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Present Day Syrian Civil War: Regional & External Dimensions

Abstract

Syria, a Middle Eastern country has been facing a civil war in the country since 2011. The city of Aleppo has suffered most in this war. Many people have been killed and forced to leave the country in Europe and neighboring countries. This situation has shaken the balance of power in the Middle Eastern region. In this backdrop, this research paper will make an attempt to answer the following important and worth-noting questions;

1. *What kind of war is being fought in Syria?*
2. *Why Syrian government is killing its people?*
3. *Which forces and parties are on the front in this war?*
4. *4. What is the role of Israel, Russia and Saudi Arabia and other Arabian countries in this war*
5. *Why other Muslim Countries and especially OIC is a silent spectator on this mayhem.*

Key Words: Byzantine Empire, Cold War, OIC, WMD, ISSI, Proxy War, Islamofascists, Hamas

Introduction

Every crisis, be it political, social or economic, is followed by a plethora of speculation as to its causes and consequences, the persons responsible for the decisions or indecisions, the lessons to be drawn, the morals to be derived and so on and so forth. The regions now constituting Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, part of Iraq, Egypt and most of North Africa were under the Roman Empire which had come to be called the Byzantine Empire after the shifting of its capital from Rome to Constantinople, formerly known as Byzantium, early in the 4th Century (Abdulla, 1967: 3)

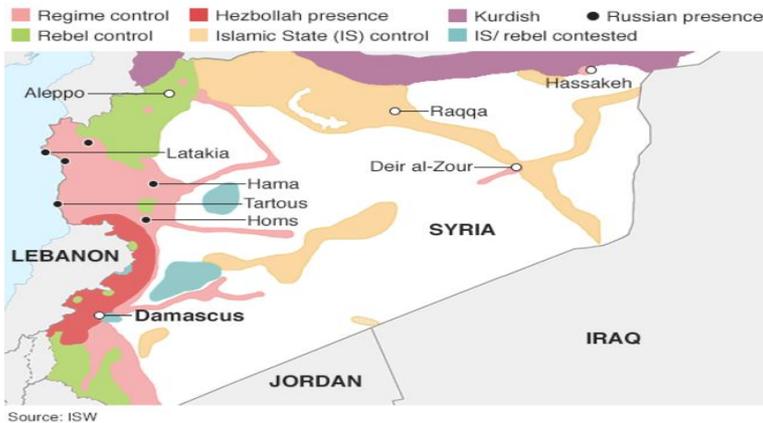
The present day Syrian Crisis (began in March 2011) leads to the study in the history few very important events like “sectarian divides, French imperialism and mandates, the Israeli & Syrian conflict, the union between Egypt & Syria, Hafiz al-Asad’s rise to power, and the contemporary rule of Bashar al-Asad”. The

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regions which are today known as Middle East, have wielded immense importance from time immemorial. It was the land which gave birth to all those monotheistic religions that command the allegiance of the majority of mankind. Middle East was the physical centre of those movements of history from which the world has grown (Abdulla, 1967: 1).

One cannot comprehend about Syria unless starts with an analysis of how the Middle East even came into existence. It was historically referred to as “the Near East”. No other region or country has the profundity of history like the Middle East. It is considered to be “the most ancient region of human civilization” (Mansfield, 1991). In a region of the earth where much is dubious, and little undisputed, the content of its very designation, ‘Middle East’, is the first controversy to be met ((Longrigg, 1970: 11)). History waits upon geography (Goldschmidt, 1979: 9). If one sees the map of Middle East, one finds that not only the geographical borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are linked to one another but their sectarian borders have liaison too. Today the Iraqi government is under greater Iranian influence. The governments in Syria and Lebanon are followers of shia sect. The trucks of armed soldiers from Tehran (Iran) reach Baghdad (Iraq), Damascus (Syria) and Beirut (Lebanon) without any hurdles.



Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>

A Glance at Syria

Syria is a country of Middle East that has whipped the modern limelight and debate floor. It has been collapsed in last five years. This civil war has compelled many people to leave the country and hence the refugee crisis has developed as a new central point for political debate with regard to the Middle East. This anarchy has given a chance to the terrorist groups to penetrate into different countries posed as a refugee (Baltes, 2016). “The aggravated civilian casualties in Syria and the displacement of over 6 million Syrians (with prospects of both more casualties and more displacement) make this the most frightening humanitarian crisis facing the world today” (Ferris, Kirsci & Shaikh, 2013: iii).

