

Syria: History, The Civil War and Peace Prospects

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'War does not determine who is right- only who is left.' - Bertrand Russell

Abstract

When the 'Arab Spring' reached Syria, its Pharaoh, Bashar al-Assad, was in no mood to give up easily. The brutal repression of peaceful anti-government protests pushed the country towards a civil war. The Syrian government, the opposition rebels, foreign powers and Islamic militants are all the architects of the Syrian quagmire. The war has led to catastrophic consequences. Hundreds of thousands of people have been massacred with ancient towns and modern cities being turned into rubble. The war has brought devastation to Syria. Firstly, there has been a huge loss in terms of human deaths and damages to property. The war has created a huge refugee crisis. Millions of Syrians have been uprooted from their homes due to the war. The Syrian Crisis has given us a few lessons. The first of such lessons is that dictators and oppressors cannot rule easily. They will face resistance and opposition until the spirit of freedom is alive in human beings. We also learned that the lust for power can lead mankind to commit brutalities of the worst kind. It was also observed that nation-states view international politics through the lens of 'self-interest' and have lost sight of a peaceful vision for the world.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Civil War, Syria, Middle East, ISIS, Militancy, Peace

1. Introduction

Why are men eternally at war with each other? The lusts for power, the longing for freedom, the struggle for an ideology, the love for one's homeland, or simply the need to survive, are some of the reasons. Unfortunately, all these human passions can be seen at their worst in -The Cradle of Civilizations- Syria. It all started in Tunisia, when the poor, hopeless and despondent street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi burnt himself in frustration in front of the Tunisian Parliament. The event created a wave of anti-government protests across the Middle East which resulted in the overthrow of despotic rulers, who had ruled tyrannically for decades. When the 'Arab Spring' reached Syria, its Pharaoh, Bashar al-Assad, was in no mood to give up easily. The brutal repression of peaceful anti-government protests pushed the country towards a civil war. What followed thereafter is best explained by a Pashto proverb: *'When the oven is hot, everyone bakes his bread in it.'* The Syrian government, the opposition rebels, foreign powers and Islamic militants are all the architects of the Syrian quagmire. The war has led to catastrophic consequences. Hundreds of thousands of people have been massacred with ancient towns and modern cities being turned into rubble. By now, the Syrian army and its allies have turned the tide against the rebels and Assad seems to be on the winning side. However, for the sake of the Syrian people, the world community should push forward the peace process, which until now has failed to end the war. *Hence, the Syrian civil war, whose roots lie in history,*

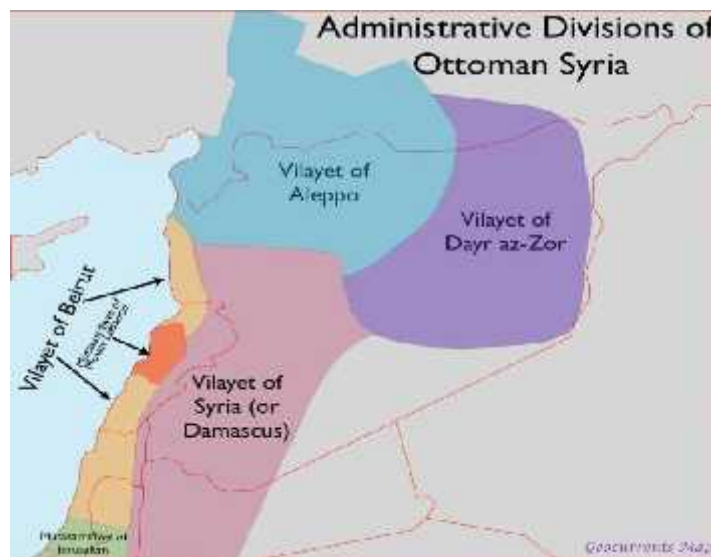
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involves a complex web of stakeholders; and despite the fact that the war has caused much destruction, yet the prospects of a peace settlement are bleak. However, to understand the contemporary civil war, it must be put into historical context. This requires a look into Syria's recent history, which shall be undertaken in the subsequent discussion.

