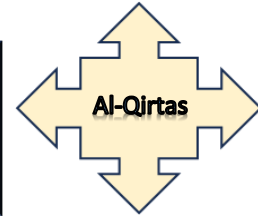


Russia-Iran's Opposition to The United States: A Glance on Syrian Crises



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Abstract

The Syrian crisis is among the most topical issues of global geopolitical and humanitarian matters. Iran and Russia participate for their local and geo-economics agenda to check the US and her allies is an aspect of it. This paper aims to analyse the main points of activity of Iran and Russia; the interest of these countries and differences in their strategies. This analysis is based on Iran's historical relation with Syria, Geopolitical intensions, the effort to retain the regional influence, and to confront regional rivals especially Saudi Arab; In view of their financial aid, military assistance, providing training grounds, etc., They have become a significant player in the matter. Russian intervention in Syria from the eve of 2015 turned into a global event and particularly into a concern for the USA. As in the case of Crimea, here again the Russian authorities are operating to safeguard their own particular strategic interests in Middle East, which is to guard the Assad regime against US, and also to spread her influence outside her geographical frontier in the realistic world power race. In this paper it is shown that Russia helped Syria by offering military assistance and through diplomatic actions as well. Here there is no external aggression, and this paper provides a systematic study of the interests shared by Iran and Russia. This paper also involves how US was irritated by Tehran as well as Moscow who contributes in defense of Syria.

Keywords: Syrian Crises, Russia, Iran, United States, Mutual Interests.

Introduction

The Syrian crisis is one of the major areas where US was trying hard to implement so called freedom. Still, the principal intention is clear to scholars of International Relations and experts and it was strategic to muster regional influence and geopolitical interests especially to scratch Iran on its adjacent neighbor (Parker, 2019, pp. 17-19). At present US one of the major objectives is win the energy resources in Syria. Thus, being neighboring to Iran and threatening its national security, the Syrian crisis was an inevitable case in the Middle East. However, the further interference of Moscow in the Syrian crisis with actively made it very important in front of the US authorities. Unlike before 2015, when USA was the single world power meddling in Syria for its own gains, Russia had entered the equation, which was the cause of concern for US 'so called' unipolarity (Olasupo, 2014). Thus, instead of reconciling with each other Russia and Iran united in order to viciously step on the throat of their common foe, namely the USA. This paper will attempt to discuss and examines the part played by both Russia and Iran with glance to how both the states influenced US incentives.

In 2015, Russia interferes with the Syrian crises, whereas in Moscow, economic growth was not up to the mark, because the inflation rates were increasing rapidly. This implication defiantly boosted her economy in the manner as outlined below. Also, such decision thicken competition between USA and Russia. Nevertheless this decision can only be regarded and justified if one takes recourse to the tenets of realist assumption. Similarly, according to the theorists of realism, power politics are considered to be much more valuable than economic (Grafov, 2019). And finally, Russia's motivation was her international objectives that necessitated her engagement in Syria. If the call for the intervention of USA against Syria was justified then on the same rationale and logic Russia could intervene in favor of Syria. It worth mentioning that there are no question about the individual relation of Iran and Syria since 1979. Syria, in turn, gave its support to Iran during the 8-year long conflict it had with Iraq. Furthermore, both countries continued on the same policy strategies such as their interest in Iraq and Lebanon for instance (Wastnidge, 2017). For more than four decades before 1991 and after the breakup of the Soviet Union, both countries had tilt towards USSR and then with Russia. At the same time, both the countries were disliked by USA were not on its favorite list. Thus, presenting the animosity of USA and Iran on a peak since the year 1979 and as Syria was one of the major priorities of USA in the strategic so called "Arab Spring" policy (Atlas, 2012).

Other bring anti-Israel sentiments and official agenda in both countries which makes both the countries Syria and Iran support each other to fur their respective national interest. As this background and the interests are historic and mutual, it may logically explain Iran's interference in Syria. In many ways Iran has given the Syria military, financial, and diplomatic support to counter the US strategies and objectives and to weaken the US influence in the Middle East. Consequently, Tehran barely succeeded in protecting Assad's regime and preventing expansionism of the USA in the region. Iran also assisted Syria in giving it logistic support in terms of facilities such as training grounds for the Iranian armed forces, ammunition storage and many

other necessities that Iran provided to ensure the sovereignty of Syria and the countering of US influence in the region.