The Syrian Arab Republic is a state of some 72, 000 square miles, with a population of close to 6, 000, 000 souls. It links to the West the Mediterranean, with a coastline of slightly over 100 miles and beyond Anti-Lebanon, the Lebanese Republic; to the North Turkey, over a great length of open Frontier, to the East 'Iraq, separated by a purely arbitrary, but diplomatically agreed, line across the Syrian Desert; to the South Jordan, across the Yarmuk River; and to the extreme South-East Israel' (Longrigg, 1970: 130). Like Iraq, Syria is also multi-ethnic and multi-sect country, where Druze, Zaidi, Shia, Sunni and Wahabi sects live (Rather they used to live). A little number of Christians also used to live there. Though semi-Presidential form of government in is vogue in Syria yet it is quite different from America and France. In Syria, from last many decades, Total dictatorship and Kingship exists. Bashaar ul Asad belongs to the sect which is more close top Shites. Syria has too many followers of different sects because of its past history in which most of the Prophets were born and sent on this part of the globe. And then they moved to other neighboring countries and took prominent part in the expansion of Islam.

The religious groups within the population are as follows;

Sects/ religious Groups	Percentage
Sunni-Muslims	3, 400, 000
Ismaili & Other Shi'is	70, 000
Heretical Sects of the Druzes	150, 000
Nusairis/ Aawis	500, 000
Christians	1/4 th of Million
Greek Orthodox	200, 000
Uniate Catholics	160, 000
Armenian Gregorians	130, 000
Syrian Orthodox	65, 000
Assyrians	15, 000
Protestants	18, 000

Source: (Longrigg, 1970: 131)

The Western powers are still demanding President Bashar Al-Assad to step down, owing to the humanitarian adversities and long record of political despotism. According to the Amnesty International at least 17,000 people have died in Syria's detention centers since 2011. Many frontlines are still fluid and the conflict could last for many years however. The area which suffered most so far is Aleppo¹

¹ It is situated in the North-West of Syria. Aleppo flourished politically and economically during the 18th Century BC as the capital of the kingdom of Yamkhad, until it fell to the Hittites (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18957096>). In Arabic and Urdu the word "Halab" is used which means "Milk". It is a lush-green area and its sand contains high quantity of Silica which is

whose Eastern side has been regularly bombarded by Syrian and Russian forces. The Syrian regime has taken it as priority to get control of this area.

According to an estimate during last 4 years about 0.4 million people have been killed in Aleppo and its surroundings. Most of its population has either been killed as a result of aerial bombardment, blown off with cannon or has moved to Europe through Turkey. There has been no example in the history of such a big migration.

The New US President Donald Trump has already conveyed his support for Russian military aspirations in Syria. In this background, the air strikes have been resumed (Jones, 2016).

Current Scenario

The Arab Spring started in 2011 not only brushed Tunisia and Egypt, but also knocked the Syrian Nation. Though in the beginning the protests were passive and nonviolent against President Bashar al-Assad's four decades long rule yet they turned aggressive when troops killed civilians in the town of Deraa. Initially, "the Assad regime also sought to pacify the opposition and made some exemptions such as lifting of emergency law that had been in place since 1963 and release of political prisoners etc. However with the rising number of people killed during the security crackdowns, the protests turned into an uprising against the regime" (<http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic%20comments/sections/2011-a174/making-sense-of-syria-0e61>).

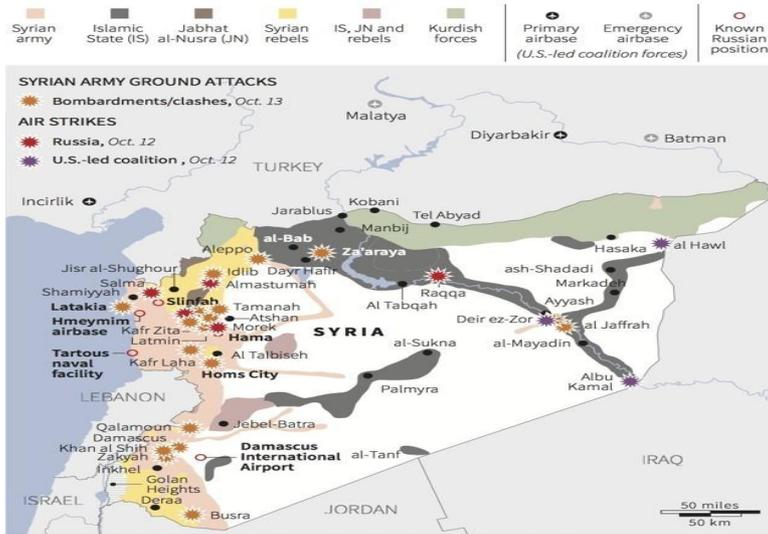
The Western powers are still demanding President Bashar Al-Assad to step down, owing to the humanitarian adversities and long record of political despotism. According to the Amnesty International at least 17,000 people have died in Syria's detention centers since 2011. Many frontlines are still fluid and the conflict could last for many years however. The area which suffered most so far is Aleppo whose Eastern side has been regularly bombarded by Syrian and Russian forces. The Syrian regime has taken it as priority to get control of this area. The New US President Donald Trump has already conveyed his support for Russian military aspirations in Syria. In this background, the air strikes have been resumed (Jones, 2016). Therefore, "a new balance of power, even though an unbalanced one, has emerged in the Middle East as an aftermath of the Arab uprisings of 2011. The struggle for regional supremacy pits a coalition of Sunni Arab monarchies—the Gulf Cooperation Council members plus Jordan and Morocco (GCC+2) —against the Shiite regimes and militias in the Levant²—Iran, Iraq, the Al-Assad regime, plus Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (Al-Hashd Al-Shabi). Internationally, the GCC+2 is supported, however unwillingly, by the United States and NATO, while the Shiite alliance is supported by Russia.

