INTERSECTING INTERVENTIONS OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL POWERS
IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: MOTIVES, METHODS, AND TIMING

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ABSTRACT

INTERSECTING INTERVENTIONS OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL POWERS IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: MOTIVES, METHODS, AND TIMING

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Following the spread of the Arab Uprisings to Syria, a civil war broke out between Syrian opponents and government; consequently, thousands of people have died, injured, and been displaced. The Syrian Civil War paved the way for the emergence of various local armed groups which have claims over the Syrian territory. In the meantime, the world has witnessed multiple-interventions of global and regional actors in the conflict in Syria through diplomatic, economic and military means. This thesis focuses on the interventions in the conflict in Syria by Russia, US, Turkey, and Iran and aims to show the impact of a current/potential intervenor on the others' motivations, methods, and timing, in other words interaction among intervenors. To do this, this study explains the motivations of intervenors to intervene (self-interest and/or humanitarian concerns), the methods they used (unilateral or multilateral, biased or neutral, diplomatic-economic or military), and the timing of their interventions. The result of the study indicates that each actor has ability to change the others' motivations, methods, and timing of intervention. Indeed, it is seen that neither of the aforementioned four countries was immune from the impact of the others' intervention preferences.

Keywords: Foreign Intervention, Syrian Civil War, Interaction, Motivations, Methods

ÖZ

SURİYE İÇ SAVAŞI'NDA KÜRESEL VE BÖLGESEL GÜÇLERİN KESİŞEN MÜDAHALELERİ: NEDENLER, YÖNTEMLER VE ZAMANLAMA

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Arap Ayaklanmalarının Suriye'ye yayılmasının ardından Suriye muhalifleri ve hükümeti arasında bir iç savaş patlak vermiştir; bunun sonucunda binlerce insan hayatını kaybetmiş, yaralanmış ve yerinden edilmiştir. Suriye İç Savaşı, Suriye toprakları üzerinde hak iddia eden çeşitli yerel silahlı grupların ortaya çıkmasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Aynı zamanda dünya, Suriye'deki çatışmalarda küresel ve bölgesel aktörlerin diplomatik, ekonomik ve askeri araçlarla çoklu-müdahalelerine tanık olmuştur. Bu tez, Suriye'ye Rusya, ABD, Türkiye ve İran tarafından gerçekleştirilen müdahalelere odaklanmakta ve mevcut/potansiyel bir müdahalenin diğerlerinin motivasyonları, yöntemleri ve zamanlaması üzerindeki etkisini, diğer bir deyişle müdahaleciler arasındaki etkileşimi göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma bunu gerçekleştirmek için, müdahalecilerin müdahale etmedeki motivasyonlarını (öz-çıkar ve/veya insani kaygılar), kullandıkları yöntemleri (tek taraflı veya çok taraflı, taraflı veya tarafsız, diplomatik-ekonomik veya askeri) ve müdahalelerinin zamanlamasını açıklamaktadır. Çalışmanın sonucu, her bir aktörün diğerlerinin motivasyonlarını, yöntemlerini ve zamanlamasını değiştirebilme yeteneğine sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Nitekim bahsi geçen dört ülkeden hiçbirinin diğerlerinin müdahale tercihlerinin etkisinden bağışık olmadığı görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dış Müdahale, Suriye İç Savaşı, Etkileşim, Motivasyonlar, Yöntemler

To My Father...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BC   Before Christ
BRICS   Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
COW   Correlates of War
CWs   Chemical Weapons
EU   European Union
FAO/WFP   Food and Agriculture Organization / World Food Programme
FSA   Free Syrian Army
GDP   Gross Domestic Product
GTI   Global Terror Index
IRGC   Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps
IS   Islamic State
ISIS   Islamic State in Iraq and Sham
KNC   Kurdish National Council
NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PKK   Kurdistan Workers Party
PLO   Palestine Liberation Organization
PYD   Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)
R2P   Responsibility to Protect
SDF   Syrian Democratic Forces
SNC   Syrian National Council
SMC   Syrian Military Council
SOC   The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and
                Opposition Forces
SU   Soviet Union
UAE   United Arab Emirates
UAR   United Arab Republic

UCDP/PRIO	Uppsala Conflict Data Program / Peace Research Institute Oslo
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VX	Venomous Agent X
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II
YPG	People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Significance of the Topic

The Syrian Civil War is one of the most important humanitarian crises in the Middle East. Since the beginning of the civil war, thousands of people have been killed[1] and wounded, millions of people (more than half of the population) fled from the country[2] or were internally displaced[3]. The people remaining in Syria have been suffering from poverty and diseases[4] because of the ruined economy and plummeted human development of Syria as a consequence of the ongoing civil war (UNDP, 2016; Phillips, 2016). Most of the studies on the Syrian Civil War underscore the internal dynamics of the conflict (Lesch, 2012; Hokayem, 2013); besides, international dynamics of the Syrian Civil War are at least as significant as internal ones (Phillips, 2016). Global and regional actors have had significant impact on the course of the civil war and probably will continue to do so at the end of the conflict in the future because they are entangled in this civil war through their interventions. This thesis analyzes the interventions by two most significant and effective global powers in the region: the US and Russia and two regional powers: Turkey and Iran. This research

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[1] The death tall in Syria is 470 thousands since the beginning of the conflict until February 2016 (Human Rights Watch, 2017)

[2] The total number of registered Syrian refugees in Iraq, Egypt, Jordon, Lebanon, Turkey, and North Africa is about 5,5 million in Februrary 2018, and the total number of Syrian asylum applications in Europe is slightly more than 1 million between April 2011 and December 2017 (Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2018)

[3] There are 6.6 million people internally displaced in Syria between 2011 and 2016 (UNHCR, 2016)

[4] There are 13. 5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria in the end of 2017 (UNHCR, 2017)

tries to explain why and how they have intervened in the Syrian Civil War. Exploring why and how they have intervened in the Syrian Civil War will help us understand how the motivations of intervention have guided the methods and timing of intervention in the Syrian case. Most importantly, this research aims to show the impact of an intervenor to another in terms of motivations, methods and timing. By doing this, it will contribute to the intervention literature, especially to the issue of multiple interventions in civil wars.

Finnemore in the book entitled *The Purpose of Intervention* (2003) underlines the significance of the case studies on the issue of intervention. She claims that the intervenors' motivations and the methods they follow have changed over time. In the twenty first century, states intervene in internal conflicts with different reasons compared to the past. Case studies give the researchers a chance to detect these changes; thereby contribute to the existing literature (Finnemore, 2003). In this respect, they open up the possibility of comparing general intervention patterns in the Cold War and intervention patterns in Syria after 2011: whether they changed over time or remained the same.

1.1 Aim of Research/Research Question

The research problem of this study is that there are multiple interventions in the Syrian Civil War and the intervenors interact. However, the current literature only explains motivations, methods and timing of foreign intervenors assuming them as isolated actors. Therefore, they neglect the interactions among the current/potential intervenors.

The aim of this research is to show the *impact* of a current/potential intervenor on the *others' motivations, methods, and timing*. To do this, this study explains intervenors' *motivations*, *methods,* and *timing* in the Syrian Civil War by focusing on the specific global and regional powers. This paper looks for an answer to this research question: Why and how have the global and regional powers intervened in the Syrian Civil War following the Arab Uprisings? How or to what extent did actors affect each other in terms of motivations, methods and timing? Therefore, this research has an explanatory objective.

Finnemore (2003) states that "The goal of the case studies is to show how ideas about what states valued or what goals could be secured by force or both have changed, and not just in one state but in many" (p. 4).

1.2 Methodology

In this study a variety of types of literature have been used. The types of literature which have been mainly used are *subject-specific books, discipline-based reference materials,* and *journal articles*. These constitute the core of this study; additionally, there are other types of literature which are occasionally used. These are *data sets, official publications and statistics*, *writing aids* such as encyclopedias and dictionaries. And finally, *grey literature* is used very seldom in this thesis.

It is demonstrated in the second chapter that the current models of foreign interventions in armed conflicts is not applicable to the situation in Syria. There are certain lacks of existing literature in analyzing foreign interventions, especially there is not a developed literature on multiple interventions. This constitutes the main problem of this study, and to solve this problem this thesis provides a new conceptual framework to analyze motivations, methods, and timing of foreign interventions without neglecting their interactions. The expected outcome of this study is to detect the interactions between foreign intervenors that affects their methods motivations and timing. By doing this, this study will provide a basis for an enhanced model of foreign states' decision to intervene in future works.

This research has some limitations. Firstly, the relevant conflict in Syria still continues; therefore, it is open to new developments. Because it is rather new and continuing process, the literature on it is not rich. Many of the studies are limited with time just like this study. In this research, developments by 2018 has been evaluated. Secondly, the scope of this research is limited with the aforementioned four actors. In fact, the method used in this research is applicable for analyzing more actors, however, this requires a broader time and effort.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

After a brief introduction in the first chapter, including the significance of the topic, aim of the research, methodology, and organization of the thesis, second chapter

consists of general information from the existing literature about foreign interventions in armed conflicts and motives, methods and timing of interventions in civil wars. In the third chapter, after a brief overview of the history of Syria, a closer look to Hafız al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad periods and root causes of Syrian Civil War follow. Moreover, this study emphasizes the division of uprising and civil war in Syria, presents a map of actors, and stresses transformation of civil war. The fourth chapter is the section where the motivations, methods and timing of the selected intervenors in the Syrian Civil War is explained. In the last chapter, a conclusion takes place.

In brief, what have happened in Syria since 2011 has crucial importance considering the future of the Middle East region; and the foreign actors, seemingly, would be the designer of it. This study tries to explain the interaction between the motivations, methods, and timing of four important foreign intervenors in Syrian armed conflict following the spread of Arab Uprisings to Syria. By emphasizing the importance of the interaction of intervenors in multiple interventions, this study will contribute to the literature of foreign interventions in (internationalized) internal armed conflicts.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this chapter is to draw a framework for the research by referring to the already existing concepts used in the literature. In the framework of this research, there are four concepts that require explanation: *foreign intervention*, *civil war*, *motivations* and *methods*. The chapter will present definitions of these key terms and also give theoretical information from the literature with regard to forms of intervention, civil war, motivations of states to intervene and methods they used in interventions. Afterwards, methodological design of the research will be explained.

2.1 Foreign Intervention in Armed Conflicts

Intervention is usually defined in international relations discipline as a state's mostly coercive activity against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state. Oppenheim (1905) defines intervention as "*dictatorial interference* by a State in the affairs of another State for the purpose of maintaining or altering the actual condition of things" (p. 181). Vincent (1974) referred to intervention as "activity undertaken by a state, a group within a state, a group of states or an international organization which interferes coercively in the domestic affairs of another state" (p. 13). The broadest definition of the intervention belongs to Hoffman (1986) who claims that "every act of a state constitutes intervention" (p. 8). These are the most used definitions of the concept *intervention* in International Relations.

In modern history, international and non-international wars have paved the way for interventions of foreign actors. The nineteenth century witnessed the involvement of Great Britain, Italy and France against Russia in the Crimean War, originally between Russia and Ottoman Empire in between 1854-56 (Rath, 2015). In the twentieth

century, the number of major wars and external intervention significantly increased (Aydin, 2012). In its first half, the Balkan Wars, the Great War and the World War II; and in its second half the Korean War, the Gulf War revealed the significance of the international intervention on the course and outcome of these wars (Martel, 2015). Since the end of the first half of the twentieth century, the US has taken part in many of these wars as the leading foreign intervenor (Aydin, 2012). Between 1944 and 1994, the US intervened in armed conflicts for 35 times, while the other important powers (the USSR/Russia, the UK, China, and France) intervened for a total of 41 times (Regan, 1996).

External intervention is one of the most significant subjects of international relations discipline for intervention which enables third parties to affect the duration and course of a conflict (Aydin, 2012). Aydin (2012) points out that *"Foreign powers have systematic impact on the evolution and termination of armed conflicts and play crucial roles in shaping belligerents' capabilities and resolve"* (p. 2). Correspondingly, Phillips (2016) in his book entitled *The Battle for Syria* emphasizes six foreign actors' ability to shape the conflict in Syria: Russia, the US, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and Qatar, as follows:

> The six players were not of equal power or influence in Syria, yet each was sizeable enough to impact the conflict, often independently of the others. Due to this variation in power, different players deployed a variety of tools at different times whether military, economic or diplomatic, sometimes overtly, but more often covertly (p. 25).

One can conclude that intervention of foreign actors in an armed conflict has a determinative impact on the future of the conflict as it can be observed in the Syrian case.

In the first place, it is necessary to form a conceptual and operational definition of *intervention*. Traditionally, intervention is defined as "illegal military infringement of national sovereignty;" however, this definition is insufficient to meet the needs of today's world (Baldwin, 1969, p. 425). In addition to military forms of actions, definition of intervention also includes the non-military forms of actions to influence the other state's behaviors since the end of the 1960s (Baldwin, 1969). An appropriate conceptual definition was designed by Regan (2002a) whose definition of intervention is: "the use of one state's resources in an attempt to influence the internal

conflict of another state" (p. 9). Third parties, militarily, can send troops, supplies, aid and intelligence; economically, can use sanctions, embargoes, aid for and/or a withdrawal of aid from the existing government or opposition (Regan, 2002a, p. 9). By using these strategies, they can make significant changes in the power balance and affect the cost of dealing with the other side (Regan, 2002a).

As Regan (2002a) mentioned, Rosenau emphasizes the importance of demonstrating the difference between influence and intervention when an operational definition is made. Rosenau's operational definition of intervention includes two criteria: "(1) that interventions are convention breaking, and (2) that they are authority targeted" (Regan, 2002a, p. 9). This operational definition by using these two criteria does separate the notions of influence and intervention in order to avoid using them as synonyms. As it is stated in the first criterion, intervention should be convention breaking in terms of economic and/or military activities; however, it is not easy to recognize whether an act was conventional or non-conventional, particularly in intrastate conflicts (Regan, 2002a; 1998). To illustrate, the economic interventions are not as clear cut as the military interventions; due to the difficulty of agreeing on whether an economic aid is conventional or not (Regan, 2002a). Accordingly, economic assistance has been used as a form of intervention as well as a form of influence (Baldwin, 1969). To put it another way, part of the literature holds the position that economic assistance is an alternative to intervention; another part posits that it is still a form of intervention (Baldwin, 1969). In the second criterion, by using targeting authority, indeed, Rosenau refers to the intervenor's goals "to change existing structure of political authority or to preserve it in the target society" (Regan, 2002a, p. 9). An intervenor supports either opposition group or the government depending on its own goals so as to affect the capabilities of the sides of the conflict. (Regan, 2002a). In this research, Rosenau's two criteria will be accepted to determine whether an action is an intervention or not.

In the second place, it is necessary to clarify why the term *armed conflict* is the most appropriate concept for this study. UCDP Armed Conflicts Dataset codebook, defines the term *armed conflict* as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a

calendar year." (2016, p. 1). One can say, the term *war* can be used to refer to armed conflicts because it includes both international and civil wars. Nevertheless, term *war* is problematic (Lieblich, 2012), because it "presupposes the existence of a factual condition" and this factual condition can also affect the rights of the parties (Lieblich, 2012, p. 53). In fact, the origin of the problem lays down the concept of *civil war,* which includes the term *war,* but not requires belligerency situation (Lieblich, 2012). For this reason, using the term *war* might cause prejudice about the situations. To avoid the prejudice, Geneva Conventions (1949) have used the term *armed conflict* by dividing it into two as cases of declared war and of other armed conflicts (ch.1, art.2). In this research, the terms such as internal armed conflict, civil war, internationalized internal armed conflict is used to describe the case in Syria.

To expand upon intervention in armed conflicts, Aydin (2012) informs us about several different forms of intervention. She categorizes interventions according to the forms of conflict and strategies used in the conflict. The next part of this chapter covers these forms of intervention.

2.1.1 Forms of Intervention

Aydin (2012) distinguishes strategies of intervention and opportunities for intervention with the purpose of specifying the forms of intervention. According to Aydin (2012), there are three *strategies* of intervention: *diplomacy, economic intervention and military intervention*; and two *opportunities* for intervention: *international conflicts and civil wars* (p. 3).

Table 2.1 Foreigners in Conflicts

	Strategies		
	Diplomacy	Economic Intervention	Military Intervention
International conflicts (1946-2001)	1283	113	413
Civil Wars (1944-1999)	513	130	942

*(Row header, rotated: **Opportunities**)*

SOURCE: Retrieved from Aysegul Aydin (2012). *Foreign powers and intervention in armed conflicts.* California: Stanford University Press, p. 3.

2.1.1.1 Strategies of Intervention

States can use three main strategies when they respond to an armed conflict: international diplomacy, economic pressure or intensives, and coercive strategies (Aydin, 2012). Intervenors may prefer to pursue one or more of these three intervention strategies, so that they might influence the other states' actions (Regan & Aydin, 2006). In this research they are referred to diplomacy/diplomatic intervention, economic intervention, and military intervention.

2.1.1.1.1 Diplomacy

Diplomacy is one of "the oldest forms of intervention to limit recourse to violence" (Fierke, 2005, p. 21). Diplomacy is "communication with neighbors and the resolution of conflict by negotiation and dialogue" (Fierke, 2005, p. 21). With respect to this definition, diplomacy first appeared when the primitive societies decided to receiving messages from other states (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2011). Scientists discovered the oldest diplomatic document dated back to about 4500 years before now in Mesopotamia. Today, diplomatic intervention is used "to limit recourse to violence or alleviate the consequent suffering" (Fierke, 2005, p. 40). After the end of the WWII, the most used form of diplomatic intervention was *mediation* (Regan, Frank, & Aydin, 2009, p. 138). The other forms of them include *recognition*, *non-*

recognition, *condemnation*, *call for ceasefire*, *fact finding, international forums*, *recalling ambassadors*, negotiation, and *arbitration* (Regan, Frank, & Aydin, 2009).

2.1.1.1.2   Economic Intervention

Economic intervention refers to third-party actions, including economic aid or/and sanctions (Regan, 2002a, p. 25). Lockyer (2007) defines economic intervention as "all non-foreign power sources transferred from foreign power to a belligerent" (p. 46). Aiming to leverage relative power of a certain side, a third-party actor can pursue economic actions for or against a side or sides. A third-party actor supports one or more of the conflicting side by providing assistance or hinder the other side by imposing economic sanctions against it (Mullenbach, 2001). An economic assistance generally materialized in the form of supply of food, petroleum, and finance (Lockyer, 2017).

2.1.1.1.3   Military Intervention

With the decrease in the number of international wars, states began to discuss the ineffectiveness of economic sanctions and other foreign policy tools beside their high cost (Pickering & Kisangani, 2006). As a result, foreign military interventions have appeared to become "a sine qua non of modern statecraft" by leaving other intervention strategies behind (Pickering & Kisangani, 2006, p. 363). Military interventions include "the supply or transfer of troops, hardware, intelligence, air or naval support, and logistical support" and the withdrawal of any such aid (Regan, 2002a, p. 25).

Military intervention is divided into two as indirect and direct military intervention. On the one hand, indirect military intervention includes supply of intelligence, materials, weapons, advisors, and training (Lockyer, 2017). One of the means of indirect military intervention is *proxy war*, Mumford (2013) defines *it* as "the indirect engagement in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its strategic outcome" (p. I). The Cold War showed that major powers engaged in proxy wars as a convenient means of use of force in civil wars in order to increase their influence and to defend their interests in third world countries (Mumford, 2013). Proxy wars continued to be in demand as a means of intervention even after the end of the Cold

War; however, intervention studies mainly focused on R2P and humanitarian issues rather than "proxy interventions" (Mumford, 2013, p. 3). Marshall (2016) states the role of proxy wars is growing day by day, especially in the Middle East and South-East Asia. The proxy intervention of countries such as "Iranian backed Hezbollah fighters in Syria and tribal militias in Afghanistan" indicates the shift in the international system has evolved from the bipolar system of the Cold War to a "polyarchic" system (Marshall, 2016, p. 190). On the other hand, direct military intervention includes the participation of the foreign party's own military forces in the battlefield (Lockyer, 2017).

2.1.1.2 Opportunities for Intervention

States may find different opportunities to involve in armed conflicts. Since external intervention is "an integral part of armed violence," intervention opportunities are classified according to the nature of the armed conflict (Aydin, 2012, p. 3). Traditionally, armed conflicts have divided into two main types, while contemporarily new typologies have been constructed.

There are several different techniques which are adopted and used by various institutions when they classify armed conflicts in the earth. As a result, different typologies of armed conflicts exist and they changed and revised over time. In International Humanitarian Law, there are two types of armed conflict: *international armed conflict* and *non-international armed conflict* respectively regulated in Additional Protocol I and II of Geneva Conventions of 1949. Respecting this division, Correlates of War used *international war* and *civil war* as two main types of war; this classification is referred to as *traditional typology* (Sarkees & Wayman, 2010). Likewise, Aydin (2012) admits that there are two types of armed conflicts in the world: interstate and intrastate conflicts; correspondingly, two forms of intervention exist with respect to intervention opportunities: intervention in international conflicts and intervention in civil wars. Intervention in conflict between the states is an old phenomenon, while intervention in conflict within a state is rather novel one (Aydin, 2012). Recently, Sarkees and Wayman (2010) have developed a more detailed typology of war referred to as *expanded typology* consists of four main types of war: *inter-state wars, extra-state wars, intra-state wars,* and *non-state wars*. As shown in

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Table 2.2, under these main types, nine war types take place (Sarkees & Wayman, 2010).

Table 2.2 The COW Project's Two Typologies of War

Traditional typology	Expanded typology
I. International wars	I. Inter-state wars (war type 1)
A. Inter-state wars	II. Extra-state wars
B. Extra-systemic wars	A. Colonial—conflict with colony (war type 2)
1) Colonial	B. Imperial—state vs. nonstate (war type 3)
2) Imperial	III. Intra-state wars
	A. Civil wars
II. Civil wars	1) for central control (war type 4)
	2) over local issues (war type 5)
	B. Regional internal (war type 6)
	C. Inter-communal (war type 7)
	III. Non-state wars
	A. In nonstate territory (war type 8)
	B. Across state borders (war type 9)

SOURCE: Retrieved from Meredith Reid Sarkees & Frank WhelonWayman (2010). *Resort to War: A Data Guide to Inter-state, Extra-state, Intra-state, and Non-state Wars, 1816-2007.* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, p. 46.

Intervention scholars focused on two different opportunities for intervention: first, states have opportunity for intervention when an international conflict breaks out (Aydin, 2012). Conventionally, intervention in international conflicts has been dominating the intervention studies for long years. Particularly, realist scholars have explored the state's responses to the conflicts between states, thereby making it the first and foremost issue of intervention studies (Aydin, 2012). Furthermore, the divergence of the realist scholars' approaches to states' responses to "powerful and threatening states," paved the way for the rise of the most basic claims of offensive and defensive realism (Aydin, 2012, p. 3). Today, conflict studies are interested in intervention in internal conflicts rather than international ones. The reason for this, to

a degree, lies behind the difference between the numbers of occurrence of these two conflict types (Aydin, 2012).

