

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL ACTORS IN
AN INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT. THE CASE STUDY OF
SYRIA (2013 - 2015)**

BY

DHLIWAYO PETROS

(R102634Q)

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

APRIL 2015

Abstract

This study aims to analyse the impact of external intervention in the ongoing Syrian conflict. The hypothesis of the research is that external intervention aggravates internal conflicts. Journals, reports, newspapers, books among others various sources of data gathering techniques were used. RT (2013:1), “the CIA was secretly involved in training rebel groups and assisting Saudi Arabia and Qatar in smuggling arms to the rebels fighting to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad.” This is an indication that foreign intervention indeed contributed to the continuation of the conflict in Syria. The research on the third chapter examines the ongoing conflict and the nations involved. The casualties that have occurred so far in the fightings. Cordesman (2013) argues that, “There still is no clear picture of the level of casualties that came out of the Syrian use of chemical weapons on August 21st, and there are no estimates at all of the total impact of the use of chemical weapons during the civil war.” Cordesman (2013) argues that, “There still is no clear picture of the level of casualties that came out of the Syrian use of chemical weapons on August 21st, and there are no estimates at all of the total impact of the use of chemical weapons during the civil war.” The casualties due to continual fighting and the failure to reach consensus by the warring parties has led to more people dying and more infrastructure destroyed. The research concluded that the United Nations should step up and intervene since it is its prime duty to stop the eruption and the spread of conflicts around the globe. Another proposal is also for the warring parties to themselves reach go to a negotiating table and try to resolve their issues. The countries that are giving help to the warring parties should also pull out of the conflict since it is now known that they are the ones that are perpetuating the fighting.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my parents for keeping on the good spirit not because they had much to spend on me but their love to brighten my future. It was not easy because we are many who still want the same care from the same one single parent. I would also want to thank my supervisor Mr Linnington for leading me throughout the dissertation. His calls and his time are not underestimated

Dedications

To my parents, friends and relatives.

Table of contents	
Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Dedications.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables and Figures.....	v
Acronyms.....	vi
1.0 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.2 Background of the problem.....	1
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	2
1.4 Justification of the study.....	3
1.5 Hypothesis.....	3
1.6 Theoretical Framework.....	3
1.7 Literature Review.....	4
1.8 Methodology.....	5
1.9 Delimitations.....;	6
1.10 Limitations.....	6
2.0 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Foreign intervention and Syrian Civil War.....	7
2.3 The Arab Spring and Foreign Intervention.....	8
2.4 External Forces Exerting Influence in Syria {Literature review}	12
2.5 Theoretical Framework.....	16
2.6 Conclusion.....	18
3.0 CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS	
3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.2 Tripoli- Damascus Tehran the axis of evil.....	20
3.3The birth of ISIS.....	23
3.4 The Libyan factor.....	26
3.5 Conclusion.....	28
4.0 CHAPTER FOUR MAJOR FINDINGS AND ANAYSIS	
4.1Introduction.....	29
4.2 The strategic consequences of Foreign intervention.....	29
4.3 The human cost of foreign intervention. The siege of Homs.....	32
4.4 The economic cost of foreign intervention. The battle of Aleppo.....	34
4.5 Vicious cycle of war. The rise of ISIS.....	36
4.6 Conclusion.....	38
5.0 CHAPTER FIVE	
5.1 Conclusion.....	39
5.2 Summary and analysis.....	40
5.3 Recommendations.....	41
5.4 Democratisation of the middle East.....	41
5.5 Reinforcement of the responsibility to protect Doctrine.....	42
6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

Acronyms

UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergence Fund
UN	United Nations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CWF	Chemical Weapons Convention
US	United States of America
EU	European Union

Topic

An analysis of the impact of external actors in an internal armed conflict. The case study of Syria.

Background to the problem

The conflict in Syria has a long chronicle that dates back into history. This research will focus on the unrest which began in March 2011 in Daraa. Bashar Al Assad, the Syrian president has been in office since 2000 after succeeding his father who had ruled Syria for almost three decades. On March 15 2011, when several protesters were killed by security forces while demonstrating against the arrest of some teenagers who had painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall, The demonstrations spread across the country in May diverting the focus to demanding the president's resignation. Razzouk (2011; 23) notes that "fighting intensified and the government used military force to crush any opposition". In February 2012, tanks were deployed to Daraa and the city of Homs and killed approximately 700 people. The conflict spread to the capital of Damascus in 2012 and the second city of Aleppo. Numerous bombs were launched, Government officials blamed terrorists linked to Al Qaeda for the attacks while the opposition claimed the security forces planted bombs to discredit both rebels and peaceful protesters.

From a different viewpoint, some scholars argue that the Syrian conflict is comprised of the two major fighting ethnic groups which seek equal resource allocation and sharing of power Thus it is the clash between the majority Sunnis and the minority rich Alawite regime which constitutes the majority in Bashar's government. Holliday (2011;27) notes that "sectarianism has been described as the characteristic feature of the Syrian conflict". Sectarianism is where there is discrimination, subdivisions within groups such as between religions or factions of a political movement. The split is between the ruling Alawite sect, a largely secularist Shiite Muslim offshoot from which president Assad's most senior political and military associates are drawn and the country's Sunni Muslim majority mostly aligned with the opposition. The conflict has drawn in other ethno-religious minorities including Armenians, Syrian Christians among some other religious groupings apart from the external forces in which the research is hinged upon.

Statement of the problem

The research seeks to address the impact of the involvement of external actors in the Syrian conflict which has resulted in the perpetuation of the struggle. Major actors, the United States of America and Russia which forms part of the United Nations Security Council have been divided on the Syrian conflict from the onset and this has contributed to the continuation of the conflict. The two could not come to an agreement on how they could bring to an end the crisis but their involvement according to Holliday (2011:30) necessitated and deepens the conflict. Russia could not keep aloof while its fellow trading partner was being destroyed. Russia furthermore resisted United States intervention in Syria because of what the United States of America did in Libya. The Russians according to Krasner (1983:45) foresaw the deposition of Assad becoming similar to that of Kaddafi which was an unbecoming event to Russia and other Assad allies.

Moreover the United States of America as a hegemonic state wanted to be felt in the Syrian conflict as she always did to different conflict zones across the globe hence its involvement. The Americans wanted to usher in a new era of democracy and the rule of law. This was faced by stiff resistance from the incumbent Government hence the continuation of the struggle. Elections were held but the United Nations, the United States and the west concluded that the elections were far from free and fair which saw Assad winning resoundingly. Iran, Lebanon, Turkey and other neighboring states also constitute other external forces which have contributed to the continuation of the Syrian conflict.

Objectives of the study

- to examine the causes of the Syrian conflict.
- to explore the intensity, scope and extent of the crisis.
- to observe the parties involved, (external and or internal) in the conflict.
- to examine the impact brought by the United Nations intervention in the conflict and its envoys.
- to assess the achievements and challenges encountered by the United Nations in the conflict.
- to suggest possible avenues which can be put in place to avert the conflict.

Research questions

- ✓ What are the causes of the Syrian conflict?
- ✓ Which parties (external and or internal) are involved in the Syrian conflict?
- ✓ To what extent and how is external intervention perpetuates the crisis?
- ✓ What are the initiatives and challenges encountered by the United Nations in combating the conflict?
- ✓ Are there any prospects for stability?
- ✓ What measures can be put in place to avert the Syrian situation?

Hypothesis

External intervention aggravates internal conflicts.

Justification of the study

The study is aimed at exploring the causes, scope and magnitude of the Syrian conflict and the impact brought by external actors in perpetuating the conflict. The research will bring to light parties involved in the crisis and their grievances leading to the conflict. It will suggest avenues to alleviate the conflict as well as prospects for change to the current situation. The research will analyse initiatives and challenges faced in trying to stop the crisis by the United Nations as well as the Arab League. The research will cover issues to do with the humanitarian intervention in assisting the injured victims, prisoners of war, civilians and other related groups included in the conflict for instance the religious fraternity.

Theoretical framework

Liberalism, power, regime theory, realism

Liberalism- lies in the liberal thought originating in the enlightenment. The central issues that it seeks to address are problems of achieving lasting peace and cooperation in international relations and various methods to achieve that peace. Broad areas of study within liberal international relations theory include democratic peace theory, effects of domestic political regime types and domestic politics in international relations.

Power- Power is defined in various ways in International relations, Mintz (1985:13) notes that power is sweet and usually leaders prefer to cling to it even by means of war. It means control over resources and capabilities. Power can be hard, soft or smart.

Realism- it predicts that conflict should be a norm in international relations. Proponents include Hobbes, Machiavelli among others and it is centred on four propositions. Realism view humans as egocentric, self reliant and motivated in seeking more power. The international system exists in a state of constant antagonism and this leads to war.

Regime theory- assumes that cooperation is possible in the anarchic system of states as regimes are by definition international cooperations. Krasner (1983:78) defines regimes as "institutions possessing norms, decision rules and procedures which facilitate a convergence of expectations" Cooperations can be effected through trade, human rights and collective security.

Literature review

Various scholars, International Organisations and institutions have documented the Syrian conflict since its beginning in 2011, including UNICEF, ICRC, and the UN among other groupings. For example in 2012, over 500 children had been killed and 400 others reportedly arrested and tortured in Syrian prisons, this shows how terrible the crisis is since it is affecting even the children who are non combatants.

The conflict has affected some surrounding regions and some external actors have participated in the conflict. Fulton (2014:44) notes that "Syria is a close ally of Russia since the Soviet times from which it buys weaponry; Russia has maintained military sales to Syria throughout the two and a half year conflict in which 100,000 people have been killed". External intervention has prolonged to some degree the conflict since the United Nations Security Council was also divided on the matter. The Iranian security intelligence services are advising and assisting the Syrian military in order to preserve Islamic Revolutionary Guards. Iran had been providing essential military supplies to Assad primarily by air. Holliday (2011:30) argues that "the Lebanese Hezbollah began to take on a more direct combat role in Syria as the Assad regime began losing control over Syrian territory in 2012" Hezbollah has supported Assad with a robust, well trained force whose involvement in the

conflict aligns with Iranian strategic interests as secretary general Hassan Nasrallah acknowledged on April 30 in Tehran.

Wyner (2014:75) argues that "the United States of America has not taken serious steps towards Syria, a strategy focused on sanctions. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 imposed on Syria responsibilities and a timeline for the destruction of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. The Syrian conflict had been growing in intensity and scope with the United Nations estimating more than 100,000 people dead and millions replaced. Kim (2012:102) notes that "the Syrian uprising started as a civil uprising that was part of the wider North African and Middle Eastern protest movements known as the Arab Spring" Deadly violence then began in March and the emphasis shifted towards ousting Assad.