The Syrian Dilemma

The Syrian crises started in 2011 but at the start it was uprising against the Assad's regime. It could be a fact that sectarian crisis and domestic economic problems were the main reasons which pushed the people against Assad Regime. But Syria and Iran were blamed by the US for these protests. At a later stage, US get involved in the matter and, according to scholars, their interference is an endorsement of the allegations of Assad and Iran. Especially in the city of Deraa in March 2011, many people were heard chanting some of the following slogans; "The people want the downfall of the regime" And some of these slogans were painted along different walls, in order to show their hatred towards the Assad Regime. Thus police and some of the agencies of law enforcement acted vigorously towards the protester and thus the protests started in the whole of Syria. Government claimed that especially the American involvement is an interference in the Syrian sovereignty. Iran claimed that these protests were on the basis of the agenda being operated by the US, Arab Spring.

Syria has been experiencing a lot of challenges over the years, including more than 511000 people killed and many people injured (Koolae, et al. 2021). The great majority of Syrian people forced to find another country where they could live so that to stay alive. Besides, the Syrian situation developed into the fact that international powers play with it, and it is possible to predict that this situation will only deepen. One must mark the presence and activity of terrorist organizations as a clear threat to security of the state of Syria. This paper shall endeavor to, distinguish the social facts on the Syrian crisis. It will also provide information about the large entities that virtually participated in the crises. It will be specially based on the super forums such as the Russia and United State of America as well as the power houses of the region such as Saudi Arab and Iran.

Geopolitics of Syrian Crises

The Middle East area where Syria is located is one among the stormiest geographical areas that is much feared by experts. Middle East geographic influence even the part connected regions or South west Asian countries, Mediterranean Sea and Arabian region (Scheffler, 2003). Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan are neighboring countries that once again appeared to highlight the importance of Syria's geographical location (El Arnaout, et al. 2019). The almost entire region is an oil rich region and Syria is significant actor in while she in the bond with the Russia and Iran. Therefore, USA and its allies never looked at Syria as good. Russia has diverse plan on how to relate with Syria to be related with the Syrian port Tartus for the sole purpose of developing her naval base (Harmer, 2012). Hezbollah of Lebanon's supply passage to Iran comes through Syria so as to sustain this insurgent group. Population of Syria, in terms of sectarian division: According to the statistics, about 74% people are Sunni Muslims, 10% are Alawites a sub sect of Shia Muslims, Druze and Ismailis same percentage 3% each and Shia Athna Ashari population is also

3% of total populations of Syrian (Sluglett, 2016). Sectarian tensions also contributed to the basslines of Syrian crises, being one of the drivers of the conflict.

Opposition political parties are also affected and participated in causing such crises in a bid to free themselves from Assad's rule. Some of it can be for the current leader of Syria: Bashar Al-Assad; some against but not militantly, there are others that are pro-Kurdish and therefore violently against the Assad Regime. USA, Turkey, Saudi Arab and other powerful nations are against the Assad regime and they are favoring the native anti groups of Assad. Likewise, Russia and Iran are aiding in the support of the Assad Regime, and other organizations that are loyal to Assad Regime. Yes we are aware that with the backing of Russia and Iran, Bashar Al-Assad is holding on to both legal and politics authority within the Syria despite the presence of crises. Originally, the united protest involving the opposition parties called Syrian National Council (SNC) fought for the overthrow of Assad's regime, and for the promotion of Democratic values. SNC was opposed to support from US led western allies and many of the Gulf countries were also supporting SNC (Kommer, 2015). However, the backing of both Iran and Russia to the Assad regime increased became very important to his continued rule as a dictator.