2. Historical Contextualization

i) The Ottoman Era

Syria had been a part of the Ottoman Empire for around 400 years by the end of the 19th century. It was called 'Bilad-u-Sham,' that consisted of present-day Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Iraq. Ottoman Syria was divided into four Vilayets: the Vilayet of Aleppo, the Villayet of Day Az-Zor, the Vilayet of Damascus, and the Vilayet of Beirut (ENCYCLOPEDIA BRI- TA NNICA, 2017).



ii) The Mandate Period

In the First World War, the Ottoman Empire sided with the Germans. Even before the war ended, the clever Englishmen and the proud Frenchmen, with the assent of the imperialist Russians, were secretly negotiating to dismember the Ottoman Empire. In November, 1915, Sir Mark Sykes of Britain and Francois George-Picot of France sat across a table in a tent and divided Ottoman Syria between themselves. They simply drew lines on a map- essentially a piece of paper- to create new states without any regard for religions, ethnicities, tribes, cultures and history of the people. This is

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essentially the root cause of the emergence of the present-day fault lines in the Middle Eastern states, including Syria. The negotiations led to the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May, 1916(Sykes, 1916). Through the agreement, Britain was promised Iraq and Palestine (including present-day Israel and Jordan) whereas France was promised Syria and Lebanon. Subsequently, the Treaty of Versailles (1919)gave a formal validation to the secret arrangement through the creation of the League of Nations and its Mandate System(Versailles, 1919). A Mandate was an authorization granted to member states of the League of Nations to govern a former German or Turkish colony(Chauhan, 2010). The typical imperial justification was that these people were not yet ready for self-government. Resultantly, France got the mandate over Syria and Lebanon.



David Fromkin, in his book, 'A Peace to End All Peace,' discusses the notion that the present-day Middle East cannot be understood without an appreciation of its formation in the aftermath of the First World War. He states that by 1922, European powers had divided the former Ottoman Empire into states and puppet regimes, drawing boundaries and imposing rulers, while ignoring the wishes of those who actually lived there(Fromkin, 1989). It was the nature of the division process that led to the creation of states-without-nations in the Middle East. The newly drawn boundaries cut across religious, social and ethnic groups. The presence of such antagonistic and conflicting groups in these drawn-up states posed a huge threat to the subsequent process of nation-building. Such divergent groups are fighting each other

in Syria today. Thus, Syria remained under French rule till its independence on 24th October, 1945.

iii) Post- Independence Period

The fundamental problem faced by the new state was its ethnically, religiously and socially heterogeneous nature. It consisted of a majority of Sunni Muslims (70 percent) along a minority of Alawites (a sect of Shias), Druze, Turkmen, Assyrian and Christians. On top of that, the Syrian society had been starkly divided into the rich townsmen on the one hand and the poor peasants and nomads on the other side. In the initial period after independence, the Sunnis were in power. The country faced a series of coups that ultimately led to a Baathist Coup in March, 1963. Later on, in 1970, General Hafez al-Assad, an alawite, seized power. Afterwards, he was sworn in as the president on 14th March, 1971. Hafez al-Assad was a shrewd and clever statesman. In the ensuing years, it was he who shaped the nature of the Syrian polity. Throughout his regime, he was popular because he pursued policies of economic development, promotion of education, strengthening of the military and vehement opposition to Israel. However, a nexus emerged between the Baath Party, the military and the bureaucracy, who repressed all opposition with ruthless brutality through a vast intelligence apparatus. The majority Sunnis resented their subjugation by a minority Alawite ruling elite. These feelings of resentment resurfaced during the anti-government protests of the Arab Spring. The reminiscence of the years of subjugation under the Alawites strengthens the resolve of the rebels- mainly Sunni- to fight the government.

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After the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000, his son, Bashar al-Assad assumed power. However, he continued with his father's policies and did not liberalize the polity. Furthermore, he was not shrewd enough to remain a part of the rich, power and luxurious elite- as his father was- and still command the loyalty of the people. Furthermore, he was financially corrupt, unlike his father. The luxurious lifestyle of the rich elite pitted the poor, unemployed and suppressed citizenry against the governing elite. These feelings reached their peak by the time the Arab Spring arrived. This brings the discussion to the contemporary civil war which shall be discussed subsequently.