UCDP/PRIO made another classification of armed conflicts which incorporates four main categories of armed conflict: *extrasystemic*, *internal*, *interstate*, and *internationalized internal*[5] (Themnér, et al., UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset codebook version 4, 2016). Since the end of the WWII, patterns of armed conflict have changed; correspondingly opportunity for intervention to armed conflicts has changed (Aydin, 2012). First of all, as Figure 2.1 demonstrates, the number of internal conflicts dramatically increased in the post-WWII period, while the number of interstate conflicts slightly decreased, especially in the post-Cold War period (Themnér, et al., The UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset - version 4, 2016). Another
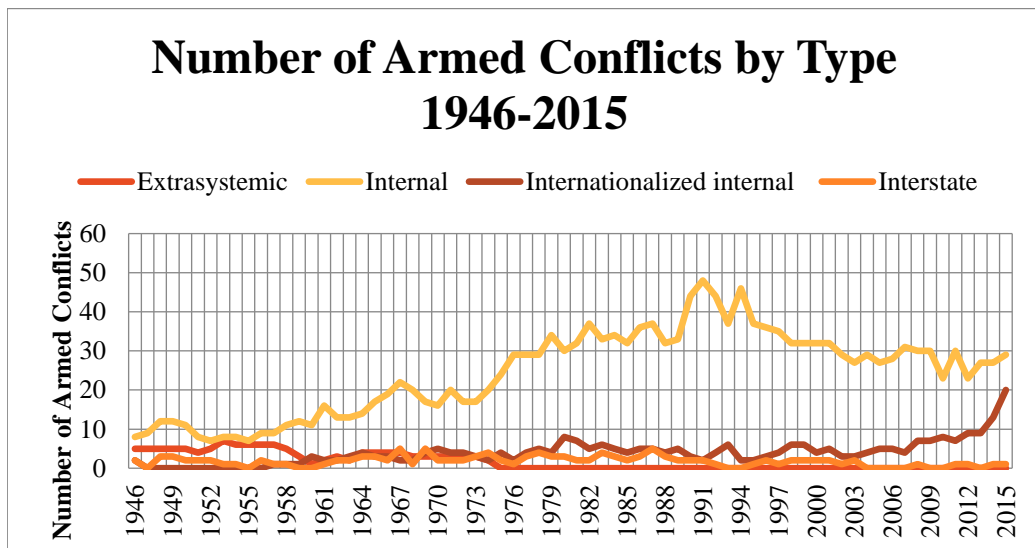
Figure 2.1 Number of Armed Conflicts by Type

SOURCE: Adapted from Lotta Themnér, Peter Wallensteen, Birger Heldt, Margareta Sollenberg, Mikael Eriksson, Stina Högbladh, Håvard Strand, Håvard M. Nygård, Halvard Buhaug, Joachim Carlsen, Nils Petter Gleditsch, Håvard Hegre, Christin M. Ormhaug, and Lars Wilhelmsen. (2016). *The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset - Version 4.* Oslo: Uppsala Conflict Data Program & International Peace Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP

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[5] *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook* explains the four types of armed conflicts as follows: (1) *Extrasystemic* armed conflict occurs between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory. These conflicts are by definition territorial, since the government side is fighting to retain control of a territory outside the state system. (2) *Interstate* armed conflict occurs between two or more states. (3) *Internal* armed conflict occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) without intervention from other states. (4) *Internationalized internal* armed conflict occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) with intervention from other states (secondary parties) on one or both sides (Themnér, et al., UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset codebook version 4, 2016, p. 9).

change was that despite no extrasystemic armed conflict since 1975, from this date on, the number of internationalized internal armed conflicts has increased, and when it comes to the beginning of the twenty first century, its increase accelerated more and more (Themnér, et al., The UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset - version 4, 2016). The increasing number of internationalized internal armed conflicts (see Figure 2.1) demonstrates the rising importance of this type of conflict which is transformed from internal armed conflicts.

Second, states have another opportunity for intervention when a civil war erupts (Regan, 1998). As mentioned previously, during the Post-WWII period, states found a different opportunity for intervention; they began to intervene in civil wars. Intervention scholars observed these events and noticed that previous findings of the realist tradition about international interventions did not suit the civil war interventions (Aydin, 2012). She asserted: "civil war intervention was a new form of interventionism," namely a *new* phenomenon; to analyze this new phenomenon, sooner or later, a new exploration framework was necessary (Aydin, 2012, p. 3). However, she neglects that conflicts may transform. In the same vein, COW Project's traditional typology includes only two opportunities for intervention which are international intervention and civil war intervention (Table 2.2) (Sarkees & Wayman, 2010). Even, COW Project's expanded typology remains inefficient when it comes to internationalized internal conflicts. Alternatively, the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset gives place to a new type of armed conflict, between the international armed conflict and civil war, referred to as *internationalized internal armed conflict* (Themnér, et al., 2016). The UCDP/PRIO Codebook introduces this type of armed conflict as follows: *"Internationalized internal armed conflict* occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) with intervention from other states (secondary parties) on one or both sides" (Themnér, et al., 2016, p. 9).

Likewise, Tamkoç (1967) developed the term of *international civil war* as a synthesis of international and civil war and presented it as "a new form of an old phenomenon" in the Cold War period (p. 79). He agrees with Modelski's statement that "there is no internal war without international intervention" (Tamkoç, 1967, p. 80). If an international actor assists the weaker side, the stronger side will seek for an

international countermeasure, to maintain its advantaged status; according to Tamkoç (1967), at that point, the weaker side will seek for further international assistance. And this turns into a cycle of interventions or with his own words *international circular processes of intervention* (Tamkoç, 1967, p. 80).

This third type, internationalized internal armed conflict, will enable this research to show the differences and similarities in the motives and strategies of intervenors during distinct armed conflict conditions by watching the transformation of the armed conflict.

2.1.2   Foreign Intervention in Civil Wars

The common term *civil war* defined by Merriam-Webster, is "a war between opposing groups of citizens of the same country" ([Def.1] Civil war, n.d.). Yet, when modern internal conflicts were considered, this definition is insufficient to clarify the subject. In the first place, the word *citizens* is not inclusive enough; in other words, it limits the range of conflicting parties. In fact, in the many modern internal conflicts, the participants of the conflict include institutions, state actors, and the people who are not a citizen of the aforesaid country (Lieblich, 2012). In the second place, as it is mentioned previously, the term *war* is also problematic because civil war does not require belligerency situation (Lieblich, 2012).

The COW project provides workable definitions of civil war as well as data. Small and Singer define civil war as "any armed conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metropole, (b) the active participation of the national government, and (c) effective resistance by both sides(d) at least 1,000 battle deaths resulted during the civil war" (Small & Singer, 1982, p. 210; 1994; Sambanis, 2004, p. 816). These numbers are not unchangeable, some scholars use different minimum criteria; for example, Regan (2002b) defines the term *civil conflict* as "armed internal conflict that experiences at least 200 fatalities" (p. 56). This criterion is significant to determine precise dates of the beginning and the end of a conflict taking place in the dataset. According to Reagan (2002b) the date when a civil conflict has begun is the date when the total number of fatalities reached at 200, and the end date of a conflict is the date is the point of settlement on cease-fire for at least 6 months.

Regan (2002a) defines third-party intervention in civil wars as "convention-breaking military and/or economic activities in the internal affairs of a foreign country targeted at the authority structure of the government with the aim of affecting the balance of power between the government and opposition forces" (p. 10). In civil war, the parties of the conflict are significantly different from each other: on one side, modern armies take place with their trained soldiers and conventional weapons, on the opposite side, there are irregular forces living in the mountains, forests, and even in urban places (Aydin, 2012).

2.1.2.1 Motivations, Methods and Timing of Intervenors

Kim (2012) in his thesis indicates states' motivations to intervene in civil wars have an impact on timing and methods of intervention. Intervenors decide to intervene early or late, multilaterally or unilaterally, biased or unbiased, and to the use of force or non-use of force in the line with their motivations or goals (Kim, 2012).

Table 2.3 Motives and Methods of Intervention

Motives of Intervention Self-Interest or Humanitarian Concerns	**Methods of Intervention** Unilateral or Multilateral Biased or Neutral Use of Force or Nonuse of Force
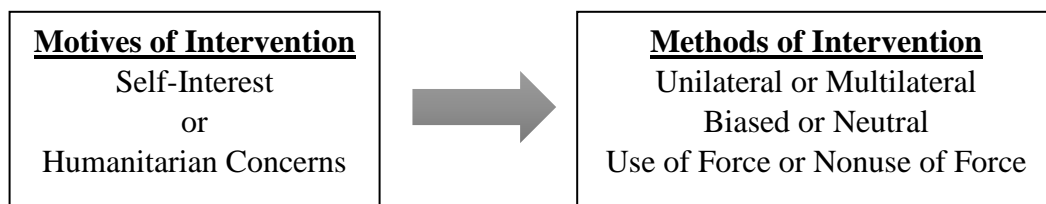
SOURCE: Sang Ki Kim. "Third-party intervention in civil wars: motivation, war outcomes, and post-war development." PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) thesis, University of Iowa, 2012, p. 7.

In this research, the conceptual framework that previously used by Kim which is shown in Table 2.3 is revised. Like the rest of the literature, Kim also neglects the impact of the potential and current intervenors actions on the other's decisions and actions (Findley & Teo, 2006; Kim, 2012). For this reason, it is necessary to modify this conceptual framework to include the impact of the intervention of an actor on the other intervening actors as well as the relationship between motivations, methods and timing.

2.1.2.1.1   Motivations of Intervenors

Researchers prefer to pursue one or several types of analysis of motivations; for instance, actor-centric approaches elaborate interventions as "a foreign policy tool that was motivated by international influences and domestic constraints" (Findley & Teo, 2006, p. 829). As previous studies demonstrated, two main motivations dominate the third-party intervention in civil wars: *strategic interests*, and *humanitarian concerns* (Regan, 1998; Kim, 2012). The former one is widely accepted as international matter, whereas the latter one is associated to domestic constraints (Regan, 1998). The dominant paradigm, realism/neorealism, states that national interest is the reason behind the major powers to intervene in a civil war; in contrast, liberal or idealist scholars have criticized this limited approach and attracted attention to the significance of ethical issues (Regan, 1998).

Some scholars state that intervenors are prone to pursuing their strategic interests; in other words, they claim that the major powers are tend to intervene in civil wars because of their strategic and political interests rather than moral values (Balch-Lindsay & Enterline, 2000; Gent, 2007; Lemke & Regan, 2007; Findley & Teo, 2006). They commonly use an actor-centric approach in their studies. According to Regan (1998), before the decision of intervention, states, as rational actors, calculate and evaluate costs and benefits of their possible intervention. Owen (2002) indicates that the major powers generally prefer to intervene in unstable and strategically important states. Kathman (2007) underlines the importance of geopolitics in the third-party interventions in civil wars. He claims that the civil wars affect not only civil war state's internal stability, but also the regional status quo. In this regard, the potential intervenors became more likely to intervene due to the possibility of diffusion of civil war to the neighborhood of the civil war state (Kathman, 2007). According to Aydın (2012), internal conflicts in the developing and underdeveloped countries easily became the target of European imperialism. Both regional and global powers pursue their economic interest when the civil war starts to affect their economies (Aydin, 2012). Gent (2008) states that a third-party prefer to intervene when a less powerful state is not able to cope with political and economic instability in the country. In this way, the third party can influence its political and economic system. Gent (2007) builds a model of intervention decision, based on realist tools,

which is able to explain why major powers have not responded to some *large-scale* humanitarian disasters by preferring not to intervene (p. 1101). Weisburd (1997) states that a great power is either a status quo or an expansionist power; consequently, it intervenes in civil wars by aiming respectively either to maintain or to enlarge their spheres of influence. Likewise, Lemke and Regan (2007) enhance Singer's *internation influence* model and claim that states are interested in intervening in civil wars to expand their influence. Their study presents that states which share borders with the civil war state, states which are allies of the civil war state, states which have a colonial history with the civil war state are more likely to intervene (Lemke & Regan, 2007). Rost and Greig (2011) state that states tend to prefer military allies, former colonies, trade partners, the states with which have ethnic ties, and the countries where the people suffer from humanitarian disasters to intervene in case of a civil war.

Major powers may intervene in civil wars in other countries with ideological motivations. Especially, third world countries experiencing an ideological internal conflict became "attractive targets" for the superpower intervention during the cold-war (Findley & Teo, 2006, p. 832).Other scholars, such as Ross (2004) state that foreign intervenors are likely to involve the conflicts in the resource wealthy countries because they could meet the cost of intervention by looting the resources - oils, nonfuel minerals, illicit drugs- of the civil war country.

Findley and Teo (2006) state that many researchers such as Regan, who is on the side of the strategic interest, generally focus on the interests of each individual state one by one without looking at their interaction. Thus, he neglected the intersecting interests of multiple intervenors and their impact on the possible intervenors. Regan provides a model and dataset of third-party intervention for researchers, whereas does not provide any model of "sequences of multiple intervenors" (Findley & Teo, 2006, p. 830). By doing this, Regan neglects the impact of an intervenor's actions on the interests of another intervenor in the course of the civil war (Findley & Teo, 2006). Balch-Lindsay and Enterline (2000) point out, what Regan has missed, that a third-party intervention impacts the possibility of other intervenors' involvement: "…the case study literature clearly indicates that the impact of third party interventions on the evolution of intrastate conflicts is often a function of the involvement of other

third parties" (Balch-Lindsay & Enterline, 2000, p. 617). Another example is Gent's baseline game theoretic model. The baseline model covers motivations of each intervenor apart from other current and potential intervenors (Gent, 2008). Conversely, Findley and Theo (2006) claim that "strategic relations between *potential* and *actual* intervenors influence the entries of multiple intervenors into the same conflict" (p. 829). In the same vein, Balch-Lindsay (2000) states that "the *strategic* and *interdependent* interests and behavior of third parties and potential third parties, as well as the geopolitical environment within which civil wars are embedded" (p. 638).

Others point out the significance of humanitarian and ethnic issues in intervention decision as a motivation (Western, 2002; Saideman, 2001). If ethnic affinities exist between a potential actor and the target state, the likelihood of intervention is higher because people pressure on the state to intervene in the target state for aiding their co-ethnics (Saideman, 2001). Saideman (2001) states that domestic political reasons matter in the intervention decision. Particularly, in the Syrian case, one can observe the impact of domestic politics in the attitudes of the US and Britain. In the US, soon after that Obama came into the office, his policies and discourses signaled a retreat from the Middle East (Phillips, 2016). Likewise, the British domestic opinion showed its impact in the British parliament in the voting of military action to Syria by saying "no" (Strong, 2015).

Western (2002) states that major states may intervene in humanitarian tragedies, even they have no strategic interest. To illustrate this, Western (2002) and Finnemore (2003) point out US intervention in Somalia in 1992. Finnemore (2003) states that intervention in Somalia is "the clearest example of military action undertaken in a state of little or no strategic or economic importance to the principal intervenor" (p. 52). In the first place, the Bush administration was against the US intervention in Somalia, after a while, humanitarian crisis accelerated and turned into a massive humanitarian disaster that was brought in front of American citizens via the media (Western, 2002). Consequently, the Bush Administration decided to intervene in Somalia not because of strategic reasons, but humanitarian concerns (Western, 2002).

The idealist approach states that intervenor might aim to bring democracy to target country. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006) show that even if one of the main goals of the intervening countries was the democratization of the state they intervened, they would rarely achieve at this end; furthermore, their intervention frequently cause to "erosion" of democracy (p. 647).

To sum up, the motivations of foreign intervenors can be classified in two groups which are self-interests and humanitarian concerns. On the one hand, in the first group; rational actors seek for their strategic and political interests. Economic interests, geopolitics, expanding sphere of influence, the need to intervene to the dynamics of resource wealthy countries and domestic politics are the prominent factors. Military allies, former colonies, trade partners, and ideologies matter. On the other hand, humanitarian concerns can be emanated from the humanitarian disasters such as genocide and refugee crises; furthermore, the idealist approach claims that bringing democracy to target country might be the motivation of intervenors.

2.1.2.1.2 Methods and Timing of Intervention

Intervention studies state that goals of actors have a determinative impact on the timing of intervention and the methods used (Finnemore, 2003). The studies on the methods of intervention generally shaped around three key points; whether the intervention is multilateral or unilateral, whether it is biased or neutral and whether there is use of force or not (Kim, 2012; Lieblich, 2012; Finnemore, 2003).

One axis of the discussion on intervention methods is multilateral versus unilateral intervention division. Multilateral intervention may refer to intervention based on Chapter VII of UN Charter. Yet at times interventions are classified as unilateral intervention regardless of the number of involving states (Lieblich, 2012). Regan (2002b) also categorizes interventions carried out by international organization like NATO as multilateral, despite being irrelevant to the Chapter VII. The term *collective intervention* is also used for UN interventions and interventions by other international organizations/institutions and ad-hoc coalitions (Damrosch, 1993, p. 2). The second axis is biased versus neutral intervention division. Biased intervention refers to a type of intervention in which the intervenor supports one or more of the sides against the others; however, the neutral interventions requires the intervenor to approach

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conflicting sides with the same distance (Regan, 2002a). The former seeks for changing the status quo, the latter seeks for reconciliation (Regan, 2002a). Another axis is the use of force which is related to the *strategies of intervention* which are explained in the previous subsection. Diplomatic and economic interventions do not include use of force; whereas, military intervention involves the direct and indirect use of force (Aydin, 2012; Regan, 2002a; Lockyer, 2017).

The last axis, timing of intervention, refers to the duration of time between the date the conflict began and the date the intervention began (Mullenbach, 2001). Intervention scholars generally focus on the impact of the timing on the duration of the conflict (Regan, 2002b; Lockyer, 2007). However, in this research, the focus will be the comparison of and interaction between different states' timing of interventions.

Table 2.4 A New Conceptual Framework of Motivations, Methods, and Timing
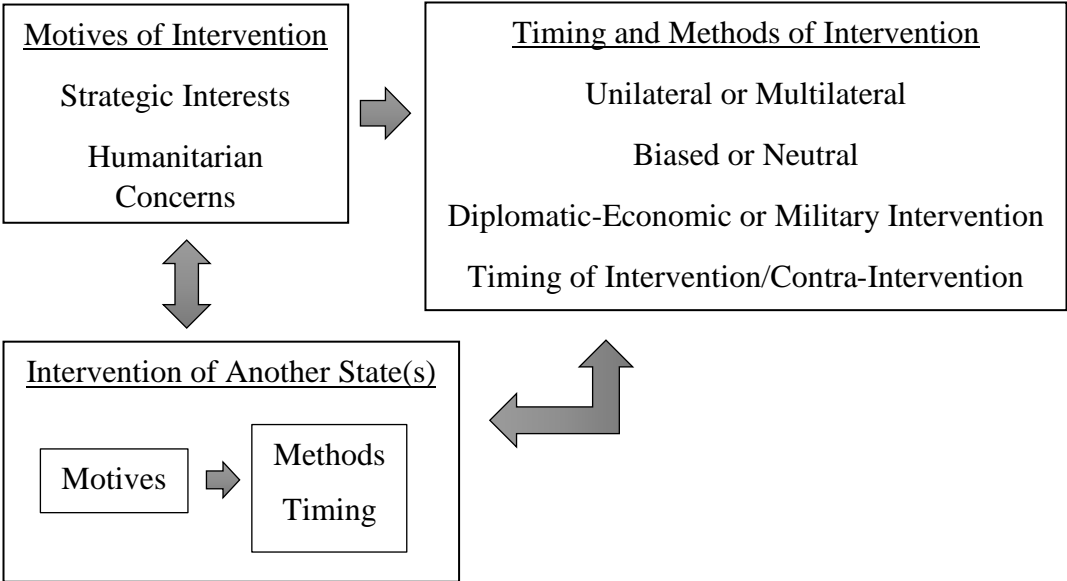
In this research, a new conceptual framework, see Table 2.4, will be used for a better understanding of motives, methods and timing of the multiple interventions. In his research, Kim (2012) takes alliance, former colony, contiguity, ideological conflict, and oil output as the measures of strategic-interests. When we consider intervention in the Syrian Civil War these measures are not sufficient to explain the motivations of the US and Russia to intervene. For this reason, it is necessary to revise already

existing measures and/or to add some new measures in order to create a new conceptual framework that is compatible to analyze aforementioned aspects. One of the measures that is problematic is ideological conflict, because it appears as a limited term that is compatible with the nature of the Cold War rather than the post-Cold War (Huntington, 1996). Considering Waltz's (1990) argument that international politics can only be understood when the impact of *structure* is taken into account; the measure can be revised in the line with his argument (p. 34). In this regard, the measure should be extended by including great power rivalry, regional rivalry and ideological rivalry as well. Phillips (2016) emphasizes the importance of international rivalry in the Syrian Civil War in his book entitled *The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East*. In this respect, as a measure, including these aspects, *international rivalry* is obviously more appropriate than the narrow *ideological rivalry* and provides the analysis a broader approach. Additionally, as it stated previously *geopolitical concerns* motivates the states to intervene in the conflict, especially because of diffusion risk of the war (Kathman, 2007, p. 138). For this reason, in this study, geopolitical concerns are used as a measure of strategic interests. Another additional measure is *international terrorism* because of its rising importance as an intervention excuse (Dexter, 2007). As the measures of the humanitarian concerns, Kim (2012)'s two measures of *number of refugees* and *existence of genocide* are revised as *refugees* and *humanitarian crisis.*

To operationalize, variables of this study are basically the motivations, methods and timing of different intervenors in the civil wars that stage multiple interventions. By using these variables this thesis aims to show that intervention of an actor may cause the changes in other actors' motivations, methods and timing. In this respect, motivations, methods and timing of a current or potential intervenor are the dependent variable of this study. Intervention of another current or potential actor, its motivations, methods and timing are the independent variables of this study. Motivations can be strategic interests or humanitarian concerns, or both. Measures of strategic interests are alliance, international terrorism, international rivalry, contiguity, and geopolitical concerns. Humanitarian concerns are measured by the number of refugees and existence of humanitarian crisis. Methods are measured as unilateral or multilateral, biased or neutral, and diplomatic-economic or military. The

issue of timing includes two types of measures: First, timing of intervention is measured as the time passed between the beginning of the conflict and the intervention of the related actor; second, timing of contra-intervention is measured as the duration between the intervention of an actor and the intervention of another.

To indicate the interaction among actors, this study focuses on four actors: Russia, the US, Iran, and Turkey. The reason why I prefer these four actors is that they provide the basis for a better explanation of the interaction between intervenors; furthermore, they represent opposite camps and this makes this study more comprehensive.

Considering previous studies, none of current models explain the motivations of the intervenors in the Syrian case properly. This is because of two vital issues that are absent in existing models: first, these models do not allow the researcher to analyze *the intersecting interests of multiple intervenors*; however, considering the foreign interventions in Syrian conflict, it is obvious that motivation of an intervenor cannot be explained independent from others. Second, they neglect *an intervenor's impact* on the nature of the conflict and on a potential intervenor's possibility to involve. Again in the Syrian case, the conflict transformed with an actor's direct military intervention; consequently, the conflict dynamics changed. Accordingly, this research compares motivations of intervenors by referring to their interests; emphasizes the impacts of their methods and timing on the other actors and impacts of the transformation of the conflict by an intervenor which is Russia in the Syrian conflict. So, here the emphasis is on the interplay between what theoretical rigidity may at times present as separate actions on the ground.

CHAPTER 3

SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: ACTORS AND CONFLICTS

Beginning from Tunisia in 2011, nationwide protests against authoritarian Arab regimes spread across the Middle East including Syria. By the end of the year, the authoritarian regimes fell down in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. However, as it had previously occurred in Libya, a civil war erupted as a result of the violent response of the government in Syria (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). The movement that had begun as a part of the Arab uprising against the oppressive government in Syria, turned into a civil war and then turned into a violent proxy war of regional and global powers (Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2016).

In order to comprehend the Syrian Civil War, it is necessary to address the history of Syria, thereby pointing out the key factors that provide basis for the Syrian Civil War (Sorenson, 2016). In this context, Antonio Perra (2016) expresses that:

> Of course, the events in Syria are just a small portion of a far longer history of violence, international suspicions, and political ambiguities, which intersect Assad's dictatorship with larger geopolitical interests, and the Western intervention in the region with the emergence, or rather renewed involvement, of terrorist cells (p. 364).

