

Patterns of international interventions in Syria from 1946 to 2011

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Abstract

This article examines the patterns of international interventions in Syria from 1946 to 2011 in the three sub-periods 1946-1970, 1971-1997 and 1998-2011. It underlines the weakness of existing literature on the causes of international intervention in Syria in 2011. The author argues that the consecutive international interventions in Syria from 1946 to 2011 reflect interwoven relations between the capitalist system, imperialist interventions for the regime change and domestic factors.

Key words: Syria, international interventions, imperialism, infitah, regime change, resistance.

JEL codes: F51, F54, F59.

1. Introduction

Syria has been in turmoil for more than five years now and what initially started out as a largely peaceful protest for reforms in 2011 has escalated over time into a sectarian civil war and chaos engulfing Syria and the whole region. There is a general tendency to evaluate the militarization of peaceful demonstrations as a result of repressive policies of the regime, thus it has largely been presented as a domestic problem. It is fair to argue that some of the early peaceful protests aiming at government change without sectarian tendencies in Damascus and the smaller cities of Hama, Daraa, and Harasta were suppressed violently by the government. However, a closer look at the main actors in the subsequent events that led to escalation of bloodshed and armed conflicts shows that the current conflict in Syria started when unidentified snipers opened fire on protesters and police in the town of Daraa near the Syria-Jordan border and continued with the attacks of armed Islamic terrorist groups on police stations (Chossudovsky, 2011). Except for suicide attacks, these events remained restricted within the border regions and certain

neighbourhoods in a few number of cities. While a global "disinformation by media" campaign similar to the campaigns seen during the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the attack on Libya in 2011 was being conducted in Syria, the sectarian conflict between Shiites/Alawites and Sunnis served not only to distort facts but also to gain new positions in the region and in Syria as part of a larger political agenda.

Although the imperialist attack on Syria has specific temporal and spatial characteristics, this attack could be considered as part of a broader process of securing production and reproduction of capital accumulation on global scale by removing obstacles to penetration of capital and thus opening new spaces for capital accumulation, if possible and necessary, through military and political interventions. To this aim, various interventions have been carried out including the military and political intervention in Chile in 1973 which subsequently spread to all of Latin America, the intervention in Turkey in 1980 and those interventions that disassembled the state in countries such as Iraq in 2003, Libya in 2010, as well as the regime changes that extended from Serbia to Georgia and Ukraine called "colour" or "velvet" "revolutions". In other words, the attack against Syria came into being as part of the process that was devised to forcefully restructure the capitalist state and domestic order using both financial and other means in order to first restructure and then consolidate the capitalist accumulation in those countries. Moreover, it may be said that, the hegemonic crisis took place at the same time as the ongoing crisis in the capitalist world economy, which in turn led to geopolitical competition that have made significant impacts on the course of Syrian conflict.

The objective of this paper is to show the interwoven relations between the capitalist system, imperialist intervention for regime change and domestic factors. This can be studied in three periods: 1946-1970, 1971-1997 and 1998-2011.

2. Imperialism as an integral part of the capitalist accumulation model

Put simply, the capitalist accumulation model has been established on the principle of retrieving surplus value on an expanding scale and constantly diversifying profit areas. Governments that do not facilitate primitive accumulation for international corporations, which do not protect property rights and do not have, or are not sufficiently compliant with, the political, financial, and legal organization that is necessary for the free circulation of capital need to be transformed for the sustainability of the capitalist relations. In Barnett's words, "the countries that have integrated into the "Functioning Core" of globalization and are thus in compliance with the rules (democracy, human rights, and the rule of law) to which stability, peace, and wealth all subscribe should change their regimes by developing forceful and unforceful methods to use against the countries in the Non-Integrating Gap,

which do not comply with these rules and constantly generate threats, under the leadership of the US, and should re-build the states' configuration and establish constant global supervision" (Barnett, 2005: 13). In fact, the demand for compliance with the changing rules of the capitalist world system, and the prerogative to destroy or transform the states that do not comply with such rules are not new, as organizations that monitor states' policies have been operating for more than half a century. In other words, the statements of Barnett and the like on maintaining world order, on establishing the rule of law, on fulfilling the responsibility to protect, on spreading the values of humanity and peace so and so forth support Lenin's theory of imperialism of the early 1900s. After World War II the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (IBRD), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and later credit rating agencies and central banks had already started implementing forcible and non-forcible methods to both "solve the potential conflicts to occur within metropolitan areas" and "perform the task of supervision of the forms of articulation between peripheral countries and metropolitan areas" (Boratav, 2010: 42).

Even though Syria had managed to survive such institutional surveillance until 1997, eventually it was subdued to forced change in 2011. The nature of its relative autonomy from the imperatives of capitalist world economy and its subsequent evolution can be investigated roughly in three sub-periods. The first sub-period was between 1946 and 1970; that was the "Golden Age" of capitalism (Hobsbawm, 1995). During this period, "the aggressive characteristics of imperialism became relatively milder" (Boratav, 2010: 42). The second sub-period was from 1971 to 1997. During this time span, the neo-liberal model spread throughout the world and made it possible for financial capital to move without any boundaries.¹ Lastly, the third period was from 1997 to 2011, when the structural crisis of capitalism became global and imperialism took up a new forceful method that involved dominance and regime changes.²

¹ As Harvey pointed out, "the whole pattern of turbulence in the relations between state, suprastate, and financial powers on the one hand, and the more general dynamics of capital accumulation (through production and selective devaluations) on the other, has been one of the most signal, and most complex, elements in the narrative of uneven geographical development and imperialist politics to be told of the period since 1973" (Harvey, 2004: 70).

² As the structural crisis of capitalism has deepened with successive financial crises, getting access to new markets, natural resources, new commoditization areas and cheap labour became very crucial issues for the imperialists. In that regard, Harvey claims that the new imperialism has become much more destructive because of the transformation of imperialism from "mono-imperialism" to "multi-polar competition between imperialists" (Harvey, 2008). On the other hand, according to Özdemir, imperialism has already been undergoing transformations since World War II and at this stage, it has reached the form of "collective imperialism" (Özdemir, 2014: 85). According to Özdemir, in collective imperialism, international capital does not only pursue its "individual" interest through the means of its own national state, but also gets political representation-protection from several different states at the

3. Less effective foreign interventions and national development strategy in Syria between 1945 and 1970

Although the financial-political structure established after World War II had encountered internal conflicts in the next 30 years, this structure had managed to sustain a relatively peaceful period of growing capital accumulation with rising profit margins. As a result, inter-class conflicts transformed into social democratic consensus (Boratav, 2010: 42), and the former colonies that gained their political independence could have a chance for implementing developmental industrialization policies.