Methodology

In undertaking the research, the following methods have been used in gathering data, surveys, interviews, reports, internet, newspapers and questionnaires. However, questionnaires have some limitations in the sense that they are viable and efficient to a selected group in a society for example the literate in this case. The illiterate will not be able to answer questions since they might not be able to interpret some of the questions. The other disadvantage of questionnaires is that respondents may choose not to answer the questions or answer them in their own pace which might also delay the whole research. The above-mentioned data collection techniques will provide both quantitative and qualitative data and qualitative data is more concerned with describing meaning rather than drawing statistical inferences. Qualitative methods include interviews which provide rich descriptions of the concepts under study. Quantitative methods provide data statistically which is easier to analyse and draw meaning. As noted above, there are advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods listed above and in curtailing the disadvantages of every method, the researcher will triangulate and combine the two techniques of gathering data. The research will make use of tables, charts, pictures to present findings.

Delimitations

In as much as the research is broad, the study will focus on the Syrian conflict beginning from March 2011 during the reign of Bashar al Assad. The Syrian conflict dates back into history from the formation of the Baath party which saw Hafez Assad getting into power and ruling Syria for close to three decades. Bashar took over the throne in 2000 after his father's death. Hafez reign was also marred with uprisings which were thwarted through repression. The reign of Hafez does not constitute part of the research but the study begins with the uprisings of March 2011 during Bashar al Assad's rule up to date since the conflict is still ongoing.

Limitations

The study has got its limitations in as far as gathering authentic data is concerned. Some scholars are pro Assad hence they write in conformity with the ruling regime and this may also apply to the opposition groups. Proximity between the researcher and the case study may also affect the researcher to gather as enough information as possible because some of the issues are best dwelt with when a researcher is on the ground. The researcher will rely on documentary search and other various data gathering tools. The Syrian conflict is an unfolding phenomena and the conclusions of the researcher about the findings might be misleading because the conflict is ongoing and events might change. The books on the Syrian conflict are still very few to address in detail the crisis.

Chapter Two

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed and in depth literature review of the Syrian conflict together with the theoretical framework upon which the whole study is hinged. Before looking in detail at the history of Syrian politics which gave birth to the 2011 March uprisings, this chapter will define key terms underlining this study as well as highlighting some cases where external influence has necessitated internal strife. Internal conflict refers to fighting between and among political parties or groupings within given boundaries and they can be politically motivated, racially or religiously driven. According to Robson (2012:44), internal conflict refers to “conflict going inside between two or more parties”. This brings to light the point that internal conflicts are conflicts from within. External intervention is a case where foreign forces are involved in internal fighting and this is motivated or driven by various reasons. The United Nations is an international body that oversees and maintains international peace across the globe and if it happens that there is conflict in state A, the United Nations may intervene for the security of state B and the whole world in particular. This has been cited as another reason why external forces intervene in domestic affairs of other states. Holliday (2012:40) defines external intervention as a situation whereby “contending parties in a civil strife develop external linkages and often endeavor to obtain external help to strengthen their position against their adversary in a domestic conflict”. ‘Impact’ refers to an outcome or influence whether positive or negative and this study will be looking at both outcomes where negatives have been witnessed and the positives in Syria though limited to a few.

2.2 Foreign Intervention and the Syrian Civil War

The thrust of the study as highlighted from the introduction of this chapter is to show how foreign intervention in Syrian civil war has contributed to the intensity and continuation of the conflict. The Syrian conflict has received significant international attention and both conflicting parties have been receiving logistical, diplomatic and or military support from outside Syria’s borders. Foreign intervention in according to Holliday (2012:7) refers to “political, military and operational support to parties involved in a conflict.” The Syrian government has received support from the Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran. Both entities have been involved in the war

militarily, logistically and diplomatically. Hezbollah has fielded soldiers in the war in support of the government. Iran has provided tactical and strategic support and reportedly sent its Quods Force to provide operational support for the Syrian army. Russia has also been sending arms and logistical support as well to the Syrian government. This dated back to the 1950s when Syria signed a pact with the United Soviet Socialist Republic providing a foothold for the communist influence within the Syrian government in exchange for arms and ammunition. Other countries in the Middle East have also gotten involved in the crisis and have provided material aid to the rebels. Hirst (2012:44) argues that “the main opposition groups receives logistical, diplomatic and military support from the major Sunni states in the middle East most notably Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. France, Britain and the United States of America have also provided significant support to the rebels.” This has largely been motivated by the fact that these countries are also ruled by Sunni elites who see the rise of Sunni rebels in Syria as an opportunity to extend their regional power and influence.

The Syrian conflict spilled across its borders and it has affected Lebanon where violence related to the Syrian war has claimed about 200 lives. The incidents included infighting between Lebanese Sunnis and the Alawite sect. Bashar Al Assad and most members of his ruling clique are from the Alawite sect. Foreign intervention in Syria has perpetuated the conflict since it created more of a balance of power between the two fighting parties. This is because both the belligerents are powerful enough in terms of military strength to keep the fighting going but do not have sufficient resources to defeat each other. The result of this has been turning the civil war into a war of attrition. Also since the majority of operational, logistical, tactical and strategic support for both sides is coming from outside forces the war has also become like a proxy war. The war is a result of a situation whereby Russia and the United States of America and the other Middle Eastern powers fail to find common ground and to embark on a course of action that may quickly end the conflict.

2.3 The Arab Spring and Foreign Intervention

In Libya during the Arab spring, the United Nations, France, United States of America and other western powers intervened after the Libyans rose against their long serving President Muammar Gaddafi. The opposition National Transitional Council was formed to topple and depose former Libyan army general. Simon (2011:87) notes that “Gaddafi became the defacto leader of the

country on September 1 1969 after leading a group of young Libyan military officers against king Idris in a bloodless coup de tat”. The king fled outside the country and Gaddafi took over power. Though Libya was a totalitarian state, Gaddafi ushered in an era of unprecedented economic growth. After some decades of development and prosperity in Libya, a civil war broke out in 2011 in the context of the Arab spring. Brian (2011:183) argues that “on 27 February 2011, the anti Gaddafi forces formed a committee named the National Transitional Council”. In trying to fight the rebels, Gaddafi used unethical and inhuman ways, mostly against civilians in the city of Benghazi where the opposition where centred. This triggered NATO forces to intervene and on March 21 2011, NATO forces joined to protect civilians against attacks from the government forces under Gaddafi. President Obama took a leading role in mobilizing military support and resources that eventually led to the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi. According to Simon (2011:88) “the United States of America spent about a billion dollars and played a far larger role in Libya than it has acknowledged quietly implementing an emerging covert intervention strategy.” The first airstrikes over Libya were coordinated by the U.S Africa Command, a division of the U.S military entirely devoted to operations on the African continent, whose establishment ironically had been bitterly opposed by Gaddafi. These airstrikes enforced a no fly zone imposed by U.N Security Council resolution 1973. In effect they disabled Gaddafi’s air superiority over the rebels by grounding his air force and destroying his anti aircraft capabilities. This tipped the scale in favour of the rebels who could now take on the Gaddafi forces on an almost equal footing. The down side was that the rebels also received arms from the West and NATO and also looted the vast stockpiles of sophisticated and heavy weaponry. These weapons however did not end up in the hands of a coordinated and defined rebel movement. The end result was that Libya descended into chaos after the fall of Gaddafi. To date Libya is on the verge of becoming a failed state because of sectarian violence and the infiltration of the rebel movement by Al Qaeda linked groups like the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). This clearly reflects the impact of foreign intervention in internal conflicts leading to increased casualties. In the Libyan case however, the conflict came to an end because the government had little or no support from outside its borders unlike in the Syrian scenario where both conflicting parties are receiving international support.

In Zimbabwe, foreign intervention worked positively during the 2008-9 economic and political turmoil. SADC under Thabo Mbeki mediated between the Movement for Democratic Change

and ZANU PF together with other splinter groups, this was largely an exercise of the soft power influence that South Africa has as the biggest economy not only in the region but on the entire continent. The negotiations were intended to end a debilitating economic meltdown precipitated by political violence and human rights violations and aimed to create a framework for power sharing between the conflicting parties. Banyana (2008:40) argues that “preliminary talks to set up conditions for official negotiations began between leading negotiators from both parties on 10 July, a final deal was reached on 11 September 2008 and was signed on 15 September”. The United Nations and the African Union were also involved indirectly in the crisis talks which is a clear indication of external intervention which unlike in Libya yielded positive results. Thabo Mbeki who was then the South African President was the mediator but under United Nations, African Union and SADC supervision.

Foreign intervention in Zimbabwe brought peace and economic development after the agreement was reached. Inflation came back to zero through the multi currency regime which was immediately implemented by the Unity government. Jongwe (2011:23) notes that “on 15 September 2008, SADC leaders witnessed the signing of the power sharing deal brokered by Mbeki with a symbolic handshake and warm smiles at the rainbow towers hotel in Harare ending the violent political crisis.” The political agreement arrested runaway hyperinflation and ushered in an era of relative economic stability that enabled Zimbabwe to recover from the brink of chaos.

The study focuses on the Syrian crisis which began in 2011 as an internal conflict but later attracted foreign intervention and up to date, no meaningful developments have been seen in as far as resolving the crisis is concerned and ordinary Syrians have lost their lives. Foreign intervention has actually worsened the crisis leading to the destruction of infrastructure and human lives.

Syria has a long history like any other entity but the research will begin from the years between 1970 up to date so as to try and trace the origins of the conflict which is now full fledged under the rule of Assad. Langer (2001:34) notes that “upon assuming power, Hafez al Assad moved quickly to create an organizational infrastructure for his government and consolidate his control”. Hafez came to power in a bloodless military coup on November 13 1970 as defence minister and the consolidation of his power was done ruthlessly through gross human rights

abuses. Uprisings which were against him were thwarted and opposition was not tolerated. When Bashar al Assad took office in 2000 after the death of his father, the seeds of his father's bad governance began to emerge as demonstrations were sprouted in some parts of Damascus. The Ba'ath party which was formed by his father, was in government and amended the constitution to accommodate Bashar's age because the one who was tipped to take over had been involved in an accident and died on the spot. These developments did not go down well with some political activists such as Riad Seif, Aref Dalila among other groupings. Brecher (2003:14) argues that "immediately following Hafez's death, the Syrian parliament amended the constitution reducing the mandatory minimum age of the president from 40 to 34". This allowed Bashar to become eligible for nomination. These developments fell under scrutiny by some political activists and soon after Bashar's election which he ran unopposed garnering 97.2% of the vote, political forums began to emerge which were dubbed the Damascus spring where groups of like-minded people met indoors to debate on political and social matters.

The movements grew under the mobilization of Riad and others to other cities of Aleppo. During this period, Bashar tried to introduce some reforms to silence the opposition movements through granting amnesties to at least 600 political prisoners in November 2000 but it had very little impact. However in autumn of 2001 Robson (2012:40) admits that "the authorities had suppressed the pro-reform movements crushing hopes of a break with the authoritarian past of Hafez, arrests of intellectuals continued punctuated by occasional amnesties" Although the Damascus spring lasted for a short period, its effects still echo during the political debates in Syria and it had an impact on the ongoing civil war.