3.1 A Brief History of Syria

Syria is "a young country in an ancient land" as Phillips (2016) defined in his book entitled *The Battle for Syria* (p. 10). The Syrian land, involving a broad part of the Fertile Crescent, has been home to various civilizations since the 27th century BC (Bryce, 2014). Syria's geographical location in the Mediterranean Sea enabled it to be a major commerce center. It often is referred to as "cross-roads of the Near East" due to its linking position Mesopotamia and further east, Nile and Mediterranean

lands, and Europe (Bryce, 2014, p. 7). This made Syria strategically important; consequently, an attraction center for intruders (Bryce, 2014).

Map 3.1 Zones of Direct and Indirect Control
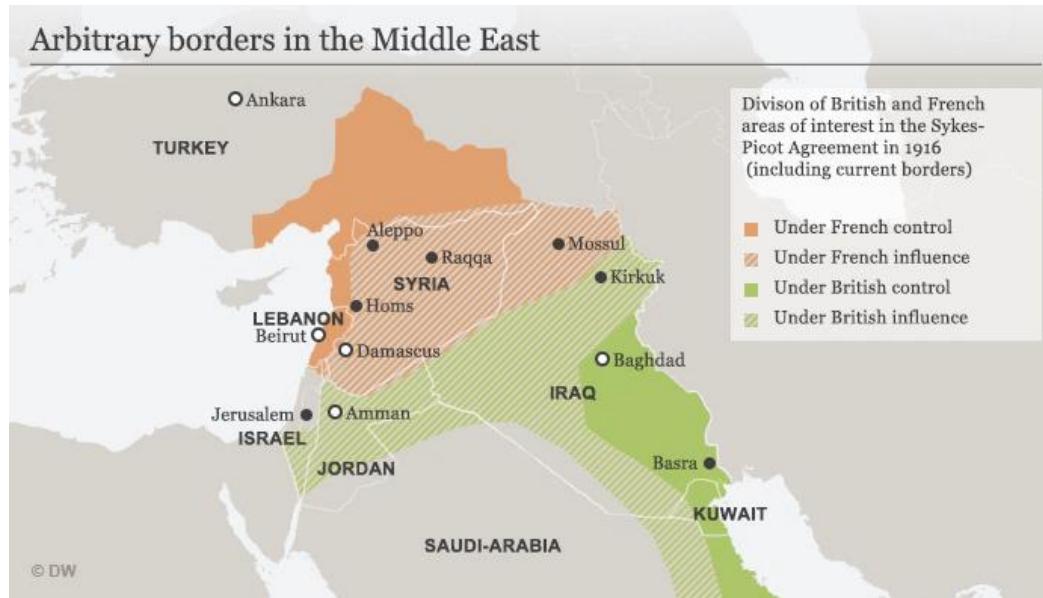
SOURCE: Martin Koch (2014, June 25). *Sykes-Picot drew Middle East's arbitrary borders*. Retrieved 1 31, 2018, from Deutsche Welle: http://www.dw.com/en/sykes-picot-drew-middle-easts-arbitrary-borders/a-17734768

In the first quarter of the 16th century, Sultan Selim took over control of Damascus, and Syria remained under control of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the WWI (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013; Darraj, 2005). During Ottoman rule, before that Jerusalem and Beirut became separate provinces in 1887 and 1888 respectively, the province of Syria, ruled by a governor in Damascus, encompassed both Palestinian and Lebanese territories (Morris, 2001, p. 7). In the WWI, Ottoman territories were shared among the European Powers; in particular, Arab territories were divided between Britain and France with a secret treaty, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, in 1916 (see. Map 3.1) (Phillips, 2016; Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). In San Remo conference in 1920, Arab provinces of Ottoman territories were portioned between France and Britain. France obtained zones of direct and indirect control in Anatolian and Syrian territories in 192O and maintained it until the end of the WWII (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). After the French occupation of Damascus in 1920, a French mandate was

established in Syria and implemented "a policy of divide-and-rule that emphasized and encouraged the existing religious, ethnic, and regional differences in Syria" (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 202). In this regard, the Alawite state of Latakia and Druze state of Damascus were established in 1922 by the French (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Aiming to weaken Arab nationalism and inhibit any rebellion against their authority, the French recruited only minorities –Alawites, Kurds, Druze, and Circassians- to Troupes Spéciales du Levant[6] (Fildis, 2012). Approaching the end of the French rule in Syria, a great majority of infantry battalions consisted of Alawites (Fildis, 2012). Correspondingly, the Alawite community was the minority which benefited the most from the French mandate (Fildis, 2012).

In 1946, Syria eventually won its independence. From then on, until the present day, the process of development of a Syrian identity has struggled with some "revisionist traditional ideologies" such as Arab nationalism, Political Islam, and Kurdish nationalism. This made the Syrian state more fragile (Phillips, 2016, p. 11). Between 1949 and 1970, a series of military coups dominated Syrian politics (Phillips, 2016, p. 11). Following the year 1949 with the first of these military coups, Alawite community increased its impact in politics as well as in the military (Fildis, 2012). Moreover, during the early years of its independence, due to political instability in Syria, the country has been exposed to increasing intervention by Arab and Western states; particularly when the United Arab Republic (UAR) was established, "the struggle for Syria" reached its climax (Zisser, 2007, p. 7; Seale, 1986).

The Ba'th[7] party was founded by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar based on the combination of pan-Arab nationalism and secular ideas in 1940, as a reaction to western values and domination. Afterwards, it became an influential party in the Arab world (Fildis, 2012; Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 303). After the independence of Syria, Alawites in the party insisted on the socialism/social reforms in addition to Pan-Arabism and secularism. Despite Aflaq's opposition to this insistence in socialism, al-Bitar accepted to merge the Ba'th Party with the Arab Socialist Party under the name of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party (Fildis, 2012). Then, the party turned

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[6] The local military force established in 1921 and afterwards became Syrian and Lebanese armed force (Fildis, 2012).

[7] Means to *resurrection* (English-Arabic dictionary, n.d.)

into a combination of a secular understanding of pan-Arab nationalism and a non-Marxist interpretation of socialism (Rabinovich, 2008). Sunnis who constitute the majority of the urban elite were skeptical of secularist and socialist elements of the party. Their doubt was reasonable, since the party became the sound of the minorities and promised them social and economic equality (Fildis, 2012).

Nasser and Syrian Ba'thist leaders agreed to unite under the UAR in 1958 (Morrison, 2009, p. 50). When UAR was founded, all political parties, including the Ba'th, were closed off; however, Alawite groups sustained their organization underground (Fildis, 2012). The union did not last long and eventually broke up in 1961 because of Syrian's resentment arising from the Egyptian dominance in the governance of the UAR (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 292).

Following the disintegration, Syria slid into chaos with subsequent "coups and counter coups, street fights and battles among army factions" (Morrison, 2009, p. 50). Factions and rivalries between the Sunni officers weakened the power of Sunnis while it strengthened minority groups, especially the one of the Alawite officers (Fildis, 2012). The Ba'th party "abandoned its democratic principles" and divided into two factions: "civilian" (moderates) and "military" (radicals) (Morrison, 2009, p. 51; Darraj, 2005, p. 40). The 1963 coup by military faction was "a crucial turning point" after the independence of Syria (Morrison, 2009, p. 52). The Alawite minority of the Syrian society took over control of the political, economic, and social realm from the Sunni urban elite with the Ba'th Revolution (coup d'état) in 1963 (Zisser, 2007). In the eyes of Sunnis, this new Alawite regime was "illegitimate, oppressive and anti-Islamic" (Fildis, 2012, p. 155).

The Ba'th party's ideas of national revival and social reform attracted the attention of the young Hafız al-Assad. He joined the party when he was sixteen. He took side with the supporters of the military faction in the 1960s, so that he could climb the steps one by one through the ranks (Darraj, 2005). Later, he was one of the leaders of it when the military faction staged a coup d'état against civilian in 1966 (Darraj, 2005).

3.2 Assad Period

In 1970, Hafız al-Assad, minister of defense, seized control of Syria. Soon afterwards, he was elected as the president of the country and maintained his power until his death in 2000 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Since 1970, Syria has been governed by members of the al-Assad family, whose name means "lion" in Arabic (English-Arabic dictionary, n.d.). Despite, the Sunni majority[8] in the Syrian society, the Assad family was coming from the Alawite community[9] (Zisser, 2007; Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). The Alawite leader, Hafız al-Assad, an "Arab nationalist socialist," and a secularist, endeavored to clear away the Sunnis, the group that dominated the country for many years, from the key positions of the state and replace them with members of Alawite community closer to the Assad family (Phillips, 2016, p. 13; Zisser, 2007). Even so, there were few successful officers from the Sunni community who remained in such positions as Vice-President Abdul Halim Khadam (Phillips, 2016; Profile: Abdul Halim Khadam, 2005). Furthermore, the countryside benefitted from the increasing rural representation in the government while the urban elite, mainly consisting of Sunnis, was losing its power (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 418). In this respect, the long-standing role of sectarian tensions in the Syrian politics reveals itself in popular protests and responses of the Alawite leader (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 417).

Hafız al-Assad was a leader portrayed as "cautious, calculating and pragmatic" (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 417). First, he was cautious at all times because he had learned to trust no one both in domestic and international realm, for instance, he managed to keep the control when his brother Rıfat organized a coup against him (Darraj, 2005). Second, he had no rival in the domestic sphere, because he consolidated his power, thereby implementing repressive and ruthless responses to unrests and providing "a strong, stable, and centralized regime" after many years of instability (Zisser, 2007, pp. 8-9). When it was necessary Hafez al-Assad did not refrain from using ruthless force, for example, when the banned Muslim Brotherhood attempted to take over control of Hama in 1982, he crushed the rebellion by

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[8] Two-thirds of all Syrian (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011, p. 1; Fildis, 2012, p. 155)

[9] 12 percent of Syrian population (Fildis, 2012, p. 151)

slaughtering approximately 10000 of his own people (Phillips, 2016). Third, in order to gain support from different groups in the domestic sphere, he pragmatically increased political participation by introducing a broad-based but ineffective membership system (Zisser, 2007; Cleveland & Bunton, 2013).

However, Hafız al-Assad could not find a broad-based support for his policies. In domestic politics, the urban and Sunni communities, which lost their previous power after the Ba'th Revolution in 1963, were uncomfortable with secularist policies, the overrepresentation of rural parts, and repressive and corrupt government as well (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). These resentments created a wave of anti-regime protests, called as Islamic Uprising, between 1976 and 1982 (Lia, 2016). They showed their disturbance by violent attacks to the party and government members, and lastly by guerilla warfare aiming to overthrow the regime and form an Islamic state (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). They started an undeclared war against the regime and called people for *jihad* (Lia, 2016). The anti-regime groups, consisting of conservative Muslims and Sunnis, mainly located in Aleppo, Homs, and Hama which were old commercial cities of Syria, took over control of the city of Hama; in return, Hafız al-Assad opted to suppress them ruthlessly with extremely violent means (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Subsequently, In February 1982, the total number of people killed by the regime forces reached up to approximately 20,000 only within three weeks (Kenner, 2011). In international politics, the first and foremost concern of Assad was Syria's conflict with Israel; in this regard; Assad was hoping to retrieve the Golan Heights which was lost in the 1967 to Israel (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Furthermore, he was dreaming to make Syria a hegemon in the Middle East, thereby dominating Lebanon, Jordan, and PLO (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). In this context, Syria intervened in the Lebanese Civil War in 1976 on the side of Maronite Christians against PLO (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). In addition, he decided to support Iran in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 by seeing "Khomeini's regime as a protest against the US-Israeli order" (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 422). In contrast to Assad policies, Syrian people were against Syrian support for Iran and the anti-PLO intervention in Lebanon (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). These were the main reasons of the popular resentments that appear time to time in Syria (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013).

In the late 1990s, Hafız al Assad's health deteriorated; in consequence, the concerns about who would succeed after him increased (Zisser, 2007). At first, Hafız al-Assad was preparing his eldest son, Bassel al Assad, as his heir; nevertheless, his son had been killed in a car accident in 1994 (Bar, 2006). As a result, Hafız al-Assad's plans about the future of leadership have collapsed. As soon as he heard Bassel's death, he summoned his son, Bashar, who had been in London for training, to Damascus (Phillips, 2016). And then, Hafız al-Assad quickly decided to assign Bashar as his successor; however, he lacked necessary qualifications such as knowledge, experience, self-confidence and charisma for leading the country (Zisser, 2007; Darraj, 2005). In contrast to his older brother, Bashar pursued a career on a medical field, ophthalmology, instead of military; thus, he must be groomed to lead Syria (Zisser, 2007). The six years of preparation process ended up when his father died as a result of a heart attack (Zisser, 2007) Soon after the death of Hafız al-Assad, his thirty-four-year-old son, Bashar al-Assad, took the lead (Phillips, 2016).

When Bashar al-Assad came into power, evidently, the most effective force in politics was the Alawite military officers remaining from his father's rule and the daily affairs of the state was conducted by the Ba'th Party officers (Zisser, 2007). Rather than proceeding with such groups, who constituted a resistance for changes, Assad decided to go on with his colleagues aiming to "advance Syria's scientific and technological development" (Zisser, 2007, p. 66). Nevertheless, he avoided implementing radical changes in the political and military structures; in this regard, he did not make appointments from outside the old regime but renewed the officials by assigning the regime's young members (Bar, 2006). To do this, he made new regulations on the retirement of military and bureaucratic officials, thereby forcing the officers over the age of sixty (Zisser, 2007; Bar, 2006, p. 371). Overall, he replaced more than sixty percent of the officers in the regime, the Ba'th party, local government, and members of the Parliament by younger Syrians (Bar, 2006, p. 371). Instead of old military officers, loyal to father Assad, he placed members of his family, such as his brother Maher[10], his brother-in-law Assif Shawkat[11], and his cousin Hafız Makhlouf[12] to key

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[10] commander of the 4th Armored Division (Bashar al-Assad's inner circle, 2012)

[11] head of military intelligence (Bashar al-Assad's inner circle, 2012)

[12] head of the General Security Directorate (Bashar al-Assad's inner circle, 2012)

positions, thereby creating an "inner circle" (Bashar al-Assad's inner circle, 2012). As Hafız al-Assad had done earlier; in the same vein, Bashar gave priority to Alawite community in his military. But, unlike his father, he went a step further and allowed almost no Sunni to remain at the important positions of the state (Nassif, 2015). Furthermore, he decided to separate the party and government structure (Zisser, 2007). As a result, these regulations narrowed down pro-Assad groups and the regime became under control of the members of Assad family and Alawite community (Zisser, 2007).

In the first year of his rule, Bashar al-Assad initiated a movement for liberal reforms referred to as 'Damascus Spring'; in consequence, he managed to create enthusiasm in the public (Phillips, 2016). However, the enthusiastic atmosphere faded soon, because of the limited reforms' failure to meet the anticipation of Syrian people (Commins, 2018). In fact, the regime introduced focused mainly economic reforms ignoring the political problems (England, 2008). In consequence, the changes remained limited, old problems such as human rights violations, lack of representation, remained the same (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013).

Owing to "Damascus Spring," Syrian civil society found a hope for democratic reforms in Syria (O'Loughlin, 2005). Assad expressed his support for a democratization process in Syria; at the same time, he was worried about possible destructive impacts of an "instant democracy" in Syria (Bar, 2006, p. 372). In this regard, his answer to the Syrian intellectuals and opposition who demand further changes was his understanding of Syrian democracy based on the history and culture of Syria and far different from the western type of democracy (Zisser, 2007; Bar, 2006). Within less than a year, an "autumn" pursued "Damascus Spring" with the arrest of some intellectuals and opposition members of the parliament (Phillips, 2016, p. 14; Bar, 2006).

In international politics, Syria was under strong pressure of international society due to a few certain issues in the 2000s. The 9/11 attack to World Trade Center was a "watershed" for both the US and Syria, because of the following anti-terrorism campaign touched upon Syrian support for Hezbollah and Hamas (Zisser, 2003). Assad's anti-Israel discourse and his strong opposition to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, on the one hand, brought him public support in domestic politics (Lesch, 2012;

Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). On the other hand, it brought about Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton's statement denominating Syria as a *rough state* along with North Korea, Iran, Libya, and Cuba (Phillips, 2016; Bolton, 2003). On a side, The US enacted Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 on 12 December 2003 aiming "to halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, and stop its development of weapons of mass destruction and other purposes" ([H.R. 1828], 2003, p. 117 STAT. 2482). Moreover, the US started to implement sanctions on Syria in 2004 (Office of Foreign Assets Control, 2013). On the other side, UN Resolution 1559 called for "all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon" (Security Council, 2004). Despite the pressures of international society, Assad insisted on keeping its presence in Lebanon (Phillips, 2016). The assassination of Lebanese Prime minister, Rafic Hariri, at the huge explosion in Beirut in 2005 caused anti-Assad demonstrations in Beirut (Phillips, 2016). In this event, accusing Syria was "implausible," it was highly probable that the assassination was made by one of the main enemies of Syria; still, the Lebanese people and international actors blamed Assad for this act (Seale, 2005). After this event, the US withdrew its ambassador from Damascus; even Russia and Saudi Arabia was among the states calling Syria to implement the UN Resolution 1559 (Phillips, 2016). In the end, Assad, facing with the strict pressure of international actors, withdrew its last forces from Lebanon in 26 April, thereby ending the 29 years of Syrian domination in Lebanon (Syrian Troops Leave Lebanon..., 2005).

The assassination of Hariri paved the way to domestic reactions as well as international reactions. The Muslim Brotherhood joined the opposition, including with secular liberals, Kurds, leftists, coalition and announced the Damascus Declaration in December 2005 (Phillips, 2016; Hinnebusch, 2012; 2013). They criticized violence and totalitarian government and demanded multi-party democracy and rule of law (Hinnebusch, 2013). This traditional opposition was from the periphery and generally old; therefore, to communicate with the young Syrians was difficult for them; to put it differently, they could not touch the public (Lesch, 2012; Hinnebusch, 2013). Eventually, the initiation failed to reach its goals; the opposition was pressed one more time. (Phillips, 2016).

Despite Assad's taking a step back, negative attitude of the international community towards Syria did not change easily (Lesch, 2012). Consequently, he found himself alone until the last years of the first decade of the 2000s (Phillips, 2016). As a result of international isolation, Assad became closer to Iran which was involved in axis of evil (Phillips, 2016). In Assad's discourse, they were not an "axis of evil" but an "axis of resistance" –Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas- against the Israeli-American domination in the region (Phillips, 2016, p. 15). In the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the relations between Syria and some countries -Russia, Turkey, France, and Qatar- flourished (Phillips, 2016; Wieland, 2013).

With the end of the isolation, Assad's liberalization policies bore fruit: the GDP doubled between 2005 and 2010 reached $59.15 billion from $28.66 billion (Syria GDP, 2018). On a side, the reforms aimed to transform Syria to "a center for tourism and banking" sectors as well as a center for "cross-regional trade" (Hinnebusch, 2012, p. 101). Consequently, Syria became an attraction center for foreign investments; tourism sector significantly enhanced by serving the tourists, particularly coming from Turkey and the Gulf region (Phillips, 2016). On the other side, the rural population cannot benefit these economic developments, because agricultural sector was the neglected part of economy by Bashar (Gerges, 2016). United Nations FAO/WFP report (2013) emphasizes inequality in rural areas especially rural Damascus, Idleb, Homs, Deraa, Hama, and al-Sweida and also asserts that 18.2 percent of Syria population was under the poverty line in 2009 (p. 8).

There were some deeper reasons of popular resentment in Syria. First, since 1963 Emergency Law was in force ostensibly against the Israeli threat; but in fact, the law enabled the regime to carry out arbitrary and "pre-emptive" arrest, detain, trial, and sentence (Lesch, 2012, p. 71). The Mukhabarat, the intelligence service of Syria, was continually spread fear by intimidations and tortures (Phillips, 2016). Second, despite liberal reforms, an elite group whose members were either from the family, such as Assad's cousin Rami Makhlouf or closely tied to the regime was directing the economic activities in Syria (Lesch, 2012; Oweis, 2011). In spite of the increase in the country's GDP, the unemployment and under-employment continued (Phillips, 2016). As a result, uneven distribution of welfare and corruption was one of the problems that created resentment in the public (Oweis, 2011). Last but not least, the

divisions in the society, especially ethnic and sectarian divisions (see Figure 3.1) which was closely relevant to political and economic problems was one of the main problems of popular resentment (Phillips, 2016). Hostility between the Alawite and Sunni community, exacerbated in the recent years and now Sunni community was seeking for revenge (Phillips, 2016).
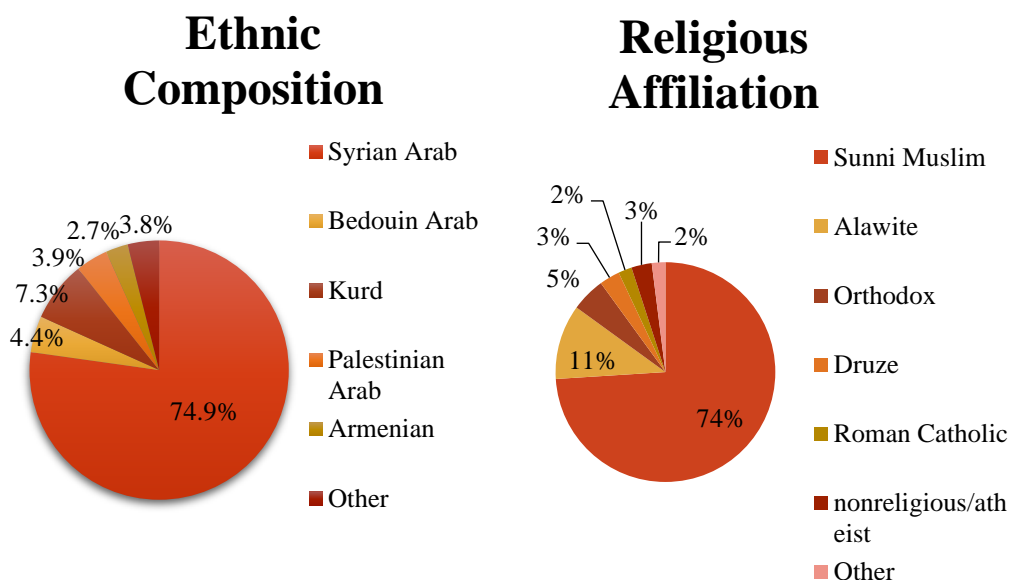
Figure 3.1 Ethnic Composition and Religious Affiliation in Syria in 2000

SOURCE: Kamal Suleiman Salibi et al., (2018, January 17). *Syria*. Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria

To sum up, Bashar al-Assad's anti-American and anti-Israeli stance brought a degree of popularity to him in Syria; even so, this was insufficient to satisfy the public who was suffering from widespread poverty, human rights abuses, and lack of representation (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 531). When the Arab Uprising initially started in Tunisia on 17 December 2010, Assad believed that it would not affect Syria; conversely, what happened in Syria after the spread of Arab Uprisings was the bloodiest part of all uprisings beginning in the second decade of the twenty-first century in the Arab world (Phillips, 2016).

3.3 Emergence of Uprising

In the interview with the president Assad by the Wall Street Journal, Assad implied that reforms could hinder the spread of Arab uprisings to Syria (Interview with Syrian

President..., 2011). However, his "authoritarian upgrading" not only became unsuccessful in keeping immune Syria from uprisings, but also paved the way for the outbreak of the crisis (Hinnebusch, 2012, p. 106).