The Keynesian welfare state model, which turned into the financial, legal, and political model of the capitalist accumulation after World War II, formed its organizational superstructure and became internationalized under the hegemony of the US. The peaceful period was based on the consensus on making the dollar the reserve currency which "eased the tension among imperialists" (Boratav, 2013: 450), on the fact that the capital that found itself a large area of accumulation within core capitalist states did not have to press hard to extract surplus value from peripheral countries, and on the reconciliation of industrialization of the underdeveloped countries with the interests of the capitalists of the core countries (Boratav, 2010: 42), on the polarization created by the Cold War which prevented local conflicts, and on the support the former colonies received from the Soviet Union for independent and populist policies and some relative protection against imperialist interventions.

Abdel Nasser in Egypt and the Arab nationalists in Syria, along with Mosaddeq's Iran, strove to develop good relations with the USSR (with the help of the political-financial support and military equipment support that they could not obtain from the US). However, while implementing strict anti-communist policies, their nationalist (especially in terms of creating national capital), progressive, non-aligned and non-cooperative policies brought the risk of being associated with international communism (Gerger, 2012: 153).³ In other words, the Eisenhower Doctrine targeted not only the USSR and communism, but also governments that were pro-Western, but did not cooperate sufficiently; the regimes that aimed at

same time (Özdemir, 2014, 90-91). In this new mode of collective exploitation, interventions have been carried out collectively through color revolutions, discrediting political parties (or leaders), funding of media activities, striving for "dissolution of social formations (ethnic or sectarian divisions)" (Kadri, 2012b: 34), supporting proxy wars, or putting pressure on governments to restructure their state apparatus and legal order.

³ An excerpt from the press conference held by the Prime Minister Hashim al-Atassi on May 25, 1957 might help us understand the anti-communist philosophy of Syria: "We are moving neither with the East nor with the West. We remain friends with the USSR, who extended hands of peace to us. But, despite this, we know quite well that communism poses a great threat for the future of our country and that it is a destructive doctrine as well" (quoted by Gerger, 2012: 170).

autonomous industrialization; and populist/pro-independence social movements (Gerger, 2012: 154).

During this period, Syria was a direct target for the US. The Anglo-American alliance first supported Husni al-Za'im in a *coup* against Shukri al-Quwatli in 1949, and was involved in *coup* plots continuously until 1956. The alliance then became involved in the assassination of Adnan al-Malki, who had been suspected of having the potential to move up the ranks like Nasser (Little, 2004: 670-674). In 1956 the US expanded its scale of intervention. In line with a decision that was made at a meeting between the US President Dwight Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, the confidential "Operation Omega" (a collaboration of CIA and MI-6) was launched in March of 1956 to overthrow revolutionary nationalist regimes in the Arab world (Little, 2004: 675). In line with this project, a *coup* plot called "Project Straggle" was devised in order to establish a pro-Western government in Syria (Little, 2004: 675).⁴ This plot was given up when the United Kingdom invaded the Suez Canal zone and provoked nationalist fervor in Arab countries. It was re-hatched in 1957, but again was aborted when the Syrian government received intelligence about the plan and proclaimed three American diplomats *persona non grata* (Brown, 2013: 17). That plot was replaced by the "Preferred Plan," wherein Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey would support the military intervention (Jones, 2004: 476-477)⁵. This plan could not be realized when the USSR backed Syria.

After the establishment of the United Arab Republic by Syria and Egypt, on February 1, 1958 (it was dissolved in 1961), the USSR, which prevented Western military intervention and supported developmentalist/populist policies, came to enjoy high esteem in Arab countries. In light of these developments, the US, while not completely doing away with the Eisenhower Doctrine, announced *via* the National Security Strategy Document (NSC5820/1 dated November 4, 1958) that it would maintain its close relationship with the pro-Western governments in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, and Lebanon while developing mutually respectful relationships with the Arabic nationalist administrations in the region (Yaqub, 2004: 256). The new approach of the US was not a compromise but the start of a strategy that aimed to "invade, cause attrition, discredit, block autonomous development and independence, stall, and divide/isolate under Israel's hit man mission" which would last many years (Gerger, 2012: 253-257). Thus, under the

⁴ As Yaqub puts it, the unsuccessful *coup* attempt in 1957 will be recorded in history as the first failure of the Eisenhower Doctrine (Yaqub, 2004: 146).

⁵ After the *coup* plan fell through, "the British Prime Minister wrote a letter to the US Secretary of State Dulles suggesting that they might find a 'reasonable cause of war' and launch an intervention under the leadership of Iraq" (quoted by Gerger, 2012: 174).

adverse circumstances of the Six-Day War defeat in 1967, an organic link was easily established between the national bourgeoisie created in Egypt by the state itself (including groups that maintained their feudal connections) and international capital due to the passivity of the disorganized and oppressed working classes (ideologies other than nationalism were suppressed). The progressive movement in the Arab world began to steer towards full liberalization, fundamentalism and consensus with imperialism with the support of the US during Anwar Sadat's presidency. This movement which had supported the Palestinian struggle for an independent statehood was divided over the Camp David Accords (Gerger, 2012: 300, 331). Thereafter Israel and the Gulf monarchies (essentially Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait), the biggest supporters of the US in the region, embarked on counter-revolutionary policies targeting progressive social movements and countries that were not in accord with the system, such as Syria, Palestine, and Libya (Hanieh, 2012: 26).⁶

Because all political parties were abolished and political/class-based organizations were disbanded upon Nasser's request when the United Arab Republic was established, the Baath Party, which took over the government in Syria in 1963, continued its state capitalism program in a relatively opponent-free (except for in-party opponents) setting until 1970, when Hafez al-Assad took over the government. From 1945 to 1970 the state-controlled autonomous capitalist development/industrialization policy was continuously implemented. During this period, important banks and industrial organizations were nationalized, large infrastructure projects were launched, life standards were improved significantly by investments in healthcare and education (within 20 years, infant deaths were reduced by 76% and adult literacy increased by 40%) (Goulden, 2011: 192), attempts to phase out feudal relationships were made through investments in rural areas, approximately one-third of the land was distributed among farmers, imports and exports were monopolized (at a ratio of 70%) by the government (Dahi and Munif, 2012: 324), economic planning was practiced, the petty bourgeoisie was supported in the cities (the population of the petty bourgeoisie rose from 110,900 to 216,090 between 1960 and 1970) (Hinnebusch, 2002: 105). Although unionization and strikes were not allowed, the living conditions of workers were improved by the reduction of rents and the prices of basic food items (Joya, 2007: 167). While such reforms partially weakened the Sunni groups who were the feudal masters of trade until 1958 (İsmail, 2013: 882), the development, industrialization and modernization policies that had been implemented without any sectarian