Opposition was mounting slowly, in October 2005, Robson (2012:40) argues that "the renewed opposition occurred when activist Michel Kilo and other opposition figures launched the Damascus declaration which criticized the Syrian government as authoritarian, totalitarian and cliquish and called for democratic reforms. Bashar responded by jailing the activists and internet censorship was tightened with laws to record all comments users post on chat forums in internet cafes. Human rights lawyers were imprisoned as well and websites such as Wikipedia, Facebook and Twitter and other social networks were blocked.

Understanding this background is necessary in order to understand the rise and precipitation of civil opposition into a full blown rebellion against the Assad regime. The rise of this opposition

also situates the various interests that have come into play supporting the various sides in the Syrian civil war.. The research is focusing on the impact from external intervention during the 2011 up to the present conflict which is dubbed the Syrian civil war. Lanser (2001:72) puts it as “an ongoing internal conflict between the Syrian army and the rebel groups composed by many heterogeneous branches as Tarkfiris, Al Qaeda linked terrorists like Al Nosra and also some Syrian opponents Free Syrian Army” The Arab spring which swept through Egypt, Tunisia and Libya is also linked to the Syrian uprisings. It all began as protestors in Damascus and the southern city of Deraa demanded political freedom and the release of political prisoners, immediately the government instituted a crackdown whereby the Syrian army was deployed to silence the protestors. The army killed a number of people in Deraa ushering in days of violent unrest and this spread nationwide over the following months. The fighting continued since then and both sides have been accused of human rights violations. The United Nations Human Rights Council found numerous incidents of summary executions, torture and attacks on cultural property. The government of Syria has been accused of committing war crimes, the fighting has the hallmark of sectarian civil war which dates back into history. The leading government figures are shia Alawites whilst the rebels are mainly Sunni Muslims who constitute the majority of the Syrian society.

2.4 External Forces Exerting Influence in Syria

2.4.1 Russia

Russia has been a major contributor into how the crisis has developed from its inception. Russia blocked Security Council resolutions meant to map possible military intervention in Syria mooted by the West. The role of Russia according to Hirst (2012:4) has impacted significantly on the continuation of the conflict, “Russia whose Tartus naval base in Syria is its only one outside the former United Soviet Socialist Republic”. Russia has therefore supplied Syria and Assad’s government with arms, ammunition and spare parts as part of a business contract signed before the uprising began. The motivation for this is to keep a regime tolerant of Russian presence and influence on its territory in power Syria over the rebels who are viewed to be mostly leaning towards the West. This is a clear indication of why Russia’s covert intervention has continued up to this day because of the pacts that date back to the Cold War. As such, Russia is not willing to pull out of Syria or stop supplying Assad with arms and ammunition to fight the

rebels and as a result, the war has continued. Russia has also sent Russian technical advisors to train Syrian soldiers to use Russian weaponry and to repair Syrian weapons. Russia has persistently denied these allegations since western diplomats have frequently criticized Russia's behavior over Syria. Russia's Putin claimed that Russia does not support either side in the Syrian war. Investigations have however, brought to light that Russia has been helping keep the Syrian economy afloat by transporting hundreds of tons of bank notes into the country by airplane. Holliday (2012:70) argues that "in January 2012, Russia had stepped up its military support for the Syrian government by supplying new armed vehicles, radars, surveillance equipment, electronic warfare systems and various weapons including guided bombs for planes." This equipment has been delivered in the full knowledge that it would be used to attack the rebels. As such Russia can be charged with being complicit in the escalation and intensification of the fighting in Syria through providing Assad with the means to fight and to fight fiercely.

2.4.2 Iran

Iran's hand has been prevalent in Syria. Iran and Syria according to Louis (2012:55), "are close strategic allies and Iran provided strategic support to Syria in the Syrian civil war." This has included combat troops, tactical intelligence and financial support worth nine billion by September 2011. The Syrian city of Zabadani is of vital importance to Iran because at least as late as June 2011, the city served as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp logistical hub for the supply of Hezbollah. Hezbollah is an Iranian proxy operating in Lebanon. Hezbollah is classified as a terrorist organization by the United States. Syria Lebanon under Hezbollah are the only vocal Arab countries against the state of Israel and have vowed to wipe it off the map. As such Syria is a priceless ally in their alliance. In this vein Iran will do everything in its power to prop up the Assad regime. Ayatollah Khameni, Iranian Supreme leader was very vocal in favour of the Syrian government over the rebels in 2011

2.4.3 Lebanon

Lebanese Hezbollah supported Syria as well since it is an all weather friend of the Ba'ath party governing Syria. Schmitt (2012:45) notes that, "in January 2012 Hezbollah fighters allegedly helped the government fight the rebels in Damascus in the battle of Zabadani." This shows that the Syrian government has in fact received not only tactical support from Hezbollah but that

Hezbollah has been actively involved in the fighting on behalf of the Syrian army. This points to an unprecedented level of involvement by a foreign force in the Syrian conflict. Hezbollah has helped Syrian government reclaim control of some villages which had fallen under the control of the rebels. The arguable effect of this has been to increase the resentment of government forces by the rebels as they are seen as using foreign forces to suppress a legitimate uprising by the people of Syria to topple a ruthless dictatorship of Bashar Al Assad. The United States of America imposed sanctions on Hezbollah for its involvement in the Syrian civil war but Nasrallah, leader of the Hezbollah group has denied the allegations. The imposition of sanctions by the U.S on Hezbollah and Lebanon is evidence of the immense operational support the groups has given to Assad, without which the Assad regime might have faced numerous defeats at the hands of the rebels.

Other parties that have extended material support to the Assad regime include Venezuela, North Korea as well as China. In February 2012, the Venezuelan government under Chavez shipped tens of thousands of dollars worth of diesel to the Syrian government. This fuel was used to power military transport vehicles as well as offensive military vehicles such as army tanks. North Korea in the same year was denied entry in the Iraqi's airspace with a war plane on its way to Syria. China openly vetoed the United National Security Council resolution in tandem with its ally Russia and the veto was enacted in the interests of preserving its ties with Russia. This is a pointer to the fact that foreign assistance to the Assad government has been consistently coming from those countries allied to him.

2.4.4 Israel

Israel on one hand supports the opposition groups. One time it supplied the rebels with anti-tank weapons, clothes and light arms. The injured rebels were also being sent to Israel for medication. Louis (2012:67) argues that "Kamal leader of the Syrian National Coalition said that a coalition with Tel Aviv is the only way to oust the Syrian government adding that the overthrow of President Bashar is among Israel's main interests in Syria." The major reason why Israel supports the ouster of Assad regime because of the long held animosity between Israel and Syria dating back to Bashar's father's rule. Syria attacked Israel in the 1967 Six day war and has since vowed to destroy Israel as part of its official foreign policy. Added to this is Assad's open alliance with Iran which is another sworn enemy of Israel. Thus the removal of Assad and

installation of a friendly and pro-Israel government in Syria would be in the best interests of Israel. Also an Arab world in disarray and imploding within itself leaves all the Arab countries too weak to think of let alone carry out an attack on Israel. Thus a prolonged war in Syria and the greater Middle East in Iraq through the rise of a group like ISIS serves the interests of Israel. This clearly points out that Israel's support as one of the external forces that are at work in Syria and this has had the impact of perpetuating the crisis in Syria.

2.4.5 France and Britain

France and Britain have been supporting the rebels since 2011 logistically and also militarily and through NATO as well. The British have also been in Syria conducting covert operations within the Syrian territory operating from Turkey. Holliday (2012:70) argues that "the European Union lifted its embargo on Syrian oil to import barrels directly from the rebel groups" This was direct support offered to the rebels in a bid to strengthen them in the war. The lifting of this embargo allowed the rebels to have a steady flow of income that would give them the capacity to buy arms and finance their own rebellion without putting pressure on the depressed economies of Britain and the rest of Europe. In August 2013, British pilots have been increasing help to the rebel fighters. President Hollande of France also hinted at recognizing the Syrian National Council as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people and he pledged to deliver weapons and lethal aid to the rebels to fight and depose the illegitimate Assad government

2.4.6 United States of America

The United States of America has been at the forefront in helping the rebel groups since the uprising began in Syria. Together with the United Nations, they joined hands in disregarding the 2014 Syrian presidential elections saying that they were far from free and fair since they were conducted in Assad's strongholds. Various United States departments have assisted the rebels for example the department of labour supplying non lethal aid like food, clothes and pick up trucks while the Central Investigation Agency CIA provides arms and assist the Syrian rebels in tactical and strategic training. The CIA has also provided communication training. Holliday (2012:45) notes that "by July 2012, the United States of America has reportedly allocated \$15 million for civilian opposition groups in Syria, by April 2013, in Jordan, the United States of America had set up a \$70 million program that is training the Syrian rebels". These supplies from outside

Syria have caused the fighting to continue. The no fly zone which was implemented in Libya and led to the ousting of Gaddafi has also been considered in Syria by the United States of America thereby creating a safe environment to equip and train rebels. The United Nations and the West played a pivotal role in the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria which were under the control of Assad. Recently in August 2014, Hilary Clinton said in an interview that the United States decision not to intervene early in the Syrian civil war was a failure. This shows United States commitment to the Syrian conflict as one of major external actor. Other entities include Qatar, Turkey, Jordan among other states.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Realism in contrast to liberalism explains why nation states continue warring against each other and why groups of people continue fighting. Mearsheimer (1994:8) argues that, “Realists claim that survival is the principal goal of every State.” The emphasis of realism centers around the anarchic nature of the international system, self interests, the lack of a sovereign government to control and oversee the activities among nation states. As such states are fearful of the intentions of other states and place their own survival as the most important goal to achieve in the course of history. The United Nations has been mandated to maintain peace and security but it has no capacity since it has from time to time failed to put to an end the eruption of conflict. This is because as noted by Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff (1972:187), “the state remains the major independent element of the international system.” As such the state is not really bound to follow international law unless it is its best interests to do so. Thus states ignore international norms when it is inconvenient for them to do so. Hobbes (1985:144) argues that “international politics is an immoral exercise which is blighted by war and conflict because of human nature” He went further to say, “human beings once lived where there was no law above them to prevent them from acting immorally or according to a specified set of rules” Thus in this case, the Syrian revolution is fully explained in the realism theory where individuals seek and pursue their self interests and if it means through fighting they will fight.