3. The Civil War

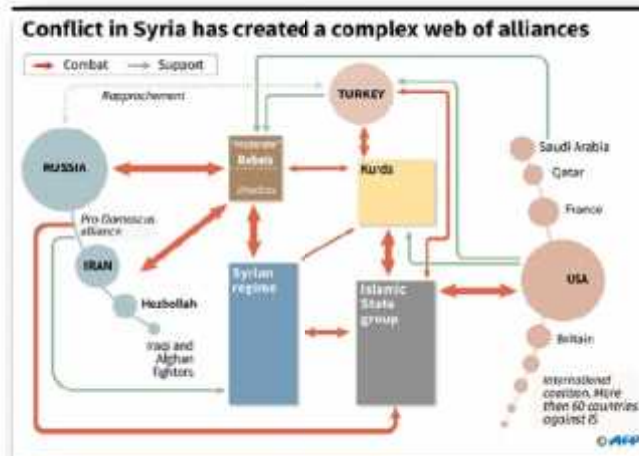
i) Origin

In March 2011, anti-government protests erupted in Syria. These protests were inspired by similar protests across the Middle East as a result of the Arab Spring. The Assad regime responded aggressively against the peaceful protests and aggravated the situation. He unleashed the security and intelligence services to break up rallies and demonstrations, often with live fire, and to arrest dissidents. However, events took a ghastly turn. By the end of 2011, armed warfare began between the government forces and the opposition rebels. In the war, the government- essentially the Alawite-ruling elite and the state machinery- are pitted against an alliance of the opposition rebels- mainly Sunnis. However, the complexity of the war has intensified due to the interference of global and regional powers as well as Islamic Jihadists in the imbroglio. Hence, it is necessary to first understand who is fighting who in Syria before any peace plan can be envisioned.



ii) Stakeholders- Who is fighting who in Syria?

The stakeholders in the Syrian Civil War can broadly be categorized into four groups: the regime, the opposition rebels, foreign powers and Islamic jihadists. The goals, motives and agendas of each of these groups will be discussed subsequently. (AFP, 2016).



a) The Regime

The regime is pitted against the numerous rebel groups and Syrian and foreign jihadists. It is bolstered by nearly 300,000 soldiers of the Syrian Army and allied forces (AFP, 2016). It is primarily fighting against the largest anti-regime rebel alliance: the Army of Conquest. President Assad has pledged not to give up until he retakes the whole country. The regime is also combatting the Islamic State, which was expelled from the Ancient City of Palmyra in March, 2016. The regime is also in conflict with the Syrian Kurds who aim to form an independent Kurdistan in the Middle East. The army is also supported by 200,000 irregular forces, mainly from the National Defence Forces. The regime also has the support of around 5000-8000 forces of the powerful Shia militia Hezbollah and fighters from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Russia strongly supports the regime both militarily and diplomatically. It has supported the regime through providing it air support (AFP, 2017).

b) The Opposition

The opposition primarily consists of anti-government rebels (including the Kurds) whose aim is to overthrow the government. The largest anti-regime alliance, 'The Army of Conquest', groups Islamist factions like Ahrar al-Sham and Faylaq Al-sham with jihadists such as Fateh al-Sham Front, which was previously known as Al-Nusra Front (an affiliate of Al-Qaeda) (AFP, 2016). Initially, the main group fighting against the regime was the Free Syrian Army (FSA) but now it has weakened and disintegrated. It was formed by the defected officers of the Syrian Armed Forces. However, it has diminished its power due to infighting.

The West supports those opposition forces which are believed to be 'moderate', which does not include Al-Nusra. These countries, including the US, UK and France, support the opposition to overthrow the regime. The West has publicly called for Assad to step down and called for the democratization of Syria (AFP, 2016). On the other hand, the opposition is also supported covertly by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The rationale for supporting the opposition in Turkey's case is the 'democratic' argument whereas the motivation for Saudi Arabia and Qatar is the 'sectarian' reason. Both these countries want the removal of the 'Alawite (Shia) Regime' and its replacement by the 'Sunni Opposition'. These countries are also supporting the IS. However, the myriad opposition groups differ on their vision for the country. For instance, The Fateh Al-Sham aims to create an Islamic emirate in Syria (AFP, 2016).



