

## The Impact of US-Russian Competition on Syrian Crisis

Ahmed Elbassoussy<sup>1\*</sup>, Aya Khaled<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Management, Economics, and Professional Technology, Egyptian Russian University, Badr City, Cairo-Suez Road, 11829, Cairo, Egypt.*

\*Corresponding author(s): Ahmed Elbassoussy, E-mail: [Ahmed-Elbassoussy@eru.edu.eg](mailto:Ahmed-Elbassoussy@eru.edu.eg)

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### ABSTRACT

The US-Russia competition within the Syrian crisis has emerged as a significant geopolitical challenge, prolonging the suffering of the Syrian people and impeding efforts to find a peaceful resolution. Stemming from divergent geopolitical objectives and ideological differences, the conflict revolves around US support for Syrian opposition groups and Russia's unwavering backing of the Assad regime. This clash of interests has intensified violence and hindered diplomatic progress. The two major powers have actively participated in the conflict through military interventions, with the US-led coalition conducting airstrikes against ISIS and supporting rebel factions, while Russia has deployed its armed forces to bolster the Syrian government's position. The involvement of external actors such as Iran and Turkey has added further complexity to the situation, heightening the risk of escalation. The US-Russia conflict has strained bilateral relations, resulting in direct clashes between their forces and allegations of chemical weapon attacks. This has not only exacerbated tensions within the Syrian crisis but also impeded broader international cooperation on critical issues. Efforts to find a resolution require a collaborative approach and a focus on prioritizing humanitarian needs and regional stability. The implications of this competition extend beyond Syria, impacting areas such as arms control, counterterrorism, and regional stability. To address the crisis effectively, diplomatic engagement,

dialogue, and compromise are necessary. The international community suggested diplomatic initiatives and provide humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. Resolving the US-Russia conflict within the Syrian crisis is crucial for fostering regional stability and cooperation on common challenges.

*Keywords: Syrian Crisis- United States- Russia- Security Council.*

## **1-Introduction**

The Syrian crisis has developed into a complex and protracted conflict, which has drawn the attention and involvement of various international actors. The conflict between the United States and Russia has emerged as a major geopolitical challenge in the Syrian context.

The United States has been a main supporter of Syrian opposition groups seeking to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad, while Russia has provided extensive military and diplomatic support to the Assad regime. This fundamental difference of interests has not only fueled the violence inside Syria but has also created a geopolitical battlefield where broader strategic interests overlap.

Both the United States and Russia have actively participated in the Syrian crisis through military interventions and strategic maneuvers. The US-led coalition launched airstrikes on ISIS targets and provided support to opposition factions, while Russia deployed its armed forces to bolster the Syrian government's position, targeting both ISIS and other opposition groups.

The conflict between the United States and Russia in the Syrian crisis not only affected the immediate region but also had far-reaching repercussions. The involvement of outside actors, including Iran and Turkey, has further complicated the situation, adding layers of complexity to an already complex conflict. In addition, strained relations between the United States and Russia have had wider ramifications, impeding cooperation on critical international issues and contributing to the deterioration of bilateral relations.

This research aims to comprehensively analyze the US-Russian competition in the Syrian crisis. It will explore the underlying causes of the conflict and assess its impact on the Syrian crisis. This study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges involved in finding a sustainable and peaceful solution.

**The Research Statement:**

The question regarding the extent of the impact of Russian-American competition on the trajectory of the Syrian crisis during the period from 2011 to 2020 stems from a recognition of the intricate dynamics that unfolded in the region. The rivalry between Russia and the United States has cast a shadow over the future of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and has exerted significant influence on the overall peace process. Moreover, this protracted conflict has the potential to intensify tensions between the Eastern and Western blocs, further complicating diplomatic efforts. Additionally, the implications extend beyond geopolitics, as the Russian-American competition has the potential to disrupt international cooperation aimed at providing much-needed assistance to the displaced Syrians and addressing the humanitarian crisis that has emerged from the conflict. Hence, a comprehensive analysis of the impact of this competition is crucial to grasp the multifaceted nature of the Syrian crisis and its ramifications on both regional and global scales.