Despite Assad's belief that Syrian people would not go to an uprising, it was not something unexpected (Interview with Syrian President..., 2011; Phillips, 2016). When the uprising erupted in March, it was obvious that Syrian regime moved according to the lessons learned from the previous Arab uprisings in the same year. In this regard, the Assad regime saw that the rapid reaction coud cause the regime's collapse as it was in Tunisia and Egypt (Phillips, 2016). Although the root causes of the two uprisings were pretty much similar; the reactions of Bashar al-Assad in Deraa in 2011 was quite different from that of his father in the Hom in 1982 (Conduit, 2017). In contrast to his father, Bashar was "indecisive;" for this reason, he got stuck between two options: enforcing reforms and suppressing the protest brutally; and could not implement either one completely; in other words; he stuck in the middle (Smith-Spark, 2013; Phillips, 2016).

Rather than Damascus, the uprising erupted in a small town in Syria and "fueled partly by local grievances" (Sorenson, 2016, p. 4). Following the regime's arresting and torturing a group of teenagers because of drawing anti-government graffiti, saying "It's your turn, doctor," as a part of the wave of anti-government protests in the middle east, a pro-democratic protest demanding food, democratic reforms, and ending of corruption from the government started on 15 March 2011 in the city of Deraa in Syria (Burke, 2017; Salibi, et al., 2018; Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2016). When the use of tear gas failed to disperse the demonstrators, the security forces responded to the protesters by opening fire and mass arrests (Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2016). Despite the presence of small armed elements in the some of those protests, the large majority of the protesters were peaceful (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). At the end of the day, at least three people died and hundreds of people have been injured in Deraa (Middle East unrest:..., 2011). As a consequence, the protests snowballed and turned into nationwide protests demanding the resignation of Assad (Arab uprising: Country by..., 2013). Phillips (2016) underlines the pattern of demonstrations: "A pattern emerged: demonstrators protested about earlier deaths, more were then killed, initiating larger protests the next day" (p. 53).

The regime found the solution in cutting off water, electricity and telecommunication networks and banning the funerals (Lesch, 2012). At this point, the impact of the internet and social media, notably Facebook and Twitter, facilitating information sharing, was unquestionable (Lesch, 2012). The excessive use of force by security forces of the regime was recorded and shared with the masses via social media (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 532).

In any event, Assad was determined to stay in power (Purdy, 2016). In his speech to public on 30 March, he referred to socioeconomic problems of Syria and blamed the external forces (Lesch, 2012). Consequently, the speech failed to meet the anticipations of the Syrian people and created disappointment (Lesch, 2012). To appease the protestors, the regime introduced new reforms, including "lifting up the emergency law," "concessions to the Kurds," "change in the government" and "participation in decision-making;" indeed, the Syrian public was used to hear such promises, what they really wanted was to see those being implemented (Lesch, 2012, pp. 82-86). In April the government lifted the Emergency Law which remained in force for forty-eight years; instead, a similar law was enacted, seemingly, solely the name of law changed but not its practices (Lesch, 2012; Marsh & Black, 2011). In the meantime, "the readiness of the security forces" to use of lethal force, paved the way for the failure of late attempts of the government to appease the people by initiating some reforms (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 532).

At first, the international and regional actors did not pay considerable attention to what happened in Syria, because they had to deal with a series of protests and crises appeared simultaneously in Arab countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Bahrain (Phillips, 2016). At that point, the west's response was limited to condemning the violence and calling the regime to reform (Britain and US condemn..., 2011). In April, the US and the EU imposed economic sanctions to Syria (Salibi, et al., 2018). However, Russia and China blocked the western efforts against the Syrian regime in the UNSC in May and June. Phillips (2016) emphasizes the significance of July and August 2011: in these two months, on the one hand, Syria's new friends, Turkey and Qatar, left Syria alone; on the other hand, Russia and Iran exhibited their stance for Assad. The month of Ramadan, starting on 1 August 2011, accelerated the protesters and the number of killings by the regime forces (Lesch, 2012). Due to the regime's

use of violence against civilians, Syria's relations with regional countries particularly Turkish-Syrian relations deteriorated. Altunışık (2013) claims that "Arab Uprisings had a direct impact on the Syrian-Turkish relations;" as a result, Turkey gradually shifted away from the regime towards the opposition (p. 189). According to Phillips (2016), "Turkey's U-turn" and its concomitant support for the opposition was the first crucial international event that affects the future of the conflict (p. 70). The second was the subsequent statements of the leaders from western states, such as US, UK, France, Germany, and Canada, calling Assad "to step aside" in 18 August (Syria unrest: World leaders..., 2011). As a matter of fact, these statements, whether intentional or not, worked as "a conflict escalator" (Phillips, 2016, p. 76). At the end of August, the regional actors have already constructed two camps: pro-Assad and anti-Assad (Phillips, 2016).

3.4 Civil War

To distinguish the stages of the conflict as uprising and civil war is not an easy task especially in the Syrian case. First of all, as previously mentioned in the second chapter, usually there is no declaration of belligerency in internal wars; correspondingly no declaration of war has existed in Syrian case. Second, there was a "considerable regional variation" (Phillips, 2016, p. 54). In detail, what happened in Darea and Homs suits the civil war, but that in Homa and other cities was not so violent (Phillips, 2016). Phillips (2016) avoids of giving a certain date for the beginning of the civil war, but he points out an interval between August 2011 and January 2012 (p. 84). Even though, the UCDP/PRIO accepts the beginning date of the internal armed conflict between the government of Syria and the Syrian insurgents as October 2nd, 2011 (Themnér, et al., 2016). UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the first time used the term civil war regarding Syria on 1 December 2011 (Syrian crisis reaching stage..., 2011).

The autumn of 2011 was the season of sanctions, the EU, the Arab League, the US, Canada, Turkey, and Australia "introduced or expanded economic sanctions" against Syria (Purdy, 2016; Phillips, 2016, p. 86). Economic sanctions were symbolic, by implementing sanctions, the western powers aimed to "increase the cost of violence for the regime" and "hoped to persuade Syria's business elite to oust Assad" (Phillips, 2016, pp. 87-88). However, the economic sanctions failed to achieve its goals.

In February 2012, Russia and China vetoed the Arab League Plan in the UN Security Council (McKirdy, 2017). By April 13, 2017, Russia and/or China vetoed 8 times the UN Security Council resolutions on Syria (McKirdy, 2017). The veto by Russia and China pave the way for the failure of R2P in Syrian case (Lombardo, 2015). Phillips (2016) asserts that unless Russia stopped protecting Syria in the UN Security council, "the only means for external actors to intervene in the conflict would be covertly or if they were willing to break international law" (p. 94). In this regard, Russia and Iran supported the regime by supplying arms and finance whereas, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia aided to the armed opposition by supplying material (Phillips, 2016).

In the frame of the Annan Plan, the regime and opposition forces agreed on a ceasefire in April; nevertheless, both sides used it as a pause for rearm (Phillips, 2016, p. 102; Yeranian, 2012). Consequently, the ceasefire was broken by both sides only after two weeks and the Annan plan failed (Yeranian, 2012). At the end of the first year of the conflict, the number of total deaths in Syria was more than ten thousand; while it reached at 92,901 by April 2013 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013, p. 532; Price, Klingner, Qtiesh, & Ball, 2013).

3.4.1 Actors of Syrian Civil War

On a side, pro-regime actors consist of both civilian and military, and also both domestic and international actors. Domestic pro-regime actors includes the Assad family and Bashar's inner circle, the Ba'th Party, Syrian security forces –Air force and military intelligence-, Syrian Armed Forces –army, air force and navy-, Syrian paramilitary groups – National Defense Forces-, Loyalist socio-economic elites – people who have personal ties to Assad family-, Religious minorities- Alawites, Christians, Shi'as, Ismaili's-; while International pro-regime actors consist of Russia, Iran, and non-Syrian militias such as Hezbollah (ARK Group DMCC, 2016). The Assad regime was increasingly supported by Russia and Iran as well as Lebanese Shia Islamists Hezbollah.

On the other side, Pro-opposition groups are more complicated than the pro-regime actors. Domestic opposition includes opposition institutions such as SNC, local civilian institutions such as Local Councils (LCs) and civil society organizations, armed opposition groups, including FSA, Ahrar al-Sham, Jaish al-Islam, Al-Nusra

Front, ISIS, PYD-YPG. International opposition consists of the US, coalition forces, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Jordan (ARK Group DMCC, 2016).

Table 3.1 Actors in Syrian Conflict

Actors in Syrian Conflict		
Nationalist armed opposition	Free Syrian Army	Anti-regime
	Nationalistic and moderate Salafi to Salafi-Jihadi groups (Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam…)	
Transnationally oriented Salafi-Jihadi groups	Al-Nusra Front	
	Jund al-Aqsa	
	ISIL	
Kurdish actors	PYD	
	YPG	
International actors	Coalition Task Force	Anti-regime
	Saudi Arabia	
	Qatar	
	Al-Qaeda	
	Jordan	
	Turkey	
The regime	National Defense groups and armed internal militias	Pro-regime
	Army	
	Security forces	
	Assad and his inner circle	
Armed external militias	Lebanese (Hezbollah)	Pro-regime
	Afghan	
	Iranian	
	Iraqi	
International Actors	Russia	Pro-regime
	Iran	
	Shi'a Iraq	
	Lebanese Shi'a	
	China	

SOURCE: ARK Group DMCC. (2016). *The Syrian conflict: A systems conflict analysis.* Retrieved from http://arkgroupdmcc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ARK-Syria-Conflict-Analysis-Digital-copy.pdf, 68-69.

As a pro-regime armed external militias, Hezbollah has a distinct and crucial role in the civil war in Syria. Hezbollah, which means to 'party of god,' created with the help of Iran in the 1980s (Phillips, 2016, p. 156). Sponsored by Iran, Hezbollah played an important role in the Lebanese Civil War and the 2006 Lebanon War; consequently,

gained public support. When the Syrian uprising erupted, Hezbollah worried about the potential consequences of the fall of the Assad regime. Therefore, in the beginning of the uprising the leader of Hezbollah, Nasrallah, expressed their support for the Assad regime (Phillips, 2016, p. 157). According to Western sources, Hezbollah expanded its support and involved in the conflict in Syria before Spring, 2012. However, Nasrallah declared that Hezbollah militias was fighting together the Syrian regime in 2013 (Phillips, 2016, p. 157). Afterwards, Hezbollah "became a vital component of Assad's forces and greatly shaped the conflict" (Phillips, 2016, p. 158).

In the first year of the civil war, the opposition movements endeavored to merge under a political (SNC) and an armed (FSA) umbrella group (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). In November 2011, Syrian opposition groups formed the Syrian National Council in Istanbul as a political unit planned to pursue common interests of opposition (Lesch, 2012). In February, more than eighty countries recognized SNC as the legitimate representative of the Syrian opposition (Gill, 2016). However, it failed to be inclusive and came under the domination of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the failure of SNC, by considering the mistakes made in SNC, National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) was established. It was obvious that SOC was more inclusive than SNC; even KNC joined into SOC in August 2013 (Phillips, 2016, p. 115). Aiming to control armed opposition groups in Syria, a group of military defectors[13] established the Free Syrian Army in August 2011 and found support from Turkey and Qatar (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). However, FSA was suffering from a shortage of weapons and finance and failed to gain the support of local armed groups (Lesch, 2012; Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). FSA was shown as an organized armed resistance against the regime; however; it was actually far from that. In fact, rather than being organized, FSA was aiming to conduct a guerilla warfare against the regime's forces (Lesch, 2012). According to Phillips (2016), anti-Assad camp, especially Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia overestimated "the opposition's ability to form a united and effective force" (p. 105). The opposition was fragmented and weak because of the suppression by the

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[13] Following the uprising, the number of defectors from the Syrian military was about 3,000 of all 50,000-60,000 military officers and the defections was limited to the Sunni officers (Nassif, 2015, p. 644). At the same time, only half of the Sunni officers defected based on the data of 2014 whereas the remaining half remained loyal to the regime (Nassif, 2015).

regime in the early years of Bashar (Hinnebusch, 2012). Beside FSA, the fragmented opposition was represented by various groups including moderate Islamists, Salafists, Jihadists, and Kurdish fighters (Phillips, 2016, p. 126). This disunity of the opposition cost them the destruction of some cities, such as Aleppo (Phillips, 2016, pp. 128-129).

There were no rigid lines among the fighters of the opposition groups. The groups which have better equipment and financial support managed to attract the fighters of other groups (Phillips, 2016, pp. 129-130). In this regard, as times progressed, Islamist groups increased their influence and power. The Islamists are distinguished into three main groups: firstly, the *moderate Islamists* were the less radical groups among Islamists and their demands on governance differed from a group to another - from conservative democracy to Islamic state- (Phillips, 2016, p. 131). Many of them initially took side with the Muslim Brotherhood and joined FSA. In a short time, they lost their popularity and/or radicalized. Secondly, *Salafi Jihadists* including Ahrar al-Sham aimed to establish an Islamic state in Syria. They formed Syrian Islamic Front and then Islamic front in November 2013 (Phillips, 2016, p. 132). Finally, the *global Jihadists* groups such as al-Nusra and ISIS aimed to conduct a religious war -Jihad-against the whole world by rejecting the modern political principles (Phillips, 2016, pp. 132-133).

The origin of ISIS was in Iraq, a merger of jihadist groups and al-Qaeda in Iraq, called as Islamic State of Iraq (Gerges, 2016). In April 2013 it was renamed as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and became a transnational force (Phillips, 2016). ISIS aimed to establish an Islamic state with a caliph and to expand and consolidate its authority over Iraq and Syria. For this reason, IS wanted to destroy the artificial borders of the Fertile Crescent drawn by the colonial powers at the end of the WWI (Gerges, 2016). According to the dataset of UCDP/PRIO, the beginning date of the internal armed conflict between the government of Syria and the ISIS is July 26th, 2013 (Themnér, et al., 2016). Next, because of the IS's demand for leadership over the Nusra Front and "interference" in Syria, Al-Qaeda disclaimed the IS (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 7).

ISIS expanded its territory to a third of Syrian and Iraqi territories in a few years by the end of 2014 and became one of the most powerful actors in the Syrian Civil War

(Gerges, 2016) As a result of the rapid expansion of ISIS, regional states such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and local actors especially Kurdish fighters were frightened to be the next target of ISIS (Gerges, 2016). At the same time, it drew attention of International actors by bombing actions, as a result, an anti-ISIS coalition was formed under the US leadership in 2014. The US-led coalition forces conducted air strikes initially targeting ISIS in Iraq; later, expanded the target towards Syria in June 2014 (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). In addition, the US followed a policy of training and equipping local forces to fight against ISIS; however, this policy failed.

Lack of representation of Syrian Kurds in the SNC paved the way for establishment of the Kurdish National Council in October; in addition, in the region there was an already existed formation, PYD (Phillips, 2016). Their ideologies were quite different: KNC was close to the Iraqi Kurdistan leader, Masoud Barzani; on the contrary, PYD was a branch of socialist PKK (Phillips, 2016, pp. 133-134). consequently, PYD did not join KNC (Phillips, 2016, p. 111). In contrast to Islamists, Syrian Kurds did not react the regime at the very beginning of the uprising; correspondingly they did not demand the fall of the Assad regime (Phillips, 2016, p. 111). Following the transformation of uprising to a civil war, YPG was declared by PYD as its own militia. Starting from the year 2012, the regime forces "voluntarily" withdrew from the Kurdish territories, and the control of these territories left to YPG; consequently, PYD-YPG became more powerful than KNC (Phillips, 2016, p. 111). The UCDP/PRIO admits that the beginning date of the internal armed conflict between the government of Syria and the PYD is September 7th, 2012 (Themnér, et al., 2016). PYD expanded its territory along the Turkish border by receiving support from the US; at the same time, was challenged by the opposition of Turkey (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017).

The internal armed conflicts between the regime and ISIS and the regime and the Syrian insurgents were internationalized with the direct involvement of Russia and Iran in 2015 (Themnér, et al., 2016). Deploying its military equipment and forces in Syria in the summer of 2015, Russian aircrafts started to bomb the opposition targets in September 2015, by claiming that they were targeting ISIS; but in fact, they were bombing the Syrian rebels (Phillips, 2016, p. 217). In 2016, beside Russian forces, Iranian forces, Hezbollah fighters and other Shi'a militias helped Syrian forces by

conducting attacks against rebels; consequently, empowered the Syrian government. Owing to the help of its international supporters, the Syrian government could take over control of Aleppo again in December 2016 (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). In 2016, Turkey militarily involved in the conflict by conducting operations against the Kurdish fighters and ISIS (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017).

CHAPTER 4

MOTIVES, METHODS, AND TIMING OF FOREIGN INTERVENORS IN THE CASE OF SYRIA

4.1 Motivations of Intervenors

4.1.1   Strategic Interests

4.1.1.1 Alliance

The alliance is one of the major indicators of strategic motivations (Rost & Greig, 2011; Kim, 2012). In this part, Syria's two main allies, Russia and Iran, and the features of these alliances will be explained. In this regard, a *patron-client relationship* is observed in the alliance between Russia and Syria, whereas the Syrian-Iranian alliance appears as a product of *alliance dilemma* (Lesch, 2015; Lawson, 2007).

There is a background to the Syrian-Russian alliance. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the USSR explicitly supported and protected Syria; consequently, Syrian politics was exposed to external interference of Soviets in subsequent years (Phillips, 2016). Since then, there had been a *strategic relationship* between Russia and the Ba'th government in Syria (Rakisits, 2015, p. 54). Although the connection between Moscow and Damascus "had largely lapsed" in the 1990s, it has been refreshed in the 2000s (Phillips, 2016, p. 29). Good relations between Syrian secularist and the SU is seen as one of the factors that brings Russian intervention. In this regard, it is crucial to point out the Russia-Syria alliance and Russian naval facility in Tartus (Shapiro, 2017, p. 7).

There has been a *strategic patron-client relationship* between Syria and Russia; in this context, Lesch (2015) says: "Soviet Union was Syria's long-term superpower patron." During the Cold War, Syria constituted a gate into the center of the Middle East for Russia. As Russia needed Syria, Syria needed Russia. Russian political and military support was crucial for Syria's struggle against Israel and the US allies in the middle east. In this respect, Russia would not allow the regime in Syria to fall, in contrast to other despots of the region (Lynch, 2015).

The aforementioned naval facility was given to the Soviet Union by Syria in 1971 in return, Russia would write-off Syrian debt[14] (Gardner, 2012). The naval base takes place in a port city, Tartus, at Syria's Mediterranean coast near to Lebanon. Its size is sufficient to host a missile cruiser; while it is insufficient for an aircraft carrier (Gardner, 2012). Moreover, it was Russia's only military base outside the territories of the former Soviet Union (Kramer, 2012). The head of information at the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST) in Moscow, Ruslan Aliev said that the Russian place in Tartus lost its important after the collapse of the Soviets, then, the place became "symbolic and insignificant" (Gardner, 2012). Before the Syrian uprising outbreak, the facility whose equipment remained from the Cold War period was poor. Regardless of its condition, the base was the only fueling spot in the Mediterranean Sea for Russian warships (Kramer, 2012). In the garrison at Tartus, "Russian military officers and civilian technical advisors was working irregularly on Russian-made air defense systems and repairing airplanes and helicopters in Syria" (Kramer, 2012). The Russian presence in Syria constituted an impediment to any Western intervention in the country (Kramer, 2012). Furthermore, while the crisis in Syria was continuing, Russia built another base, Khmeimim air base in Latakia in 2015 to expand its military presence in Syria (Nordland, 2017). In brief, the existence of these bases was an element of deterrence in favor of Russia against the possible Western interventions in the Middle East and a tool for enlarging military presence throughout the region.

Russia's concerns regarding its strategic ally in the Middle East have also an impact on other actors, especially on the US. According to Mintz and Wayne (2016), as

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[14] A multi-billion-dollar

opposed to his military advisors, Obama noticed earlier the high risk of engaging a military intervention in Syria and the importance of the Assad regime for Russia. Therefore, he decided to keep the US military force away from the battleground regardless of how tragic the circumstances could be during the conflict (Mintz & Wayne, 2016). This proves how concerns/motivations of an actor change the other's calculations, and eventually, methods and timing of intervention.

Syria's strategic partnership with Iran is far different from the patron-client relationship with Russia. Lawson (2007), uses Snyder (1984)'s concept of "alliance security dilemma" to explain this complex relationship. By doing this, he manages to show the relations of the two with other regional powers as an important determinant of Syrian-Iranian relations (Lawson, 2007). He claims that Syria's policies towards its strategic adversaries[15] in the region had a crucial impact on strengthening its alliance with Iran (Lawson, 2007).

The Syrian-Iranian alliance goes back to the 1980s. The alliance is referred to as 'odd couple' because of the different characteristics of the states; on one hand an Islamic state on the other hand a secularist pan-Arab Republic (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997, p. 87). There are two obvious factors that brought these two states together. Firstly, the anti-imperial stance of them was one of the major factors to build and maintain the alliance (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997, pp. 88,91). After the Iranian Islamic revolution, the first state which has recognized the new regime was Russia, but the second one has been Syria (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997, p. 89). The decreasing American hegemony required a power balance in the region; to balance the pro-Western axis, they formed the Syrian-Iranian alliance (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997, p. 87). The US leaders, Reagan and Bush, denounced them as terrorist states and axis of evil, in return, they took part in a resistance to the US (Phillips, 2016). Secondly, the other major factor was the threat of regional actors, notably Iraq and Israel (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997, p. 104). Iraq was the shared threat of and neighbor of both states, while Israel has been the old enemy. Not only Syria supported Iran in the Iran-Iraq War, but also Iran supported Syria against Israel (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997). Close relationship with Syria enabled Iran to enter

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[15] Turkey, Iraq, Israel

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into "the heartland of the Middle East;" consequently, backed the Islamist groups of Hezbollah and Hamas in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Lesch, 2012, pp. 125-126). The "defensive nature" of Syrian-Iranian alliance has provided a longevity to the alliance (Goodarzi, 2013, p. 35). Iran is the "primary strategic ally" of Syria in the region; however, the commitment to the alliance was loose and the extent of the alliance fluctuated in time (Lawson, 2007, p. 46). As a matter of fact, the alliance between them loosened from time to time, partly because of mitigating security threat (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997). As it has been stated in the previous chapter, the isolation of Syria by international actors in 2000s pushed Syria towards Iran; as a result, their alliance substantially strengthened (Phillips, 2016).

To sum up, their alliance with Syria is one of the components that motivates Russia and Iran to intervene in the Syrian Civil War. Partly because of their commitment to long standing strategic alliances, they positioned on the side of the regime.

4.1.1.2 International Rivalry

As Waltz (1990) claimed the importance of the structure was crucial in international politics, Phillips (2016) argues that the politics in the Middle East is a "reflection" of structural characteristics of the international system (p. 15). The collapse of the Soviet Union putting an end to the Cold War in 1991, paved the way for the rise of the US as the only superpower in the international system. In other words, the structure of the system transformed from bipolar to unipolar. However, the international system's power distribution in the post-Cold War period tended to change quickly. Just after the end of the Cold War, the US was not willing to act unilaterally, consequently the structure of the system turned from bipolar into multipolar (Gaiser & Kovac, 2012). When G.W. Bush took office, as new president of the US, the structure changed one more time and became uni-polar in 2001 (Gaiser & Kovac, 2012, pp. 54-55). In 2006 the structure of the international system sled into a uni-multipolar structure that is a structure between unipolar and multipolar. The 2008 financial crisis reduced the relative power of the US in the system and the system turned into a "non-polar" structure (Haass, 2008). Wallerstein (2010) mentions a multipolar world-system consists of "eight to ten centers of relative geopolitical autonomy." The first fourth of these centers –the US, Western Europe, Russia and Northeast Asia (China, Japan, and Korea)- are located in the north (p. 191). Likewise, Gromyko (2015) admits the

current structure of the international system as a "polycentric structure" (p. 142). Considering these realities, a commentator can say that there has been an uneven and loose power distribution in the international system in the first two decades of twenty first century. And the Syrian Civil War occurred in this international context.