The other group that belongs to the opposition, but with different aims, is the ‘Syrian Kurds.’ The Kurds are an ethnic group who were divided into three countries during the colonial demarcation of boundaries. They live primarily along the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. They were since long struggling for an independent Kurdistan in these countries but were largely unsuccessful. However, with the instability and vacuum created by the upheaval in Syria, the dream of an independent Kurdistan has revived. Therefore, the first goal of the Syrian Kurds is to occupy the Kurd areas during the civil war and negotiate for an autonomous Kurd region within Syria after the war. Their long-term goal is the formation of an independent Kurdistan state that encompasses the Kurds of other neighboring countries- Syria, Iraq and Iran- as well (AFP, 2016). They are largely out of the conflict between the government and the opposition but Assad has shown no tolerance for them. Assad has sternly opposed the formation of any independent Kurd region. In August 2016, a regime aircraft attacked Kurdish forces for the first time in Hasakeh, which was jointly controlled by the government and the Kurds at that time. Moreover, the Kurds are proving a formidable force against IS. The Syrian Kurds, through their ‘People’s Protection Unit’, have formed a semi-autonomous region in northeast and northern Syria. They are a crucial partner of the US-led coalition fighting IS: the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF group’s various groups who are combating IS. In short, the opposition to the regime is massive and multi-faceted.

c) Foreign Powers

Regional as well as global powers are also adding fuel to fire in Syria. Each foreign power is pursuing a proxy war in Syria for its own narrow interests. Russia is steadfast in making sure that Assad is not ousted. It is publicly carrying out aerial strikes against IS in Syria since September, 2015. However, in reality the strikes are aimed at the rebels and have helped Assad to recapture areas in several provinces. Russia is also seeking a diplomatic victory by competing with the US to shape negotiations between the rebels and the regime. It has vetoed, along with China, several UNSC resolutions calling for action against the Assad regime under Article 7 of the UN Charter. Russia's motive is to strengthen its power base in the Middle East through partnership with the Assad regime. The formation of a new alliance: Russia-Turkey-Iran can also be seen emerging from the Syrian situation (Fisk, 2016). The alliance shifts the balance of power towards Russia (in comparison to US) and Shia Iran (in comparison to Sunni Saudis) in the Middle East. Moreover, the cost of the alliance will be paid by the Turks. Russia, Iran and Turkey do not want the formation of independent Kurd state. Thus, Putin is reaping the best out of the Syrian situation.

The United States has called on Assad to step down and is covertly supporting the rebels against the regime. However, it is primarily focusing against the elimination of IS (AFP, 2016). It is leading the coalition of around sixty countries fighting against IS, the Syrian Democratic Forces. Likewise, other Western countries are backing the rebels and fighting against IS simultaneously. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are funding the rebels for clearly sectarian reasons. They are striving for the formation of a Sunni government in Syria. Iran, on the other hand, seeks to protect Assad by providing financial and military support. Iran's motives are the preservation of the Shia regime in Syria as well as bolstering of its own role in the Arab World. However, Turkey's position on Syria is the most complex and paradoxical.

Turkey called for the stepping down of Assad in the beginning phase of the civil war. During that period, it sided with the rebels and also helped in the united fight against IS. It also vehemently opposed the formation of an independent Kurd region in Syria which can be a prelude to Kurd demands for a Kurdish region in Turkey as well. Unfortunately, on 24th November, 2015, Turkey shot down a Russian jet. This made the Turkish hunt of Kurds difficult. Erdogan soon flew to Moscow and mended relations. An implicit agreement was made: Russia will allow Turkey to hunt the Kurds and Turkey will, in return, lessen their support for the opposition and soften the 'Assad must go' rhetoric (Dawn, 2016). Now Erdogan is able to target the Kurds with a comparative ease. Turkish forces made incursions into Turkey- with Russian implicit approval- in August this year in order to fight against IS and the pro-American Kurdish militia, the YPG. In the words of Robert Fisk, 'The IS has been sitting in Jarabulus for many months; it is the advance of the American-armed Kurdish YPG militia along the Turkish border towards Jarabulus that worries Sultan Erdogan.'