used in the formation of glass. Hence, its glass was famous all over the world. Apart from that, there is no match in the world for the marble of Aleppo. That is why Arabs gave the name "Halab" to this region. This silica was then sent to Europe through navals

² The **Levant** is a geographical term that refers to a large area in **Southwest Asia**, south of the **Taurus Mountains**, bounded by the **Mediterranean Sea** in the West, the **Arabian Desert** in the South, and **Mesopotamia** in the East. It stretches 400 miles North to south from the Taurus Mountains to the Sinai desert, and 70 to 100 miles east to west between the sea and the Arabian desert. The term is also sometimes used to refer to modern events or states in the region immediately bordering the Eastern Mediterranean Sea; **Cyprus**, **Israel**, **Jordan**, **Lebanon**, **Palestine**, and **Syria**.

Present Day Syrian Civil War: Regional & External Dimensions

Syria is the theatre of war for both the regional and global competition between these alliances” (Khoury, 2015). The discovery of America and the route round the Cape of Good Hope as well as the superiority of the Ottoman Power had kept them away from this region for about 300 years. But soon it was realized that they could not do without the Middle East. Shorter route to the East through this area was vital to them (Abdulla, 1967: 28).



Source: Gilsinan, Kathy. (2015, October 29). *The Confused Person’s Guide to the Syrian Civil War.* *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/syrian-civil-war-guide-isis/410746/>

The contemporary civil war in Syria has brought into limelight, the Resurgence of Russia, destabilization of Europe, weakening of neighbors and rising of Iran (Issa, 2016).

Who is Fighting Who?	Who Supports Whom?	Who Controls What?	What are Goals of Each Party?
Regime against rebels	Regime (Having support of Russia and Iran)	Regime (Holds almost 35% of the country, together with strategic areas for example the capital Damascus, Central Homs and Hama, the Coast, and large parts of Aleppo. 60% of the population lives under its rule)	Regime (President Assad does not want to step down)
Regime against IS	Rebels (Opposition blocs considered “moderate” are supported by the West, mainly the United States, France and the	Kurds (Holds 18% of the country including three-quarters of the Syrian-Turkish Border. They have affirmed a federal region in areas	Rebels (Rebel forces seek to oust Assad, despite having difference of opinion Fateh al-Sham)

	UK, Turkey and Saudi also backing the opposition and Islamic Groups)	under their control)	
Regime against Kurds	Kurds (The key partners of the anti-IS alliance headed by Washington)	IS (Since 2015, IS controls approximately 35% of Syria, much of it unpopulated. It dominates Deir Ezzor province on the Iraqi Border and Raqa Province. It also exists in a number of other regions)	Kurds (The Kurds look for an autonomous region in areas where they form a majority)
IS against Rebels	Jihadists (No vivid support to Fateh al-Sham and IS, though the latter has been able to count on funds from taxation and resources in the land it holds in Syria and Iraq)	Fateh al-Sham (Holds 12 % of the country), other rebels (The largest area is in Idlib province and controlled by the Army of Conquest alliance)	IS (IS seeks to spread out its self-proclaimed “Caliphate” in territory under its control in Syria and Iraq)
Kurds against IS			United States (Washington has requested Assad to quit, but having warfare with IS)
			Russia (Moscow claims Assad will not be driven out, and hunts for a diplomatic win by competing with Washington to contour dialogues between the regime and rebels.
			Iran (Tehran looks for defending the key ally Assad, and affirms its role in the Arab world)
			Turkey (Ankara supports the opposition; however is presently having all ears on averting the Kurds from generating a flanking autonomous region)

Source: Jones, Owen Bennett. (2016, November 18). *Conflict in Syria Shows No Signs of Early Resolution*. Dawn