⁶ After England, whose power in the region weakened significantly, announced that it would withdraw its troops from the Gulf in 1971, the USA announced through the Nixon Doctrine that it would protect its interests through alliance with local powers. Accordingly, its relationships with Gulf monarchies were improved (Hanieh, 2012: 81).

discrimination (especially until 1969) made government employees, small farmers, and the petty bourgeoisie the traditional voters of the Baath Party (Joya, 2007: 168). However, neither the proletariat nor the villagers gained political rights or financial advantages in tandem with their other gains achieved through the reforms.

In sum, Syria was subjected to several political intervention plots and *coup d'état* attempts between 1946 and 1970. However, both the decisive stance of the USSR against a military intervention in Syria and the development policies of the Baath Party, which gained the unified support of the nation (excepting the Kurdish regions, where discriminatory policies were practiced) thwarted the attempts to forcefully change the government.

4. *Infitah* (openness-liberalization) policies and autonomy at a tolerable level from 1971 to 1997

During the early 1970s neo-liberalism emerged as a "restoration project"⁷ after the inner contradictions of the accumulation model, namely over-accumulation (the tendency toward falling profit rates), and the conflict between capital and labour led to a structural and systemic crisis. This restoration project aimed to ensure that capital, primarily financial capital, could expand into new areas of accumulation, could commoditize (primitive accumulation)⁸ and could realize surplus value extraction (by lowering labour costs and increasing productive efficiency) without facing national limitations (by ending differentiation between foreign and domestic capital), or legal obstacles (by reinforcing property and contract rights and arbitration rules that would be presented as rule of law), or class resistance (by disorganizing workers and introducing work flexibility).

Starting from the early 1970s, restructuring of the state came to the agenda with a view to dismantling its key redistributive functions in surplus value sharing and public services by subjugating it to the interests of capital through privatizing and thus commercializing public services and state-owned enterprises; abolishing rules that restricted the movement of capital; safeguarding the right of property ownership by law (without discriminating between foreign and domestic); accepting coordination by international organizations (governance); and legalizing labour market flexibility. The first regime change experiment towards building a new state to perform a neo-liberal transformation was conducted in Chile *via* the

⁷ In the USA alone, the profit margins in the manufacturing industry fell by 40.9% and the private business sector's profit margins fell by 29.3% between 1965 and 1973 (Brenner, 1998: 97). The fact that profit margins tended to fall so sharply required the metropolitan economies clustered around the triangle formed by North America, Western Europe, and Japan to open new capital accumulation areas towards the surrounding economies, as well as the internationalization of financialization.

⁸ Simply put, primitive accumulation is "divorcing the producer from the means of production" (Marx, 2009: 679).

Pinochet *coup d'état* in 1973. During the twenty years after the Chilean *coup d'état*, a significant number of "Southern" countries that were not under the protection provided by the Soviet policy were pushed into neo-liberal transformation with the help of domestic armed elements (military, domestic armed forces and non-governmental organizations since the 1990s) and international organizations (IMF, DB, OECD, EU, and international financial institutions) under the hegemonic coordination of the US.

The Middle East in general and Syria in particular became parts of this multi-dimensional neo-liberal transformation during the 1970s. Syria was relatively protected from direct armed challenges between 1971 and 1997 due to geopolitical considerations, particularly the goal of keeping the Gulf area in the orbit of the US. However, the high-speed neo-liberalization of Gulf monarchies that occurred during these years paved the way for regime change in Syria in 2011.

The relatively permissive policies of the US under the Nixon Doctrine, which aimed to gain control in the Middle East through cooperation with local allies (particularly Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel), came to an end in the late 1970s as a result of two developments. The first development was the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR in 1979 with the aim of supporting the government of the People's Democratic Party (communist party) that came to power by 1978.⁹ The second development was the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1979), which led to the removal of US bases from strategic locations in Persian Gulf and increased the threat of the spread of revolutionary movements and ideas that would be harmful for Gulf monarchies whose legitimacy was in question. Thus, by reverting to its pre-1958 policy, the US proclaimed *via* the Carter Doctrine on January 23, 1980 that it would use military force in the Persian Gulf to defend its national interests and protect its interests through the help of its local allies (with the ideological support of Sunni-centered sectarian policies). For this reason, while the US started to establish military bases and facilities in Gulf countries and provided Iraq with military intelligence, consultancy, and weapons during the Iran-Iraq war, it also pioneered the launch of the Gulf Cooperation Council (February 4, 1981) to organize the Gulf countries which were its allies (Hanieh, 2012: 95). In addition, the Rapid Development Joint Task Force, which was established in 1980, was restructured as United States Central Command (CENTCOM). CENTCOM re-designated its operation area as North Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East, and American navy ships were deployed in the ports of Gulf countries, especially Bahrain, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates (Hanieh, 2012: 96). The US, which found more opportunities to use direct military intervention to change regimes and seize targets

⁹ USSR intervention in Afghanistan was exploited by the US for the purpose of turning the problem into inter-bloc competition and thus justifying US deployment of forces in Central Asia and Gulf countries.

forcefully after the end of the Cold War conducted its first intervention with the help of the coalition forces that were formed against Iraq in 1991.

The geopolitical developments that occurred in the region since the 1970s affected Syria directly. The plans of Syria (President Hafez al-Assad defined Syria and Lebanon as "two states, one nation"), were more open to reconciliation with the international capitalist system. Syrian policies found a common ground with the plans of the US and Israel, which aimed at expelling the Palestinian guerrilla organizations from Lebanon after their expulsion from Jordan (Gerger, 2012: 368). Syria was the local ally that provided the military power for implementing the plan in Lebanon in line with the Nixon doctrine.¹⁰ The Syrian "military forces"¹¹ worked in cooperation with Lebanese nationalists, conservatives and Christian militia in 1976 and launched attacks against the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and leftist organizations. These events forced the PLO to evacuate Lebanon, pacified Palestinian refugees, ostracized socialist organizations and provided the financial conditions for Israel to obtain partial control over South Lebanon. Although Syria backed Iran during the Iran-Iraq war that started in 1980, during the unipolar phase of world politics from 1990 to 2000, Syria adopted a stance within the tolerance limits of hegemonic policies (at least, geopolitically). Accordingly, Syria supported coalition forces in the Gulf War, participated in the Madrid Peace Conference, signed the Adana protocol in 1998 without much resistance and gave consent to the formation of the Kurdish State in North Iraq, which was established through indirect support from the US.