Waltz notes that, “For Realists the international system is defined by anarchy—the absence of a central authority. States are sovereign and thus autonomous of each other; no inherent structure or society can emerge or even exist to order relations between them. They are bound only by forcible coercion or their own consent.” As such states cooperate on their own initiative if it favours their own survival and enhances their own security. As such states will use all within their power to survive and increase their security. Fry (2014) argues, “No sensible nation or its leader would claim that the survival and independence of a state are not its primary goal and the very condition of its existence.” Because there is no higher power over the state and the anarchic nature of the international system, states therefore will use all means necessary to perpetuate their survival. This is relevant to this study because Syria has used its military machinery to stop its territory being overrun by the rebels. It has gone to the extent of using banned weapons like sarin gas on civilians. This can be argued to be a last gasp attempt to ensure and maintain the existence of the state within the conceptualization of the Assad regime. The blatant disregard of international law also goes to show that the state is not bound by any other higher authority except its own, the state is sovereign.

Realists argue that humanity is self-centred and competitive. This perspective, which is shared by theorists such as Thomas Hobbes, views human nature as egocentric and conflicting unless there are conditions under which humans may coexist. It is also inclined to the notion that an individual's nature is made up of anarchy. In regards to self-interest, these individuals are self-reliant and are motivated in seeking more power. This will be situated in this study to explain the behavior of terrorist organizations such as ISIS. Realism and the use of all available means to accumulate power by the state explain the behavior of countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar in sponsoring the rebels in Syria. This is because a weakened Syria rules by Sunni Islamists enhances the influence and regional power of Saudi Arabia. Realism situates this behavior as normal because with the international system being anarchic, states have to do what they can to secure their own interests and increase their power at the same time.

The state emphasizes an interest in accumulating power to ensure security in an anarchic world. Power is primarily thought of in terms of material resources necessary to induce harm or coerce other states. The use of power places an emphasis on coercive tactics being acceptable to either accomplish something in the national interest. This explains the behavior of the United States in

relation to its prosecution of the global war on terror and the effect this has had on its interventions in various countries that include Afghanistan, Iraq and more recently Syria.

Mearsheimer (1994:9) adds that, “Realists hold States to be rational actors. This means that, given the goal of survival, States will act as best they can in order to maximize their likelihood of continuing to exist.” This argument propounds that states will act rationally in order to survive. As such states are risk averse, that is they will seldom get into fights that they are likely not win. This has been seen in the reluctance of the U.S to put boots on the ground in Syria because it fears this maybe another unwinnable war like the ones it started in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the same light, the involvement of other actors like Iran, Qatar and Israel who all have their own motives in joining the conflicts points to the fact that states will take the necessary measures and adjust their posture in the international system in manner that furthers their own interests in a rational way. Realism and its tenets are observed in every aspect of the Syrian conflict.

Goodin (2009:123) goes on to add that, “The state is the most important actor under realism. It is unitary and autonomous because it speaks and acts with one voice. The power of the state is understood in terms of its military capabilities.” Power politics are expressed in terms of the size, scope and effectiveness of a particular state’s military. This in turn is used to express and execute the objectives of the state or group through a show of force or the exercise of this force. This is an expression of power. State and non state actors use military power to secure their interests and impose their will depending on the situation. The exercise of this power has been seen in the U.S backing of the Syrian rebels through supplying them with ammunition and arms, the rebels have in turn used this hard military power to mount a challenge against the Syrian government.. Military power is the major determinant of states action and reaction in the international system. Thus power theory will be used to unpack and situate the actions of the various foreign interests that have claimed a stake in the Syrian conflict.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the causes and course of the ongoing Syrian conflict. The major foreign powers involved in the conflict and their reasons for involvement have been identified. This chapter has analysed how foreign intervention has impacted the Syrian conflict, though

there has been an emphasis on the published literature concerning the subject. The following chapter will look at how foreign intervention with the accompanied influx of arms and foreign fighters has furthered instability and the rise of groups such as ISIS in Syria.

Chapter Three

3.1 Introduction

Foreign intervention in domestic conflicts has historically had the effect of prolonging conflict. Where the effect has been peace this peace has not lasted long. This is because intervening forces or actors usually have their own agenda they hope to advance through getting involved in a conflict. As such these vested interests in the event of an international intervention usually take precedence over the initial causes of conflict in the first place. This has been seen in the Libyan intervention by NATO, which though it toppled the government of Muammar Gaddafi, it has left the country in a perpetual spiral of chaos. The intervening forces are now nowhere to be found. It can be safely argued that the effect of NATO bombing only had the effect of worsening the security situation in Libya and opened it up to being overrun by Al Qaeda linked fighters such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. This same scenario has presented itself in Syria with a multitude of actors sprouting up to prop up various sides in the conflict. The Free Syrian Army is alleged to have asked for arms and financial help from the LIFG. Other actors have been Iran, the U.S, Israel and the Russians. All of these actors have done nothing but further their own agendas in a civil war that increasingly has the hallmarks of a proxy war.

3.2 Tripoli-Damascus-Tehran The Axis Of Evil

The intervention of the U.S did not start with the present civil war in Syria. Rather it is part of the greater U.S strategic interests in the Middle East to topple the Assad regime. This dates back to the days of the Bush Administration which sought to consolidate its influence by removing unfriendly governments in Libya, Iran and Syria. Cunningham (2012:12) notes that, “Bush warned against three countries that “aggressively pursue weapons of mass destruction” that “export terrorism” and are ruled by “an unelected few”. He named Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the “axis of evil.” As such Syria was firmly in the crosshairs of the U.S government and targeted for removal through overt or covert means. This is because it was viewed as part of the greater ‘axis of evil’ that was accused of sponsoring terrorism and amassing weapons of mass destruction. In this vein the Assad regime and the other two nations were not only construed as threats to U.S interests but also global peace and security.

Cunningham (2012:12) adds that, “Later, the Bush administration would expand the “forces of evil” bearing down on the world to include Cuba, Libya and Syria.” This axis would face gradual but tactically strategic onslaughts to expedite their removal from power. The grand strategy of the U.S was to eventually install friendly governments that would be more amenable to U.S interests and maneuvers’ in the Middle East. The Syrian uprising in 2011 that occurred as a result of the Arab spring was a priceless opportunity for the U.S to put its regime change agenda against the Assad government into high gear.

London and Miller (2013:43) note that, “The arms shipments, which are limited to light weapons and other munitions that can be tracked, the United States is also shipping new types of nonlethal gear to rebels. That aid includes vehicles, sophisticated communications equipment and advanced combat medical kits.”

According to RT (2013:1), “the CIA was secretly involved in training rebel groups and assisting Saudi Arabia and Qatar in smuggling arms to the rebels fighting to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad.” The result of this was tactical support provided to the rebels by mainly the U.S and other Middle Eastern countries allied to the U.S. This support however was limited to non lethal force as the U.S was fearful of arming the rebels. This position was based on the premise that giving the rebels more sophisticated weaponry like anti tank rockets and anti aircraft guns, was a mistake as the weapons would end up in the arms of extremist and terrorist organizations like ISIS. As such the only support the rebels have received has been training, food, clothes and military advice. The effect of this has been to build an opposition force capable of mounting a challenge against the Assad regime but at the same time lacking enough fire power to take out the Assad regime in its entirety. This half hearted interference by the U.S can be argued to have created a stalemate between the rebels and the government of Bashar Al Assad. The net result is that the Assad government does not have the capacity to completely wipe out the rebellion. The rebels on the other hand can only mount a resistance to an Assad onslaught but are not adequately armed to win the war. This has caused the conflict to drag on for much longer than necessary. The losers in this have been the citizens of Syria with massive displacements and civilian casualties. Entire cities like Aleppo and Homs have been destroyed by government offensives to bludgeon the rebels into submission. This created a humanitarian crisis in Homs in 2014. Foreign interference has not served any purpose other than the needless continuation of a

conflict that has evolved into a war of attrition which no one can win in the foreseeable future. RT (2013:1) sums it up by saying that, “Syria has suffered greatly in the three-year civil war, but its government remains stable and its military is gaining ground in the fight against various opposition forces, many of them foreign Islamists.”

The foreign interference in Syria has also given birth to a disturbing trend of both sides increasingly becoming more brutal and unconventional in their use of force. This may be as a result of desperation and wanting to end the war quickly. Ollivant (2013:22) notes that, “the Syrian regime’s use of chemical weapons against its own people, which crossed the “red line” that Obama drew in August 2012 as a warning to Assad. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the administration has solid evidence of the regime’s use of Sarin gas against civilians in Ghouta, an area east of Damascus, on August 21.” The use of banned chemical weapons under the Chemical Weapons Convention was a clear challenge to the U.S’ resolve to intervene with boots on the ground in the Syrian conflict. This is because the U.S had warned Assad that it would intervene with military force if they used chemical weapons. Ollivant (2013:22) observes that, “The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), an international treaty banning the use of such arms, has been signed and implemented by all but seven of the world’s nations. Although Syria has not signed the treaty, its acceptance by such an overwhelming majority of the world’s states gives it the status of an international norm to which Syria can be held accountable.” The Assad government according to Warrick (2013:13) did, “use outlawed toxins to kill nearly 1,500 civilians, including at least 426 children,” Warrick (2013:13) adds that, “a relatively controlled use of chemicals had in recent months become part of the normal military strategy whenever government forces were unable to push back rebel offensives or break through defensive fortifications.” This is because the government found it increasingly hard to face the rebels head on because of massive defections from within the Syrian army itself. Also the use of chemical weapons was meant to serve as a deterrent to people willing to consider joining the rebellion. Sarin gas was used to break stalemates and gain advantage in areas where the rebels had an upper hand. It also had the strategic effect of demonstrating the resolve of the Assad regime to stay in power through whatever means necessary.

Garfinkle (2014:5) observes that, “by using chemicals without paying any price, they signaled to the rebels the highly credible taunt that the Americans will, in the end, leave you hung out to

dry.” The fact that the U.S did not send in troops to Syria after the use of chemical weapons which it had said would be the breaking point from which its entry into the conflict would start also sent a message to the rebels that they were essentially alone in the war against Assad. The message was clear, the rebels would receive no military support to remove the Assad government, even after it had used to chemical weapons to massacre civilians. This clear challenge to the U.S went unanswered. Though the U.S started giving the rebels ‘lethal’ aid, this has not been enough to help them defeat the Assad regime. This half hearted intervention however has notably exponentially increased the Assad regimes propensity to use unwarranted and illegal weapons to secure victory. During this time, ordinary Syrians have paid with their lives for the consequences of the power politics at play.

Ollivant (2013:22) however, argues that, “Regime change in Syria is still — at least officially — U.S. policy. The president has never formally revoked the goal he declared on August 11, 2011 of ‘a democratic Syria, without Bashar al-Assad.’ The large-scale civilian killings perpetrated by Assad’s regime have only reinforced the importance of his ouster.” The unwillingness to get more involved by the U.S is a curious fact. The U.S has chosen largely to stay on the sidelines of the conflict refusing to commit to sending troops to stop the man made humanitarian crisis that has become Syria. This has opened the Syrian revolution to sinister elements and it has been hijacked by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant which has gone on to cause havoc and regional instability. ISIS is a result of the lack of resolve by all the parties that initially intervened in the Syrian crisis but did so without devoting themselves to ending the war. As such the war became a breeding ground for jihadists and salafists from all over the Middle East and some from as far off as Libya and Mali. These elements coalesced into ISIS, which now represents a threat not only to Syria, but to Iraq and the greater Middle East and the world.