Iraq's Invasion after 9/11

After 9/11 though the main target of US was to destroy and dismantle Al Qaeda, yet Bush Junior suspected about Iraq, and Iraq war was not initiated upon the *raison d'être* of the establishment of democracy, however slightly upon the rationale that Iraq had Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and that Saddam Hussein had established links with Al Qaeda (Girdner, 2008: 137). Therefore, a large number of troops landed in Iraq in the beginning of 2003 by starting a Colonialist war and illegally occupied the Sovereign State of Iraq. On the drawing board, "Operation Iraqi Freedom" was conceived as a "revolution" which would change Iraq into a modern democratic state in the pluralist reflection. It would then serve as a catalyst for democratic transformation which would spread throughout the region (Girdner, 2008: 7). Hence, until the year 2011, American, Ground, Air and Naval forces played havoc and destroyed Iraq at its worst. Resultantly, Saddam Hussein was arrested and hanged. Saddam belonged to Ba'ath party (A Sunni political party). Saddam's soldiers either were defeated or shifted towards mountainous areas of Kurds in the North. Saddam Hussein did not have any kind of Atomic or Chemical weapons. The Superpower primarily invaded Iraq not because of lies or bad intelligence, though both featured. Indeed, it attacked owing to appalling ideology (Fisher, 2016). Ten years on from the invasion, Iraq remains the most divisive war in recent history and the greatest intelligence failure in living memory.

Much of the key intelligence that was used to substantiate the war was based on trumped-up story, wishful thinking and lies - and as later investigations revealed, it was dramatically wrong (Taylor, 2013). He was rather punished for invading Kuwait (1990). Apart from that, Iraq had ample military equipments which were bought from oil. Therefore, the US administration was of the view that Saddam Hussein may not be able to build a professional army who could operate those equipments and consequently Baghdad was overrun.

In this backdrop, the power vacuum that was created, it was filled by Iraqi Malaysia with the collusion of US. This Malaysia had full support of Iran in terms sectarian, financial, weaponry and training assistance. When in 2012, the Super Power decided to leave Iraq, then Iran also started focusing towards Shia rulers of Syria rather than Iraq. It was the beginning of the emergence of such a sectarian and military block in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon). And this was going to be an emerging threat for Iran's religious rival and this region's second powerful political rival, i-e; Saudi Arabia. To a real sense, the "Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI)"³ for "Democratization" is not regarded to the growing freedom from Western capital and guaranteeing unrelenting US political control of the region. Military force, along with other US foreign policy instruments under

³ This idea was developed by the US Department. It was to be another tool of Imperialist control which could be used to secure the resources, labor and markets of the region to beef up US global hegemony and secure corporate profits in the region, while theoretically ending any incentives for terrorism. See Details Girdner, Eddie J. (2008). *U.S.A. and the New Middle East*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. P. 138

occupation, continues to be employed to secure the resources of Iraq for US global hegemony and corporate profits (Everest, 2004).

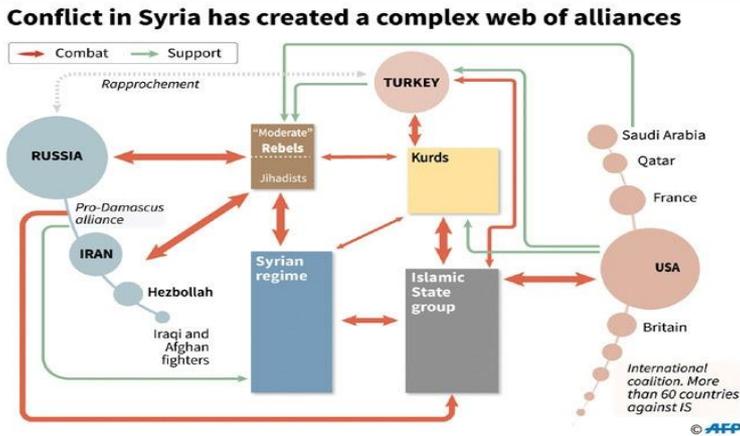
The US occupation of Middle East is not a new trend however simply a change of the regional US occupation from Europe to the Middle East as a basis for US Global Hegemony. During the Cold War US Hegemony was based upon the occupation of Europe and US Satellites in East Asia, such as Japan and South Korea. Now the eye of the storm has moved to the Middle East and South Asia (Cypher, 2007: 37-55). Since Superpower was directly involved, it got killed its thousands troops, no matter by killing Arabs. Therefore, it was not in the interest of the Superpower to jump into another war directly, henceforth it preferred Proxy within proxy war. This proxy war then generated ISIS.

Regional Dynamics and Western Approach

Looking at the politics in the region since World War II, It has been observed that the traditional challenge for the power among states from the different sub-systems in the Middle East (i-e; North Africa, the Nile Valley, the Fertile crescent and the Arabian Peninsula) has initiated the shifting coalitions. The rivalries between Iraq and Egypt, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and Algeria and Egypt; struggles between states within these sub-systems (Syria-Iraq, Syria-Jordan, and Yemen-Saudi Arabia); and the internal conflicts within the states of each of these sub-systems and with states on their peripheries (Novik & Starr, 1981: 2). The Western interests in the Middle East are related to a number of subjects;