**To what extent has the Russian-American competition affected the course of the Syrian crisis during the period (2011-2020)?**

**Sub-questions:**

In order to investigate the main question, some sub questions need to be answered, which are as follows: -

- 1) What are the political reasons behind the Syrian crisis?
- 2) What is the position of the United States of America and the Russian Federation on the Syrian crisis?
- 3) What are their motives for interfering in it?
- 4) What is the result of the two parties' intervention in the Syrian crisis and the impact of this intervention on the course of the Syrian crisis?

**Literature review:**

**Literature dealing with the US-Russian competition:**

Ali, S. (2013). "Russian foreign policy towards the United States of America in the post-Cold War era." One of the most important aspects that the study focused on was the aspect of conflictual relations between the United States of America and Russia. In addition to dealing with Russian foreign policy in the post-Cold War period. [1]

Al Taie, M. (2012). "US-Russian relations after the Cold War." The paper deals with the development of US-Russian relations, starting from US-Soviet relations during the Cold War to US relations after the Cold War. The book also deals with the political components of US-Russian relations. [2]

Zughaib, M. (2014). "The renewal of the US-Russian conflict in light of the emerging crises." This study examines the history of US-Russian relations and their stages, focusing on the recent period compared to other literature. [3]

**Literature dealing with the Syrian crisis:**

Lister, C. (2014). *The Syrian crisis: analysis of the military scene in Syria*. The writer focus on the military scene in Syria on both sides (the opposition, and the pro-government forces), such as Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIS and the armed groups from one part, and the Syrian army and his regional and international supports such as Iran, and Russia. [4]

Abed, N. (2012). "What do Syrian refugees think about their country's crisis?" highlights the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian crisis, emphasizing the immense human suffering, displacement, loss of life, and violations of human rights, emphasizing immediate needs and prioritizing their protection". [5]

**Literature dealing with the US-Russian competition and its impact on the Syrian crisis:**

Ostrovsky, A. (2016). "The US and Russia in Syria: Competition or Cooperation?" analyzes the complex dynamics between the US and Russia in the Syrian conflict, highlighting diverging interests and cooperation in counterterrorism and chemical weapons destruction. It also discusses strategic calculations, regional dynamics, and global security implications. [6]

## **Research Methodology**

The study is going to use the comparative analysis approach as it provides a useful tool to compare between the positions of two different powers about the Syrian crisis which are United States of America & Russia on political settlement.

## **2-Results and Discussion**

### **Political factors behind the Syrian crisis**

The Syrian crisis broke out in 2011 and has continued until the present, and is one of the largest humanitarian and political crises in the world. The main factors that contributed to the Syrian crisis are multiple, in their foremost the political factors, which are as follows:

#### ***The inclusiveness of the political system:***

President Hafez al-Assad was able to monopolize power for three decades and rule Syria with absolute unilateralism, relying on the army and security as it was, which led to the concentration of power in the person of the president and prevented a peaceful transfer of power as a result of the constitutional amendments, except for the Baath Party, it controls state institutions.

All political parties joined the National Progressive Front and marginalized the middle class by connecting it to different security services, which in turn contributed to the marginalization of the political process, the expanding role of the security services that have come to shape political life, as well as the spread of corruption. [7]

In the end, totalitarianism—especially the one-party system—is ineffective and has negative effects anywhere it is practiced. The same thing and for the same goal he does with civil society organizations, with cultural and media institutions, and against his rivals from the political forces, such as parties and organizations, or subjugate them by force to his control, and make them into mere marginal followers. [8]

#### ***Inheritance of power:***

The Syrian people demanded the end of the system of power transmission and a fundamental transformation in the way politics is used to hold onto power after Hafez al-Assad established the

custom of converting deliberative republics into hereditary republics. Bashar's takeover of office did not significantly alter the circumstances. [7]