US activities in Syria

In Northern Syria, American forces had established military bases, airstrips, and other installations. Nearly the whole northern and northeastern region of the country, which is home to the Syrian YPG, the Turkish PKK, and the Democratic PYD, is home to Washington's two air bases and eight military locations (van, 2021). Israeli forces struck with US assistance, killing an Iranian general at Syraiya (Kam et al., 2018). A second Iranian general was also murdered, and General Qasim Suleimani was killed in an American airstrike on Iran in 2020. The United States considers all members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to be terrorists, and its duty is to protect its ground forces and allies. Syria. The Democratic Union Party (PYD) is a left-wing Kurdish political party, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are YPG and PKK subgroups. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the United States has consistently supported the Syrian Democratic Forces. Therefore, the US always sought ways and means to legitimate her presence in Syria with the pretexts of democracy and countering terrorism.

Iran has stated that this political group is a left-leaning group installed and sponsored by the United States for overthrowing the most stable government in Syria and creating instability. This is because of the assistance it receives mostly from Turkey for the Kurdish terrorist groups, such as the YPG, PKK, PYD, etc. It's 2017 and there's fresh information: the US government backs the PKK and YPG, two terrorist organizations that are US ground soldiers in Syria. It is comparable to American perceptions of the IRGC and the Fatima group, which are likewise influencing Middle East future developments. Additionally, the US indirectly backs the YPG, PKK, and SDF.

The SDF, YPG, and PKK are among the Kurdish militant groups that the US supports and aids. Whether you like it or not, the United States has built military bases, airfields, and several other facilities in Northern Syria. At least they have humiliated, if not completely destroyed, the terrorist group ISIS/DAESH, and they are in charge of some of the country's northern regions. It is significant to remember that Syria's natural resources, especially its oil and gas fields, are found in its western, central, and southern regions. The Syrian government, led by Bashar al-Assad, now occupies and controls these regions.

Similar to how they would have been prohibited if they had concentrated on the Iranian side, they would have thought that the US force's presence in some areas of Syria is illegal and an infringement on Syrian sovereignty. In a similar vein, Iran believes that the United States is staying in Syria because it is plundering its oil resources under the pretext of combating terrorism and introducing democracy. The presence of the US military base in Turkey is an occupation of its territory, which is why the Syrian government has justified the US military's aerial strike on this forbidden US military base. In response, the US sent warplanes and conducted an airstrike in the Deir Ez-Zor province (Hassan, 2019). Iranian powers used drones to plan an assault on the US military installation at Al Tanf, which is located near the appropriate Iraqi border (Schmitt, et al. 2022).

According to US defense secretary Mark Esper, US troops are positioned to stop ISIS fighters from seizing control of oil-rich areas of Syria (Aziz, 2020). Remarkably, if one may call these accusations mere slips of the tongue or merely boastful declarations, U.S. President Donald Trump has acknowledged that the U.S. military is in Syria in order to extract oil (Issa, 2020). The goal of the United States is to obtain something, or it is more likely to exploit a nation for its natural resources or as a strategically important location. If the United States is successful in achieving its goals through traditional diplomatic means, it is because of this. The next action that each frequently takes is to instigate or arrange a battle, mucking up the area so thoroughly that neither Russia nor Iran can take control of it again.

The US wants to tell others how to practice democracy in the Middle East, how to maintain peace, human rights and all those noble things but this is the time one could start wondering that there are many nations ruled by dictators but the US has good relationships with them like the Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia and so on. United States of America under the presidency of Barack Obama has been vigorously seeking to unseat Bashir Assad but they could not succeed because the Russian president Vladimir Putin came to the scene and assisted Bashir Assad. United States focused to understand the strategy of oil it can produce the best products for sale American oil producing companies are willing. The Gulf War has two main reasons for this: one is to increase the U. S military presence in the Middle East. United States sees it is might in its political influence so as to assist its own businesses together with Europe to clinch contracts together with raise exports within these nations specifically in a military and aerospace.

The second reason is by increasing the military presence the US wants to avoid their enemies control large natural resource region. May be so that they don't gain even more power

and pose challenges to the dominance of the United States. This means that if for instance the oil rich areas of Northeastern Syria are controlled by the Syrian government which is Bashar al-Assad then it would benefit Iran and Russia and they become more of a threat to the United States by seizing the rich oil reserves groups of countries can form alliances and come up with policies that may jeopardize the supply of oil across the globe. They can regulate the prices and other things and as for whether or not countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Iran will be a threat to United States. There is disagreement over this as, as you can see, US sanctions have entirely destroyed the economies of Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Therefore, even if the United States were to leave Syria and Iraq, the countries would not be a threat to the United States because they are not in a position to do so.