During the Cold War the direct intervention of the superpowers into the conflicts in the Middle East was troublesome; while in the post-Cold War period, the Soviet Union enabled the US to engage in direct interventions easily in this region by abandoning the superpower rivalry (Phillips, 2016; Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Economy, politics, and security of the region is deeply affected by the US dominance via neoliberal reforms, opening economies and setting up new US military bases in the Middle East (Phillips, 2016). Phillips (2016) claims that the Iraq War in 2003 was a watershed in the Middle East dynamics, because it paved the way to the release of three important trends: *the collapse of the post-1991 order* and increasing *regional rivalry*; *diffusion of Jihadism, sectarianism, and Kurdish nationalism,* and *the decrease of US impact* (p. 20). Following a decade of the battles in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US gave priority to domestic matters; consequently, its influence in the region decreased (Phillips, 2016, p. 28).

As a result of the fall of Saddam, a power vacuum appeared in the Middle East. The regional balance of power shifted in favor of Iran (Phillips, 2016, p. 18). Some scholars interpreted the developments in the post-2003 Middle East as a "New Arab Cold War" in which Iran sought for gaining influence in the Arab world (Valbjørn & Bank, 2012, p. 16). Iran got rid of -Saddam- one of the major obstacles before Iran's gaining further influence in the region (Phillips, 2016, p. 18). Egypt had already lost its former regional influence and new post-Saddam Iraqi governments pursued pro-Iran policies (Phillips, 2016, p. 19). Moreover, the possibility of a shift of power from the Sunni dominance to the Shi'a dominant governments in the region bring the Syrian regime and Tehran closer (Kang & Kim, 2016, p. 23). Consequently, Iranian influence in the region increased; and soon, many other regional states perceived Iran as a military and ideological threat. In particular, Saudi Arabia endeavored to balance Iran by taking the lead in the pro-American block against 'Resistance Axis' (Phillips, 2016, p. 19). In fact, the change in power balance caused the rise of competition

between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the region (Phillips, 2016, p. 20). Considering the situation in Syria, Goodarzi (2013) states that:

> The nightmare scenario for Iran would be for the Syrian Ba'th to be replaced by a Sunni fundamentalist regime that is staunchly anti-Iran and anti-Shi'a, and closely allied with Tehran's regional rival, Saudi Arabia (p. 52).

In addition to Iran, there were other regional powers wishing to benefit from the regional power vacuum in the Middle East such as Turkey and Qatar (Phillips, 2016).

A major change occurred in the Turkish foreign policy in the post-2003 (Benli Altunışık, 2014). The post-2003 Middle East provided the basis for Turkey's becoming "a rising regional power" (Benli Altunışık, 2014, p. 138). Turkeys self-confidence increased during the first decade of AKP era, particularly because of significant developments in economic and political spheres besides its conventional sources of power (Öniş, 2014; Benli Altunışık, 2014). By trusting the rising economy and popular Islamic democracy, the moderate Islamic government in Turkey believed that Turkey was able to pursue a more active role in its region and be a "regional hegemon" (Öniş, 2014; Phillips, 2016, p. 74). In this regard, a Turkish hegemony was more preferable for the West considering Iran's ambition for being regional hegemon (Ilgıt & Davis, 2013). To expand its influence in the Middle East, Turkey presented itself as "a constructive regional power" and featured its soft power (Benli Altunışık, 2014, p. 133). In this respect, the role of "neutral arbiter" contributed Turkey's regional success (Phillips, 2016, p. 75). The AKP government has "reconstructed a new international identity" by creating a new domestic identity and adopted a new role: "the defender of regional interests" (Benli Altunışık, 2014, p. 138). As a result, Turkey followed a foreign policy that gradually became more "independent" and "assertive" (Öniş, 2014, p. 214). In the beginning of the Arab Uprising in Syria, it was thought that Turkey could be a hero by playing a leading role; and consequently, could promote its influence in the region (Davutoğlu, 2012).

According to Weisburd (1997) and Lemke and Reagan (2007), the major powers seeks to maintain and enhance their spheres of influence by intervening civil wars, Russia fits this explanation. The collapse of the Soviet Union had pushed Russia to the periphery; afterwards, Vladimir Putin appeared as a populist leader who sought to regain the power of the SU in the twenty first century (Phillips, 2016, p. 28). His

worldview and policies towards the Middle East have evolved over the first decade of the twenty first century (Nizameddin, 2013; Phillips, 2016). In the beginning of the 2000s, Putin was a "rationalist" whereas afterwards he became a "nationalist" (Phillips, 2016, p. 28). Russian economic growth from 2000 to 2010 increased five times. In addition to the flourishing Russian trade, the Russian military was modernized and advanced. Putin's desire was to regain the power once the Soviet Union had in the 1960s,70s, and 80s (Nizameddin, 2013). Notably, Russia's military involvement in the Syrian Civil War is "a rather new phenomenon" in the Middle East because its last such engagement in the region was in the 1970s (Ergun, 2018, p. 158). Considering this phenomenon, he saw the Middle East as a zero-sum game in which any gain for Russian interests would be a loss of the West (Nizameddin, 2013). Russia frequently attempted to hinder the US efforts insistently, especially in the UN Security Council resolutions (Mintz & Wayne, 2016, pp. 137-152). However, his aim was not to take sides with the resistance axis against the US, rather, by approaching both allies and foes of the West to show there is another option -Russia- in the region (Phillips, 2016, p. 29). One of the illustrations of this attitude is that Russia voted for the sanctions against Iran in 2010 (UN Security Council, 2010). Soon after the beginning of Syrian crisis, the experts started to argue whether a new cold war appeared in the Middle East. Lesch (2012) points out the existence of two blocks in the "new Middle Eastern cold war:" first, "a US-led block" including EU; second, "a Russian-led block" including BRICS countries (pp. 122-123).

Mintz and Wayne (2016) claim that Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict in support of Syrian regime was "a primary source of unease for the US" (p. 141). For this reason, by watching the accelerating number of civilian death toll in Syria, the US was walking on thin ice on the matter of engaging in a proxy war that contradicts Russian interests. This was a critical dilemma that the Obama Administration struggled with (Mintz & Wayne, 2016). This situation is a case in point to show how actors' motivations and methods of intervention interact and constrain and enable them in various ways. Considering the ISIS terror and humanitarian disaster in Syria, the US has motivations to intervene the conflict in Syria; however, the presence of Russia limits the range of the US intervention.

4.1.1.3 International Terrorism

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 paved the way for the declaration of "war on terror" by the Bush administration. The US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq followed these attacks; however, it ended up in failure (Ayoob, et al., 2013). The US fought against insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq; Al-Qaeda was one of these insurgent groups; afterwards, a merger of Islamic extremist groups, including al-Qaeda, reappeared as an Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in 2013 (Maxim & Steinberg, 2017, p. 14). The priority of the US has become the elimination of extremist Sunni groups again; and this time the ones in Syria and Iraq (Oktav, 2018, p. 201). The world suddenly became aware of the threat posed by ISIS in 2014; in other words, ISIS managed to capture the imagination of millions of people all over the world only within a year (Howie & Campbell, 2017, p. 10).

Until 2011, countries like Syria and Libya were not involved in the list of "*ten countries most impacted by terrorism*" in the Global Terror Index (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 21). After the Arab Uprisings began, they took place in the list (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). Turkey was also one of the countries who had never been ranked in the top ten lists previously; however, for the first time Turkey was ranked ninth; and consequently, entered into the list in 2017 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 30). The 2017 report of GTI emphasizes "a global trend" by pointing out nine out of top ten countries' increasing GTI scores since 2002 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 21). As a matter of fact, from 2002 to 2016, the number of attacks in these countries surged up to almost 25 times and reached 8,226 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 21).

The terror and fear were not limited by these top ten countries. Globalization and the media enable terrorist organizations to organize tragic attacks in any country and achieve their aim (Yair Galily, 2016, p. 1059). Hammond says to *the Sunday Times*:

> The brutal murder of the American journalist James Foley by ISIS is a reminder to us all that Islamic extremism in Iraq and Syria is not only causing huge suffering in those countries but is also a barbaric ideology threatening us at home (2014).

The terrorists benefit from media and crowded places like large-scale sporting events, as it has been in the Boston Marathon in 2013, by spreading terror and intimidation

all over the world in order to "change political situations" (Yair Galily, 2016, p. 1059). In this regard, the attack in Paris was one of the most ruthless attacks by ISIS in non-Muslim countries. On November 13th, 2015, ISIS responded to French activity in Syria under the coalition against fighters of jihad by conducting this attack at which at least 130 people were killed and more than 350 people were wounded (Muro, 2015). Immediately afterwards, Hollande declared a state of emergency which would last almost two years in France (Osborne, 2017).

The terrorist attacks in western cities not only have intimidated the people, but also have inspired some of them to join ISIS. Consequently, a considerable number of people, especially young ones, left their homes to join the ranks of ISIS and found themselves in the battleground or in the organization of terrorist attacks in their own country (Howie & Campbell, 2017). In this regard, *Time* illustrates top five countries in which the Islamic State recruit foreign militants and the number of their citizens joining ISIS: Tunisia (6000), Saudi Arabia (2500), Russia (including other former Soviet republics between 5000 and 7000), Turkey (2100), and Jordan (2000) (Bremmer, 2017). In this context, these recruitments and their future consequences were a matter of concern for both Russia and Turkey.

Since 1970, Russia has witnessed more than 800 terrorist attacks and the death of more than 3500 people due to terrorist activities; therefore, terrorism was not a new phenomenon in Russia (Bremmer, 2017). The roots of the terrorism problem of Russia can be found in the Northern Caucasus, including Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan, in which Muslim population dominated. For hundreds of years they have sought their independence from Russia by resorting to violent means. Particularly, the collapse of the Soviet Union paved the way for the independence movements to flourish, afterwards, violent struggles arose. Another development that the independence movements of the Northern Caucasus region find courage may be the sudden rise of ISIS. This can be seen in numbers; for instance, the number of Russian Jihadist who went to Syria and fight for Islamic State was more than 2000 (Walker, 2016). When the other former Soviet republics are added, the total number of recruits surged up to 7000 (Bremmer, 2017). In this context, in Russia, global Islamic terror cannot be seen as an independent fact from Islamic terrorism in Russia (Bremmer, 2017).

Similar to Russia, Turkey was also familiar with terrorism before the rise of Islamic terror. Six years after its establishment in 1978, the PKK began its armed struggle against the republic of Turkey "aiming to establish an independent Kurdistan within Turkey's borders" (Alexander, Brenner, & Krause, 2008, p. 103). Since the beginning of the armed struggle in 1984, the number of Turkish citizens who lost their lives as a result of the PKK's terrorist activities was more than 30,000 (Alexander, Brenner, & Krause, 2008, p. 103). In comparison to Russia, Turkey's suffering from terrorism was more bitter. The 1990s was the times when terrorist activities in Turkey were at the highest point; since the end of the decade, there have been approximately 15 deaths in a year on account of terrorism until 2014. In 2013, violation of the ceasefire and following developments led to increase in the number of deaths on account of terrorism from 13 in 2014, in the first stage to 174 in 2015 and later to 399 in 2016 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 30). In addition to Kurdish nationalist groups, another main source of terrorism in Turkey is ISIS. According to GTI Report in 2017, one-fourth of all deaths from terrorism in 2016 in Turkey was because of ISIS (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 30).

The narrative on "war on terror" also gives regional actors reasons to collaborate with extra-regional powers. Iran started to perceive ISIS as a thread when ISIS recorded significant advances in 2014, to put it differently when ISIS constituted a threat against "Iranian geostrategic interests" (Oktav, 2018, p. 202). The fight against ISIS gives Iran further legitimacy to ally with Russia; the fight against ISIS gives also legitimacy to Turkey's intervention, as well as US support to the Syrian Kurdish movement. In that regard, there is an intersection between various interventions as they feed each others' narratives.

Briefly, since the September 11, the US stance against Islamic terrorism has been obvious. At the same time, both Russia and Turkey have suffered from international terrorism for long years and worried about their citizens who joined the IS. Indeed, the rise of international terrorism in the region, provided those three countries a significant motivation to intervene the conflict in Syria. Additionally, Iran also perceived a threat by Sunni extremist groups and eventually began to fight against them.

4.1.1.4 Contiguity

Contiguity is one of the indicators of the strategic motivations to intervene in a civil war. The existence of shared border increases the possibility of a country to intervene in the civil war ongoing in its neighbor (Kim, 2012). There are five countries that share a border with Syria: Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon (see. Map 4.1). The focus of this subsection is Turkey-Syria border.

Map 4.1 The Neighbors of Syria

SOURCE: Kamal Suleiman Salibi et al., (2018, January 17). *Syria*. Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria

Turkey shares its longest border line with Syria, along 911 kilometers, which is about one-third of the total border length of Turkey[16] (Taşçi, 2015). The conflicts within Syria seem to have a considerable impact on Turkey and pose a threat against

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[16] 2753 kilometers

Turkey's border security such that Turkey set about constructing a wall along the border in 2013 and its length reached up 774 kilometers in 2017 (Şimşek, 2017).

Kathman (2007) asserts that intervention in a civil war tends to increase possibility of contagion into the neighbor states. In this line, the interventions of other powers in Syria increased the concerns of Turkey; and in the end, circumstances pushed Turkey to intervene in the conflict to decrease or eliminate the contagion of the conflict into itself. The rise of ISIS and YPG increased the risk of contagion into Turkey to an "unmanageable" extent, particularly after 2014 (Dal, 2018, p. 222). At this point it is crucial to take a glance at what happened in the Turkey-Syrian border. As it can be seen in the Map 4.2, Kurdish, ISIS, rebels, Syrian regime and al-Nusra presence existed throughout Turkish-Syrian border in 2015. The situation of contiguity of many of the warring groups constituted a challenge against Turkey's border security.

In short, the matter of contiguity is only relevant to Turkey, within the focused four countries. Turkey has been sharing its longest border line with Syria. In this respect, the presence of the different warring groups along such a long line, posed a significant threat against Turkey's border security. Turkey and Syria's contiguity increased not only the possibility of contagion of the conflict into Turkey but also the likelihood of an intervention by Turkey.

Map 4.2 Military Situation on the Syria-Turkish Border: September 14, 2015

Military Situation on the Syrian-Turkish Border: September 14, 2015
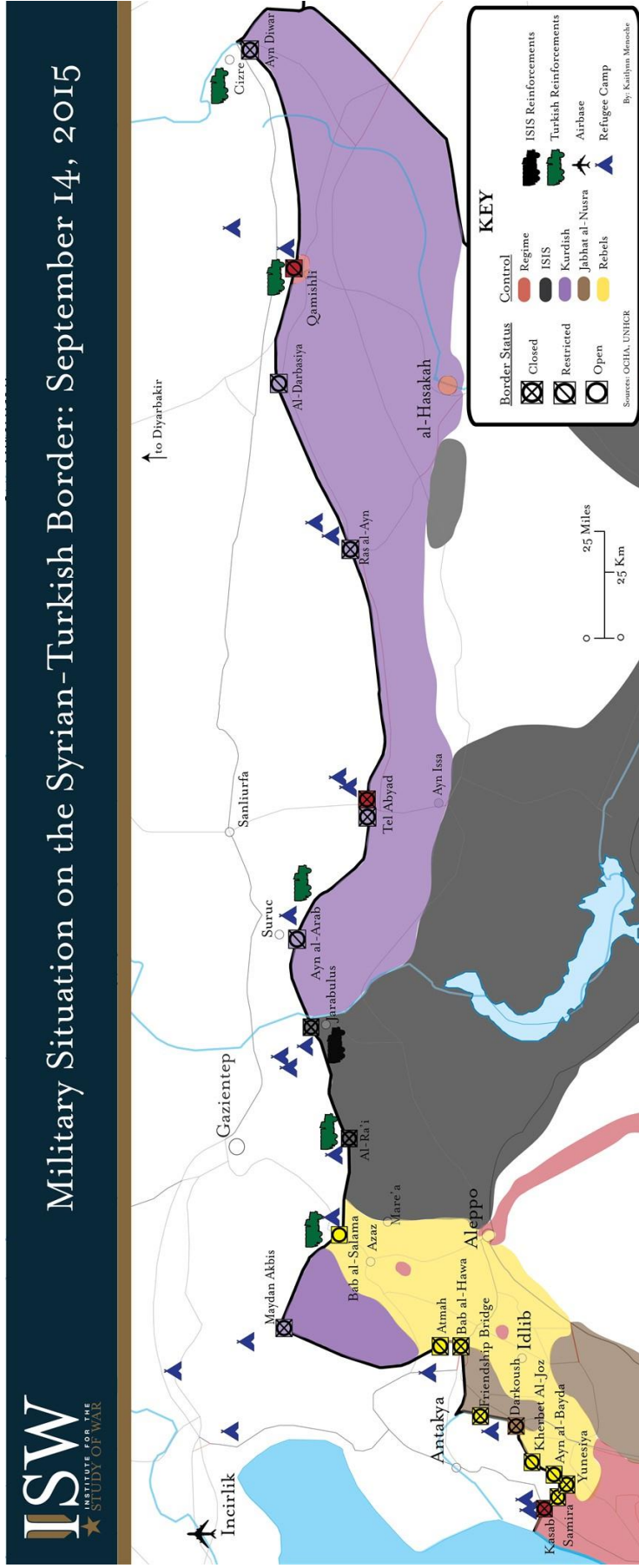
SOURCE: Institute for the Study of War. (2015, September 14). *Military situation on the Syrian-Turkish border: September 14, 2015*. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from http://www.understandingwar.org/map/military-situation-syrian-turkish-border-september-14-2015. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from Institute for the Study of War: http://www.understandingwar.org/map/military-situation-syrian-turkish-border-september-14-2015

4.1.1.5 Geopolitical Concerns

One of the most important geopolitical concerns, the *diffusion risk* of any nearby conflict is related to the contiguity to an extent. International intervention literature demonstrates that civil wars are prone to be "geographically contagious" (Kathman, 2007, p. 12). The risk of diffusion of the conflict in the neighboring country to the regional countries can motivate states to intervene in the conflict (Kathman, 2007, p. 138). The likelihood of intervention increases depending upon "the threat of diffusion posed to a third party's security, economic, and geographic interests" (Kathman, 2007, p. 139). This is not merely about the risk of contagion into a third-party's own country. Rather, it is about the impacts of regional instability to the regional investments of a country. In this regard, if the diffusion of conflict to a region puts a state's regional interests at risk, the likelihood of intervention of this state increases (Kathman, 2007). There are two groups of states in this context: first one is the regional states concerned the conflict may spread to their own country; second one is the global powers which have concerns about their investments in the region.

In the first group, Turkey is one of the counties challenged with the treat of contagion. Dal (2018) argues that Arab Uprisings demonstrated how quickly ideas and protests can spread over the region. In the first stage, Turkey did not face a significant threat; yet, challenged with economic and foreign policy problems. Afterwards, the diffusion of the instability in the neighborhood increased its impact in Turkey within 2 years following 2014; in addition to the aforementioned problems, security issue, especially emanated from ISIS and YPG, became an important problem of Turkey (Dal, 2018).

Turkey and Lebanon are the states which have been affected by the Syrian Civil War most. Following Turkey, Lebanon is the second country that admits the largest number of Syrian refugees in the region (UNHCR, 2018b). One of every six people in Lebanon is a registered Syrian refugee (The World Factbook: Lebanon, 2018; Salloukh, 2017). Post-Syria Lebanon is challenged by social, economic, political, and security problems emanated from the "spillover effects" of the Syrian conflict (Salloukh, 2017, p. 62).

It is important to address that liberal and economic theories of imperialism highlight *economic interconnectedness* among states; because of this interconnectedness, states

whose citizens/companies have a considerable amount of investment in a belligerent country are more likely to intervene the conflict (Aydin, 2012). In this respect, In Syria the %73 of FDIs belong to EU countries in 2010 and those investment was focused on the oil and gas firms such as Shell from Netherlands and Total from France (Syrian Investment Agency, 2012, p. 18). When the oil and gas investments were excluded, the major investor countries became Arab countries -Gulf states, Jordan and Lebanon- with %61 and proportion of EU investment fell to %19 -mainly came from Cyprus (%16) (Syrian Investment Agency, 2012, p. 19).

Kathman provides an extended approach which provide basis for the second group of countries consists of states whose citizens/companies have investments in the first group of countries. A glance at the foreign direct investments in Turkey between 2007 and 2016, the highest investment was made by Netherlands with USD 15.8 billion and the US and some other EU members, including Luxemburg, Austria, the UK, Germany, Spain, France, and Greece (Teşvik Uygulama ve Yabancı Sermaye Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017, p. 48). 8 of top 10 countries are the EU member and more than 76 percent of foreign direct investments in Turkey -equals to USD 85 billion of USD 110.7 billion - belongs to the Western countries (Teşvik Uygulama ve Yabancı Sermaye Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017, p. 48). On the other hand, according to the data form the annual reports on FDI in Lebanon, Lebanon's foreign direct investments from 2007 to 2016 equals to USD 35.6 billion and almost a half of it belongs to European countries; 20 or 30 percent of FDI in Lebanon belongs to Arab countries especially UAE; and about 10 to 20 percent of it belongs to the American countries (Investment Development Authority of Lebanon, 2017, p. 18).

Overall, two main concerns came to prominence in terms of Geopolitics: firstly, the concern of regional states about the contagion of the conflict into their own country; secondly, the concern of the foreign countries whose citizens/companies invest those countries. In this regard, the major part of the FDIs in aforementioned countries came from the Western countries, particularly the EU member states and the US. These concerns motivated these countries to get involved in the conflict in Syria.

4.1.2 Humanitarian Concerns

4.1.2.1 Humanitarian Crises

The devastating impact of the humanitarian crisis has reached a catastrophic level. Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 470 thousand of people have lost their lives in the Syrian Civil War. (Human Rights Watch, 2017). There are more than 6.6 million internally displaced people and 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria at the end of 2017 (UNHCR, 2017). Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International's Senior Crisis Adviser, in her statement says: "increasingly widespread attacks against the civilian population, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, committed by government forces and militias with utter impunity" (Syria: Fresh evidence of..., 2012).

One of the sources of humanitarian crisis was use of chemical weapons by any of the warring parts. Syria has developed chemical weapons with the support of the USSR and Egypt during the 1970s and 1980s in order to compete with the nuclear capability of Israel (Phillips, 2016, p. 175). Just before the beginning of the uprising, the largest stockpile of sarin and VX nerve gases and mustard gas in the Middle East region belongs to Syria (Iqbal, 2013). The use of these chemical weapons, a type of WMD, either by the regime or rebel forces became an increasing international concern (Phillips, 2016, p. 175). Correspondingly Obama's speech on August 20th, 2012 declared using of chemical weapons as a "red line" as follows:

> We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation (Remarks by the President..., 2012).

Obama, reiterated the red line in December 2012 and use of chemical weapons became the determinant of the US position in the Syrian conflict for a while (Kanat, 2015, p. 102).