(Fisk, 2016) Turkey have regarded both the YPG and the IS as the same type of terrorists. It has alleged that the YPG has links with the PKK or Kurdistan Workers' Party. The PKK is being hounded by Erdogan in Turkey due to their anti-state activities. The PKK aims at the establishment of an autonomous Kurd region in Turkey which Erdogan fiercely opposes. The fact is that neither Turkey wants a Kurdish mini-state on their frontier nor the Syrian regime wants to lose any territory to the Kurds. Hence, it is the fate of the Kurds that unite Russia and Turkey- who otherwise supported opposite sides- in Syria.

d) Islamic Jihadists

Like other parts of the Middle East, the Islamic Jihadists has also exploited the Syrian Civil War for its own interests. Although a plethora of jihadist groups are engaged in the war, but it is the Islamic State, the Al-Nusra Front and Hezbollah who have the main stakes in the war.

a) The Islamic State

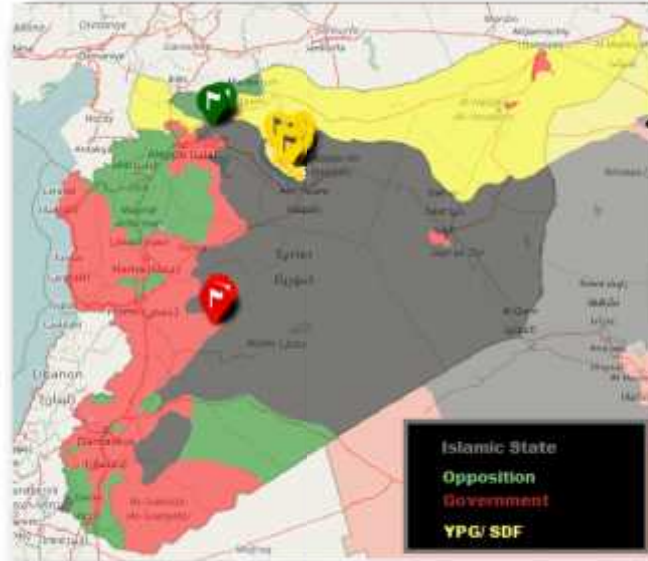
The Islamic State has captured much of Syria's territory due to the political vacuum created in the aftermath of the Civil War. Its primary aim in Syria is to expand its proclaimed 'caliphate' that it has carved out in Syria as well as Iraq (AFP, 2016). The Islamic State is fighting against the regime as well the opposition and in fact, against everyone else. The Syrian Army has fought against it in several parts of the country and expelled it from the Ancient city of Palmyra in March, 2016 (Dawn, 2016). On the other hand, IS has also fought against rebel groups and even rival jihadist groups. The reason is that IS considers everyone an enemy who does not pledge allegiance to its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Moreover, it is not openly backed by any country but it is widely held that Saudi Arabia and Qatar supports it financially. However, its main sources of income are from taxation and resources in the territory it holds in Syria and Iraq.

The United States' primary focus in Syria is the eradication of IS and is leading an anti-IS coalition of more than 60 countries. The Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Unit) is the only partner of the US-led coalition which is giving a tough time to the Islamic State due to its presence on the ground. The rest of the anti-IS campaign of the coalition is mostly air-based. Moreover, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of diverse factions, is also battling the IS. Similarly, Russia, Turkey and the West are united as far as the Islamic State is concerned. Robert Fisk foresees that if the Islamic State is expelled from Mosul (currently under IS control), its fighters will flee to Syria (Fisk, 2016). Thus, the Islamic State is one of the beneficiaries of the civil war.