- a) The geo-political and geo-strategic position of Middle East
- b) The need to prevent a major power confrontation
- c) The US peace-making role in the Arab-Israel Conflict and the US pledge to Israel's security
- d) Soviet propinquity, interest and involvement
- e) The commercial role of the West

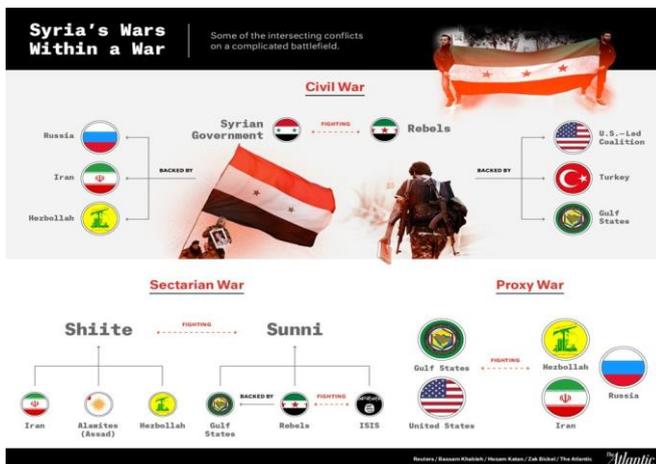
Among all above, the West's need for the access to oil bears plentiful connotation. This need focuses attention on the Persian Gulf area. Although there are tremendous prospects for the growth of substitute sources of energy, for the emergence of new primary sources of energy, and for the success of energy conservation efforts, there is still slight qualm that the US and Western reliance on oil from Persian Gulf will remain the principal Western interest in the Middle East for the foreseeable future. Its protection was assumed to require the accomplishment of regional stability (Novik & Starr: 1981: 1).



Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1280157/who-is-fighting-who-in-syria>

External Dimensions to the Conflict

Syria's geo-strategic position and history have added an imperative external dimension to the conflict there. As the Syrian crisis has heaped on, it has roiled all of its neighbors, not just tipping up the regional status quo, however also menacing to ignite a broader regional conflagration. The new dynamics the conflict has unleashed, together with a regional power struggle between rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran, heightened Sunni-Shia sectarianism, the fanning of Kurdish separatism, and the undermining of Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan, among other regional consequences (Calabrese, 2012). Syed (2013: 121) writes that "Syria is a redoubtable partner of Iran and supporter of Hezbollah in Lebanon. It is the only Arab country allied with the Shiite Iran in the Sunni populated region. A shift in regime will broadly manipulate the balance of power in the region".



Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1280157/who-is-fighting-who-in-syria>

Strategic Chessboard & Limitations of Saudi Arabia

The supreme value of the Middle East lies in its location at the world's cross-roads as the nucleus of the commercial arteries running from East to West and West to East, as the ground of power politics where ideas collided with ideas, civilizations united with civilizations, where the birth of every thesis brought an anti-thesis leading to a synthesis (Abdulla, 1967: 1).

On this strategic chess board of Middle East, the Limitations of Saudi Arabia had been more than its capabilities. Among Saudi capabilities, there were following 3 key factors;

1. The foremost was its Oil (Black gold)
2. It was being backed by America and the Western Europe
3. It had the status religious leadership of 57 Islamic Countries

As far as Saudi limitations were concerned;

- i. It had no experience of any prolonged regional war.
- ii. Its Ground, Naval and Air armies were not war-tested.
- iii. Its weapons totally depended on Western imports.
- iv. It had less war-stamina as compared to Iran
- v. Last but not least, its civil population could not be considerate for any long war.

The Block of Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and UAE which supported Saudi Arabia, is compared with Iranians, it is found that the Block (Iraq, Syria and Lebanon) had the brilliant military history that supported Iran. All these countries have seen and fought wars for years and had also been defeated. In this backdrop, Saudi Arabia could evidently assess that if Iranians formed a Shia block, ranging from Tehran to Beirut, then its next target would be Riyadh. Therefore, it was the need of the hour for Saudi Arabia and therefore, it had asked the Superpower for help too. While on the other hand, the US had destroyed its own economic and military machinery by directly involving in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

Emergence of ISIS

With the emergence of Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on the world scene about 3 or years back, the world noticed that an armed force has been generated from North-Eastern Iraq, named ISIS. It very soon killed the people from Yazidi Tribe (The Shites). This tribe was inhabited from Kurdistan to Mosul⁴ and then this armed force started marching towards Mosul. The questions were raised about ISIS;

1. Who has organized ISIS?
2. Who was providing financial support to it?
3. Where from the weapons and gun powders are coming?
4. Who is training them?