The former president, President Hafez, sought to create the conditions for the establishment of power in Syria as a forerunner to his son and the estate of Assad and to do so, he dismantled the national institution, putting those who support the idea of succession within the top positions in the state and pressuring them to perform; for his son, Bashar al-Assad, to ascend to the presidency. As a result, this wing illustrates corruption in Syria. [9]

***Spread of corruption:***

The accumulation of the regime's faults and failure to carry out the reform initiatives required to maintain its structure, the middle class's success in escalating public unrest and creating a national discourse for the public interest after its long-standing role in political development was abolished and it lost weight and influence in political life. [7]

Prevalence of injustice and inequality, as the Syrian citizen suffers from pervasive injustice and inequality, and he is unable to exercise some of his rights except through the security services. He is also denied access to his rights in any economic, commercial, financial, or educational field on an equal basis with other upper-class citizens. One of the causes of the crisis' rise is the Syrian people's perception of inequity.

**The Position of the US and the Russian Federation on the Syrian Crisis.**

**The Russian Position**

Since President Bashar al-Assad's government and thousands of protesters started fighting in Syria in 2011, Russia has played a strategic role in how the crisis is developing on the global stage. Russia was and is still regarded as one of the main supporters and protesters sectors of the Assad regime. Because Syria is Russia's closest Middle Eastern ally, the historical context the two nations have shared and their close relationship are the driving forces behind this support.

Russia has recently refuted claims that it is supporting one side in the conflict or that it has a unique relationship with the Assad administration. It has also accepted the use of other nations of supporting the rebels. [10]

Since the start of the Syrian revolution and the calls for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down, the League of States Arab countries, the United States of America, and the European Union have applied various pressures to end the Assad dictatorship. Violence against the Syrian people as a result of the positions taken by Russia and China the subscriber supports the Syrian government by repeatedly exercising its veto (objection) right to block any UN resolution that would condemn the use of excessive force by the Syrian military to put an end to the revolution.

Unlike the other Arab Spring uprisings, the Syrian issue is the one where the Russian government's position on it is most quickly determined. Russia has stated its support for the Bashar al-Assad regime since the start of the crisis, along with its rejection of outside interference in Syrian affairs and the idea that the future of Syria must be decided by the Syrian people themselves. The crisis in Syria has also been treated as the top concern in Russian foreign policy since it first began. Russia recognized the necessity of giving the Syrian leadership adequate time to carry out the reforms that had been announced in Syria from the outset of this crisis. As it went on, Moscow rejected the request for the Syrian president to resign made by US President Obama and Catherine Ashton, the High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union. [11]

As a supporter of the Assad regime, Russia was outspoken in its opposition to any outside interference in Syria, including the transfer of power from the president to his deputy. The Russian President consequently said that "there is no desire for the events in Syria to follow the Libyan model so that the Security Council resolution is used to justify a military operation against Syria." Because it recognizes that such an operation would give the US a foothold, Russia adamantly opposes outside participation in the Syrian issue. Russia hastened to disrupt international and regional attempts to enact resolutions supporting the US or other foreign interests in the Syrian issue if the US was successful in toppling the Assad administration in Syria as it did in Iraq. people acting as an armed resistance force to the Syrian regular army.

Consequently, the Russian President declared that "there is no desire for the events in Syria to follow the Libyan model so that the Security Council resolution is used to justify a military operation against Syria." Russia vehemently opposes outside involvement in the Syrian situation because it understands that such an operation would offer the US a foothold. If the US was successful in toppling the Assad government in Syria as it did in Iraq, Russia moved to obstruct

international and regional attempts to implement resolutions supporting the US or other foreign interests in the Syrian crisis. persons who are the Syrian regular army's armed resistance force.