3.3 The Birth of ISIS

Beauchamp (2014:2) argues that, “The United States invaded Iraq, accidentally sparked a sectarian civil war, and generally created the conditions for what was then al-Qaeda in Iraq to flourish. Without the American invasion, al-Qaeda in Iraq never would have been so strong, and ISIS never would have grown out of it.” ISIS grew out of the Sunni discontent of being ruled by the majority Shiite’s who went on to institutionalize discrimination against the Sunni’s who were accused of benefitting from Saddam’s rules as they formed the core of the ruling elite. Gorman et

al (2014:14) note that, “at least two of its top operational leaders are former generals in Saddam’s army. In other words, they were among the professional soldiers who found themselves without work when the U.S. disbanded Saddam’s military. Neither of them are known to be particularly radical or knowledgeable about Islam, suggesting they weren’t motivated to join the group because of their religious beliefs.” The disbandment of the Iraqi military further provided a pool of military trained men with arms to form a recruiting pool for a terrorist organization like ISIS. The Syrian war, which has the same dynamics of Shiite against Sunni characteristics, provided a ripe proving ground for ISIS to flourish.

Keck (2014:1) observes that, “many of ISIS’s top leaders– including Abu Baker al-Baghdadi– spent time in an American military prison during the occupation.” The treatment they received at the hands of the American forces and the rapid disintegration of Iraqi society served as a clarion call for these elements to coalesce into what would become ISIS. Keck (2014:1) adds that, “this only served to further radicalize them and strengthen their resolve.” ISIS was formed in 2013 and grew out of Al Qaeda. ISIS’ stated objective is to establish an Islamic Caliphate that straddles Syria and Iraq. Its proposed territory once this objective comes to fruition covers most of the Middle East and parts of North Africa. Barnes et al (2014) note that, “the expanding strength of Islamist forces in Syria, who in recent weeks have asserted control of large parts of neighboring Iraq and now pose threats to U.S. allies in the region.” ISIS won control of vast parts of Syria and Iraq including Raqqa in Syria and Fallujah in Iraq. ISIS expansionist ambitions thus pose not only a threat to Syria and Iraq but the entire Middle East and Africa. Taking into account the strategic importance of this region in terms of oil production and the prevalence of radical Islamist organizations, this poses a serious threat to global peace and security.

Ollivant (2013:23) notes that, “The Syrian presence of the al-Qaeda-affiliated group Jabhat al-Nusra and other extremist elements has been known at least since the beginning of 2012. But it is only in the last several months that the U.S. and its allies have acknowledged the seriousness of this problem. It is one thing for jihadists to join the rebel forces; it is quite another when jihadists control territory. Many analysts believe that al-Qaeda affiliates now enjoy an almost total safe haven in the northern “liberated” areas of Syria in a manner that recalls pre-9/11 Afghanistan.” These liberated zones controlled by rebel factions such as Al Nusra proved to be fertile incubation grounds for terrorist organizations like ISIS to grow and consolidate their power. It is

however curious to note that ISIS took over from the Al Nusra Front, a rebel faction claimed by the Americans to be moderate. The Al Nusra Front received funding and support from the U.S and its Middle Eastern Allies. The Al Nusra Front was however absorbed by ISIS. ISIS through its sophisticated organization and sweeping victories attracted a large number of jihadists into its ranks. It also absorbed some smaller factions within the greater Syrian opposition.

Beauchamp (2014:14) notes that, “ISIS makes most of its money from oil and organized crime-style rackets. But back in 2011 and 2012, ISIS didn't have this sophisticated fundraising apparatus. Instead, their funding came from friends in the Gulf monarchies — most notably Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait.” This support is not because these countries would like to see a takeover of the Middle East by this terrorist group. Rather their support is motivated by the desire to weaken their regional rivals in the form of Assad Syria and Iran which happens to be Syria’s ally. Crowley (2013:63) notes that, “A number of countries are already deeply involved in Syria—it is at one level a proxy battle between the Gulf States and Iran.” This power politics has shaped the intervention of regional powers like Saudi Arabia in the Syrian conflict. This foreign intervention has however not been for the quick solution of the conflict but has served to complicate it by introducing a wide variety of actors onto the scene, each with their own agendas. This has had the effect of exponentially complicating the ending of hostilities in Syria. ISIS has solidified the resolve of the United States to use military force in Syria with targeted airstrikes over ISIS held territory and targets.

The coming of ISIS onto the scene however has had some adverse effects. Beauchamp (2014:14) alleges that, “Assad has deliberately nurtured ISIS, or at least tacitly allowed its rise, as a means of marginalizing more moderate rebels whom outside powers like the US might have supported against him.” This is because when ISIS appeared in the conflict and claimed vast swathes of territory, the Assad regime did not use its usual tactic of incessant bombing like it did in other rebel held areas. This allowed ISIS to grow and consolidate its hold. This strategic move was meant to let the true terrorist nature of ISIS show on its own to the rest of the world, especially the U.S. The intended effect of this was to force the U.S to stop its support for the rebels as this support would equate to supporting a terrorist organization that would one day have the ultimate goal of attacking the U.S. This tactical move seems to have worked as the U.S is firmly against the rise of ISIS and has carried out targeted aerial bombing of ISIS held areas in both Iraq and

Syria. It should be noted however that the deliberate and controlled rise of ISIS has had negative impacts not only in Syria but also in Iraq. ISIS has derailed the stability of Iraq which was coming out of the throes of sectarian violence after the U.S occupation ended.

Ollivant (2013:23) argues that, “Any action that weakens the regime may also increase the scope and scale of safe havens extremists enjoy. Similarly, any attacks against al-Qaeda-linked groups may also help strengthen the regime by eliminating some of the allegedly most effective forces fighting against it.” As such some other regional powers have taken it upon themselves to enter into the Syrian conflict on the side of the Assad regime, this is in cognizance of the threat that ISIS poses to regional stability. There are other powers that have been involved in the rise of ISIS and have exploited the Syrian conflict to further their own political agendas. Beauchamp (2014) argues that, “Iran is allied with Syria and helping Assad more than anyone, the Iranian government is much more serious about fighting ISIS. They're providing hefty military support to Iraq's campaign against the group, including battlefield direction from Qassem Suleimani, the powerful commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' elite Quds force.” Iran has also entered this fight to safeguard its interests. These interests consist of keeping Saudi Arabia from becoming the regional hegemon in the Gulf. Since ISIS is a proxy of sorts for Saudi Arabia, fighting ISIS serves the interests of Iran in keeping its ally Syria afloat and at the same time limiting the influence of Saudi Arabia as a regional power.

3.4 The Libyan Factor

Abouzeid (2013:3) notes that, “The transfer of Libyan arms to Syrian rebels — and to other countries in the region — was [documented](#) in a U.N. Security Council report published in April. The report, by the U.N. Security Council’s Group of Experts, described shipments from various places in Libya and suggested that some local officials, or their representatives, were either involved in the shipments or allowed them to happen.” After the fall of Gaddafi, the vast Libyan armaments were looted and fell into rebel hands. These included sophisticated weaponry such as anti tank rockets and other munitions. Abouzeid (2013:3) adds that, “Libya’s vast and loose stockpiles of machine guns, artillery, ammunition and antiaircraft systems — leftovers amassed largely by snatching government stockpiles during the military uprising against the late dictator.” These weapons ended up in Syria through transfer by a large number of Libyan rebels that came into Syria to join the rebellion.

Abouzeid (2013:4) observes that, “Former commanders are sympathetic to the Syrian rebels in their bid to oust Assad and are helping them by steering weapons through Turkey and, according to the U.N. report, through northern Lebanon.” As such the importation of Libyan arms into Syria is a well orchestrated operation that involves the tacit approval of the governments of Turkey and Lebanon and other countries that allow the arms shipments safe passage through their territory. Other countries that have been involved in the movement of arms from Libya include Qatar. Abouzeid (2013:4) points out that, “the Qataris have acted as ‘deliverymen’ for five planeloads of weaponry the Libyans claim they sent via Turkey since last summer.” The transfer of weapons and fighters from Libya to Syria has been done through a well oiled machine that is dedicated to see the ouster of Assad. This has largely involved the willingness of the Libyans themselves to fight the Assad regime. Daragahi (2012:24) argues that, “Libyan rebels may be motivated by the support the Syrian president gave Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi, the former president, until the very end of his life, hosting a television channel that lambasted the former rebels as stooges of the west.” This alliance between Assad and Gaddafi may be construed as the major driver of the resentment harbored by the Libyan jihadists. However it can never be overemphasized that the al Qaeda in Iraq, which morphed into ISIS in Syria, has links with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group which may also be a major motivation for the Libyans going into Syria. These terrorist linkages pose a significant threat to the region and global security as a whole. This is just but one of the serious offshoots that foreign involvement in the Syrian crisis has had.

Zelin (2013:42) observes that, “there have been 201 Libyan Jihadi deaths, Saudi Arabian 267, Tunisian 182 and various other nationalities as of December 2013.” This serves to show the intensity of the Libyan presence in relation to other foreign nationalities that are involved in the Syrian crisis. Libyan involvement may be argued to have had a more profound effect on the conflict. This is because Libyans have arguably constituted the bulk of the foreign fighters in the country. The influx of their weaponry has also furthered the volatility of the conflict by ushering in a rapid influx of heavy weaponry. This has led to escalation in the intensity and frequency of confrontations between the rebels and the government forces.

3.5 Conclusion

External interference in the Syrian war has been done to further the interests of foreign powers and not Syrians. This has been through the covert and overt funding of terrorist and rebel factions operating within Syria. Foreign interference has also been precipitated by the regional environment prevailing in the Middle East, North Africa and the Arab Maghreb. The Arab Spring has witnessed an unprecedented influx and flow of weapons throughout the region. It has also seen the movement of a variety of fighters from as far afield as Libya, the U.S and Europe coming in to fight for the various rebel factions in Syria. It is noteworthy to mention that most of the weapons that were given to the Libyan rebels by NATO found their way to Syria and other volatile areas like Somalia. This not only increased the intensity of the fighting in Syria but also diminished the chances of reaching a ceasefire or peace agreement. Groups that were given arms by the U.S such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group have provided material aid to the Syrian rebels in the form of arms and fighters. Other countries such as Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E and Iran have also gotten involved in the conflict albeit on different sides. This chapter has looked at the varied effects of foreign intervention in domestic disputes by a broad spectrum of international actors. These effects have been mainly the prolongation of the conflict at the expense of civilians.