⁴ t is a big city of Northern Iraq, abundant in oil wells

5. Where is its leadership and who are those people?

The main ambiguous answers were given by the Western media which were not only unbelievable but also meaningless. Few people named Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi that he wanted to revive the Caliphate Period and Iraq and Syria were told as its fountainhead. Then it was told that it has access to India and Bangladesh and its incursion was supposed to be spread up to Northern and Eastern part of Afghanistan. The main hidden motive behind this fabricated information was also to threaten Pakistan. America invaded Afghanistan with the sole objective of denuclearizing Pakistan. The millions of ISAF Troops were not only brought to defeat and dismantle Al Qaeda and Taliban. The result was a lost war in Afghanistan with the withdrawal of NATO forces in 2014. The left over NATO troops are 1, 3000, used for training and counter-terrorism operations, including 98, 00 US Troops⁵ (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11371138>).

Hence, with the passage of time, the reality dawned that since the Superpower and NATO forces had been devastated in the wars of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. It goes beyond saying that having the best Air power, Defence Hardware (Weapons), Intelligence and combat leadership, the West had been able to gain the upper hand over the conservative and backward societies of the countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Yet the reality cannot be brushed aside that in doing so, these Western powers have been wrecked. Therefore, the Western powers wanted to evade from Afghanistan and Iraq without losing the military glory and pride and being ignoble. Still if they prolonged their stay, it was just like committing the suicide. Saddam Hussein was Pro-Saudi and though his act of invading Kuwait was not appreciated yet he was considered to be a counter against Iran. After his absence from the scene, Saudi Arabia was under the apprehensions that now Iran will emerge as a power in the region. And if Iraq and Iran unite militarily, Saudi Arabia can never defeat them

Americans had informed Saudi Arabia that would be leaving Iraq but the vacuum created from withdrawal of American troops, was not going to be filled by Saudi military forces. In this backdrop, this vacuum was filled by the Iranian military forces and then Saudi Arabia realized the real situation. Consequently, it asked US for help and then America offered a plan with the help of CIA which was as follow;

- i.** To contact Saddam's Sunni troops who had hidden themselves in Kurdistan's mountains after attack on Baghdad
- ii.** They might be given training by American military officers
- iii.** They might be made ready with the American weapons
- iv.** This entire project may be kept in secret

⁵ Following the completion of the mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) at the end of 2014, a new, follow-on, NATO-led mission called Resolute Support was launched on 1 January 2015 to provide further training, advice and assistance for the Afghan security forces and institutions. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw, Allied leaders decided to extend the presence of RSM beyond 2016. For further details see; Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. Retrieved from http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm

- v. This force may be named as “ISIS” (Daesh)
- vi. This force may occupy the oil wells of Musal and Kirkuk
- vii. This oil may be exported under the supervision of Americans
- viii. Then the same Daesh may step forward and occupy Baghdad and defeat Shia military leadership there.
- ix. Then it may proceed and occupy Kufa and Basra in South and reinstate the era of Saddam Hussein
- x. All the expenditures of this operation may be paid by Saudi Arabia (Khan, 2016).

With this idea, Daesh moved from North-Western Iraq and made attacks on Northern and Central Syria (Aleppo). It defeated the dutiful army of Assad and then marched forward to Damascus. The joint military and financial aid of America and Saudi Arabia was becoming successful.

Russia-Iran New Phase of Military Cooperation

When this plan was disclosed, Iran thought to make investment. Its biggest achievement was that it made Russian President Valadimir Putin agreed that it may assure to commit its forces in Iraq which was acceded by Putin over some conditions. The approach entails three factors;

- I. Russia is increasing its military facilities in Syria.
- II. Russia remains dedicated to the survival of Assad’s regime and its fight against ISIS in Syria.
- III. Russia proclaimed an intelligence sharing and flight corridor agreement with Iran and Iraq.

In earlier history, Russian goals in the Middle East were mostly limited to Turkey and Iran. Russian interest in the Middle East started almost all together with that of the Western powers after the middle of the 18th century “as a result of the progressive enhancement of the region’s significance in two respects”; As

- a) Foundation of key commodities
- b) A conduit of communications (Abdulla, 1967: 84).

Over the past year, Russia and Iran have penetrated a new phase of military collaboration first-time in their relations since the end of World War II. Iran-Russia relations have attained an incomparable peak, stimulated by military cooperation in Syria, a joint disclosure of the global order, and shared criticism of Western policy in the Middle East (Geranmayeh & Liik, 2016).

In the words of the British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond ,”There is one man on this planet who can end the civil war in Syria by making a phone call and that’s Mr. Putin,” (Osborne, 2016). Kozhanov (2016) state that “many argue that Russian-Iranian cooperation in Syria is only opportunistic (a result of short-term interests), conditionally overtaking equally outstanding disparities. Though this is acceptable, the alliance is however supported by a number of intrinsic

commonalities in their extensive revelation of international relations. The Western governments and commentators have concentrated on the first and second components of the new Russian approach. The third part, nonetheless, is likewise important for the geo-political developments in the region and justifies an in depth analysis. This agreement serves two key objectives.

- a) It improves the capabilities of all three governments in their fight against ISIS.
- b) It also spawns a precious flight route between Russia and Syria.