Russia was keen on the necessity of concerted international efforts to reach peaceful solutions to the crisis, which stipulated the formation of a transitional governing body, and this Russian initiative prompted US President Barack Obama to postpone his military strike, to pave the way for political solutions to the Syrian crisis. Along with the destruction of its chemical arsenal. Russia attempted to impose its interpretation of the Geneva 1 conference by insisting that Assad be considered part of the transitional phase, then linking his fate to the will of the people and considering him part of the change in Syria. Russia saw granting full executive powers as a necessary step on the road to politically resolving the crisis.

The fragmentation of the opposition parties, however, as well as the presence of international tensions, prevented the achievement of what was reached, where the disagreements between the opposition parties and those who support them, as well as the conflict of international interests, were resolved without coming to any agreement on how to resolve the crisis. Russia called for the formation of an international alliance with some opposition parties on the side of the Syrian regime in a diplomatic move toward Saudi Arabia in the middle of 2015. However, after failing to persuade Saudi Arabia to accept the Russian formula for a solution in Syria, Russia started to intervene directly on the side of the Syrian regime to prevent its collapse. [7]

Regarding the Russian perspective, Moscow's stance on the Syrian problem, which was characterized by a form of deliberation and ambiguity like its stance on the other Arab revolutions, was definitive in backing the Syrian regime, which was seen in the fact that Russia exercised its "veto" against proposals and resolutions that would have condemned the Syrian regime four times in a row in the Security Council.

Additionally, it places a strong emphasis on political and diplomatic solutions to the crisis, dialogue between the Syrian parties to find a resolution to the crisis, and its emphasis on its country in Syria and its infrastructure. Finally, it rejects any international military intervention in Syria to prevent a recurrence of the Iraqi and Libyan cases. [12]

When the Syrian crisis erupted in 2011, Putin threw Russia's support to the regime, and in 2015, a thorough military operation brought the crisis to a close. We may observe that Putin's actions in



Syria occurred at a time of rising pressure and tension in the larger relations between Russia and the West, particularly the United States. The United States, its harsh economic sanctions against Putin as a result of his involvement in the Ukraine conflict and his attempt to isolate Russia.

As soon as ISIS expanded from Iraq into Syria, it joined the fight against the regime with powerful forces and cutting-edge weapons, which is a development that doubled the military intervention, and parallel to that, Russian fighters joined the regime's fighters in attacking the centers of the opposition forces.

Russia has invested in this role and the regime's complete reliance on it to develop and establish its presence in the Tartous naval base, which gives it access to the Mediterranean Sea. It has also developed S400 systems and missiles, and the Hmeimim Air Base has been added to that. This presence has also been codified to last for 49 years and is currently in advanced stages extendable, not ignore diplomatic action for a political settlement despite his presence and density. In the same year that Russia participated militarily, 2015, the Kremlin summoned Bashar al-Assad and advised him that military action and diplomatic action should go hand in hand.

The regime's representatives were content to concentrate on ancillary concerns like the prisoner exchange and humanitarian supplies, despite United Nations Resolution 2254 calling for elections and the creation of a new constitution. The regime troops were hitting opposition areas during the Astana summit that called for a cease-fire, especially in Aleppo, where it concluded. He gave the command for his soldiers to advance and for the opposition forces to retreat.

The fact that the Battle of Aleppo resulted in a victory for the regime may be considered a turning point in Russia's strategy towards the Syrian conflict. When they called to congratulate Bashar al-Assad, they acknowledged the need for a political solution. On December 29, 2017, the Kremlin hosted the Moscow conference. Its most noteworthy aspect was the participation of armed rebel groups in Syria. The conference came to an end when a cease-fire was declared. Even though fighting continued, especially in Wadi Araba, the factions pledged to continue.

The Astana Conference, scheduled for January 23–24, 2018, will include more Syrian fighting factions than the Moscow Conference did. The Astana Conference's main goal how will be to consolidate the ceasefire and prepare the ground for the Geneva Conference, which will take

place on February 29 under the auspices of the UN. Putin has not stopped reminding Assad of the importance of his participation in politics.