Chapter Four

4.1 Introduction

The Syrian civil war has been raging on since 2011. It is now four years old and there still seems no end in sight to the suffering of ordinary Syrians. The war has claimed an unacceptable number of civilian lives. The research phase of this study has uncovered a myriad of after effects of foreign intervention in the Syrian crisis. The most notable of these has been the profound strategic effect foreign intervention has on the course and outcome of a complex crisis like the Syrian civil war. There has also been the wholesale destruction of both social and human capital. Civilian infrastructure has been destroyed and in the cases of Homs and Aleppo, whole cities have been turned into piles of rubble. Hospitals, schools and power generation facilities have been destroyed. This has exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Syria. The Assad regime and the rebels reached a stalemate where neither of them can win the war outright nor can they fail to repel an attack by the other. This has had the effect of needlessly perpetuating the suffering of civilians who are caught in between the two belligerents. The huge influx of foreign fighters who receive military aid from a plethora of actors has complicated the situation and diluted the resolve of the rebels. This in turn has caused the rise of ISIS, a terrorist grouping with regional ambitions of forming a caliphate. ISIS has not only hardened the Syrian regime but also played a role in diverting U.S support from the rebels to focus on bombing ISIS positions. This has weakened the rebels and affected their chances of dislodging the Assad regime from power. These factors have led to a stalemate whose effects this chapter will discuss in detail. Foreign intervention has had three distinct effects on the Syrian conflict. These are the perpetuation of hostilities, economic costs and human costs as well.

4.2 The Strategic Consequences of Foreign Intervention

Cordesman (2013:67) argues that, “There still is no clear picture of the level of casualties that came out of the Syrian use of chemical weapons on August 21st, and there are no estimates at all of the total impact of the use of chemical weapons during the civil war.” The failure by the warring parties to come to a peaceful ceasefire has meant the continuing escalation of the conflict. This has seen the use of chemical weapons by both sides, with the Assad regime claiming that the rebels used chemical weapons to force the entry of the U.S into the war. This

was because the U.S had said that the use of chemical weapons would be a red line that it would not tolerate the crossing of. As such the promise of foreign intervention in the form of U.S boots on the ground or airstrikes on Assad forces was incentive enough for the rebels to use chemical weapons on civilians. In interviews conducted with the European Union ambassador to Zimbabwe Mr. Philippe Van Damme, the respondent argued that this was “borderline terrorist behavior by the rebels and that it was shameful that the U.S was willing to get into bed with such questionable elements.” Also extracted from inference was that the promise of U.S support served as cause for unnecessary escalation of the conflict. Respondents noted that the use of chemical weapons by the Assad government was also a ploy to test the resolve of the U.S in its support of the rebels. It also served the strategic goal of warning the rebels that the Assad regime would use whatever means necessary to remain in power, even banned chemical weapons on civilians. These sentiments outline the fact that foreign intervention, or the promise of it, subjugated an essentially domestic problem to the whims of external actors who were in no hurry to see the end of the conflict as it did not directly affect their core interests. This in turn made it virtually impossible for the internal actors to come to an agreement on their own as they were now virtually operating as proxies and could not make any strategic decisions without the input of their external benefactors. Hassan (2011:17) points out that, “The Gulf states’ attempts to steer Damascus away from Tehran to bolster their regional standing is central to their approach in Syria. This derives from their long-term interest in countering Iranian power in the region, exerted over recent years through the so-called resistance axis, which, uniting Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas, has played an important role in weakening Gulf regional influence. Gulf leaders believe that a new – Sunni – regime in Damascus will naturally ally itself with the Gulf states at Iran’s expense, particularly if they have helped establish the new order through financial and military support.”

Cordesman (2013:68) points out that, “To date, 197,387 people have been killed. Of them, 62,347 are civilians, including 6,468 women. Of the non-civilians: 34,060 are rebel fighters, 21,343 are non-Syrian jihadis, 43,396 are regime forces, 2,381 are de-facto regime forces -- people who used to be in the army and are fighting for the regime -- 28,198 are from militias allied to the regime, 620 are Hezbollah, 2,075 are Shia militia supporting the regime, and 2,958 are unknown persons.” This saturation of the conflict region by foreign fighters has had an unquantifiable impact on the conflict. This is because all these actors represent a plethora of

agendas that do not necessarily echo with the interests of the Syrians. This was said by the United Nations head of mission to Zimbabwe, who argued that not only did this make conflict resolution impossible but also placed Syria in a position of weakness in determining its own destiny. The argument made was that the proxy war now had too many actors to make the possibility of a conflict resolution that adequately met all these actors needs a near impossibility. This is because some of the rebel movements had been hijacked by terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS whose stated objective was to establish a Muslim caliphate. As such these groups would not stop even if the Assad regime was toppled, they would simply move on to the next country- possibly Afghanistan and Iraq where they already have established footholds argued the U.N head of mission. These foreign actors are not strategically interested in toppling Assad because their overall grand strategy is bigger than Syria alone. The respondent also noted that Iranian interests of propping up the Assad regime at all costs also meant that they would not accept Assad's fall as it would be a threat to their own national security if they lose their only true ally in the region. The advent of ISIS which is a mainly Sunni organization is a threat to Iran as it is a mostly Shiite dominated country. Thus Iran sees itself as the next target of ISIS after the fall of Syria. This makes the vested interests of Iran in securing Assad's permanent stay in power that much more important in lieu of the geopolitics of the region.

Another respondent declined to be named also noted that the partial switching of U.S allegiance has had the effect of drawing out the conflict, a strategy that Assad had hoped and anticipated. This is because the rebels had expected a quick and swift victory in the footsteps of the Libyan revolution of 2011. However Assad proved to be much more tactically prepared for the insurrection and had learnt from the Libyan revolt that resisting the rebel onslaught long enough to slow their momentum would be enough to force a stalemate and contain the rebels, albeit with no clear winner. As such the agreement by Syria to give up its chemical weapons, at the same time demanding a ceasefire so that these weapons could be safely transported out of the country to be destroyed, played into this strategy. The refusal by the rebels to observe this ceasefire was a major public relations gaffe for the rebels as Americans became undecided and unsure of the reliability of these rebels to be rational partners. The effect was that rebels lost momentum and had to give up cities like Aleppo, that had been the centres of the uprising when it started.

The rise of ISIS further divided U.S. resolve on whether to fully arm the rebels and provide them with all the tactical support they needed or deal with a rising terrorist organization that could one day pose a threat to U.S. interests. The arrival of ISIS on the scene further complicated an already complex scenario. Respondent argued that the U.S. had to decide on whether to supply lethal aid to the rebels or to launch air strikes against Al Nusra and ISIS positions. This strategic conundrum was a result of the radicalizing effect that ISIS had on other rebel groups in Syria. As such the U.S. had to choose between supporting Assad in crushing ISIS or supplying weapons to shoddy rebels, weapons that were most likely to end up in the hands of ISIS- a threat to U.S. interests and security in the region. All these strategic considerations have had to be worked out during the course of the conflict as they had not been anticipated when the conflict started in 2011. As such the reactions to events have largely been knee jerk and not well thought through. This in turn has led to the escalation and dragging on of the conflict as crisis after crisis has arisen, without any clear plan of action by the internal or external actors with declared interests in Syria.

4.3 The Human Cost of Foreign Intervention: The Siege of Homs

The siege of Homs by the Syrian military for three years during the war created a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions. The human and economic cost is unjustifiable. Maksan (2015:3) notes that, "Homs, the third-largest city in Syria, was for several years the site of a bloody stand-off between the regime and rebel forces of various stripes, both secular and Islamist." The Syrian army could not successfully take it, neither could the rebels repel the encirclement by the Assad forces. This stalemate marked the beginning of a harrowing and brutal siege that lasted years.

Van Tets (2014:16) observes that, "The Old City of Homs has been under siege for almost two years. It lies in ruins, surrounded by regime troops and suffering severe shortages of food." The blockade meant that neither food aid nor weapons could enter the city. The acute shortage of food forced inhabitants of Homs to eat grass and cats or face starvation. Basic services like electricity and water were not available for the civilians trapped inside Homs for the duration of the siege. Civilians paid an enormous price as food was used as a weapon by both sides in the conflict. The result was a humanitarian crisis as starvation set in. The perpetual bombing of the city by the Syrian air force and artillery destroyed virtually all the civilian infrastructure in the city. Pleasence (2014:23) notes that, "the extent of destruction caused by two years of continuous

fighting was laid bare, with whole neighbourhoods reduced to rubble and building reduced to concrete skeletons.” The wholesale carpet bombing was indiscriminate and resulted in large civilian casualties. Hospitals and schools were also destroyed, tearing apart the very fabric of Syrian society in Homs. The U.N head of mission argues that this was the time the international community should have come out strong and united in condemning the deliberate targeting of civilians by the Syrian government and the rebels too.

Maksan (2015:10) adds that, “There have been horrific attacks against civilians by all sides throughout the brutal conflict, now in its fourth year.” The E.U ambassador argues that such indiscriminate and shameful war crimes should have been enough to galvanise international opinion into putting pressure on all sides involved in the conflict to come to the negotiating table and reach a ceasefire. Harding et al (2012:34) points out that, “Residents inside the besieged city of Homs claimed they are under "genocidal attack" from a Syrian regime apparently deaf to international opinion and determined to "bomb, starve and shoot" them into submission.” The respondent argued that there are instances where international or foreign intervention is warranted to save the lives of civilians and non combatants. The respondent argued that international law had developed that governed the legal response and moral obligation of other states to act in the face of such horrific and barbaric attacks on civilians. The respondent cited various examples in the development of what is now known as the responsibility to protect. These include the NATO bombing of Kosovo in 1999 and the removal of Idi Amin by Tanzanian forces. The most recent case of the Libyan intervention by NATO was cited as a case of the responsibility to protect crystallizing as an accepted principle of international law. Respondent also cited the genocides in Rwanda, Cambodia and Srebrenica as unacceptable and such levels of deliberate violence against civilians should not only be condemned by the international community but warrant concerted international efforts to stop them, global power politics aside.

Pleasence (2014:13) argues that, “The city was once home to nearly a million people, according to a 2002 census, but its central districts are now virtual ghost towns, littered with twisted metal and broken concrete.” Most of the city’s residents are either internally displaced or are refugees in neighboring countries. This large number of people being displaced has had obvious negative impacts on the areas they have gone to settle in. The U.N ambassador argued that there had already been reports of tensions in refugee camps in Turkey and in Lebanon between the

refugees and the locals. There has also been a humanitarian catastrophe in these refugee camps as there are no adequate shelters to protect people from the elements especially during winter. Respondent also pointed out that though the international community was quick in pledging and providing material aid, in most instances lethal aid, to both sides of the conflict they were not as forthcoming when it came to sourcing funds to help refugees. This the respondent argued were misplaced efforts which did not lead to the resolutions of the civil war but rather worsened the situation of the most vulnerable sections of Syrian society in the conflict- civilians. One would be inclined to agree with this assertion because of the humanitarian crisis that unfolded in Syria because of these altercations.