Initially, it was thought that Obama's the red line statement would be a deterrent to Assad; on the contrary, he tried to test seriousness of the US by engaging low-scale chemical attacks (Phillips, 2016, p. 176). Following an attack by rebels to the regime forces in Aleppo in March 2013, the regime demanded an independent mission to investigate alleged use of chemical weapons from the UN Secretary General by

blaming the rebel forces (Phillips, 2016). Additionally, the government of France and the government of the UK requested "the investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons" on 23 December 2012 in the Khan al-Asal in Aleppo and Ataybah in Damascus, and in Homs (Ki-moon, 2013). The US demanded further evidence regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons by the regime, otherwise, Assad's chemical attacks would bring the US to the brink of a war (Porter, 2016). The US administration sought to save its "freedom of action on the issue of intervening in the war" in spite of pressures coming from international society (Porter, 2016, pp. 101-102). In April, the US's position was as it has been stated above; while the Obama administration announced military aid for the opposition forces in June 2013. This policy change was not because of new evidence regarding the use of chemical weapons, but the threat posed by the Syrian military against the armed anti-Assad forces (Porter, 2016, p. 109).

The UN sent a mission to Syria on August 18th, three days later a huge chemical attack killed approximately 1400 people in Ghouta, Damascus (Phillips, 2016, p. 140). At the end of the investigation, the UN mission's report concluded that the chemical weapons were used in the attack in Ghouta; the attack was relatively large scale and the casualties included many children and civilians (Report of the United Nations..., 2013, p. 5). There was no conclusion about which side was responsible for using chemical weapons; apparently, the UN report avoided blaming either side (Report of the United Nations..., 2013).

Considering the chemical warfare in the Syrian Civil War, the use of internationally banned chemical weapons in Syria began in 2012; Khan al Asal, Sarqib, Ghouta and Jabar are some of the locations where the CWs were used (Brooks, et al., 2018). Since the beginning of the conflict, chemical weapons related casualties have reached up more than 13000 injured and 3415 dead (Brooks, et al., 2018, p. 2). Despite this terrible situation, merely humanitarian concerns about the use of chemical weapons was not enough to motivate potential interveners to intervene in the Syrian conflict to protect civilians.

The US reactions to the use of chemical weapons changed after the Trump administration took office. In April 2017, a new chemical weapons attack, conducted by the Syrian regime according to American intelligence, triggered criticism about

the Obama administration's not striking; and after a few days, the Trump administration reacted to the regime's using of chemical weapons with Tomahawk cruise missles (Shear & Gordon, 2017). As a result of this strike, Russia suspended the agreement with the US on the cooperation in Syria (MacFarquhar, 2017). Another strike came in April 2018 by the US and its western allies -France and Britain. The US was giving a message to Russia and Iran who empowered the regime by providing air and ground support (Wright, 2018). Russia found these strikes threatening and warned about the "consequences" (Buncombe, 2018).

Furthermore, the humanitarian crisis in Syria was much more than the use of chemical weapons; there have been other serious violation of international law, as follows:

> The Syrian people have been subjected to deliberate, indiscriminate, and disproportionate attacks; the misuse of conventional, unconventional, and improvised weapons and weapon systems; industrial-grade custodial abuses, including deaths in detention; unrelenting siege warfare; the denial of humanitarian aid and what appears to be the deliberate use of starvation as a weapon of war; sexual violence, including sexual enslavement of Yezidi women and girls and sexual torture of men and boys in detention; and the intentional destruction of cultural property. Thousands of Syrians have disappeared without a trace, many of them victims of enforced disappearances. The emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Daesh (ISIL) introduced a new set of ruthless perpetrators who have brought the violence to an even more alarming level of brutality. In addition to war crimes under international humanitarian law (IHL), the Syrian people have experienced other crimes under international criminal law, including crimes against humanity, summary execution, terrorism and, potentially, genocide against ethno-religious minorities (Schaack, 2016, p. 283).

Syrian conflict generated "a profound challenge to the R2P doctrine" (McCormack, 2016, p. 541). Violation of international law by using chemical weapons in Syrian Civil War triggered an important debate over the R2P (Brooks, et al., 2018). Hoeling (2015) asserts that "…the situation in Syria indeed falls within the scope of R2P with its extreme scale of violence and human suffering caused by all conflict parties" (p. 54). She went on to say that the international community has "responsibility to act and protect Syrian populations from perpetrators" including both opposition and regime forces (Hoeling, 2015, p. 54). Nevertheless, the UN Security Council failed to fulfill its responsibility to protect people in the Syrian case (Janik, 2013).

In brief, the use of chemical weapons in the conflict and other serious war crimes motivated international state to intervene in the conflict in Syria; however, these

concerns remained in shadow because of the other concerns of the states and the effect of interaction among states. Therefore, a consensus has never been reached during the conflict. Four years after from the first use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Civil War, the first direct military intervention as a reaction to the use of chemical weapons came from the US.

1.1.1.1 Refugees

The conflict in Syria triggered the largest refugee crisis in the world (UNHCR, 2018a). Correspondingly, one of the sources of humanitarian concerns regarding the Syrian Civil War is continuously rising number of Syrian refugees globally and regionally. The majority of the Syrian population fleeing from the conflict in their homeland sought refuge in the countries in their neighborhood (Morico, 2017). The total number of registered Syrian refugees in Iraq, Egypt, Jordon, Lebanon, Turkey, and North Africa is about 5,6 million in April 2018 (see. Figure 4.1), and the total number of Syrian asylum applications in Europe is slightly more than 1 million between April 2011 and December 2017 (UNHCR, 2018b).

Trend of Registered Syrian Refugees

Figure 4.1 Trend of Registered Syrian Refugees (Regional)

SOURCE: UNHCR. (2018b, April 19). *Syria regional refugee response*. Retrieved April 27, 2018, from Operational Portal: Refugee Situations: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria#_ga=2.200602606.1738697355.1524824079-1312583460.1519387442

The decision of admitting a large number of refugees brings some burdens. Firstly, it tends to be "politically unpopular;" secondly, it is a risky decision considering

potential security problems such as terrorism; thirdly, it has an economic cost[17]; and finally, it is not a solution to the ongoing crisis (Byman & Speakman, 2016, p. 50).

Considering refugees, as a product of civil war in Syria, the heaviest burden is on the shoulders of Turkey. About 63 percent of registered Syrian refugees in the region are accommodated in Turkey (see. figure 4.2). The total number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey on April 19, 2018 was 3,584,179 (UNHCR, 2018b). According to the statement of the vice prime minister of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Akdag, the amount of money spent for the Syrian refugees in Turkey has reached to USD 31 billion (Altug, 2018). Moreover, states' responses to the calls by the UN and EU for burden share by providing financial support have been rather limited (Altug, 2018; Byman & Speakman, 2016). As a result, the situation gets worse against the host countries.
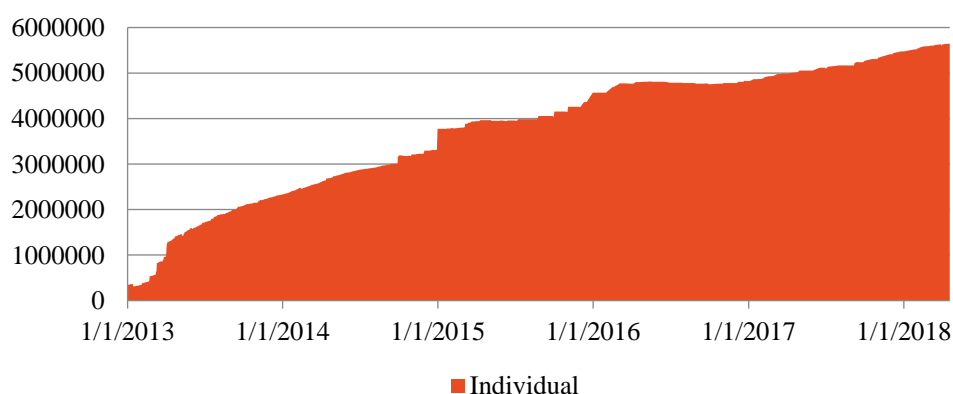

Figure 4.2 Registered Syrian Refugees by Country (Regional)
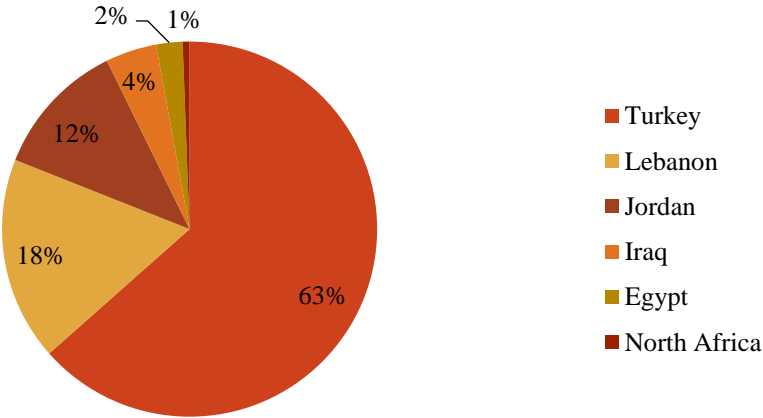
SOURCE: UNHCR. (2018b, April 19). *Syria regional refugee response*. Retrieved April 27, 2018, from Operational Portal: Refugee Situations: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria#_ga=2.200602606.1738697355.1524824079-1312583460.1519387442

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[17] The highest amount of aid for refugees in history has been made for Syrian refugees (Byman & Speakman, 2016, p. 51)

There are also global impacts of refugees. In Europe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel adopted an 'open door' policy towards the refugees in 2015 by allowing more than a million Syrians to enter Germany. After a while, in 2016 this policy was replaced by a more restrictive one which limits the number of refugees coming from Syria as a result of the assaults by the Syrian asylum seekers in Berlin and Munich (Morico, 2017). Despite all, Germany was the "most welcoming" country of Europe; notably admitting 484 thousand Syrian refugees in 2015 –almost half of total admissions in Europe (Morico, 2017, p. 205).

In the US the policies of two leaders –Obama and Trump- regarding the Syrian refugees were completely different from each other. In 2015, Obama had targeted to admit 10 thousand Syrian refugees within a year; however, could not meet the target and admitted only 1300 (Morico, 2017). In total, the US admitted only fewer than 2000 refugees from beginning of the conflict in Syria up to 2016 (Byman & Speakman, 2016, p. 47). When Trump took office in 2017, with the excuse of national security "suspended the admittance of all refugees to the United States for 120 days and terminated admission of Syrian refugees indefinitely" via *Executive Order on Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* (Morico, 2017, p. 191). After the objections from judiciary, he was obliged to step back and revise the executive order (Morico, 2017).

According to Byman and Speakman (2016), one of the ways to solve a refugee problem is to fix it at its source; however, it is problematic. They argue that negotiations for the resolution of the conflict did not bear fruit, apparently, diplomacy does not work; therefore, the only remaining option to "fix the problem at its source" is military victory of the right Syrians (p. 54). What makes it problematic is that the regime's violence is the biggest reason for the refugee flow before the IS's violence; furthermore, the Russian intervention in the conflict in 2015 has changed the conflict dynamics and enabled the regime to regain the dominance over the conflict. In this context, even if the threat caused by IS was eliminated, the threat posed by the regime would remain (Byman & Speakman, 2016).

In short, the refugee crisis, which emanated from the conflict in Syria, is one of the most significant consequences of Syria. Its effects can be seen all over the world; most importantly, the biggest share of its burden is on the shoulders of Turkey.

Therefore, the refugee crisis became a significant source of motivation, especially for Turkey to intervene in Syria.

4.2 Methods and Timing of Intervenors

This subsection presents methods of intervenors and timing of interventions in the conflict in Syria by focusing on four states: the US, Russia, Iran, and Turkey. Each of these four states has different motives for intervention as it has clearly been seen in the previous subsection. However, there are some similarities in terms of methods and timing considering their intersecting interests in the conflict. In this section, different interventions were evaluated whether they were unilateral or multilateral, biased or neutral, diplomatic-economic or military, when interventions happened and whether there was a use of force or not.

4.2.1   Early Stages of the Syrian Conflict

It is beneficial to take a glance at the four states' attitudes toward the rising conflict in Syria in order to determine whether they were neutral or biased. Since the beginning of the uprising in Syria, both Iran and Russia have taken side with the Syrian regime; in other words, from the beginning they were biased and constituted an important part of pro-regime side (Ergun, 2018; Oktav, 2018). On the other side, despite the earlier close relations between Syria and Turkey, Ankara and Damascus fell apart as Turkey blamed Assad regime for using excessive violence against its civilians (Altunışık, 2013). Consequently, Turkey positioned at the anti-regime side. Similarly, the US with its western allies called Assad to step aside; what is more, the US supported anti-Assad forces starting with the earlier stages of the civil war (Ergun, 2018). As it was stated in the previous chapter, these four international actors took a side with or against the regime either before or at the beginning of the civil war; as a result, each became a *biased* intervenor.

Just one and a half month after the outbreak of the uprising in Syria, the US and subsequently its western allies imposed sanctions on the regime individuals; and a few months later, in August, called Assad for stepping aside (Phillips, 2016). In fact, many of the US sanctions against Syria had already been implemented before the internal armed conflict began (Ergun, 2018). Soon afterwards, the conflict escalated and eventually transformed into a civil war. Both motivations and methods of the US

evolved over time depending on "The developments in the Syrian conflict and the changes in its international context" (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 26). In general, the basic objectives of the US have revolved around the termination of the conflict, elimination of Syrian chemical weapons, and defeating ISIS (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017; Ergun, 2018). Between 2012 and 2017, Obama sought for a negotiated settlement of the conflict; however, diplomatic efforts such as Geneva Communique and Annan Plan did not bear fruit (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, the US administration started to send *nonlethal assistance,* including food rations and medical supplies to anti-Assad groups such as SOC and SMC in 2012 and the range of supported groups and the type of aid expanded over time (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). In the earlier stages of the Syrian Civil War, Obama drew a red line regarding the use of chemical weapons; however, the US response to violation of 'red line' remained rather limited until the Trump administration retaliated with an air strike to the regime's use of chemical weapons in April 2017 (Ergun, 2018). The lack of consensus in the UN Security Council -emanated from the vetoes of Russia and China- eliminated the possibility of multilateral intervention with humanitarian reasons (Hoeling, 2015). The use of chemical weapons and difficulties on reaching a consensus over multilateral response had an impact in the decision of the Obama administration to "send lethal aid to rebel groups" (Phillips, 2016, p. 178). In this regard, the US provided a *covert arms support* for some opposition groups in Syria in 2013; it was claimed that these groups were the main targets of the air strikes of Russia in 2015 (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 34).

In the first years of the conflict, Russia supplied financial aid and Russian arms to Assad. Moreover, by insisting that "Assad regime is a legitimate sovereign government," Russia vetoed UNSC resolutions regarding Syria several times (Phillips, 2016, p. 98). Consequently, Russia protected the regime by hindering the UN measures, sanctions, investigation of chemical attacks and so on (Russia's 12 UN vetoes..., 2018). The diplomatic support by Russia for the regime, pushed the other actors -the US and Turkey- seek for different methods of intervention. In addition to these *diplomatic support* for Syria, Russia helped the regime resist the sanctions and enabled it to pay the salaries of the state officials and to provide services (Phillips,

2016, p. 149). For instance, Syrian's currency was printed in Austria until the EU sanctions; since then Damascus has sought for new sources to produce its currency; in this regard, Russia transferred more than 30 tons of new banknotes to Syria via a cargo plane in 2012 (Walker, 2012).

Iran's attitude towards the uprising in Syria was quite different from its approach to other Arab uprisings such as ones in Yemen, Bahrein and Tunisia. In this respect, Iran denounced the events in which 200 people died as "a result of foreign interference," particularly by the West, Israel, and the Gulf states rather than spontaneous protests (Pomeroy, 2011). Positioning on the side of the regime, Iran provided "key technical assistance and training in cyber warfare to combat social media, along with USD 1 million worth of equipment and training from Lebanese Shia broadcasters" (Phillips, 2016, p. 68). Iran sent its Quds forces[18] to provide security advice and thousands of Shia militias trained in Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan to Syria so as to help the Assad regime (Oktav, 2018, p. 200). Hezbollah fighters backed by Iran provided important support on the ground by fighting together the regime forces since 2013 (Phillips, 2016, p. 157). Although, the Iranian administration denied for a while, Quds forces "active role" in the conflict was revealed in January 2013 (Phillips, 2016, p. 161). The Syrian regime, for the first time since the beginning, lost the control of a city (Raqqa) to opposition forces in March 2013 and the government's loss of control continued thereafter (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). At that point, Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah provided military and intelligence support for the Syrian government (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). Furthermore, Iran convinced the Iraqi leader, Maliki, to help them by allowing transportation of goods and arms through the Iraqi land and smoothing the way of Syrian trade and finance via Iraqi banks (Oktav, 2018, pp. 199-200). Iran supplied "Iranian weapons, including rockets, anti-tank missiles and rocket-propelled grenades and mortars" through flights over Iraqi territory and denied that Iran violated UN sanctions regarding Iran's arms export (Who is supplying weapons..., 2013). In terms of economic aid, the Syrian regime made a loan agreement with Iran for USD 4.6 billion in 2013 (Phillips, 2016, p. 149). Owing to these assistances from Iran, the Assad regime could resist the sanctions of international society, especially

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[18] A special forces unit in IRGC

of the West (Oktav, 2018). As a result, the regime gradually "became more dependent on Iran" (Phillips, 2016, p. 164).

In the beginning of the uprising, Turkish authorities made statements supporting for the opposition and expressing their concerns about the regime's violent reaction. In this regard, Turkey played a crucial role in the survival and forming of opposition groups fleeing from the regime forces and the Turkish government allowed the opposition to hold meetings in Turkey (Phillips, 2016, p. 71; Ilgıt & Davis, 2013). In the meantime, the refugee flow to Turkey had already started and the rumors about "Turkey's providing safe haven to armed rebel groups" tended to rise (Phillips, 2016, p. 72; Ilgıt & Davis, 2013). However, during the early stages of the uprising, by trusting its special relationship with Assad, Turkish government believed that they could solve the problem and put an end to the conflict. For this reason, Turkey remained in contact with the regime and tried to persuade Assad to implement political reforms (Ilgıt & Davis, 2013). As the political initiatives of Turkey failed, Turkey started to promote regime change in Syria and to support for the opposition actively (Öniş, 2014). Moreover, the Turkish government permitted establishment of SNC in Istanbul and promoted the MB leadership in SNC (Phillips, 2016, p. 110). Turkey imposed *economic sanctions* together with the West and Arab League and an *arms embargo* against Syrian in autumn of 2011. In terms of timing of intervention, an intense interaction among the actors was obvious, especially in the issues of economic sanctions. A day later from Qatar-led Arab League's introducing economic sanctions, including suspending relations with the Syrian Central Bank and the Syrian government, Turkey suspended its relations with the central bank in Syria and froze Syria's assets in Turkey on 30 November 2011 (Phillips, 2016, pp. 86-87). A UN report claimed that Turkey was "the main transfer corridor for material and combatants joining the Syrian opposition" among other corridors of Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan (UN Security Council, 2014, p. 47). According to the report, weapons from Libya arrived in Turkey by air and sea and then transferred to Syrian opposition by trucks (UN Security Council, 2014, p. 47). In June 2012, Syria downed a Turkish jet, and conducted a number of bomb attacks in Turkish towns, which caused series of clashes. At that time, Turkey preferred to stay away from a large-scale military intervention and took little action by opting to engage in a proxy war, instead

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(Phillips, 2016, p. 172). In spite of being the largest military power of the Middle East region, Turkey was not willing to act unilaterally initially (Phillips, 2016, p. 172). For this reason, Turkey made calls for direct military intervention by a western-led coalition (Phillips, 2016, p. 172). In this phase, Turkey's military actions were defensive and did not have an objective to change the balance of power of the conflict (Phillips, 2016, p. 172). However, after 2014 the ISIS and YPG posed an unignorable threat against the Turkish border security. The methods used by the other intervenors, particularly the US, changed the power balance in the conflict. Consequently, this change impacted, at first, motivations of; and then, method used by Turkey to intervene.

4.2.2 Rise of ISIS and Transformation of the Syrian Conflict

Following the surge of ISIS threat, Iran left its "ideologically driven revolutionary foreign policy;" and by focusing on its economic and geostrategic interests started to pursue "nation-state-like policies," instead (Oktav, 2018, p. 203). The immediate rise of jihadist groups such as ISIS and al-Nusra in 2014 paved the way for the Western powers' accepting the Iranian support for the regime as a "necessary cost of countering Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jihadist Groups" (Oktav, 2018, p. 201). As a result, the ice between the West and Iran started to melt down and the position of Iran shifted from "axis of evil" towards "last best hope" for the US at the expense of relations with Sunni Arab countries (Oktav, 2018, p. 203).

ISIS was the common enemy of Russia, Iran, the US, and the Assad regime; however, the priorities of each state were different and tended to change over time. Iran's priority was to keep the Assad regime in power; and in this context, Iranian government spent USD 6 billion annually for guaranteeing that (Jansen, 2015). In order to provide the necessary connection between the regime and Iran, Iranian corridor along Sincar in Iraq and northern Syria was crucially important (Oktav, 2018, p. 205). Keeping the northern Syria stable was one of the objectives of Iran; for this reason, Iran approached to and allied with PYD/YPG, the only non-state actor fighting against ISIS in the region; thus, even other Kurdish groups in Syria such as KNC started to blame the PYD with "being agents of the regime and Iran" (Oktav, 2018, p. 206). Considering Tamkoç's argument on the *international circular processes of intervention*, which was stated in the second chapter and identified with

the Cold War period, the interventions of Iran and Turkey in the Syrian Civil War can be an example of it (1967, p. 80). To support this argument, Oktav (2018) claim that "Iran used the YPG as a proxy to bring Turkey to heel" and emphasizes that especially after the Turkey's support for Islamists backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Iran intensified its support for YPG and PKK (p. 206). As a result, Iran could balance Turkey in the regional rivalry, but the prospect of autonomous Kurdish territory in future would remain as a source of concern of both Iran and Turkey (Oktav, 2018).

The US's policy towards Syria became "more direct" but "limited" when the US focused on its primary goal of "defeating ISIS" (Ergun, 2018, p. 163). The US started to fund "a train and equip program for vetted Syrians" in 2014; however, the program had little impact because of Russian direct military intervention in Syria (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 31). For this reason, the program was redesigned after September 2015, and its scope shifted away from its initial design to "equipping and enabling….a select group of vetted leaders and their units" against Islamic groups (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 31). In this context, the US provided equipment, ammunition and arms notably to SDF and NSA and trained SDF forces with US special personnel in Syria; nevertheless, some of these groups either surrendered or lost their weapons and equipment to radical Islamic groups such as IS (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). The US Congress had already approved more than USD 1, 25 billion for this program since 2014 and requested for an additional USD 930 million by the end of 2018 (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 32). According to Katz (2013), "If the US and the West are truly worried about al Qaeda's prospects in Syria, they have the option of supporting the more moderate and broader-based rival Syrian opposition movements" (p. 22).