However, if you think that these nations could pose a threat to the country's regional allies, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, you will notice that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries would be the first to respond because the United States military will always be there to defend them. The stability of the Gulf region is protected by the United States and in return the US seeks to gain access to the resources of the region with a particular focus on Syria. In that connection, the GCC countries require the American support, and the United States, in turn, needs the cooperation of the GCC countries even though the GCC countries are fully aware of their interconnected relationship. The visit of the president of the United States and his administration, Joe Biden, to Saudi Arabia proves that the United States is struggling to build better relations with Saudi Arabia.

Iran's Involvement in Syria

Iran wants to keep a good relationship with Syria in order to advance its regional networks; one such network is Hezbollah, given that Syria and Lebanon share a border. Furthermore, Iran was fighting Saudi Arabia's dominance while simultaneously aiding Yemen. Thus, since 1979, shared interests have kept Syria and Iran on the same page.

What Iran practically did?

The Fatemiyoun and Zaynabiyoun Brigade are the names of the militant groups that the US targeted. During the Afghan conflict, many Shia Afghan refugees fled to Iran in order to save their lives. These so-called Brigades are backed by Iran, and the majority of its members are recruited from this demographic (Clarke, 2017).

The consequences of Iran's growing Shia foreign fighter force

According to the allegations, Iran has been using the Shia Afghan refugee community to fight in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. These refugees belong to the Hazara Ethnic group that forms only nine to ten percent of the population in Afghanistan and have some similarities with other Afghans in terms of religion. However, Afghan Taliban, who are Sunni Muslim does not share a good relation with Shia Muslims. Iran's Afghan Shite Fatima is reported to be involved in the killing of ISIS prisoners in Syria while fighting on behalf of the Assad regime which is backed by Russia and Iran. This is similarly in line with the position of the United States, European nations, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey against Bashar Al-Assad as evidenced by the US Treasury Department

listing the Fatima group as a terrorist organization in 2019. USA accuses Tehran of taking advantage of Afghan refugees and using them for its strategic goals, including sending them to fight in the Syrian conflict. In turn, the U.S. launched airstrikes in Syrian territory and took a stance against Assad's regime and often framed its actions as part of the fight against ISIS/Daesh within Syria.

It's interesting to note that support for proxy forces by other nations is referred to as "militia" or "military groups," whereas support for any group by the government of the United States is referred to as "U.S. led coalition." The US military supports a group known as the Syrian Democratic Forces in its battle against ISIS. Iran launched several drone attacks against the US military installation at Altanf in eastern Syria. With the exception of a few minor injuries, there were no casualties, but the US military base sustained substantial damage. According to the US authorities, the attack was carried out by the Fatima organization, which supports Iran. Iran is spending extensively in drone research, and this year it built its first Naval drone carrier branch. Several drones were used, and the country's drone business is growing. Russia is also receiving drones from Iran. American aircraft delivered guided bombs on military installations, including bunkers that were purportedly used by the Fatima group and other IRGC-affiliated forces.

Russia's Intervention in Syria

The relationship between Syria and Russia is deeply rooted in history, with Russia providing military and financial support to the Assad regime. This support coincided with the United States' efforts to extend its influence in the Middle East, leading Russia to assert its dominance in the region. By backing Assad, who belongs to the Alawite sect, Russia positioned itself against Sunni-majority nations like Turkey, the United States, and Saudi Arabia, which oppose the Syrian government. This opposition stems from religious and sectarian affiliations, with Sunni leaders such as Erdogan and Mohammed bin Salman expressing animosity towards Assad. The US Middle East strategy often revolves around exploiting Shia-Sunni divisions, with former President Obama openly endorsing the overthrow of the Syrian government. Allegations of chemical weapons use further intensified tensions, with Russia blocking UN investigations and accusing the US and its allies of orchestrating chemical attacks through local proxies. Russia and Iran's support for Syria challenges US objectives in the region, complicating efforts to achieve the "Arab Spring" goal as perceived by the US. This analysis underscores the complex interplay of geopolitical interests and sectarian dynamics shaping the Syrian conflict.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework that encompasses historical alliances and geopolitical interests, military operations, humanitarian repercussions, and regional and global implications can be used to contextualize the examination of Iran and Russia's actions in the Syrian conflict. Russia and Iran have longstanding geopolitical ties and historical allegiances that have led to their involvement in the Syrian crisis. Iran's historical connections to Syria, forged by similar political and religious views, have strengthened its resolve to back the Assad government. Such understanding aligns with (Ahmadian and Mohseni, 2019) who gives historical and strategic factors of the Syrian-