4.4 The Economic Cost of Foreign intervention: The Battle For Aleppo

The Syrian civil war has brought the country's economy to its knees. Oil production has gone down and exports of textiles and agricultural products have gone down. Unemployment has also skyrocketed and the country has suffered an unprecedented brain drain. The countries most skilled and educated personnel have fled the conflict which seems to have no end in sight. Foreign capital in the form of Foreign Direct Investment has also been reduced to almost nothing at all as investors are risk averse and will not pour money into a war zone.

Before the civil war broke out, oil used to be the mainstay of the Syrian economy. However due to the alleged human rights abuses of the Syrian regime, oil exports to Europe were banned. The freezing of Syrian bank accounts in Europe has meant the government is now short of funds to provide basic services like healthcare to civilians. This was under a sanctions regime meant to cripple the Assad military machine by drying out its sources of funding. The intended effect of this was to render the military impotent and unable to take on the rebels. This was through cutting off revenues for the Assad regime to use to buy ammunition, weapons and pay its soldiers salaries.. However this has not had the intended effect as ordinary citizens have been the ones to bear the full brunt of these sanctions. This is because the Syrian government has used the little resources available at its disposal to keep the war effort going. As such there have been chronic food shortages and medicines. This reflects a dire consequence of foreign intervention taking an inadequate and ineffective strategy such as the imposition of sanctions and trade embargoes. Sanctions have a long history of not achieving their intended goals and hurting the

ordinary civilians in a conflict situation. As such foreign intervention in this case has served to only worsen the situation of civilians in Syria. This form of intervention has crippled the Syrian economy and has not had any significant effect on the resolve of the Assad regime to remain in power.

The regime has simply handed down the effects of sanctions down to the citizens. Over 60% of Syrians now live in poverty. A respondent from the Zimbabwean intelligence community who spoke on condition of anonymity notes that the poverty datum line has gained traction and that even after the cessation of hostilities it will take at least a decade to rebuild Syria's destroyed infrastructure. Respondent went on to argue that it would take even longer to rebuild the institutions that make for a modern society in Syria. This points to the destructive toll the war has exacted on both sides of the fighting parties. The battle of Aleppo serves as an example of the economic cost of the war and how foreign intervention in the various forms that it took, only made the situation worse and more costly for Syrians- in blood and in money.

Sharp and Blanchard (2011:18) note that, "Prior to the recent unrest, U.S. sanctions against Syria had clearly dissuaded some U.S. and some foreign businesses from investing in Syria. With the exception of certain specified goods, most U.S. exports to Syria are prohibited, a policy that has prevented the country's national air carrier, Syrian Air, both from repairing the few Boeing planes in its fleet and from procuring new planes from Europe." This has had severe effects on the country's ability to import vital materials including medicines. The sanctions have also served to isolate the Assad regime from the international community. The inferred downstream effect of this has been the hardening of the regimes position and the strengthening of its resolve to cling on to power at whatever cost.

Also uncovered during the research was that the European Union had signed an Association Agreement with Syria that would open up the E.U market to Syrian trade and would see Syria's economy integrate significantly with that of the E.U. however the outbreak of the civil war and Assad's alleged human rights abuses have seen the collapse of this deal which would have been a significant boost to Syria's economy. These are some of the background effects of foreign intervention. Foreign powers that have substantial economic muscle and influence can manipulate and orchestrate an artificial economic collapse to stir political outcomes in their favour. Sharp and Blanchard (2011:20) conclude by arguing that, "In sum, existing economic

relationships and long-term Syrian economic needs may provide points of leverage to parties seeking to influence current developments.”

4.5 Vicious Cycle of War- The Rise of ISIS

A respondent from Zimbabwe’s military argued that the most notable outcome of the Syrian civil war has been the rise of ISIS. He pointed out that ISIS was an opportunistic terror group that seized the chance precipitated by the lawlessness of war. ISIS grew from the offshoot Al Qaeda in Iraq which had links to the greater Al Qaeda terror network. Al Qaeda in Iraq morphed into ISIS seizing large parts of Syria and Iraq and declaring a Muslim caliphate. The stated objective of ISIS has so far been the establishment of a caliphate that covers the entire Muslim world in the Middle East. Urfa (2014:34) notes that, “Though IS has been pushed back in some areas, it is still making advances in others. It has crept towards Baghdad, causing jitters in the city, and this week was close to winning the Syrian Kurdish enclave of Ain al-Arab (known to Kurds as Kobane) on the Turkish border.” This represents the single greatest threat to regional peace in the Middle East presently. The respondent argued that ISIS was formed after the numerous rebel groups failed to mount a credible and effective force to topple the Assad regime. Thus ISIS came into fill the power vacuum left by the government in the rebel held territory and at the same time coalesced the minor rebel factions and incorporated them into its ranks. This made ISIS into the formidable terrorist group that it is today. Urfa (2014:34) argues that, “The danger is that, out of jihadist solidarity, Jabhat al-Nusra may now join forces with IS to confront the common American enemy.” The rallying call has been that the U.S is fighting a war against Islam. Not only does this further radicalize an already radicalized following but it has the effect of entrenching instability not only in Syria but in the region. ISIS rose from the chaos of Iraq and usurped the power vacuum created by the stalemate between the rebels and the Assad government. As such any gain in power by ISIS through joining with other powerful rebel factions like the Al Noosra Front has only one ending, spreading the insurgency under the banner of establishing a Muslim Caliphate in the entire Middle East. As such one can safely deduce that foreign intervention in the Syrian civil war has only worsened the situation. However the respondent highlighted that ISIS was only able to do this by seizing weapons, ammunition and money supplied to “moderate rebel factions” by the U.S.

This in effect meant that ISIS was using arms supplied by the U.S to not only attack the Assad regime but to also attack U.S interests by threatening her allies like Saudi Arabia and declaring a Muslim caliphate in the region. This argument reinforces the perception that ISIS only rose out of the confusion created by a multitude of foreign interests meddling in the Syrian conflict. Its rise was ensured by the easy accessibility of highly sophisticated weaponry supplied to the rebels by the Americans and some which came from Libya. The prediction given by the respondent is that ISIS will perpetuate the vicious cycle of instability in the Middle East engendered by groups like Al Qaeda and other jihadist movements. This is because of its well publicized wish to unite the entire Muslim world under one caliphate. This cannot happen peacefully because ISIS is mainly made up of Sunni's and has expressed its wish to convert all other Muslim sect into one Sunni sect. this represents a clear threat to Shiite dominated countries like Iraq. It is also curious to note that support from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates support for the rebels formed much of the backbone of what is now ISIS.

Urfa (2014:34) adds that, "as well as bombing IS, America also targeted Jabhat al-Nusra, one of the strongest groups fighting the Assad regime. America says it only bombed a faction, dubbed the "Khorasan group", claiming it was planning imminent attacks on the West." This has had the effect of further fragmenting the Syrian opposition. As such the opposition that had garnered some sort of momentum has in turn lost it due to targeted attacks from the U.S. The effect of this has been to weaken the rebel movement further. This has allowed the Assad regime to entrench its grip on power and to score some wins against the rebels. However these gains are not enough to do away with the rebels and score an outright victory to end the war. The net result is the prolongation of the conflict and a possible descent into chaos and state collapse and failure as seen in Libya. The rise and seizure of a significant portion of Syria's territory by the ISIS terrorist group opens up the possibility of Syria being permanently split into two. This is because the Syrian government cannot take on ISIS alone and win. The U.S in turn cannot switch allegiances to support Assad because of his human rights record, even though ISIS poses a bigger threat to its interests. All these factors serve to highlight how foreign intervention has made the Syrian conflict a maze of vested interests that are not easy to reconcile in order to end the war.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the findings of the field research conducted to analyze the impact of foreign intervention in Syria. The study found that foreign intervention has had a profound effect on the course and outcomes of the war. These effects have been mainly at the strategic level and have manifested in how the different actors in the conflict behave in terms of tactics and political posturing to get international support. It cannot be over emphasized however that the net effect has been the unnecessary prolongation of the conflict costing thousands of lives and destroying Syria's economy in the process. This chapter has been a presentation of these facts of findings of the study. The following chapter focuses on the conclusions and recommendations that have been arrived at in lieu of these findings.

Chapter Five

5.1 Conclusion

The study was focused on unpacking the intricacies and complexities of foreign intervention in domestic conflicts. The case study of the Syrian civil war exposed a myriad of external actors in the conflict that had a profound effect on how the conflict played out and the nature and character of the domestic actors. The strategies of the Assad regime and the rebels were almost all exclusively determined by the stances and proclamation of a wide ranging assembly of interested parties. Most notable were Iran which was allied with the Assad regime and sent material in the form of troops and intelligence operatives to provide tactical support to the Assad forces. Lebanon's Hezbollah also provided fighters to fight on the side of the government forces. The Russians also played a part in keeping the U.N Security Council from passing a resolution on the Syrian war which might have opened the way for a multilateral humanitarian intervention most likely led by the U.S and NATO. This went a long way in giving the Assad regime time to mobilise and rebuff the rebels. The Russians also kept arms sales to Syria ongoing and sent spare parts and technicians to repair Russian made military equipment possessed by the Syrian army. Saudi Arabia actively supported the rebels by allowing its citizens to channel funds to the rebels who would use it to buy arms and other materials necessary to keep the war going. The U.S was the most vocal and influential supporter of the rebels providing them with lethal aid, tactical training and financial resources.

All these foreign actors had vastly negative effects on how the Syrian conflict played out. The main reason of the intervention of the Gulf Arab states has been to dislodge Syria from the orbit of Iran. This is intended to weaken Iran, however the sectarian nature of this intervention served to make the Syrian conflict more complex than it already was. The conflict now morphed into a Sunni versus Shiite conflict in which the Gulf states wanted to help the Sunni rebels in order to establish a Sunni belt from Lebanon, Syria to Saudi Arabia. This would vastly weaken Iran and increase the influence of Saudi Arabia as the new Sunni regime would be beholden to Saudi Arabia for its existence. The effect of this was to internationalise a purely domestic non sectarian conflict into a religious one, attracting jihadists and terrorists from all over the Middle East. This eventually saw the formation of terrorist groups like ISIS which hijacked the rebel movement and now poses a threat not only to Syria but to the peace and stability of the entire Middle East.