On the other hand, because petro-dollars, which through the sudden hikes in petroleum prices in 1973 and 1979 became an important financial source for the neo-liberal model, were transferred to the global system, the significance of the Gulf countries increased at an unprecedented rate. Between 1973 and 1977 alone, 107 billion US dollars flowed into Euromarkets from OPEC reserves, which constituted more than 10% of the market's total dollar-denominated assets (Hanieh, 2012: 87). Similarly, the percentage of OPEC reserves held in US dollars rose from 53% in 1973 to 93% in 1978 (Hanieh, 2012: 88). The country that issued the most credit to IMF during the second half of the 1970s was Saudi Arabia (Hanieh, 2012: 91). The effect of the flow of the petro-dollars generated by the Gulf countries into the global financial system, which included Syria, took two different forms.

¹⁰ During this time, Syria recognized Resolutions 242 and 338 of the UN (which recognized the international legitimacy of Israel) and hosted Nixon in Jerusalem in 1974.

¹¹ The official "military power" refers to the Arab Peacekeeping Force, which was formed according to the decisions made at the Riyadh Meeting between Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt on October 17-18, 1976. It consisted primarily of Syrian soldiers and was later transferred to Syrian command.

First, with the sudden hike in petroleum prices, a significant current account deficit emerged in the underdeveloped countries that were dependent on petroleum imports and were executing their development plans within the perspective of autonomous industrialization. To finance this deficit, these states resorted to borrowing from private international banks that were located primarily in Europe and the US. In 1988, the total debt stock of underdeveloped countries increased by approximately 17 times compared to 1970. These countries reached the brink of bankruptcy when the US Federal Reserve Bank (Fed) raised interest rates substantially (Volcker Shock)¹² during 1979-1981 (Gibson and Tsakalatos, 2010: 183).¹³ They were forced to accept the "political and legal reforms" (governance rules or global transformation to neo-liberalism) of the World Bank and IMF in order to manage their debts. During this term, Syria compromised on its goal of autonomous industrialization and switched to an *infitah* (openness-liberalization) policy.

Secondly, the Gulf countries started to earn a significant part of their revenues from their assets in the global financial system. Especially after the 2000s (with increasing petroleum prices) these countries provided direct support (financial, political and military) for the regime changes in the region to open up new accumulation areas. Syria would become the target of this collective pillage-imperialism by the 2000s.

Significant changes in the internal conditions of Syria also occurred between 1970 and 1997. Both the old dominant class (including the Sunnis who traditionally traded and lived in Damascus)¹⁴, which had been weakening since 1969 but had not disappeared, and the "new"¹⁵ capitalist classes (although dependent on the regime) started gaining financial and social power both in the parliament and the

¹² During the years of 1979-1981, under the direction of Paul Volcker (chairman), the Fed increased the American short-term interest rates from 8% to 19 % (Hart, 2006: 17). According to Wood, "medium and long-term public debts of Third World Countries increased from 75.1 billion in 1970 to 634.4 billion in 1983" (Wood, 1986: 130).

¹³ "The additional cost incurred on the interest payments of underdeveloped countries by the rise in interest rates in 1981-1982 alone was 41 billion dollars" (Gibson and Tsakalatos, 2010: 183).

¹⁴ While some of the top senior officials (military and bureaucracy) of Hafez al-Assad's government were his family members, most of the senior officials consisted of a blend of Alawites and Sunnis. In particular, the second-tier administration had an inter-sectarian composition. For example, the ratio of Sunnis employed in the higher ranks of the military component of the party was 43.4%, while the ratio of Alawites was 37.7% (Hinnebusch, 2002: 71).

¹⁵ Because the support for commerce was provided *via* the state's resources and petro-dollars entered the country illegally during the petroleum crisis (Kadri, 2012a: 99), a new capitalist class was created from (and connected to) the Baath-military-bureaucracy trio, which influenced the entire financial scene. In addition, the state-dependent bourgeois (rentier-class) who were operating in small industry and the real estate sector grew rich with the help of low interest rates and loan options (Joya, 2007: 171). In short, a "merchant-military" (Kadri, 2012b:25) capitalist class, which combined bourgeoisie and bureaucracy emerged during the liberalization process in the 1980s.

administration of Hafez al-Assad (Joya, 2007: 168). As a result of liberalization policies, the private sector started to perform 40% of all exports and 35% of all imports in 1981 (Joya, 2007: 171).

Despite the high petroleum profits, loan options with low interest rates and remittances especially from Lebanon that helped Assad's government to balance the income gap with basic food and rent subsidies and social services, such as education, healthcare, finding employment and providing cheap credit, the pressure on the working class increased and the already weak labour unions were pulled into the "National Progressive Front" and made non-functional (Joya, 2007: 169). To mask the impoverishment during the liberalization process and the corresponding financial/political oppression and to maintain the legitimacy of the government, a relatively aggressive Islamization policy had begun to be implemented by the 1970s (especially after the insurgency led by the Muslim Brothers - Syrian Ihwan in Hama).¹⁶ As a result, the number of mosques built in Syria within the last 30 years exceeded 8,000 and more than 600 semi-official religious institutions and more than two dozen Islamic centres of higher education were opened (Joya, 2012:30).