Of all the opposition movements which Katz mentioned, the "most effective" one would be PYD/YPG (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 8). The US's anti-ISIS campaign had already started in Iraq by August 2014; in the meantime, the US set about to engage in the PYD/YPG in Syria (Ergun, 2018). About a month afterwards, the US expanded its air strikes against ISIS to Syria in September 2014; and in the meantime, assisted YPG's struggle against the ISIS (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017). With the help of the US, YPG took over control of a significant amount of territory along the Turkish border in 2015; consequently, as mentioned in previous

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subsection the situation disturbed Turkey (Dal, 2018). Another development that disturbed Turkey and eventually pushed it to implement its own military intervention was the US political support for SDF/YPG provided by visits of US generals in 2016 in addition to material support (Ergun, 2018). In April 2017, the US conducted cruise missile strikes by targeting aircrafts, radars, hardened aircraft shelters, ammunition bunkers, an air defense system, and fuel storage sites; as a response to Syrian government's using of chemical weapons (Shear & Gordon, 2017). In December 2017, the US-led coalition initiated to train a new border force called "Border Securiy Force" along the Turkish and Iraqi border with Syria (Perry & Coskun, 2018). Because the majority of this force consisted of the SDF, Turkey found this initiation unacceptable (ABD, SDG ile Suriye..., 2018). A month later, to secure its border Turkey initiated a new military operation against the Western support for the Kurdish forces (Zeytin Dalı Harekatı nedir?..., 2018).

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Russia has been engaged in the conflict by supporting the Syrian regime; and about 4 years after the beginning, carried out a *direct military intervention* which transformed the conflict into an internationalized internal war (Ergun, 2018). By capturing Deraa, Idlib, and Palmyra, Rebels and ISIS recorded great advances in 2015; hence, the Syrian regime was on the brink of collapse (Phillips, 2016, p. 213). In addition, the Russian concern about "potential for broader US-led coalition military operations in Syria" provided motivations for further intervention (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017, p. 10). Immediately afterwards, Russia moved to expand its support for Syria by sending its own forces in September 2015 (Ergun, 2018). It is sensible to evaluate the Russian intervention as a reaction against the intervention of US-led coalition a year ago; even though, their objectives were the same on the surface. The aim of Russian 'direct military intervention' in the Syrian Civil War was, ostensibly, to hit ISIS targets; yet, the majority of Russian airplanes targeted the rebels instead of ISIS (Ergun, 2018). In fact, Russia's ISIS excuse provided a legitimate ground for Russian direct military intervention and enabled Russia to hold Assad in power and increase Russian influence in the region (Ergun, 2018, p. 160; Phillips, 2016, p. 99). Soon after that Turkey downed a Russian aircraft in November 2015, Russia accelerated its efforts to build a partnership with PYD/YPG and backed them through air support in their

fight against rebel forces backed by Turkey (Ergun, 2018). Russia kept its relations with PYD/YPG "warm" to hinder its slide to US sphere of influence (Ergun, 2018, p. 162). Russia even offered a degree of autonomy for PYD/YPG in a draft constitution of Syria, which was rejected by the regime and the rebels. Indeed, the PYD/YPG was a golden actor of the conflict through which Russia could put pressure on both Turkey and Assad so as to achieve its own interests (Ergun, 2018). Both the regime and YPG forces regained a significant amount of territory with the help of Russia and the US respectively in 2016. In the same year, Russia and Turkey initiated diplomatic negotiations for settlement of the crisis called the Astana Process; however, this initiative remained inconclusive just like the previous ones (Humud, Blanchard, & Nikitin, 2017).

After the bombing attack of ISIS in Suruç in July 2015, Turkey joined the US-led anti-ISIS coalition and started to conduct operations in Iraq. Like Russia's assaults towards the rivals, Turkey bombed the PKK positions in Iraq within the anti-ISIS campaign (Phillips, 2016, p. 227). Approaching the fifth year of the conflict, on August 24, 2016, by informing Russia and the US, Turkey unilaterally initiated a *direct military operation* called "Operation Euphrates Shield" against ISIS in Syria (Ergan, 2016). By accompanying FSA, Turkey with this operation aimed to push the ISIS away from the Turkish border and to stop the advance of PYD/YPG (Turkey ends 'Euphrates Shield'..., 2017). As a reaction to the military training of YPG forces by the US, Turkey's special forces, a professional group dependent on Turkish Armed Forces, began to train the FSA forces (ÖSO'ya TSK destekli eğitim, 2017). Furthermore, in January 2018 Turkey conducted a new military operation called "Operation Oil Branch" against YPG (and ISIS) as a response to the US-led coalition's initiation to form a new border force along the Turkish-Syrian border (Zeytin Dalı Harekatı nedir?..., 2018). These developments illustrate how Turkey's methods have changed during the conflict because of the strategies followed by the other intervenors and their consequences.

To summarize, the intervenors which were motivated by different concerns, were not acting as separate actors on the ground. Rather, they were interacting over the course of the conflict. The reason for this is that the actions of each actor had ability to change the others' calculations, motivations and eventually their methods and timing

of intervention. Considering their motivations of the four states, their strategic interests overweighed humanitarian concerns. Each of the four intervened into conflict somehow to maintain or alter the power situations in the conflict in favor of themselves. They played an important role on escalation, evolution, and transformation of the conflict. Most importantly, neither of them was immune from the impact of the others' intervention decisions.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The ancient lands of Syria, home to various civilizations in the history, witnessed one of the most destructive and severe civil war of near history. The problems of Syria, mainly emanated from its colonial history, remained in effect even after its independence. The struggle for power in domestic affairs created a broad gap between different ethnic and religious groups, especially Alawites and Sunnis. After 40 years of presence in the Syrian government, the Alawite minority's dominance has been at stake just like the other oppressive regimes in the Middle East. While the tide of anti-regime and pro-democratic protests sweep the nations in the Middle East, the uprisings in Syria rapidly evolved into a civil war which attracted foreign actors to intervene. Their multiple interventions affected the course of events, power situations on the ground and the evolution of the conflict as well.

Each intervenor has a different set of motivations. In terms of strategic concerns, being an ally of Syria was a significant motivation for Russia and Iran. The US and Russia were competing to expand their influence in the region; while Iran and Turkey do the same for a regional hegemony. Besides being a global problem, international terrorism was domestic problems of Russia and Turkey. Turkey's long border line shared by Syria and the risk of diffusion of the conflict to the neighborhood provided further motivations. In terms of humanitarian concerns, continuously rising number of Syrian refugees in Turkey in particular, in all the world in general; and the use of WMDs and other war crimes provided additional motivation created more motivation. However, states have tended to attach priority to their strategic concerns rather than humanitarian concerns.

The motivations were a determinant of methods of intervention; however, the current literature missed the impact of other potential/current actors in this determination process and assumed intervenors as separate actors. By focusing on four states, this study showed how this neglected impact could change the calculations of states in the course of the conflict. The study also indicates that each of the four intervened into conflict somehow to maintain or alter the power situations in the conflict in favor of themselves. They played an important role on escalation, evolution, and transformation of the conflict. Therefore, each actor has ability to change the others' calculations, motivations and eventually their methods and timing of intervention. Indeed, neither of them was immune from the impact of the others' intervention preferences.

One example of interaction between different interventions is the interplay between US and Russian roles. The US sought for the termination of the conflict in the beginning with diplomatic efforts; however, diplomatic support of Russia for the regime hindered many of these efforts. As such Russian intervention contained US impact and partially affected its future trajectory. Likewise, economic sanctions by the western countries did not bear fruit because of Russian and Iranian monetary, financial, and material help for the regime. Concerns about the use of chemical weapons caused priority of the US to shift towards elimination of chemical weapons. Despite Obama's redline, the use of chemical weapons did not bring a direct military intervention by the US or another actor. Russia's concerns about its strategic allies in the Middle East became an obstacle to a direct military intervention of the US in this early phase of the internal armed conflict in Syria. This pushed the US to engage with indirect ways of military intervention: "send lethal aids to rebel groups" (Phillips, 2016, p. 18).

Rise of ISIS and later Russian direct military intervention changed the dynamics of the conflict. The US policy changed one more time and became "defeating ISIS" (Ergun, 2018, p. 163). A US-led coalition, including Turkey, was formed and intervened in ISIS positions in Iraq, soon afterwards, the anti-ISIS coalition forces extended their operations to Syria. In addition to the advance of the rebels and ISIS against the regime in 2015, a potential extended military intervention by the US-led coalition pushed Russia to a direct military intervention; as a result, the conflict

internationalized and calculations have changed one more time. Consequently, the US became more prudent on the ground by avoiding from coming up against Russia. Considering PYD/YPG as a useful proxy on the ground, the US provided an immense support; in return for this, Russia allied with PYD to show them there is an alternative to the US in the region. Iran's priorities, keeping Assad in power and securing the Iranian corridor, were stable compared to the other states. With the aforementioned motivations Iran provided tremendous support for the regime. To secure the Iranian corridor allied with PYD; and as a reaction to Turkey's backing the rebels, Iran increased its support for PYD. These supports from the US, Russia, and Iran, leveraging PYD/YPG, initially affected Turkey's motivations and eventually its methods and timing. Since the early years of conflict, Turkey engaged in a proxy war by supporting FSA in its southern borders and was not willing to a unilateral direct military intervention. However, the other actors' actions increased Turkey's concerns on its southern borders and eventually pushed it to conduct a unilateral direct military intervention against ISIS and PYD.

There are both similarities and differences between the patterns of intervention in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. In terms of motivations, compared to the Cold War period, the importance of ideological rivalry has significantly diminished in the conflict in Syria. Furthermore, international terrorism appeared as an important factor that motivates the states to intervene in the (internationalized) internal armed conflicts. In terms of processes of intervention, international circular processes of intervention still are relevant today. In addition, the proxy war still works as a preferable choice within the strategies of intervention.

This study provides a new conceptual framework about motivations, methods, and timing of intervenors without neglecting the interaction between actors. This conceptual framework is suitable to further implications over the (internationalized) internal armed conflicts, especially those exposed to multiple interventions. In this study measures of the variables in the literature are revised in line with the post-Cold War period. In other words, this study also provides new measures for post-Cold War conflicts. In this study, *former colony* and *oil output* is not used as a measure because of the intervenors chosen and limited importance of oil output in Syrian case, respectively. Hence, it would be a mistake to claim that these measures are invalid.

They are still valid, but there are further motivations, including *international rivalry*, *international terrorism* and *geopolitical concerns* to understand the foreign interventions.

This research contributes to the intervention literature in two points: firstly, by emphasizing the interaction between the actors, especially when multiple interventions are concerned, it provides a new conceptual framework which is able to be applied to other cases of multiple interventions. Secondly, this research contributes literature as a case study which explains motivations, methods and timing of four intervenors in Syrian (internationalized) internal armed conflict. The current literature has models to explain motivations and methods of foreign interventions in civil wars by taking each intervenor as a separate actor. This study can be a base for a new model of motivations and methods of intervention without neglecting the interactions between actors.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Binlerce insanın hayatını kaybettiği, yaralandığı, yerinden edildiği Suriye İç Savaşı, Orta Doğu'daki en önemli insani krizlerden biridir. Bu husustaki çalışmalar genellikle savaşın iç dinamikleri üzerinde durmuştur; buna rağmen, savaşın uluslararası boyutu da iç dinamikler kadar önemlidir. Bunun nedeni, bölgesel aktörlerin müdahaleleriyle savaşın gidişatını etkileyebilmesi ve onu kendi çıkarlarına göre şekillendirebilmesidir. Mevcut literatürün müdahalecileri tekil aktörler olarak ele almasına karşın Suriye'de etkileşim halinde olan birden fazla müdahaleci ve aynı müdahalecinin birden fazla müdahalesi söz konusudur. Diğer bir ifadeyle, mevcut bilgi kaynakları müdahaleci aktörler arasındaki etkileşimi ihmal etmektedir. Literatürdeki boşluğu gidermek amacıyla bu çalışma, aktörler arasındaki etkileşime odaklanarak, ABD ve Rusya olmak üzere iki küresel ve Türkiye ve İran olmak üzere iki bölgesel aktörün Suriye İç Savaşı'na müdahalelerini konu alarak, bu ülkelerin neden ve nasıl müdahale ettiklerini açıklar. Böylelikle, hem motivasyonların yöntem ve zamanlamadaki belirleyiciliği hem de motivasyonlar, yöntemler ve zamanlama bakımından bir müdahalecinin bir diğerine etkisi konularına dikkat çeker. Ayrıca, vaka incelemeleri, araştırmacıların müdahale motivasyon ve yöntemlerindeki değişimleri tespit etmesine olanak tanıdığından; bu çalışma Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde öne çıkan değişikliklere ve Soğuk Savaş dönemiyle benzerliklere de dikkat çekmektedir. Çalışma, iki araştırma sorusunu cevaplamaya çalışmaktadır: ilki, "küresel ve bölgesel güçler Arap Ayaklanmalarını takip eden Suriye İç Savaşına neden ve nasıl müdahale ettiler?"; ikincisi, "motivasyonlar, yöntemler ve zamanlama bakımından aktörler birbirlerini nasıl ve ne ölçüde etkilediler?" Araştırma kısa bir giriş bölümünden sonra kuramsal çerçeve bölümüyle devam etmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm Suriye İç Savaşı'nın tarihsel nedenlerini, aktörleri ve çatışmaları konu alırken,

dördüncü bölüm ise bahsi geçen aktörlerin etkileşimleri vurgulanarak Suriye İç Savaşı'na müdahale motivasyonları, yöntemleri ve zamanlamaları tartışılmaktadır. Son bölüm ise bulgular ve çalışmanın literatüre katkısını belirten bir değerlendirme bölümüdür.

Kuramsal Çerçeve

Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplininin en önemli konularından biri olan dış müdahaleler, üçüncü taraflara savaşın gidişatını, süresini ve savaşan tarafların kabiliyetlerini etkileme olanağı sağlamaktadır. Tarih boyunca pek çok uluslararası ve uluslararası olmayan savaşlar dış müdahaleye maruz kalmıştır. Ancak 20.yy'da hem savaşların hem de dış müdahalelerin sayısı önemli ölçüde artmıştır. Buna paralel olarak, Müdahale çalışmaları uluslararası silahlı çatışmalara yapılan dış müdahalelere odaklanmıştır. Ancak İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında uluslararası silahlı çatışmaların sayısı azalırken iç çatışmaların sayısı giderek artmıştır. Bunun sonucunda, müdahale çalışmaları bu kez iç çatışmalara yapılan müdahalelere odaklanmaya başlamıştır.

Müdahale stratejileri ve müdahale olanaklarının belirlediği çeşitli müdahale biçimleri mevcuttur. Diplomatik, iktisadi ve askeri müdahale olmak üzere üç adet müdahale stratejisi, bunun yanı sıra uluslararası çatışmalar ve iç savaşlar olmak üzere iki çeşit müdahale olanağı bulunmaktadır. Diplomasinin en çok kullanılan türü arabuluculuk olup tanıma, tanımama, kınama, ateşkes çağrısı, inceleme, uluslararası forumlar, büyükelçiyi geri çekmek, müzakere ve hakemlik gibi çeşitli usulleri mevcuttur ve diplomasi yöntemi güç kullanımını sınırlamak için kullanılan en eski müdahale yöntemlerinden bir tanesidir. Ekonomik müdahale ise bir müdahalecinin savaşan taraflardan birinin veya birden fazlasının göreceli gücünü arttırmak için giriştiği ekonomik yardımlar veya yaptırımlardır. Uluslararası silahlı çatışmaların azalması ekonomik müdahale yönteminin verimliliğinin sorgulanmasına neden olmuş bunun sonucunda yabancı askeri müdahaleler "modern devlet idaresinin olmazsa olmaz şartı" haline gelmiştir. Dolaylı ve doğrudan olmak üzere iki çeşit askeri müdahale bulunmaktadır. İstihbarat, malzeme, silah, danışman ve talim temin etmek dolaylı askeri müdahale araçlarıdır. Ek olarak, vekâlet savaşı da bir dolaylı askeri müdahale yöntemi olup özellikle Soğuk Savaş döneminde yoğun bir biçimde kullanılmıştır. Müdahale çalışmalarının daha çok koruma sorumluluğu konusuna yoğunlaşması ve vekâlet müdahalesi konusuna yeterince ilgi gösterilmemesine rağmen vekâlet

savaşlarının müdahalelerdeki rolü gün geçtikçe artmaktadır. Doğrudan müdahale ise müdahalecinin kendi askeri güçlerinin savaş alanında faaliyet göstermesi durumudur. Devletler yukarıdaki strateji veya yöntemlerle, iki ya da daha fazla aktörü bulunan uluslararası silahlı çatışmalara veya aktörleri bir devlet ve bir ya da daha fazla yerli muhalif gruptan oluşan iç silahlı çatışmalara müdahale etmektedirler. Ancak 2003 yılından sonra uluslararasılaşan iç silahlı çatışmalar yoğun artış gösterir ve çatışma dönüşümü önem kazanır. Örneğin, UCDP/PRIO Silahlı Çatışma Veri Kümesi, uluslararasılaşan iç silahlı çatışmaları, diğer iç silahlı çatışmalardan ayırır. Bu durumda uluslararasılaşan iç silahlı çatışmaların dış aktörlere yeni bir müdahale olanağı sağladığını göz ardı etmemek gerekir.

Müdahalecilerin iç savaşa müdahale etme sebepleri, müdahale yöntem ve zamanlamasında belirleyici nitelikte olup iki gruba sınıflandırılır: öz çıkar ve insani endişeler. Öz çıkarların motivasyon gücünü savunan araştırmacılar, ekonomik ve siyasi çıkarların, jeopolitik endişelerin, etki alanını koruma ve genişletme arzusunun ve doğal kaynak zengini ülkelerin iç dinamiklerine müdahale etme isteğinin dış aktörlere müdahale motivasyonu sağladığını iddia etmektedir. Diğer araştırmacılar ise, ülkelerin soykırım ve mülteci krizi gibi insani endişelerden motivasyon sağlayan müdahalelerde bulunabileceğini savunmaktadır. Bu motivasyonlar müdahalelerin yöntem ve zamanlamasının belirlenmesinde etkilidir. Başlıca müdahale yöntemleri şunlardır: yanlı veya yansız, tek taraflı veya çok taraflı, güç kullanımının olması veya güç kullanımının olmaması. Müdahalenin zamanlaması ise çatışmanın başladığı tarihten itibaren ona yapılan müdahaleye kadar geçen süredir.

Mevcut literatür motivasyon, yöntem ve zamanlama arasındaki tek yönlü nedensellik ilişkisini kabul etmesine rağmen, günümüzde kullanılan modeller müdahalecileri birbirinin etkisinden bağımsız (tekil) aktörler olarak ele aldığından, aynı çatışmaya müdahale eden birden fazla müdahaleci olduğunda işlevsiz kalmaktadır. Bu tezin iddiası ise söz konusu 'çoklu müdahaleciler' olduğunda aktörler arası etkileşimin müdahalecilerin motivasyonları, yöntemleri ve zamanlamaları üzerinde belirleyici rolü olduğudur. Bu doğrultuda, mevcut kavramsal çerçeve aktörler arası etkileşim faktörü göz önünde tutularak yenilenmiş ve kullanılan ölçüler gözden geçirilmiştir. Öz çıkarlardan literatürde bulunan ittifak ve bitişiklik ölçüleri; insani kaygılardan ise mülteci ölçütü aynen alınırken, diğer ölçüler değiştirilmiştir. İdeolojik çatışma ölçüsü

Soğuk Savaş atmosferini yansıtmış olmakla birlikte, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde etkisini büyük ölçüde yitirmiştir; yerine uluslararası rekabet gibi hem büyük güçler arasındaki hem de bölgedeki rekabeti kapsayan daha kapsamlı bir ölçü getirilmiştir. Eski sömürge ve petrol üretimi ölçüleri seçilen ülkeler dolayısıyla mevzu dışı kalmıştır. Bunların yerine, müdahale kararındaki yükselen etkileri nedeniyle jeopolitik endişeler ve uluslararası terör yeni ölçüler olarak yerini bulmuştur. Soykırım ölçütü ise daha kapsamlı olan insani kriz ölçütüyle değiştirilmiştir. Yöntemler, yanlı veya yansız, tek taraflı veya çok taraflı, diplomatik-ekonomik veya askeri olarak ele alınmıştır. Son olarak, zamanlamanın ölçümü çatışma başlangıcıyla müdahale arasındaki süreç ve etkileşim içindeki iki müdahalenin başlangıç tarihleri arasındaki fark olarak alınmıştır. Ele alınan dış aktörler ABD, Rusya, İran ve Türkiye ile sınırlı tutulmuş olup, bunların seçilmesinin nedeni aktörler arasındaki etkileşimin daha anlaşılır bir şekilde ele alınmasına zemin sağlayan ve zıt kampları temsil eden aktörler olmalarıdır.

Önceki çalışmalar göz önüne alındığında, kullanılan modellerden hiçbiri Suriye vakasındaki müdahalecilerin motivasyonlarını esaslı bir şekilde açıklayamamaktadır. Bunun temelde iki sebebi bulunmaktadır: birincisi, mevcut modeller araştırmacıların birden çok müdahalecinin çakışan çıkarlarını incelemesine izin vermez; ancak Suriye'deki çatışmalarda bir müdahalecinin motivasyonu diğerinden bağımsız olarak açıklanamaz. İkincisi, mevcut modeller herhangi bir müdahalecinin çatışmanın doğasına ve potansiyel müdahalecilerin müdahale etme olasılığına olan etkisini ihmal ederler. Bu kuramsal sertliğe karşı, bu çalışmanın vurgusu motivasyon, yöntem ve zamanlamaya yönelik aktörler arasındaki karşılıklı etkileşim ve aktörlerin çatışmayı dönüştürebilmesinin bunlar üzerindeki etkileridir.

Suriye İç Savaşı: Aktörler ve Çatışmalar

2011'de Tunus'ta başlayıp Orta Doğu boyunca yayılan otoriter rejim karşıtı Arap Ayaklanmalarının bir parçası olarak baskıcı Suriye hükümetine karşı ortaya çıkan hareket, kısa bir süre sonra iç savaşa, sonrasında ise küresel ve bölgesel aktörlerin vekâlet savaşına dönüşmüştür. Suriye İç Savaşı'nı kavramak için öncelikle Suriye'nin tarihini ele almak ve Suriye İç Savaşı'na zemin oluşturan ana unsurları işaret etmek gerekmektedir.

Suriye toprakları, Bereketli Hilal'in büyük bir bölümünü kapsayıp, MÖ. 27. yüzyıldan beri çeşitli uygarlıklara ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Akdeniz'deki coğrafi konumu, Suriye'nin başlıca ticaret merkezlerinden biri olmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Ancak, stratejik önemi haiz olması onu davetsiz misafirlerin ilgi odağı haline getirmiştir. 16. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinden Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na kadar Osmanlı Devleti yönetiminde kalan Suriye, savaş sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arap topraklarının İngiltere ve Fransa arasında doğrudan kontrol ve nüfuz bölgeleri olarak paylaşılması sonucu Fransa'nın kontrolü altına girmiştir. Fransız Suriye mandası, böl ve yönet politikası dâhilinde Suriye'yi azınlıklar –Alevi ve Dürzi- kontrolünde iki bölgeye ayırmış ve Arap milliyetçiliğini zayıflatmak ve Fransız otoritesine karşı ortaya çıkabilecek isyanları engellemek amacıyla yalnızca azınlıkları silahaltına almıştır. Manda yönetimi İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sonuna dek devam etmiş ve bu yönetimden en çok istifade eden azınlık Aleviler olmuştur.

Suriye 1946 yılında bağımsızlığını kazandıktan sonra Arap milliyetçiliği, Siyasal İslam ve Kürt milliyetçiliği gibi sorunlarla boğuşmuştur. Suriye devletini kırılgan hale getiren bu sorunlar, 1949 ile 1970 arasında peş peşe yapılan askeri darbelere zemin hazırlamıştır. Arap dünyasında öne çıkan, batı değerlerine ve tahakkümüne karşı olarak pan-Arap milliyetçiliği ve sekülerizm üzerine kurulan Baas Partisi, Suriye siyasetinde etkili olmuş ve zaman geçtikçe içine sosyalist elementleri de dâhil ederek Nasır ile 1958'de Suriye ve Mısır'ın Birleşik Arap Cumhuriyeti adı altında birleşmesi kararı almışlardır. Fakat birliğin ömrü Mısır'ın BAC yönetimindeki baskınlığından Suriye'nin huzursuz olması nedeniyle uzun sürmemiş ve 1961'de birlik çözülmüştür. 1963'te Baas Devrimi olarak adlandırılan darbe ile Alevi azınlık, siyasi, ekonomik ve toplumsal alanların kontrolünü Sünni kentli seçkinlerin elinden almıştır.