### **The US Position**

The US supported the harsh action against the Syrian government in addition to accusing it of using chemical weapons and committing other atrocities because it is believed to be one of the nations that opposes the regime. Barack Obama, the president of 2014, asked Congress for permission to take military action in Syria in September 2013, but he postponed the vote since it was unlikely to pass after Syria announced it would hand over its chemical weapons.

Although it no longer explicitly United States its desire for Bashar al-Assad to leave office, the US still favors the transitional administration outlined in the Geneva Communiqué. However, to accomplish its goals, the US is thought to be supplying light weapons in addition to "nonlethal" support such as communications technology, generators, and office supplies for the Syrian opposition. [10] According to the U.S. intelligence community, Assad "remains unwilling to negotiate himself out of power" and "almost certainly intends to remain the ruler of Syria" in the political sphere. [13]

On the other hand, it appears that policymakers in the United States and other nations are both compelled to respond to these crises and hesitant to adopt solutions that might pose political and security risks, such as committing military forces to battle or giving substantial material support to armed opposition groups.

As a result, the US is reluctant to support the Syrian opposition and has committed both itself and its money to an endless conflict that will only result in loss and damage on both sides of the border. However, the use or loss of control of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles during its ongoing civil war has been the United States' top policy concern. Thus, according to assessments by the United States and other nations, the Syrian government has frequently used chemical weapons against civilians and opposition forces in the nation.

### **United State position during Obama Era: -**

The Arab League's decision to suspend Syria's membership in the League was hailed by the United States of America as "more firm and strict than we expected," and it suggested sending international observers to the country. However, the United States insisted on rejecting an

international military intervention similar to the one in Libya. The Working Group on Syria reached the Geneva Agreement on June 30, 2012, which consists of six points to resolve the Syrian crisis including:

- 1) Establishment of a transitional governing body in Syria with full executive powers, including over security and military forces.
- 2) Formation of a national unity government that includes members of the current government, the opposition, and other groups.
- 1) Drafting of a new constitution for Syria that is developed through a Syrian-led political process.
- 2) Protection of the rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion.
- 3) Holding of free and fair elections under the supervision of the United Nations.
- 4) The need for all parties to end violence, including violence committed by government forces and opposition groups.

However, the implementation of the agreement stalled due to differing interpretations about the future of President al-Assad in the transitional phase. In the same context, American diplomatic efforts to try to remove Bashar al-Assad politically continued. While Washington maintained its stance calling for Assad's ouster and that it could not be part of any transitional period, Russia insisted that the deal did not mention Assad's ouster as a starting point for implementation.

The United States maintained its stance, which did not last long, of refusing to offer any military assistance to the Syrian opposition forces. In 2013, US president Barack Obama decided to reassess his approach and shift in favor of arming the Syrian opposition forces that his government considers moderate.

Not overthrowing the regime was the aim of creating a tight force. The plan was to establish a local ally with whom the US could cooperate and who would do all in its efforts to persuade Assad and those who support him that a military victory was improbable. Since reports of the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons began to circulate, the United States has threatened to impose severe deterrent measures if such a use occurs.

When Obama announced his plan to execute a limited military action against the Syrian regime in September 2013, the use of chemical weapons brought him front of a focal point he had not anticipated. However, Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry's diplomatic attempts to form an international coalition support the execution of the operation. The military campaign against Syria in response to allegations that the regime used chemical weapons outside of Damascus failed terribly. Obama made the rushed decision to employ military force against Syria, which divided America and Russia and confused the international community. [7]

**US position during Trump Era: -**

Although Trump administration sent US forces to Syria, especially on the northern front, to coordinate efforts to combat terrorist groups, it initially rejected humanitarian intervention, and then it gradually happened. Trump embraces the philosophy of (leading from behind), or attaining success without actively meddling in the situation, in his interpretation of the Syrian scenario if it decides that defeating ISIS is crucial.