Petroleum prices fell in the early 1980s, aid from Arab countries dwindled¹⁷ and interest rates spiked after the Volcker shock. These developments hampered the initial liberalization process of Assad's government, and the foreign debt increased ten-fold from 1970 to 1983, reaching 2.3 billion dollars (Joya, 2007: 174). Unlike most of the other underdeveloped countries, Hafez al-Assad's government avoided the structural adjustment programs and official supervision of the IMF-IBRD duo, but started a second *infatih* period (harsh neo-liberal regulations) that substituted for IMF programs. In this direction, while the public sector either withdrew from the financial sphere or was made to compete with the private sector under unequal conditions, the private sector became the main motor of the economy, and the state withdrew from planning, industrialization and its role as an arbiter between

¹⁶ The northern regions such as Hama, Aleppo and Homs, where Sunnis who were especially big land owners, merchants, small industrialists, and business owners resided and where Islamism, which was a type of continuance of feudal values, was much more powerful, were quite negatively affected by both agricultural reforms (in the 1960s) and the liberalization process (in the 1970s). While 60% of the working population of Syria worked in agriculture in 1971, this rate fell to 33% in only eight years (Lawson, 1989: 26). In addition, the small businesses in cities lost their competitiveness due to market-friendly policies, and the reactions of small merchants against the pricing and supply policies of the government constituted the basis for provoking insurgency. The Syrian Ihwan took advantage of these adverse social conditions and tried to label the Assad regime as "Alawite" and charged the regime with implementing discriminative sectarian policies against Sunni Muslims. In this regard, one of the reasons behind the Islamization policies of the Assad regime was to eliminate the Ihwan's sectarian accusations and appease the Sunni Islamists.

¹⁷ With the drop in Arab aid in 1976, the deficit financing increased from an average 6.6% of the total government budget in 1966–1976 to 22.5% in 1976 (Hinnebusch, 2002: 128).

classes.¹⁸ As of 1986 a gradual "devaluation"¹⁹ began and through Investment Law No: 10 of 1991, the import substituting industrialization model was modified by an export priority (Joya, 2007: 178). In addition, the banking law was liberalized especially to attract Gulf capital and tax laws were amended in favour of companies (Joya, 2007: 176-180).

Despite all of these developments the articulation into the international political system and its organizations through legal reforms as required by the "governance" concept in IMF programs did not materialize. Hence the neo-liberal transformation in Syria was not satisfactory for the US and its partners. Not only did the neo-liberal transformation in Syria fail to cover the restructuring of the state in line with the Washington Consensus through which the aim was to strengthen the influence of domestic market forces by reducing state intervention and role in the economy through public spending cuts/budget deficit cuts, cuts in social spending, privatization, deregulation, which had been demanded since the 1980s. Moreover, it also failed to accomplish the commodification of public goods, to ensure property rights (with no discrimination against foreigners), to guarantee the autonomy of the Central Bank or to accept the coordination of international organizations. Thus Hafez al-Assad's reforms (which he named as "the beginning of Syria's perestroika") (Hinnebusch, 2002: 108) did not fully match neo-liberal criteria.

In summary, Syria experienced a relatively calm period between 1970 and 1997 as a country that the imperialist system tolerated for geopolitical reasons, but was not able to articulate itself into the capitalist system and its hegemonic institutions and remained partially autonomous.

5. Open intervention and the "resistance front" in Syria between 1997 and 2011

Syria was safeguarded from interventions between 1945 and 1960 thanks to the support of the USSR and was tolerated by imperialism between 1960 and 1997 due to its regulatory role in Lebanon, its efforts to comply with hegemony and its desire to partially articulate into the neo-liberal model. However, with the outbreak of the Southeast Asian Crisis²⁰ in 1997, Syria became one of the targets of

¹⁸ The fact that the 4.7% growth ratio between 1980 and 1983 fell to a negative 2.9% in 1983-1987 affected urban proletariat the most. As a result of neo-liberal policies, the crisis that started in the second half of the decade and the population growth of over 3% per year led to a dramatic decline of 15% in per capita income (Hinnebusch, 2002: 130).

¹⁹ As a result of the devaluation policy, consumer prices went up 36% and 60% in 1986 and 1987, respectively; and unofficially exceeded 100% (Joya, 2007: 175).

²⁰ The Southeast Asian Crisis is crucial, because it was understood that the structural crisis of capitalism which had been exported to peripheral countries in the 1980s was going to bounce back onto the advanced capitalist countries. In addition, it was foreseen that extreme financialization would create

imperialism when the structural crisis in the capitalist model urgently increased the need for non-commoditized areas and when hegemonic competition turned into direct military invasions - interventions.

By the 1990s the US, which established its economy within the global "circuit of dollarization-consumption-importation dependent on borrowing at low-interest rates and credit expansion" (Köse and Öncü, 2006: 87), gradually distanced itself from specialization in industry-manufacturing and expanded service sectors, especially finance. Although the US alone accounted for 40% of the financial growth in the world in March 2001, it went into recession after a hard break. Thus, in 2001, Fed pioneered the largest monetary expansion in history. Its reduction of short-term interest rates significantly led to financial growth in derivatives and mortgage markets, boosting consumption. The financial sector expanded by creating huge bubbles on a global scale for six years. The sector experienced a severe crisis in 2008. The government in the US alone injected 14 trillion dollars into markets in order to bail out financial institutions. The total cost of the bail-out packages for the capitalist core countries reached 60 trillion dollars (*The Economist*, 2010: 9).²¹

It was evident by the late 1990s that this irrational financialization and dependent regime of accumulation would be detrimental to sustaining the hegemonic position of the US. Thus the US signalled in the Quadrennial Defense Review 1997 (QDR 1997) that it would restore its hegemony through geopolitical deployments by transitioning from a "threat-focused" military defense doctrine to a "probability-focused" one. In 2001, the Bush Doctrine declared that the US had the right to use force anytime and anywhere and would launch pre-emptive strikes on "rogue nations" and on presumed threats that had not yet materialized.

The main goal of the Bush Doctrine was to ensure the sustainability of the dollar-based financial accumulation model on a global scale, to transform the countries that had not yet integrated into the system (i.e. failed to transform their state structure to a pro-market and pro-American model) and to subordinate other

new bubbles and worldwide crises. The fact that the persistent external deficit of the US had to be financed by surplus countries (primarily China) made it clear that the US hegemony became overwhelmingly dependent on this fragile model. The East Asian crisis showed that capitalism needed a new model to solve its over-accumulation problem but that the US hegemony did not have the ability to develop a new model of accumulation.

²¹ The prediction that total financial assets, the volume of which were at the level of 600 trillion dollars in 2006, would reach 900 trillion dollars by 2020 (a 50% increase) while the expected increase in the global real GDP over the same period is 27 trillion dollars. This shows that the superabundance of capital would create new bubbles to burst and extensive crises (Bain Report, 2012: 7). The Bank for International Settlements, which is called "the bank of central banks," used quantitative data in its 84th Annual Report (2014) to show the asset values in metropolitan countries bubbled up as they did before the 2008 crisis, and that the easy money policies of central banks could cause a crisis much larger than that of 2008 (BIS, 2014).

global (namely Russia and China) and regional powers (for instance, Iran) through “velvet” revolutions or by establishing physical domination over strategic locations. In line with these goals, the "Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative" (or "Greater Middle East Project" (GMEP) for short) which covers a region with more than 60% of the total global natural energy resources, strategic trade routes and oil and gas pipeline transportation and distribution lines, was put into operation.