Since some European countries, such as Bulgaria, have stopped their space to Russian military flights, access to Syria via Iran and Iraq is fundamental for Moscow's Middle East policy. The impact of this Russian approach in Iraq will be mostly on domestic politics and the relative balance of power among contending blocs in Baghdad. For Iran, on the other hand, the cooperation with Russia will mainly influence the foreign policy environment and the dynamics of its continuing tensions with United States and Saudi Arabia. If Russian concern in Syria intensifies, which seems to be the case, it will have to spread out its military cooperation with Iran. This will propose Iran more control in its economic and military relations with Russia. Iran's cooperation with Russia will also reinforce its position in the recent proxy war with Saudi Arabia and its partners. Not only will it become trickier for Saudi Arabia and Turkey to get rid of the Assad regime, nonetheless they will be more precautious to ascend the level of existing tensions with Iran (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/09/bulgaria-denies-air-access-syria-bound-russia-planes-150908132827726.html>).

“Earlier, if the proxy war with Saudi Arabia were to grow into a direct military conflict, the Saudis would have had the upper hand militarily by counting on the support of the United States against an isolated Iran. Closer military liaison with Russia and access to advanced Russian military hardware might, conversely, change the balance of power and make Iran keener to challenge Saudi operations against its allies. For as long as Russia's military operations in Syria persist, it will have to count on the support of Iran and Iraq. Accordingly, it will have to be more receptive to these countries' demands for diplomatic and military support”. (<http://theconversation.com/russian-cooperation-with-iran-and-iraq-has-broader-consequences-than-saving-assad-49164>). In this milieu, Iran did not let Daesh strengthen its hold in Iraq, rather ascertained to support Basharul Assad.

Conclusion

The Saudis' strong opposition to the Assad regime is embedded in a blend of personal and geopolitical impulses. From a strategic outlook, Saudi Arabia aspires to have a strong hand in developing a “new Syria”, i.e. one that is not aligned with Iran. On the domestic front, the conflict in Syria has produced a breach for senior clerics to enhance anti-sectarian rhetoric. On the other hand, this has reinforced the existing outlook of estrangement and hostility among Saudi Shi'a youth. “The Syrian conflict has also sharpened the incongruity between Saudi Arabia's external policy of supporting revolution and its domestic policy of repressing protests. This blend of personal, political, and sectarian *raison d'être* has made Saudi Arabia one of the most vocal regional actors in demanding an end to the

Assad regime and has interpreted into considerable Saudi financial support for the opposition, which has used the money to buy arms on the black market” (Calabrese, 2012).

- a. When Damascus felt the danger, then Iran requested Putin to bring its forces in Syria and face American air and naval forces. In this context, Russian forces landed on the ports of Akdeniz and Antalya and aerodrome. It further sent its aircraft carrier fleet via baheera rome to Akdeniz.
- b. Now the Superpower realized that Russia is ready to run risk of Third World War and if this war erupts, then China will also side with Iran and Russia. Therefore, the US President Obama with the consultation of his administration decided not to start a brawl with Russia (and China). And thus Assad will remain the control in Damascus
- c. Under this state of affairs, Saudi Arabia decided to have enmity with the US.
- d. Now the current scenario is that ISIS is at its weakest position. The dutiful forces of Syria have occupied Aleppo. Daesh is fleeing from the Northern borders areas of Iraq and Syria and Palmyra monumental ruins
- e. Saudi Arabia has abandoned financial support to Daesh and it entirely depends on the export of oil wells of Musal.
- f. Iran’s allied Iraqi forces have reached near Musal and heavy battles are being fought there. And it seems in offing when a day will come when the present Iraqi leadership will occupy the whole Iraq.

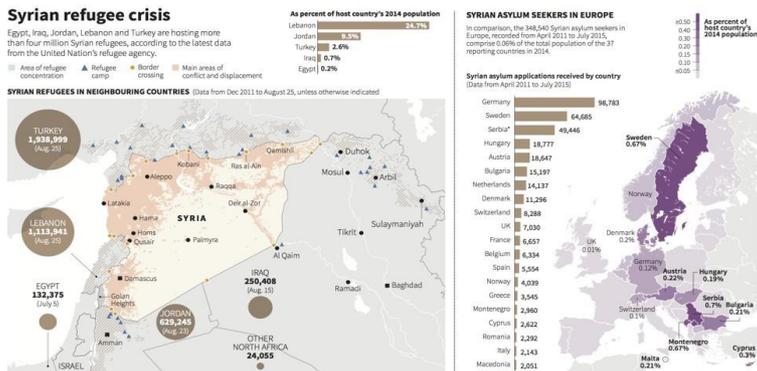
If somehow in the future, the new elected US President Donald Trump takes a decision to leave Iraq then Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya’s bloc will emerge in a reality. If Russia and America both evade Middle East, then Iran would emerge as sole regional power. Though Israel would not be appeased with American withdrawal, but Trump has his own interests. The political situation of this region is still shaky. It will take some time until it becomes static and stabilized. Nonetheless, the next four years of new US President will decide the future of Syria, Iraq and other countries of this region. It can be said that in the present war and conflicts, Syria is not playing key role rather the secondary one. The real actor in this game is Iran which is being backed by Russia while on the other hand; Saudi Arabia is playing its role, being backed by US. This Syrian war is indeed a proxy war. That means Iran and Saudi Arabia are fighting a proxy war while those at its back, i-e; Russia and US are the actors behind this proxy war so as to boost their influence. The most important aspect of this war is the Arab outlook which Daesh and its supporters hold. This war is indeed between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This difference and enmity is between two sects, i-e; Shia-Sunni conflict.