Trump does not object to Russia's involvement in Syria since, according to him, the ISIS group that Russia is fighting is trying to eradicate it. In order to show the efficiency of the new US policy in addressing the region's conflicts and to show the Trump administration's commitment to combating terrorism and its supporting forces.

In the first few months of Trump's administration, the US military launched a missile strike on a Syrian air base, hitting it with around 59 Tomahawk missiles as proof of the change in US policy towards Syria. The attack "serves vital interests related to security," according to Trump, who acknowledged it.

Asserting the objectives of the new American policy in Syria, "American nationalism", the approach Trump has taken thus far has multiple goals, the first of which is to let Russia know that America is engaged in the Syrian conflict and has well-thought-out plans and strategies in place. In addition, it has developed a more thorough understanding of its role in Syria after ISIS, moving beyond the struggle against ISIS and the fall of Raqqa. The new US government implemented new policies and postures that were distinct from those of its predecessor thanks to Trump's condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs, and other weaponry as well as his image of the US as a defender of people everywhere.

The Syrian crisis provided a great chance for the Trump administration to show that it has the strength and capability to return to the region stronger than ever in order to ensure that this purpose is politically realized among all of Syria's political factions. [7]

Similar to the American position on other Arab revolutions, which was hindered by a certain degree of misunderstanding, the American posture on the Syrian crisis was bland and lethargic in comparison to the character and development of events on the ground. Since the United States is now seeking specific outcomes for each military action it conducts, even if it is not in the vanguard and has preferred to lead in the rear rows, as happened in the Libyan case, in light of what happened to it in Afghanistan and Iraq, the American stance in the Syrian case was typically defined by dealing with the consequences and not by with the typical power.

Washington does not wish to keep the Assad government in place, despite the danger involved in any military intervention in a region where Israel is a key component of its strategy. Instead, it aims to alter it by adopting a strategy distinct from that of Libya, inciting the government to fall from inside, and acting in a way that relies on escalating progressive consequences. [12]

**The Impact of US- Russian competition on political and diplomatic path of the Syrian crisis**

Peace talks between the Syrian government and the opposition have stalled several times, and the United States and Russia have exchanged accusations about the other side's non-compliance with the ceasefire and participation in political dialogue. The Syrian crisis became a stage for geostrategic interactions and the long-term goals of the great and regional villages as a result of the failure of the second Arab initiative and the use of the Russian-Chinese veto. In the absence of the United States, Russia was the most effective and significant international player in the crisis, blocking attempts to curtail the power of the regime and leaving in a special UN Security Council Resolution. [14]

**Initiative of political settlement: -**

Since its outbreak in 2011, the Syrian crisis has witnessed many political initiatives aimed at settling the conflict and finding a political solution to the crisis. These initiatives are considered attempts to resolve the Syrian crisis diplomatically and peacefully.

***The Kofi Annan initiative:***

One of the most serious international initiatives to find a diplomatic solution to the Syrian problem was made by Annan, who offered a plan with six components. These are the main components of that strategy:

1. A commitment to collaborate with the UN representative in a thoroughly political process to achieve the legitimate aspirations and interests of the Syrian people; to this aim, a negotiator with authority has been selected and will act as the representative's representative when necessary.
2. A commitment by all parties to halt hostilities and achieve an immediate end to all kinds of armed conflict under the supervision of the UN in order to protect civilians and bring about stability in the nation.
3. Ensure that all areas affected by the war receive humanitarian aid promptly. This goal requires the rapid acceptance and implementation of a two-hour humanitarian break, as well as the successful coordination of the daily halt's precise timing and mode, including at the local level.
4. Quicken and expand the release of people who have been arbitrarily jailed, particularly those who belong to vulnerable groups and those who took part in nonviolent political protests.
5. Ensure that journalists have unrestricted access to the entire nation and implement a nondiscriminatory entry visa policy.
6. Uphold the constitutional rights to free speech, association, and peaceful assembly.