Russian intervention in the form of UNSC veto on the Syrian conflict exposed the structural weaknesses of the U.N system that have existed since its formation. The U.N was essentially unable to act on a situation of grave humanitarian consequences due to the fact that the state concerned was a client state of a veto wielding power and also that big power politics were at play. The Russians had not been too pleased about the way resolution 1973 imposing a no fly zone over Libya had eventually led to the toppling of Gaddafi and the tacit spread of U.S influence and dominance in the region. As such the Syrian conflict represented an opportunity for Russia to assert its authority and willingness to defend its allies and at the same time reestablish itself as a powerful actor in Middle Eastern affairs in the region. These interests and the nature and from they took overrode those of the civilians in Syria that had to live under the unending bombing by the Syrian army and the terror brought on by ISIS and other jihadist groups. This meant that foreign intervention in Syria was in fact not aimed at helping Syrians but rather to push foreign agendas. The net result was the needless and unnecessary continuation of the conflict which saw bloody battles and sieges that demanded an unacceptable toll in human life and property.

Foreign intervention had a noticeably profound impact on the strategies of the actors involved in the conflict. From the use of chemical weapons to sheer terrorism by groups like ISIS. This was because the actors had hardened and became increasingly desperate to secure victory at whatever cost. As such this study found that foreign intervention went a long way in brutalizing the conflict to unprecedented levels. This was affirmation of the hypothesis that external interference aggravates internal conflicts.

5.2 Summary and Analysis

This study found that indeed foreign intervention had aggravated the Syrian conflict to unprecedented levels. The study also unpacked the salient causes of the conflict and the challenges met by the U.N in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis. The Syrian conflict transformed into a proxy war because of the plethora of foreign interests that took hold inside Syria and dictated the pace and nature of the conflict. As such the Syrian war has been unnecessarily extended over a long period of time, largely because the belligerents dug in owing to their foreign support base. The study cited various examples of where foreign intervention has

been successfully executed and others where such intervention has done nothing but to make things worse.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends the United Nations as a body mandated to keep peace should work with Assad in fighting the new threat from ISIS. This would also help in bringing the conflict to a quick close and making way for a negotiated settlement. The logic behind this is that separating the fight between ISIS and Assad has left the rebels open to being overrun by the Assad regime. In a scenario where Assad wins an outright victory on the rebels, it would spell more human rights violations by his forces and government through a predictable crackdown on all perceived opposition elements still remaining in Syria. As such if the U.S were to offer Assad help in taking out ISIS through joint operations. Either way, such an arrangement would bring an end to the war and chaos that characterize Syria presently.

5.4 Democratisation of the Middle East

Though democracy is seen as a mainly Western concept imposed on Middle Eastern countries, this study advances that the only way to build and sustain lasting peace in the Middle East and Syria is through democracy. This is because close examination of the causes of the Syrian conflict by this study uncovered that the main grievance was a democratic deficit in how Syria was governed. This assertion extends to all the countries that experienced revolutions during the Arab Spring, from Tunisia, Libya all through to Egypt. Thus the establishment of democratic institutions and the supremacy of the rule of law will ensure that there will not be any violent uprisings against democratically elected governments. The first step to achieve this would be naturally to call for credible free and fair elections in Syria. This would call for an immediate ceasefire and pledges by all belligerents to respect the outcomes of the elections. This is a first step towards building upon regional stability. The premise is that instability in Syria has attracted a lot of foreign intervention meaning that the conflict is very close to crossing Syria's borders into neighboring countries. The study found that there had already been a number of border skirmishes with Syria's neighbors.

The study also noted that the majority of Arab states that had gotten involved in Syria were not liberal democracies but rather religious theocracies and monarchies. The net effect of this lack of

democracy is that the foreign policy formulation and articulation process is only open to a few individuals who define what the national interest is. As such the interventions by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Lebanon and Qatar may be argued to be not in the pursuit of the core national interest but rather the interests of the ruling elites. Thus if these states were to truly democratize then incidences of narrow minded foreign interventions like the one witnessed in Syria would be a thing of the past as policymakers would be answerable and accountable to a voting electorate.

5.5 Reinforcement of the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine

The responsibility to protect is one of the most contentious issues in contemporary international relations. This study found that its universal application is yet to be fully accepted as it is widely seen as an imperialist tool to dominate and interfere in the politics of small countries. However in light of the acute humanitarian crisis that Syria degenerated into, this study advances that R2P should become a permanent appendage to the body of international law not only through state practice but also by treaty. This would go a long way in outlining the instances where R2P is warranted without contest by other superpowers playing big power politics. This would prevent a situation whereby an international intervention headed and governed by a U.N resolution, much like the no fly zone over Libya under resolution 1973, would be blocked by a country like Russia serving its client state. Such a framework would firmly route human security and human rights as paramount over the sovereignty of the state and would pave way for robust and effective international interventions that not only save lives but prevent the descent into anarchy that has been seen in Syria. This would serve to prevent the uncoordinated efforts that characterized the debate for and against humanitarian intervention in Libya.

Bibliography

Abouzeid, R., (2013).Libyan fighters and Know-How Reach Anti-Assad Fighters [online] available at <http://world.time.com/2013/05/29/libyans-arming-syrian-rebels/> accessed 19 January 19, 2015

Alfred, C., (2014). Inside The Advocacy Group That Keeps Track Of Syria's War Casualties, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/24/syrian-observatory-for-human-rights_n_6201182.html accessed on January 30, 2015

Banya N, 2008. MDC- Zimbabwean Talks in Stalemate. Sky News.

Barnes J.E., et al (2014). Obama Proposes \$500 Million to Aid Syrian Rebels, [online] available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-proposes-500-million-to-aid-syrian-rebels-1403813486> accessed on 14 January 2015

Beauchamp, Z., (2014). How the US, its allies, and its enemies all made ISIS possible, [online] available at <http://www.vox.com/2014/8/25/6065529/isis-rise> accessed 16 January 2015

Brain D, 1980. Gaddafi, Terrorism and the Origins of the United States of America attack on Libya. New York Times

Brecher M, 2003. A Study of Crisis. University of Michigan Press.

Bruce R, 1992. Libyan Terrorism. The Case against Gaddafi: The Contemporary Review

Contending Theories of International Relations by James E. Dougherty, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr.
Review by: DENNIS M. RAY *World Affairs* Vol. 134, No. 4 (Spring 1972), pp. 364-366
Published by: [World Affairs Institute](#)

Cordesman, A.H., (2013). The Human cost of the Syrian Civil War, <http://csis.org/publication/human-cost-syrian-civil-war> accessed on January 30, 2015

Crowley,P. J., (2013). Syrian Crisis Won't Be Resolved With the Tactics Used in Libya, [online] available at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/08/04/syrian-crisis-won-t-be-resolved-with-the-tactics-used-in-libya.html> accessed 19 January 19, 2015

Cunningham (2012). Syrian conflict exposes America's "Axis of Evil" [online] available at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/syrian-conflict-exposes-america-s-axis-of-evil/31867> accessed on 14 January 2015

Daragahi, B., (2012). Libya Can't Stop Fighters Joining Syria Rebels, [online] available at <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article30480.htm> accessed 19 January 19, 2015

Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff Ch 2: From Realist to Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist Theory & Course Packet: Waltz, Kenneth, *Man, the State & War*, pgs. 187-238 & Doyle, Michael, *War and Peace*, pgs. 41-48.

Fry, G., (2014). The Relevance of Realism in International Relations Theory, [http://www.academia.edu/1632931/The Relevance of Realism in International Relations Theory](http://www.academia.edu/1632931/The_Relevance_of_Realism_in_International_Relations_Theory) accessed on January 20, 2015

Garfinkle, A., (2014). Syria Policy, Up Close and Ugly, [online] available at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/01/21/part-2-syria-policy-up-close-and-ugly/> accessed on 14 January 2015

Gorman, S., Et al (2014). Brutal Efficiency: The Secret to Islamic State's Success, [online] available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-secret-to-the-success-of-islamic-state-1409709762> accessed on 14 January 2015

Harding, L., Mahmood, M., and Weaver, M. (2012). Syrian siege of Homs is genocidal, say trapped residents, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/07/syrian-homs-siege-genocidal-say-residents> accessed on January 29 2015

Hirst D, 2012. Hezbollah uses its Military power in a contradictory Manner. The Daily Star.

Holliday J, 2012. Syria's Armed Opposition. Middle East Security. Institute for the study of war. New York Times

Keck, Z., (2014). How the US Made ISIS a Threat, [online] available at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/09/how-the-us-made-isis-a-threat/> accessed on 14 January 2015

Lanser L, 2012. The Middle East war. Houghton Mufflin Borders. London Review

Londono, E and Miller, G., (2013). CIA begins weapons delivery to Syrian rebels, [online] available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html accessed on 14 January 2015

Louis L, 2012. Exclusive Iran flouts United Nations sanctions sends arms to Syria. BBC News

Maksan, O., (2015). Jesuit laments car bomb attack in Homs, Syria: 'young people were deliberately targeted'

http://www.churchinneed.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8259&news_iv_ctrl=1461
accessed on January 29 2015

Mearsheimer, John. The False Promise of International Institutions. *International Security* 13, 3, 1994.

<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~plam/irnotes07/Mearsheimer1994.pdf> accessed on January 20, 2015

Ollivant (2013). The strategic interests at play in US debate over Syria, [online] available at <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/7/the-strategic-interestsatplayinusdebateoversyria.html> accessed on 14 January 2015

Pleasence, C., (2014). Is this the beginning of the end for Syrian rebels? Fighters surrender city of Homs to Assad's troops after three-year siege, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2623572/Syrian-rebels-surrender-city-Homs-three-year-siege-fighters-Aleppo-signal-continued-defiance-destroy-hotel-used-government-base.html#ixzz3QJNJ6TWo> accessed on January 29 2015

Robson J, 2012. Syria hasn't changed but the world has. Toronto University Press.

Russia Today (2013). US admits sending 'lethal aid' to Syrian rebels, [online] available at <http://rt.com/news/164536-syria-rebels-supplied-lethal/> accessed on 14 January 2015

Schmitt E, 2012. CIA said to aid in Steering Arms to Syrian Opposition. *New York Times*.

Sharp, J.M., and Blanchard, C.M., (2011). Unrest in Syria and U.S. Sanctions Against the Assad Regime, Congressional Research Service, Washington.

Urfa, R., (2014). The war against Islamic State Unintended consequences, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21621863-are-american-led-air-strikes-creating-sunni-backlash-unintended-consequences> accessed on February 4 2015

Van Tets, F., (2014). Inside the siege of Homs in Syria: 'There is hardly anything left; there is only ruin' <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/inside-the-siege-of-homs-in-syria-there-is-hardly-anything-left-there-is-only-ruin-9129586.html> accessed on January 29 2015

Warrick, J., (2013). More than 1,400 killed in Syrian chemical weapons attack, U.S. says, [online] available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nearly-1500-killed-in-syrian-chemical-weapons-attack-us-says/2013/08/30/b2864662-1196-11e3-85b6-d27422650fd5_story.html accessed January 15, 2015

Zelin, A.Y., (2013). Foreign Jihadists in Syria: Tracking Recruitment Networks, [online] available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/foreign-jihadists-in-syria-tracking-recruitment-networks> accessed 19 January 19, 2015