Beyond its importance in terms of energy resources, the Middle East and the Gulf region have broad areas for commodification and a large potential for primitive accumulation. In addition, as the price of petroleum increased considerably between 1998 and 2014 as a result of the "unusual increase in demand"²² in China and the speculative positions of international investors, the Gulf countries accumulated billions of dollars that would ease the sustainability of the dollar-based finance-service-consumption model. Lastly, controlling the Gulf region and, thus, controlling most of the energy-generating regions and transport routes would help the US hegemony to administer global economic growth while restricting the spheres of influence of Russia and China.

Syria has been a target of imperialism since 1946; and by the early 2000s, Syria was still being ruled by the nationalist, partially pro-independence and secular Baath ideology-dominated government, and its resources had not yet been subjugated to transnational corporate control. In addition, Syria was close to the “resistance front”²³ and Russia.

The first plan of the US with regard to Syria was to impose financial sanctions and to put an end to the military-political presence of Syria in Lebanon (the US preferred to avoid the costs of a new military operation after the invasion of Iraq in 2003). In line with this plan, the US House of Representatives passed the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 on October 15, 2003 (U.S. Government, 2003). In addition to this act, Syria was subjected through Executive Order 13338 issued in 2004 and Executive Order 13460 issued in 2008 to a number of accusations that included "being a country supporting terrorism"²⁴

²² Between 2000 and 2006, China alone was responsible for 45% of the increase in World’s global energy consumption, and it became the second-largest consumer of petroleum in the world (Hanieh, 2012: 142). While China gets 25% of its petroleum from Gulf countries as of 2014 (it was 21% in 2007), India imported 44% of its crude oil from Gulf countries in July 2013, up from 36% in 2011 (Hanieh, 2014).

²³ The opposing side, which was sometimes named the "Shiite front" and sometimes the "resistance front" comprising Syria, Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas until 2011, and the Shiite Iraq under the former Prime Minister Nouri el-Maliki to some extent. It was supported by Russia and in part by China. The resistance front is a defence alliance rather than cooperative framework based on "principles" or "sectarian" affiliation.

²⁴ While Syria has not been accused of being a country supporting terrorism since 1986, it stated that it was ready for all types of cooperation with the US after the September 11 attacks and shared significant

through its military presence in Lebanon, posing a threat to Israel's security through its weapons of mass destruction, aiding armed opposition in Iraq and creating an "extraordinary" threat to the national security of the US.

The second move of the US was to use the suspicious assassination of Rafiq Hariri, the then Lebanese Prime Minister in 2005, as a pretext for demanding Syrian troops to leave Lebanon. After Syria followed a reconciliatory policy and withdrew its troops from Lebanon, Israel launched attacks on Gaza on June 25, 2006 and on Lebanon on July 12, 2006 with the aim of disarming Hezbollah and Hamas. While Israel failed to eliminate Hezbollah during the attack on Lebanon (the "July War"), it lost its image of "invincibility" and its reputation was significantly tarnished, and neither Hezbollah's nor Hamas's ties with the resistance front were severed. Despite these failures, Syria was subdued and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was deployed to South Lebanon through UN Security Council Resolution 1701. All of these developments opened up a new manoeuvring space for the US-Israel duo.

During this entire process, Syria endeavoured to conciliate the US and sustain its secret negotiations with Israel until the end of the 2000s, despite the interruptions that occurred during the crisis periods (Israel's attack on Lebanon in 2006 or the "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza in 2008), the bombing of military facilities by Israel's jets in 2007, and the meetings between the representatives of the Syrian National Liberation Front and the US National Security Council.

To break Syria away from the resistance front after Israel's failure in 2006, the US supported the friendly relations between Turkey and Syria. During this period, Turkey's policy of criticizing Israel, which started in 2006 and reached its climax with the "One Minute!" show by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2009 was warmly welcomed in Syria and provided Bashar al-Assad the opportunity to move closer to the US and Gulf countries. Turkey maintained this role until the plan for forced regime change in Syria was put into effect in 2011. The policy of integrating Syria into the system and changing the regime through non-forcible ways with the leverage of Turkey and the Gulf countries aimed at the full-scale implementation of free market policies in Syria. After 2006, and especially after the High Level Strategic Cooperation agreements that were signed in 2009 through the end of 2010, the volume of trade between Turkey and Syria exceeded two billion dollars, and only 800 million of this sum were due to Syria's exports (Birdal and Günay, 2012: 192). The 1.2 billion dollar deficit resulting from trade with Turkey was large for Syria, whose foreign trade volume was 25 billion dollars in 2010. The

amounts of intelligence, and it also signed 5 of the 12 agreements on international terrorism in 2002 (Zunes, 2003).

deficit could harm the delicate inter-class balance upon which Assad's government relied (Birdal and Günay, 2012: 193).

The Gulf countries have gained much from the neo-liberal transformation since the 1980s (Hanieh, 2012: 28). The petroleum prices that increased consistently as of the end of the 1990s paved the way for the accumulation of capital worth billions of dollars in these countries. For example, according to the Institute of International Finance, the sum of net foreign assets of the Gulf countries was 879 billion dollars in 2006; this value is expected to reach 2.348 trillion dollars in 2014 and 2.493 trillion dollars in 2015 (IIF, 2014: 2). Furthermore, this increase occurred despite the fact that the contribution of hydrocarbon sector to real GDP decreased from 41% in the 2000s to 33% in 2014 and that the current account surplus as a proportion to GDP is estimated to decrease from 20.5% in 2013 to 16.8% in 2014 (IIF, 2014:1). This huge capital surplus made the Gulf countries the biggest investors in both international and Middle East finance and real estate markets as of the early 2000s (Hanieh, 2014). Between 2003 and 2009, more than 60% of the Gulf-centered capital investments went into Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and the value of these investments reached a level equivalent to three times the investments of the EU and 12 times the investments of the US (Hanieh, 2014). The net foreign assets of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco went from a surplus of 20.4 billion dollars to a deficit of 24.3 billion dollars between 2008 and 2011 (Hanieh, 2014).