Every event that occurs today has a connection with the event that occurred yesterday, yesterday’s event is connected with that of the previous day and so it goes on (Abdulla, 1967). The US is now a major Middle Eastern power and will remain so far atleast another 50 years. Nothing can avert this. Although US global Hegemony may decline in general, the US militarism will remain strong for

indefinite future. This is part of the new International Order, in general. The US population, the Middle Eastern Region and the World population in general, are behind the curve in accepting this (Girdner, 2008: 334). Gilsinan (2015) states that “the Syria’s conflict is not only partly a civil war (of government against people) but also a religious war (ditching Assad’s minority Alawite Sect, linked with Shiite fighters from Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, against Sunni rebel groups); and ever more a proxy war (featuring Russia and Iran against the United States and its allies)”.

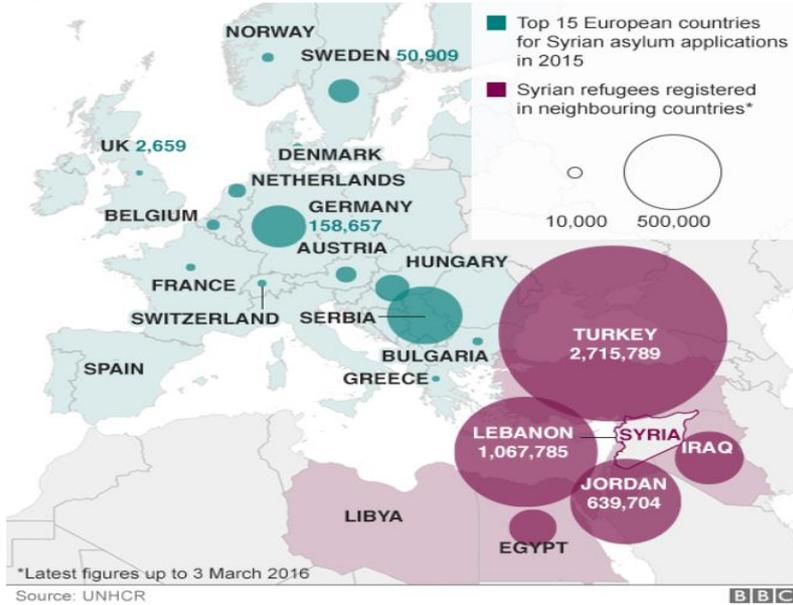
The Syrian conflict has the potential to transform the regional balance of power radically with all players anxiously looking at the gains and losses to their regional position and power and countering thus. Whether Syria faces an unending military impasse, the crumbling of the Assad regime or fall down followed by civil war and disintegration, numerous regional trends emerge to be unfolding in the country that will persist to impact the calculations of, conditions in, and relationships among the regional states (Calabrese, 2012).

The forces in Middle East who opposed US policies were labeled “Islamofascists” and said to be spreading Islamic Fascism. In the words of George W. Bush, “They are heirs to fascists, to Nazis, to communists and other totalitarians of the 20th century” (Lobe, 2006). In quest to increase US Global hegemony, the US has infact been weakened. Aspiring to contain Iran and weaken or crumple the Islamic regime, Iran has been significantly reinforced. In the hunt for bringing regime change and set up a stable democracy in Iraq, the deposing of Saddam has brought turmoil and sectarian rivalry, even throwing in doubt the territorial integrity of the country. On the lookout for ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban, the overthrow of the regime has only strengthened radicalism as a force and pushed Pakistan into greater insecurity. Seeking to contain Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the group has only strengthened and endangered Mubarak government. Seeking to contain Hamas, the party was elected democratically. Seeking to crush Hezbollah in Lebanon, the organization only grew stronger. Syria, which has largely avoided the conflict, along with the Jordan, has become a haven for refugees fleeing the chaos in Iraq (Girdner, 2008: 358).



Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/syrian-civil-war-guide-isis/410746>

Syrians in neighbouring countries and Europe



Source: Syria: The Story of the Conflict. (2016, March 11). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>

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