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b) Fateh al-Sham

In comparison to the IS, the Fateh al-Sham has proved much dangerous. It was previously called the Al-Nusra Front and is an affiliate of Al-Qaeda. It is allied with the rebels in its fight against the regime. However, its main aim is the strengthening of the organization in Syria. It is also pitted against the Russians, Iran, Hezbollah and Kurds (AFP, 2016). The Fateh al-Sham has a two-pronged strategy: to help other rebels in overthrowing Assad and to build an Islamic Emirate in Syria. It is not openly backed by any country but is secretly funded by Qatar. It is currently the major guerilla army in Syria. It is sometimes in alliance with the IS, sometimes at war with it, depending upon the interests of the groups. However, the Fateh is a more powerful enemy for the Syrian regime and the West as compared to the IS because it has more Syrians among its ranks than IS. They are proving to be tougher and tactically minded than the Islamic State militants (Fisk, 2016). In July 2016, they inflicted heavy casualties on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces and others (Afghan and Iraqi Allies) who were fighting along them in the 'rif' district, a countryside south of Aleppo.



c) Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a Shia, Islamist militant group and political party based in Lebanon. It is defending Assad in the war clearly due to sectarian reasons. It has fought against the rebels, IS and the Al-Nusra Front. It has proved successful in taking over many areas for the regime. Thus, Islamic Jihadists do have a huge stake in the war (Dawn, 2016). In short, all these stakeholders have created, in the words of Hobbes, 'a war of all against all,' in Syria. Unfortunately, the worst sufferers are the Syrian people who neither have any supporters nor any helpers. All they have is misery, death, hunger and hopelessness. Now let us understand the position of each party at the moment.

iii) Current Situation

Currently, the regime is on the winning side. It holds around 35 percent of the country. These areas include strategic cities and areas such as Damascus, central Homs and Hama, the coast, and large parts of Aleppo. It controls territory that contains sixty percent of the population. Its major was the retaking of Palmyra in March 2016 from IS and the recent occupation of Aleppo from the hands of the rebels. On the other hand, the rebels including Fateh al-Sham control around 12 percent of the country. The greater share of their land is in Idlib province which is controlled by the Army of Conquest. The Islamic State, although is receiving setbacks since 2015, holds around thirty five percent of Syria. However, much of this territory is uninhabited. It rules Raqqa province and the Deir Ezzor province on the Iraqi border. Yet, it also present in a few other regions. Furthermore, the Kurds (YPG) along with the SDF control around eighteen percent of Syrian territory. This includes around three-quarters of the Syrian-Turkish border. They have formed a federal region in territories under their hold. Thus, Syria lies in tatters with each party controlling one or other part of the country.

iv) The Effects of the War

The war has brought devastation to Syria. Firstly, there has been a huge loss in terms of human deaths and damages to property. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, since the beginning of the civil war till 13th December, 2016, approximately 312,000 persons have been killed (Fisk, 2016). The adjoining table gives a picture of the death toll (SOHR, 2016).

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Total Deaths	312,000
Civilians	90,506
Syrian Army Soldiers	60,309
Women	10,540
Children	15,948
Hezbollah Fighters	1,387
Pro-Regime Militias	5,330
Islamic Jihadists (IS/ Fateh etc.)	54,941

In addition to this, around two million people have been injured. Moreover, the economic losses are estimated to be around 185 billion pounds. In the view of a Syrian consultancy, the reconstruction of the Syrian infrastructure will take around 15 to 20 years (Fisk, 2016).

Secondly, the war has created a huge refugee crisis. Millions of Syrians have been uprooted from their homes due to the war. According to the UN, around 13.5 million people are in need of human assistance in Syria. It also declared the number of Internally Displace Persons in Syria at around 6.3 million whereas those who fled the country are around 4.8 million (OCHA, 2017). The children of the refugees- specifically those living in Arab countries- have been deprived of the dream of education and if they are getting any, it is pathetic. Some of the refugees are entering Europe through a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in risky ships and boats. Hundreds of deaths have been reported in these journeys and those who have successfully crossed into Europe, are still haunted by the trauma of the terrifying journey. Despite some well-intentioned words in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the dominant feeling among migrant and refugee aid organizations remains that little action is being taken for the refugees (Azad, 2016).

Thirdly, as discussed earlier, the war has strengthened Islamic Jihadists in the Middle East and specifically, in Syria. These jihadists also kill Christians, blow up churches and chop the heads of their enemies. Syria has become what Afghanistan was in the 80s. It has become a center of radicalization and extremism where thousands of fighters arrive after abandoning their home countries. Currently, both Sunni and Shia fighters are moving to the battlefield of Syria to participate in the 'holy war'. Shockingly, fighters from around eighty countries are taking part in the Syrian War. These include the descendants of Muslim immigrants in Europe who are born and raised there. However, the majority of the fighters are from Muslim-majority states including Pakistan (Dawn, 2016).