In 2006, Syria ranked as the fourth country in which Arab countries made direct foreign investments, and the share Syria received from Gulf countries increased from 115 million dollars to 1.6 billion dollars between 2001 and 2006 (Rafizadeh, 2013). On the other hand the foreign trade deficit increased rapidly to reach 4.5% of Syria's GNP in 2009 (IMF Country Report Number 10/86, 2010). In effect the Gulf countries helped carry out the imperialist scheme to transform the region. As Hanieh puts it, fighting against imperialism and the imperialist tools within the region meant challenging the financial and political power of the Gulf countries as well (Hanieh, 2012: 14).

As a result, the neo-liberal interventions by Turkey and the Gulf countries accelerated the regime change in Syria. Bashar al-Assad turned a blind eye to unequal trade relations with Turkey and the Gulf countries and began to implement the demanded high-speed liberalization to demonstrate that Syria had integrated into the capitalist system.²⁵ Although the liberalization process in Syria had been underway since the 1970s, this process was intermittent and gradual until the period of Bashar al-Assad (Dahi and Munif, 2012: 326). However, under the rule of Bashar

²⁵ “In 2003, Bashar al-Assad issued Legislative Decree No.33 which abrogated both Decree No.24 of 1986 and Decree No.6 of 2000 that prohibited foreign exchange dealings” (Kadri, 2012b: 28).

al-Assad, a firm and comprehensive transition to neo-liberalism was carried out. Abdullah al-Dardari, who had worked at the UN and was a convinced adherent of *laissez-faire* economics, was appointed as the President of the State Planning Committee between 2003 and 2005 and as the Vice President in charge of the economy. Dardari's appointment indicated that the neo-liberal transition would be accomplished in a radical manner.²⁶ The government led by Bashar al-Assad implemented several neo-liberal deregulations during a 10-year time period including the deregulation of prices, reducing restrictions on imports, lowering export taxes on agricultural products, licensing of private banks, establishing a stock market, large-scale deregulations in financial markets, passing laws to facilitate direct foreign investment, changing property laws to pave the way for illicit profiteering on real estate and abrogating control on rent increases for state-owned property (the rents in Hama alone rose seven to ten times at once), passing new laws to protect and strengthen private property, eliminating state support in the field of energy and renting and selling public land to big land-owners and contractors (Dahi and Munif, 2012: 327; Goulden, 2011: 197).

In contrast to his father's attitude, Bashar al-Assad did not refrain from collaborating with international trade and financial organizations. Syria filed appeals to the WTO in 2001 and 2004, and signed the trade "Partnership Agreement" in 2004 in exchange for lowering the customs taxes on goods imported from the EU. In addition, Syria took measures to make its money laundering prevention regulations comply with the international system by becoming a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (Robicheau, 2013). Syria also tried to establish a close relationship with international finance organizations. The financial liberalization reforms that were implemented by Syria during the transition into a market economy were praised in the IMF report of 2005 and in the country report of *The Economist* in 2006 (Joya, 2007: 164).

While the neo-liberal reforms received praise from international organizations, it had destructive effects on the class structure in Syria. It was announced at the 10th Regional Conference of Baath (2005) that a switch to a "social market economy" had been made; however, the model implemented was more of a market economy than a social state (Dahi and Munif, 2012: 327). Public spending was reduced and its ratio to the GNP, which was 28.5% in 2005, dropped to 25.9% in 2009 (IMF Country Report Number 10/86, 2010). The official

²⁶ Nibras al-Fadel who recommended Dardari to Bashar al-Assad escaped from the country as soon as the protests started in 2011 and joined the Syrian National Council, which was a local cooperator/spokesperson of the imperialist attack against Syria. Dardari also escaped from Syria in 2011, returned to his original post at the UN, and identified himself as one of the first revolutionaries aiming to overthrow the Syrian regime (Francis, 2011).

unemployment rate in Syria in 2009 was 11% (IMF Country Report Number 10/86, 2010), and 30% of the population was living under the poverty line (Dahi and Munif, 2012: 328). The ratio of salaries and wages to the national income dropped from 32% in 2005 to 30% in 2007, and "the rate of increase of real wages dropped from 9.2% in 2005 to 3.2% in 2007" (Birdal and Günay, 2012: 194). The inflation rate on basic consumption goods exceeded 10% in the initial years of second-generation reforms launched in 2006 (Kassem, 2011).

Apart from these changes, most agricultural subsidies, primarily for fuel, were abolished during the "agricultural reform" that was launched in the early 2000s; no new long-term investments in irrigation were carried out; 33% of the population working in agriculture (approximately 460,000 people) had to quit their jobs; farmers and agricultural labourers, who comprised 19.5% of the working population in the country, became significantly impoverished during the drought between 2006 and 2010; and more than 300,000 people were forced to migrate to cities (settling in ghettos) (De Chatel, 2014: 526).

In the meantime, while the "hot money" coming from the Gulf countries and neo-liberal policies made importing cheaper and easier, 20 billion dollars was spent on luxury housing and hotels. After 2000, only 13% of investment was in manufacturing (Hinnebusch, 2012: 101). As a result, while small industrial business owners, farmers, government employees, and wage earners became impoverished under the neo-liberal transformation, the Syrian bourgeoisie, which had very close ties with the regime, benefitted largely from the increasing consumption, imports, real estate business, trade and financialization and became the main sponsors of the election campaigns of Bashar al-Assad (Hinnebusch, 2012: 101).

In short, the Bashar al-Assad government, contrary to claims, adopted a class policy rather than a sectarian policy. Students, the unemployed, government employees, workers, farmers and leftist parties took to the streets for peaceful demonstrations as a result of the social grievances caused by this policy. Later, these groups did not participate in the process that turned into a civil war. It was the salafi groups that instigated the civil war. Compliant Islamists had been supported by the regime in Syria since the 1980s. However there were powerful salafi groups in small towns and cities. They were sponsored by Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood. These salafi groups participated in the protests and joined terrorist organizations, such as Free Syrian Army, Al-Nusra, and ISIS which were also sponsored by Western states and the Gulf countries.

The merchant-military capitalist class in Syria did not take a stance in favour of the dissidents in order to avoid losing the wealth and the privileges they obtained with the neo-liberal process under the Assad regime. Actually, as the number of those killed by Islamic militants in Syria reached tens of thousands and the violent footages of those killed because of their sect became available, the support of the

Syrian public, which consisted of a number of different sects and ethnic groups, for Bashar al-Assad began increasing. In January 2012, only 6 months after the clashes started, the support for Bashar al-Assad rose to 55% (Joya, 2012: 43).