Iranian relations and impact Iran's role and desire in the region. In the same way, Russia intervention in Syria is also historical and other political and economic reasons. To further build upon Kreutz's analysis, Kreutz stresses on the historical ties between Russia and Syria (Kreutz, 2010) and focuses on how Russian engagement in Syria stems from Russia's geopolitical interests to assert its influence and contend with the West while pursuing its strategic interests within the Middle East.

While comparing Iran and Russia in the Syria conflict, the two countries have used military intervention as a massive approach. Strengthening its Armed Forces, the Revolutionary Guard Corps, and proxy allies such as Hezbollah, Iran has provided significant battlefield assistance to the Syrian government. Esfandiary and Tabatabai averred that Iran has been affixing military support to the Syrian situation; something they noted was dependent on proxies and funds (Esfandiary and Tabatabai, 2015). Russian military intervention in the Syrian context which comprises of aerial and ground operations along with contingents for the Assad government has shifted the roles of the conflict profoundly. Additionally, the strategic use of force and its influence on the Syrian crisis by discussing Moscow's goals and the latter's change of the power "vector" in the Middle East (Kaim and Tamminga, 2015).

Both Iran and Russia are significant power-brokers in the Middle East and their actions in Syria can be understood in terms of these wider international consequences alongside their impacts on the civil war. By changing strategic policies of development these interventions have altered power relationship of Middle East opposing traditional actors affecting the geopolitics of the region. Studying and investigating Iran's involvement in the Syrian crisis with focus laid on the regional influence of the country. In addition, Russia's Syrian experience in relation to shifts in the international relations insofar as Moscow's operations in the Middle Eastern nation have enforced Russia on the international stage and changed the nature of power politics.

This had helped to narrow down the focus of the study to try and understand the roles of Iran and Russia in the Syrian crisis in its historical, militaristic, humanitarian, and geopolitical contexts.

Russia as a global power competing with USA in the Middle East Region

Russian geopolitical activities in the region, especially with a view to undermining or combating the power of the United States, form one of the core pillars of its policy. The Russian operations, mainly in Syria, have been viewed really as a policy aimed at influencing and competing with the United States interests in Middle East. Historically the U. S. has been at the center of this region's power map since the U. S. had both military installments, strategic partnerships and impact its regional policies. Russia has been more active especially through military intervention in Syria since 2015, it signifies a proactive effort to counterbalance American dominance in the region. Which, in a way, by supporting the Assad's regime in Syria Russia was not only securing years-long friendly relationship and partnership but was also concerned with portraying itself as an influential actor in the process. Moscow's actions endeavored to address what Moscow found as the signal of U.S uni-polarism and imperialism over the formation of the Middle East strategic paradigm. Russia actively embarked on participating in the conflict and playing a role of

peacemaker and power broker, diminishing the role of USA in the peacemaking process. This dynamic was meant to change the previous dynamics of power distribution into the Middle East, where Russia's military might and strategic partnerships were intended to contain and reduce the US influence and power in the region hence exercising an influence and dominance over the region once again. The ongoing Middle East crisis remains a manifestation of power rivalry, with various parties, including Russia, seeking to manage the dynamics of the region in light of the competing international agendas.