Finally, the war has turned the ancient beauty of Syria into the ugliness that accompanies war. The old city of Aleppo and its wonderful mosque- and the Ottoman heart of Homs- have been reduced to rubble. In short, history has once again given us a lesson of the ‘fruits’ of war, as seen in Syria.

4. Peace Prospects

Since the beginning of the war, there have been numerous peace efforts but none of them have succeeded in bringing peace to Syria.

i. Peace Efforts

The following peace efforts have been undertaken since the start of the war (MEI, 2017):

1. Arab League I and II (November, 2011- January, 2012)
2. Kofi Annan’s Six Point Plan (April 14, 2012- March 27, 2012)
3. Geneva I (June 30, 2012)
4. Cairo I (July 2, 2012- July 3, 2012)
5. Geneva II (January 22, 2014- February 15, 2014)
6. Cairo II (January 22, 2015- January 24, 2015)
7. Moscow I (January 26, 2015- January 29, 2015)
8. Moscow II (April 6, 2015- April 10, 2015)
9. Astana Conference (May 25, 2015- May 27, 2015)
10. Vienna I (October 30, 2015)
11. Vienna II (November 14, 2015)
12. Riyadh Conference (December 9, 2015- December 10, 2015)
13. Munich Conference (February 11, 2016- February 12, 2016)
14. Inter-Syrian Geneva Talks 2016

Instead of going into the details of each peace effort, this section will focus on the overall picture of the peace process, including impediments to the peace process. The current peace process led by UN envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, began on 29th January, 2016 in Geneva. However, this process is also stalled at the moment. The main point of disagreement between the regime and the opposition is the fate of President Assad. The regime considers a ‘minus-Assad’ formula as the red-line whereas the opposition rejects any peace deal that leaves Assad in power. Had Assad not been backed by Russia, he would have been dethroned long ago. It is Russia and China which has repeatedly vetoed UNSC resolutions calling for actions against the Syrian government under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. One of the greatest obstacles is the support given by the foreign powers to the stakeholders (Dawn, 2016). Instead the regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey as well as global powers including the US and Russia should arrive at a consensus on the Syrian issue (Fisk, 2016). First of all, all foreign powers need to stop fueling the conflict and urge their

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local 'clients' to come to the negotiating table and not leave until there is some consensus on peace. Secondly, all foreign powers should force both the regime and the opposition to make compromises. The opposition (as well as the US and the West) should be convinced to give up the 'impractical' demand of Assad's ouster because with such strong allies, it has become nearly impossible to remove him. The regime (as well as Russia and Iran) should be warned that their refusal to consider an alternative to the status quo will only strengthen the impasse. Thirdly, it should be remembered that in the midst of power politics, the world should not lose sight of the fight against jihadists such as IS and Al-Nusra. Any peace deal that does not have a united plan of action against IS will not be a good deal. Fourthly, a successful peace deal must include the Syrian Kurds in the process. Hence, the only practical solution at the moment seems to be the formation of a unity government that includes Assad, the rebels and the Kurds. This unity government shall decide the future of Syria and conduct the next elections for the transition of power to the truly elected representatives of the Syrian people.

Conclusion

The Syrian Crisis has given us a few lessons. The first of such lessons is that dictators and oppressors cannot rule easily. They will face resistance and opposition until the spirit of freedom is alive in human beings. We also learned that the lust for power can lead mankind to commit brutalities of the worst kind. It was also observed that nation-states view international politics through the lens of 'self-interest' and have lost sight of a peaceful vision for the world. It has also been dawned upon us that the United Nations has failed to bring about peace to the world. We have also witnessed the cruel consequences of war and all that it brings with itself. Finally, we have been alarmed to the potential that Islamic Jihadists have as far as capturing power in instable regions is concerned. However, this is but a fleeting moment in the flow of history. This unfortunate moment shall soon come to an end. It is hoped that the Syrian dictator shall soon lose power. It is hoped that war shall end. It is hoped that peace shall return. And it is hoped that power shall return to the people. For victory belongs to the righteous!

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