In sum, especially since the mid-2000s, Syria has been a country that wanted to undergo political and financial integration with the capitalist system and come to a conciliation with US hegemony. Therefore, the government of Bashar al-Assad was caught off guard by the attacks that were launched by the collective jihadist terrorists under the coordination of the US and its allies with monetary and logistical help from neighbouring countries. The Assad regime believed that implementing neo-liberal policies, keeping a low profile in international affairs and getting along with US-led imperialists would protect it from imperialist encroachment. However, what the regime misconstrued was that at this phase of the structural crisis of the capitalist mode of accumulation, getting rapid access to new markets, natural resources, cheap raw materials, new commoditization areas and cheap labour had become much more urgent. So “accumulation by destructive dispossession” turned out to be more lucrative for US-led imperialists and international capital (Kadri, 2012b: 32). As Kadri points out, “imperialism draws far bigger rents from the rest of the world as a result of its hegemony over the Near East” (Kadri, 2012b: 33). In addition, the Assad regime also failed to notice that the US was determined (as revealed in QDR 1997 and later on by the Bush Doctrine) to restore its hegemony through geopolitical deployments and to narrow the spheres of influence of Russia and China. So, keeping relatively good relations with the US would not be sufficient for the Assad regime to survive as long as hegemonic confrontations were taking place in the Middle East, with Syria located in the centre.

6. Conclusion: The attack on Syria as a premonition of the future

Syria is a country that has been managing its capitalist accumulation model somewhat parallel to the global system since 1946. Within this model, Syria conducted an autonomous development strategy until the 1970s, transitioned into the neo-liberal period through *infītah* policies from the 1970s to the 2000s, and started the implementation of the liberalization/financialization stage fast enough to receive compliments from the IMF. Despite all of these developments, Syria's Central Bank was not granted an autonomous status; financial reforms that would ensure the free inflow and outflow of international capital were not fully implemented; legal reforms to eliminate any discrimination against foreign capital were not realized; the privatization of public services were not achieved; the integration into global monitoring mechanisms were not realized. The Syrian merchant-military bourgeois had been very dependent on the regime (in a form of crony capitalism) and was thus reluctant to cooperate with international capitalists to stage a *coup*. Furthermore, even though Syria as a capitalist state had class

priority policies, it continued to provide free education and healthcare services; housing and food for farmers, workers and government employees who were the main pillars of the regime. In addition, Syria did not pull out of the resistance front and attempted to build relatively independent relationships with other global and regional powers, especially Russia and China. In short, while Syria had a goal of integrating into the capitalist system and establishing good relations with US hegemony, its liberalization process remained within the political, legal, and social boundaries of the current regime (hence Syria remained within the so-called “non-integrated gap”).

The attack that was launched against Syria in line with the momentum of the "Arab Spring" in 2011 was not decided upon through the moment's requirements, but through the process itself. While the process started in 1946, the attack in 2011 was decided upon through the overlapping of the two important processes at the end of the 1990s. Firstly, the East Asian Crisis revealed that the neo-liberal restoration project was becoming increasingly insufficient to meet the needs of the structural crisis of capitalism. Secondly, the US hegemony was incapable of offering a new accumulation model and preventing the ongoing regressive tendencies in the world economy, while global/regional forces, such as Russia and China, started to play more active roles in the global economy and politics. The transformation of the state-judicial system in accordance with the neo-liberal model, obtaining access to new commodification areas (primitive accumulation) and the establishment of US hegemony in geostrategic regions (such as Syria) became extremely important with the overlapping of these processes.

The US, which was unable to shoulder the financial, political, and military costs of an extensive military operation after the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and of Iraq in 2003 adopted a strategy of conducting geopolitical deployments through local collaborators. This strategy, which succeeded in overthrowing Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, did not succeed in Syria. The resistance of the Syrian people which did not allow any colour revolution, prevented an imperialist invasion. The protests that briefly took place at the beginning of 2011 were class-based but unorganized protests that developed in response to the loss of economic and political rights by the proletariat. In addition, a large portion of the dominant class, which became wealthy by depending on the opportunities and policies of Assad's regime, would receive no benefits from the regime change that was being planned in Syria. Further, except for the Islamist groups that had gathered under the Muslim Brotherhood movement since the 1980s and the salafis who were growing through supports basically from the Gulf countries, the Syrian public (even though they always lost under the destructive effects of class-based policies) did not want to get mired in the chaos that could be created by a sectarian and ethnic conflict. In addition, the consistent stance of Russia and China against any military intervention

in Syria and the military support of Iran and Hezbollah helped Syria to resist imperialist attacks.

On the other hand, as the gory images of the “creative” sectarian destruction caused by a "useful enemy", namely, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), were relayed to the Western public, and as the threat of the dissemination of Islamic radicalism in the West grew, it became possible for the US and its allies to form areas for strategic deployment. The existence of ISIS helped to topple Maliki's government in Iraq, induced Iran to exercise more caution with regard to Syria and Iraq (and to seek a consensus with the US), caused Barzani and the Kurds in Syria to become more dependent on the US and increased the feasibility of establishing dependent microstates in Syria and Iraq under the guardianship of coalition forces. ISIS's terrorism enabled the US to refurbish its posture as the leader in the "war against terrorism", a discourse the credibility of which has been deteriorating in international public opinion.

It may be concluded that Syria will remain under collective attack by the West under the US leadership and perhaps by financial support of the Gulf countries. The war in Syria is the tale of countries that are victimized by imperialism.

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Özet

Suriye'ye yönelik uluslararası müdahale kalıpları: 1946'dan 2011'e

Bu makalenin amacı, 1946'dan 2011'e kadar Suriye'ye karşı yapılan uluslararası müdahale kalıplarını üç alt dönem itibariyle incelemektir: 1946-1970, 1971-1997 ve 1998-2011. Bu inceleme bağlamında, Suriye'ye karşı 2011'de başlatılan uluslararası müdahalenin nedenlerine ilişkin mevcut bilgi kaynaklarının yetersiz olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Makalede, 1946'dan 2011'e kadar Suriye'ye karşı peşi sıra gerçekleşen emperyalist müdahalelerin kapitalist sistem, rejim değiştirme amaçlı emperyalist girişimler ve Suriye'nin iç politik unsurları arasındaki karmaşık ilişkilerin bir yansıması olduğu ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Suriye, uluslararası müdahale, emperyalizm, infitah, rejim değişikliği, direniş.

JEL kodları: F51, F54, F59.