Savunma Bakanı Hafız Esad'ın 1970'te Suriye yönetimine el koymasıyla birlikte Suriye toplumunun çoğunluğunu oluşturan Sünniler kırk yıldan uzun süre iktidarda kalacak bir Alevi azınlık hâkimiyeti altına girmişlerdir. Mezhep gerginliklerinin Suriye toplumu ve siyaseti üzerindeki etkisi zaman zaman ortaya çıkan halk protestoları ve Esad rejiminin verdiği sert tepkilerde görülmesi mümkündür. Örneğin, 1982 yılında partileri kapatılan Müslüman Kardeşler'in Hama'yı ele geçirme girişimi Hafız Esad'ın 10,000'den fazla sayıda insanını katletmesiyle sonuçlanmıştır. Zalim

ve baskıcı uygulamalarıyla gücünü sağlamlaştıran Esad, uzun yıllar süren istikrarsız yıllardan sonra Suriye'de güçlü, istikrarlı ve merkezi bir rejim kurmuştur. Uluslararası siyasete bakıldığında, Lübnan İç Savaşı'nda FKÖ'ye karşı Maruni Hristiyanlarına ve İran-Irak Savaşı'nda Iran'a destek veren Hafız Esad'ın bu politikaları halkta huzursuzluğa sebep olmuştur. Halefi olarak yetiştirdiği büyük oğlu Basil'in 1994 yılında araba kazasında öldürülmesi üzerine 90'ların sonuna doğru sağlık durumu kötüleşen Hafız Esad'ın yerine kimin geçeceği yönündeki endişeler artmıştır. Basil'in ölümünün hemen ardından Londra'da tıp alanında kariyer yapmakta olan oğlu Beşar'ı Suriye'ye çağırıp onu halefi olarak yetiştirmeye başlamıştır.

2000'de Beşar Esad'ın yönetimi devralması sonrasında rejim giderek Esad ailesi ve Alevi cemaatinin kontrolü altına girmiştir. İktidarının ilk yılında giriştiği 'Şam Baharı' adıyla anılan liberal reformlar halkta coşkuyla karşılanmasına rağmen ekonomiye odaklanıp siyasi problemleri ihmal eden bu reformlar büyük bir hayal kırıklığını da beraberinde getirmiştir. Uluslararası siyasette, Hamas ve Hizbullah'a verdiği destek ve Lübnan'daki askeri varlığını sürdürmesi nedeniyle Batı'nın 'şer ekseni' söylemine dâhil edilen ve uluslararası toplum tarafından yalnız bırakılan Suriye, buna karşın İran, Hizbullah ve Hamas ile birlikte 'direniş ekseni' söylemini geliştirmiştir. 2000li yılların sonlarına doğru Rusya, Türkiye, Fransa ve Katar gibi ülkelerle ilişkilerini geliştirmiş olan Şam yönetimi, aynı zamanda ekonomik reformların meyvelerini toplamaya başlamış; Suriye yabancı yatırımların çekim merkezi haline gelirken Turizm sektörü de önemli ölçüde gelişmiştir. Tüm bu gelişmelere rağmen, refahın dengesiz dağılımı, işsizlik, yaygın yoksulluk, yolsuzluklar, insan hakları ihlalleri ve temsil sorunu gibi sorunlar halkın tepkisini çekmiştir. İlaveten, artan mezhep düşmanlıkları özellikle Sünni toplumu Alevi rejimden intikam alma arayışına sürüklemiştir.

Tunus'ta başlayan ayaklanmaların diğer Arap ülkelerinde de yankı bulmaya başlaması üzerine Esad, kendi halkının ayaklanma çıkarmayacağını ifade etmiştir. Ancak 'senin sıran doktor' ifadesi yer alan rejim karşıtı duvar yazısı nedeniyle bir grup gencin tutuklanıp işkence görmesi, ülke çapındaki ayaklanmaların tetikleyicisi olmuştur. 2011 yılının Mart ayında Suriye'nin Dera kentinde başlayan ve büyük çoğunluğu barışçı olan gösterilerin rejimin sert müdahalelerine maruz kalması

protestaların her geçen gün daha da büyümesine neden olmuştur. Sıkıyönetim yasasını kaldıran ve reform girişimlerinde bulunan Esad, inandırıcılığını yitirdiği öfkeli halkı yatıştırmayı başaramamıştır. Başlangıçta, eşzamanlı olarak diğer Arap ülkelerindeki yaşanan benzer gelişmeler nedeniyle uluslararası aktörler Suriye'deki gelişmelere kayda değer bir dikkat gösterememişlerdir. Bunun sonucunda batının tepkisi şiddetin kınanması ve reform çağrılarıyla sınırlı kalmıştır. Sonrasında peş peşe gelen batı ve müttefiklerinin ekonomik yaptırımları ve diğer rejim karşıtı girişimleri, Rusya, Çin ve İran engellerine takılmıştır. Ağustos ayında, Türkiye ve Katar gibi yeni dostlarının sırtını döndüğü Esad, batılı devletlerin istifa çağrılarının hedefi olsa da koltuğunu terk etme niyetinde değildir. Sonuçta, uluslararası aktörlerin gösterdikleri tepkiler, karışıklığı yatıştırmaktan ziyade onu tırmandırmıştır.

İç savaşlarda savaş ilanı durumu söz konusu olmadığından savaşın başlangıç tarihini tespit etmek zordur. Kimi kaynaklar Ağustos 2011 ve Ocak 2012 gibi geniş bir aralığı kabul ederken, UCDP/PRIO veri kümesi Suriye'deki iç savaşın başlangıç tarihini 2 Ekim 2011 olarak kabul etmiştir. Ekonomik yaptırımlar işe yaramadığı gibi BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nin de Rusya ve Çin vetoları nedeniyle karar alamaması müdahaleye istekli olan aktörleri üstü kapalı ve uluslararası hukuka aykırı yöntemlere itmiştir.

Savaşan taraflar, rejim yanlısı ve rejim karşıtı olmak üzere iki grupta sınıflandırılabilir. Bir tarafta, rejim yanlısı grup dâhilinde Esad ailesi ve Beşar'ın iç halkası, Baas Partisi, Suriye güvenlik güçleri (hava kuvvetleri ve askeri istihbarat), Suriye Silahlı Kuvvetleri (ordu, hava ve deniz kuvvetleri), Suriyeli milis grupları (Ulusal Savunma Kuvvetleri), yönetime sadık sosyo-ekonomik seçkinler ve azınlıklar (Aleviler, Hristiyanlar, Şiiler, İsmaililer) yerel aktörleri oluştururken; Rusya, İran ve Hizbullah gibi Suriyeli olmayan milisler uluslararası aktörleri oluşturmaktadır. Diğer tarafta, rejim karşıtı grup yerel anlamda Suriye Ulusal Konseyi, yerel konseyler gibi yerel sivil kurumlar, sivil toplum örgütleri ve Özgür Suriye Ordusu, Ahrar uş-Şam, El-Nusra Cephesi, IŞİD ve PYD/YPG gibi silahlı muhalif gruplardan oluşurken; uluslararası anlamda ise ABD liderliğindeki koalisyon güçleri, Suudi Arabistan, Türkiye ve Ürdün'den oluşmaktadır.

Muhalif grupların parçalı ve geçişken yapısı, onları rejim yanlısı gruplara nazaran daha karmaşık hale getirmektedir. İç savaşın ilk yılında muhalif hareketler silahlı

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birlik olarak Özgür Suriye Ordusu ve siyasi olarak Suriye Ulusal Konseyi çatısı altında birleşmişlerdir ancak Suriye Ulusal Konseyi kapsayıcılık konusunda başarısızlığa uğramış ve büyük ölçüde Müslüman Kardeşler'in baskın olduğu bir konseye dönüşmüştür. SUK'ta yapılan hatanın ardından daha kapsayıcı bir çatı olarak Suriye Muhalif ve Devrimci Güçler Ulusal Koalisyonu kurulmuş, Suriye Kürt Ulusal Konseyi de bu çatının altında yer bulmuştur. Özgür Suriye Ordusu ise organize bir silahlı direniş grubu olarak gösterilse de gerilla savaşı sürdürme amacı gütmüş, aynı zamanda da silah ve finansal destek sıkıntısı çekmiştir. Muhalif gruplar arasında kesin çizgiler olmadığından finansal destek ve ekipman desteğinin varlığı kimi grupları savaşçılar için çekici kılmıştır. ÖSO'nun dışındaki muhalifler dört grupta sınıflandırılabilir: ilk olarak, başlangıçta ÖSO ve Müslüman Kardeşler'e katılan sonrasında ise popülerliğini yitiren veya radikalleşen ılımlı İslamcı gruplar; ikincisi, Ahrar uş-Şam/Suriye İslam Cephesi/İslam Cephesi şeklinde kurulan Selefi gruplar; üçüncüsü, El-Nusra ve IŞİD gibi Cihatçı gruplar; sonuncusu, KNC ve PYD/YPG gibi Kürt muhalif gruplar.

Suriye'de iç savaş olarak başlayan çatışma daha sonra Rusya'nın doğrudan askeri müdahalesi ile uluslararasılaşan iç savaşa; başka bir deyişle, uluslararasılaşan iç silahlı çatışmaya dönüşmüştür. Bu noktaya kadar ciddi kayıplar veren Suriye güçleri bu noktadan sonra Rusya, Hizbullah ve İran'ın desteğiyle yeniden gücünü toplamış ve kaybettiği bölgelerin önemli bir kısmını geri kazanmıştır.

Suriye Örneğinde Yabancı Müdahalecilerin Motivasyonları, Yöntemleri ve Zamanlamaları

Stratejik çıkarların en önemli göstergelerinden biri ittifakın mevcudiyetidir. Bu bağlamda, iki ittifak söz konusudur: Suriye-Rusya ittifakı ve Suriye-İran ittifakı. Rusya ve Suriye arasında uzun yıllar süren stratejik hami ve müvekkil ittifakı bulunmaktadır. Özellikle 1973 Arap-İsrail Savaşı sonrasında artan Sovyet desteği bir süre sonra Sovyet nüfuzuna dönüşmüştür. Soğuk Savaş döneminde Suriye, Rusya için Orta Doğu'nun merkezine açılan bir kapı işlevi görmüştür. Ayrıca, Sovyetler Birliği'nin 1971'den beri, Suriye'nin Tartus adlı kıyı kentinde bir donanma üssü bulunmaktadır. Rusya ve Suriye arasındaki ittifakın varlığı yalnızca Rusya'ya müdahale motivasyonu sağlamamış, aynı zamanda ABD'nin karar mekanizmalarını etkileyerek olası bir erken ABD müdahalesi engellemiş, ABD'nin yöntem ve

zamanlamasını değiştirmiştir. ABD, çatışmalarda durum ne kadar dehşet verici hale gelirse gelsin, Esad rejiminin Rusya için önemini göz önünde bulundurarak Amerikan askeri gücünü savaş alanından uzak tutulması gerektiğine karar vermiştir. Suriye ve İran arasındaki ittifak ilişkisine gelince bilhassa emperyalizm karşıtlığının ve bölgesel aktörlerden kaynaklanan tehditlerin bir araya getirdiği bu ittifak ilgili devletlerin farklı karakteristik özelliklerinden ötürü 'tuhaf ikili' olarak adlandırılsa da uzun soluklu bir stratejik ittifaktır. Zaman zaman gevşeyen ittifak bağları 2000li yıllarda giderek kuvvetlenmiştir. Sözün özü, İran ve Rusya'nın müttefikleri Suriye hükümetini korumak için yapacakları müdahalelerin arkasındaki en önemli nedenlerden biri ev sahibi ülke ile aralarındaki ittifaktır.

Stratejik çıkarların göstergelerinden bir diğeri ise uluslararası rekabettir. Sovyetlerin dağılması sonucu ortaya çıkan uluslararası sistemin tek kutuplu yapısı, ABD'nin etki alanının zayıflaması ve 2008 krizi sonucunda yerini kutupsuz, çok merkezli bir yapıya bırakmıştır. Oluşan iktidar boşluğu bölgesel ve küresel rekabeti tetiklemiştir. Bölgedeki nüfuzunu artırmasındaki en büyük engellerden biri olan Saddam'dan kurtulmuş olan İran, Şii yönetimlerin söz sahibi olduğu bir Orta Doğu tahayyül etmektedir. Bölgedeki etki alanını genişleten İran'ı, Suudi Arabistan liderliğinde Amerikan yanlısı bir grup dengelemeye çalışmaktadır. Diğer taraftan 2000'lerde kaydettiği önemli ekonomik ve siyasi gelişmeler Türkiye'yi bölgesel hegemonya yarışına dâhil olmak konusunda cesaretlendirmiştir. Türkiye, Suriye'de liderlik rolü üstlenerek kahraman olmayı ve bölgedeki etkisini artırmayı hedeflemektedir. Daha geniş ölçekte ise, Sovyetler Birliği'nin eski gücüne kavuşmak arzusuyla Rusya'nın uluslararası rekabete yeniden dahil olması ve Orta Doğu'yu bir 'sıfır toplam oyunu' olarak görmesi ABD'yi attığı adımlar konusunda tedirgin etmiş, onun motivasyon ve yöntemlerini etkilemiş; aynı zamanda, 'yeni bir Orta Doğu soğuk savaşı' yaşanıp yaşanmadığı tartışmalarını başlatmıştır.

Stratejik çıkarların bir başka göstergesi uluslararası terörizmdir. 11 Eylül sonrasında gelişen ABD'nin 'teröre karşı savaş' söylemi, IŞİD'in yükselişiyle birlikte ABD müdahalesine ciddi bir motivasyon kaynağı olmuştur. Çalışma dâhilindeki ülkeler arasından terörden en çok canı yanan ülkeler ise Rusya ve Türkiye'dir. Uzun yıllardır çeşitli terör örgütlerinin saldırılarına maruz kalan bu iki ülkenin yüzlerce vatandaşı IŞİD militanı olmayı seçmiştir. Ani yükselişi ile İran'a karşı da tehdit oluşturan IŞİD,

müdahaleciler için bir meşruiyet kaynağı da oluşturmaktadır. Özetle, uluslararası terörizm dört ülkeye de müdahale motivasyonu sağlamıştır.

Stratejik çıkarların dördüncü göstergesi bitişikliktir. Türkiye'nin Suriye ile paylaştığı 911 kilometrelik sınır hattı Türkiye'nin Suriye'ye müdahalesine motivasyon sağlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, diğer ülkelerin müdahale tercihlerinin Türkiye'nin sınır güvenliğini etkilediği görülmektedir.

Stratejik çıkarların göstergelerinden sonuncusu ise jeopolitik endişelerdir. Bu husustaki en önemli mesele çatışmanın yayılması riskidir ve iki grup ülkeye müdahale motivasyonu sağlar. İlki Türkiye ve Lübnan gibi çatışmanın kendi ülkesine sıçramasından endişelenen ülkeler; ikincisi ise ABD ve Avrupa Ülkeleri gibi şirketleri ilk gruptaki ülkelere yatırım yapan ülkelerdir.

İnsani endişelerin göstergelerinden biri insani krizlerin varlığıdır. Suriye İç Savaşı'nda kimyasal silah kullanımı başta olmak üzere pek çok ciddi uluslararası hukuk ihlali söz konusu olmuştur. Kimyasal silah kullanımı konusunda Obama, 'kırmızı çizgi' çıkışının arkasında duramamıştır. Uluslararası toplum, Suriye halkını saldırganlardan koruma sorumluluğunu yerine getirememiştir. Suriye'deki insani krizler devletlere bir ölçüde müdahale motivasyonu sağlasa da stratejik çıkarların gölgesinde kalmıştır.

İnsani endişelerin son göstergesi ise mültecilerdir. Suriye'deki çatışma dünyanın en büyük mülteci krizini tetiklemiştir. Mülteci krizinin küresel etkileri bir yana bırakıldığında en ağır yükü omuzlanan ülkenin Türkiye olduğu görülmektedir. Tüm dünyadaki toplam kayıtlı mültecilerin yarısından fazlasına Türkiye ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Türkiye'nin bu konuda 31 milyar dolar harcadığı görülmektedir; uluslararası yardımlar ise oldukça sınırlıdır. Mülteci problemini ortadan kaldırmanın bir yolu problemin kaynağını yok etmek olduğundan, mülteci krizi Türkiye'nin müdahalesinde önemli bir motivasyon kaynağı olmuştur.

Müdahalecilerin Suriye'ye müdahalelerindeki yöntem ve zamanlamalarını iki ayrı dönemde ele almak mümkündür. İlk dönem 2011ve 2014 yılları arasını kapsayan çatışmanın ilk yıllarıdır. Bu dönemde dört ülke de tarafını daha ilk yıl içinde belirlemiş ve farklı yöntemlerle çatışmaya müdahil olmuştur. Etkileşimin en ön planda olduğu noktalardan biri ABD'yi takiben, Türkiye dâhil ABD'nin batılı

müttefiklerinin eş zamanlı ekonomik yaptırımlarıdır. Karşılığında, Rusya, Suriye yönetimine finansal destek; İran ise hem finansal hem askeri destek sağlayarak müttefiklerinin ekonomik yaptırımlara direncini artırmıştır. Başlangıçta ABD muhaliflere ölümcül olmayan yardımda bulunurken kimyasal silah kullanımıyla 'kırmızı çizgi'nin aşılması sonucunda çok taraflı müdahalenin yollarını aramaya başlamıştır. Ancak Rusya'nın BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nde sağladığı diplomatik destek çok taraflı müdahale olasılığını ortadan kaldırmıştır. Bu durum, ABD'nin yöntemlerinde değişikliğe neden olmuş; ABD muhaliflere ölümcül yardım göndermeye başlamıştır. Türkiye bu dönemde büyük ölçekli bir tek taraflı askeri müdahaleden uzak durmayı tercih etmiş, muhaliflere destek vererek Özgür Suriye Ordusu vasıtasıyla vekâlet savaşı yöntemi izlemiştir.

İkinci dönem ise 2014 ve 2018 yılları arasını yani IŞİD'in yükselişi ve Rusya'nın doğrudan müdahalesiyle çatışmanın dönüşüme uğradığı yılları ve sonrasında gelişen olayları kapsayan dönemdir. IŞİD'in önü alınamayan yükselişi tüm aktörleri etkilemiş aynı zamanda müdahale için meşruiyet sağlamıştır. ABD bir yandan eğit-donat projesine başlamış bir yandan da IŞİD ile mücadele edebilecek 'en etkili güç' olarak görülen PYD/YPG'ye malzeme ve silah desteği sağlamıştır. ABD liderliğinde kurulan IŞİD karşıtı koalisyon hava saldırılarına başlamış ve Eylül 2014'te saldırılarını Suriye'ye doğru genişletmiştir. Koalisyonun daha geniş çaplı operasyonlar düzenleme potansiyeli, Rusya'yı endişelendirmiş; bunun sonucunda, Rusya daha ileri bir müdahale yöntemi izlemeye yönelmiş ve Suriye hükümetinin ciddi anlamda desteğe ihtiyaç duyduğu 2015 yılının Eylül'ünde IŞİD bahanesiyle Suriye'ye doğrudan müdahalede bulunmuştur. Ancak, müdahale IŞİD ile sınırlı kalmamış, isyancı gruplar da saldırıların hedefi olmuştur ve iç savaş uluslararasılaşmış iç savaşa dönüşmüştür. Eğit-donat projesinde büyük ölçüde başarısız olan ABD, Rusya'nın müdahalesi sonrasında projeyi yeniden tasarlamıştır. ABD, PYD/YPG'ye eğitim verirken; buna karşılık Türkiye de ÖSO'ya eğitim vermeye başlamıştır. Kimyasal silah kullanımına karşı yapılan ilk ciddi müdahale ise Nisan 2017'de gerçekleşen ABD'nin füze saldırılarıdır. 2015'te Suriye Demokratik Güçleri bünyesinde karşımıza çıkan PYD/YPG yalnızca ABD'nin değil, bölgede başka alternatiflerin de mevcut olduğunu göstermek isteyen Rusya'nın ve İran koridoru açısından önemli olan kuzey Suriye'yi sabit tutmak isteyen İran'ın da

desteğini almıştır. Aldığı destekler sonucu önemli miktarda toprağı ele geçiren PYD/YPG, Türkiye'nin güvenlik endişelerini artırmıştır. Bir anlamda, diğer ülkelerin müdahaleleri Türkiye'yi kendi doğrudan askeri müdahalesini gerçekleştirmeye itmiştir. Ağustos 2016'da Türkiye, doğrudan askeri müdahaleye girişerek IŞİD'i sınırlarından uzaklaştırmayı ve PYD/YPG'nin ilerlemesini durdurmayı amaçlamıştır. 2017 Aralık'ında ABD liderliğindeki koalisyonun, çoğunluğu Suriye Demokratik Güçleri'nden oluşan yeni bir Sınır Güvenlik Gücü oluşturma girişimi ertesi ay Türkiye'nin bir kez daha doğrudan müdahalesini tetiklemiştir. Rusya'nın havadan, İran ve Hizbullah'ın karadan desteğini alan Suriye yönetimi kaybettiği toprakların büyük bir kısmını yeniden elde etmiştir; bunun yanı sıra, PYD/YPG güçleri de kayda değer bir miktarda toprağı elinde bulundurmaktadır. PYD/YPG'nin bölgedeki varlığının Rusya'ya Suriye üzerinde, ABD ve İran'a ise Türkiye üzerinde baskı yapabilme olanağı sağladığını gözden kaçırmamak gerekir, nitekim bu durum karar verme süreçlerinde etkili olmuştur. Neticede, müdahalecilerin yöntemlerinin bir ölçüde diğer müdahalecilerin stratejileri ve bunların sonuçları nedeniyle Suriye'deki çatışma boyunca değiştiği görülmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, rejim karşıtı ve demokrasi yanlısı protesto dalgası Orta Doğu'da milletleri önüne katarken Suriye'deki ayaklanma hızla yabancı müdahalecileri çeken bir iç savaşa dönüşmüştür. Birden fazla müdahaleci ve onların çoklu müdahaleleri, olayların gidişatında, güç durumlarının değişiminde ve çatışmanın evriminde büyük ölçüde etkili olmuştur. Motivasyonlar bakımından Suriye örneğinde insani endişelerin stratejik çıkarların gerisinde kaldığı görülmektedir. Her bir aktörün diğerlerinin motivasyon, yöntem ve zamanlamalarını etkileme imkanına sahip olduğu ve hiçbirinin diğerlerinin tercihlerinin etkisinden bağışık olmadığı görülmektedir. Soğuk Savaş dönemiyle kıyaslandığında Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönem, müdahaleler açısından benzerlik (vekâlet savaşları) ve farklılıklar (ideolojinin öneminin düşüşü, uluslararası terörün artan önemi) göstermektedir. Bu çalışma literatüre yeni ölçüler ve aktörler arası etkileşimi gözden kaçırmayan yeni bir kavramsal çerçeve kazandırmış ve dört aktörün Suriye İç Savaşı'na müdahalelerindeki motivasyon, yöntem ve zamanlamalarını ele alan bir örnek olay çalışması ile özgün bir katkı sağlamıştır.

B. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

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