However, it is crucial to consider the fact that while Russia aims at containing the US, the Middle East is a highly volatile region with numerous regional and international actors whose interests often coincide or conflict with both the US and Russia. Moscow decided to get involved in Syria due to political and military factors. Moscow considered that if Assad's power declined then its matter of weakness of national security, and US will become more influencer in the Middle Eastern region which will affect the national interests of Russia. Thus, in realist perspective Russia moves towards securing her national interests in regional and global sphere. Syrian government also requested Russia for the support further legitimize the intervention of Russia. Geopolitical interests each country focuses while intervening in global ventures. Also, anti US sentiments in the foreign policy of Russia were the bigger baselines that Russia involved in the crises in both ways i.e., militarily and politically. Russia supported Syria on international forums like UNSCR and given solution by the Russian authorities was based on peace plan. International diplomatic support from Russia also became reason for the rule of Assad in Syria. Economic support to Assad is also evident from Russia. Military support lead by Russia was including arms, weapons, ammunition, helicopters, air defense systems, radars, and guided bombs etc. (Barrie, 2018). All type of above support became the cause of protection for Assad's regime. Simultaneously US considered Russia a strong opposition power in Syria.

Current situation of Syria

President Bashar al-Assad's administration in Syria continued to hold sway over major cities like Damascus and other vital regions. Nonetheless, the battle continued, with rebel organizations including some extreme factions remaining active in several regions of the nation. Syria's terrible humanitarian situation persisted. Millions of Syrians have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict, and millions more have sought safety in neighboring nations or in Europe. It caused significant defamation of resources and efforts related to humanitarian help. The important role was performed by international intervention, particularly by Russia and Iran in support of the Assad administration. To make matters worse, the United States had provided backing to forces in the northeast headed by Kurds. Various regional and international actors had vested interests, resulting in a complex web of alliances and oppositions. Stabilization and construction was in some ways pressed by the conflict, absence of finance and the challenge in providing protection measures towards such endeavors. This brought extra challenges toward the rebuilding of the war-torn cities and infrastructures that were left in the battlefield.

Iran's Status in Syria:

Iran kept on supporting the Assad regime in whatever way it could and in whatever form this support was ranging from financial assistance, supply of military advisers and support for local militant groups such as the Hezbollah. It was due to reasons of historical connection, compatible interests, and the quest of the great powers, Britain and France, to exercise power over the continent. Their military and logistic support for the Syria's government was needed to help Damascus to beat opponents on the Syrian territory, including various rebel fighters and radical groups, in order to preserve the power of the regime headed by Assad. Iran's role in Syria is not only connected with the situation in Syria, but also indicate its strategic plans for the region with Syria as one of the main components as it concerns its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Russia's Status in Syria:

Russia continued to use the military and political force in Syria to a greater extent. Its direct intervention starting from year 2015 has also provided support to the Assad government against multiple opposing groups. Moscow's participation was complex, desiring to exert influence outside of its sphere of influence, to challenge Western teams within the area and to guard the interests of Moscow. Aerial operations will be demonstrated as the key operand where Russian intervention was influential in changing the nature of the conflict. In addition, it gave Russia the status of the conflict solver, negotiator and organizer of the peace process that determined the future fate of Syria. This implies that Moscow's conduct, especially the backing of the Assad regime and its military much shaped the trajectory of the war.

Conclusion

Iran and Russia were key players in upsetting US policy. In the end, it has impacted both regional and global political forces. Iran demonstrated her importance in the area and effectively prevented the US from gaining any sway there. Iran has a legitimate presence in Syria due to its historical links, sectarian affiliations, and strategic interests, particularly since 1979. Iran's involvement in this irritates the US and Saudi Arabia. Iran's influence in the region grows as a result. Iran's cordial ties with the Assad administration further cleared the path for access and strengthened ties with Hezbollah for future security. Israel is worried about Iran's increasing influence. Russia demonstrated her growing power in the Middle East, a jab at the United States of America. Similar to 2011, it appeared that the US was the only country entering the Middle East and that the Assad regime would be overthrown with ease. However, Russia turned into an Assad regime bulwark, and the United States was unable to realize its "Arab Spring" ambition. As it challenged the US and its allies' hegemony in the oil-rich region, Russia emerged as a major actor in the Middle East. Iran and Russia have both shown to be crucial players in resolving the Syrian crisis. Meaning that the US alone was unable to fix this problem. Only by taking Iran's and Russia's policies and viewpoints into consideration can a political and peaceful solution be reached.

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