***A) American position:***

The US supported the initiative and urged the Syrian government to comply with its terms. The US also participated in the "Friends of Syria" group, which consisted of 70 nations that backed the opposition and sought to increase pressure on President Bashar al-Assad. [15] However, the initiative faced many challenges and obstacles, such as the lack of compliance by both sides, the escalation of violence, the veto of Russia and China on stronger Security Council resolutions, and the division of the international community on how to deal with the crisis. [16].

***B) Russian position:***

The Russian reaction to the Kofi Annan initiative was ambivalent and contradictory. On one hand, Russia supported the initiative and endorsed it in the UN Security Council resolutions 2042 and 2043, which authorized the deployment of UN observers to monitor the ceasefire and the implementation of the six-point plan. Russia also participated in the Geneva conference on Syria in June 2012, which endorsed the Annan plan and called for a transitional governing body with full executive powers to be formed by mutual consent of the parties.

On the other hand, Russia continued to provide military and diplomatic support to the Syrian government, vetoed several UN resolutions that condemned the Syrian regime or threatened sanctions, and accused the Western countries and some Arab states of undermining the Annan plan by arming and financing the opposition. Russia also rejected any external intervention or regime change in Syria, insisting on the principle of non-interference and respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. [17]

The main reasons behind Russia's stance on Syria and the Kofi Annan initiative were its strategic interests in maintaining its influence and presence in the Middle East, its naval base in Tartus, its arms sales to Syria, its opposition to NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011, its concern about the spread of Islamic extremism and terrorism in the region and beyond, and its desire to protect its international status and role as a great power.

Russia also viewed Syria as an ally and a partner in resisting US hegemony and promoting a multipolar world order. Therefore, Russia sought to balance its support for the Annan plan with its defense of the Syrian regime, hoping to achieve a political solution that would preserve its interests and prevent a chaotic collapse of Syria. [18]

Due to such contradiction between Russian and US interest, by June 2012, Kofi Anan admitted that his plan was failing and that Syria was heading towards a full-scale civil war. He called for a new international conference to revive the diplomatic efforts and to find a political solution. [15]

***Lakhdar Brahimi and the Second Geneva Conference:***

Given his extensive background working for the UN, where he served as a special representative for Afghanistan and Iraq and the Syrian government participated in the Taif negotiations on the

conflict in Lebanon, and his appointment in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution considering Kofi Annan to have resigned, Lakhdar Brahimi, a former foreign minister of Algeria, was given the task of carrying out Kofi Annan's mission as the UN and Arab envoy to Syria.

Based on the declaration of the Action Group in Geneva, Lakhdar Brahimi took action to end the violence inside the nation, especially the formation of a transitional government with full powers to be formed by agreement between all Syrian parties, in addition to holding international elections, as the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the suffering of thousands of Syrians grew worse.

The UN envoy, Al-Akhdar Al-Ibrahimi, presented positions and estimates on the Syrian crisis, but the opposition Syrian National Coalition made it clear that it views these with skepticism. The Coalition also declared that Al-Ibrahimi had not presented any concrete plans to stop the killings and violence in Syria. The coalition also believed that Brahimi's actions prevented the UN Security Council from moving the resolution forward. The alliance also believes that Brahimi's attempts to mediate between the two parties hindered him from seeing the facts, adjustments, and developments on the ground.

Lakhdar Brahimi found it challenging to play a part in resolving the Syrian conflict due to a variety of internal and regional changes. Terrorism being added to the political opposition. The Syrian regime continued to receive backing from Russia and China in this setting, which strengthened the current condition of international polarization. In addition to the hypocrisy of the American dealings with the so-called "Arab Spring" uprisings, Russia provides international backing and cover for Syria; as a result, it represents some pressure on the international envoy through its preconditions for any political settlement.

***A) American position:***

The US expressed its frustration with the lack of progress and the obstruction of the Syrian government delegation, which refused to discuss the issue of a transitional governing body and insisted on focusing on fighting terrorism. The US also criticized the Syrian government for its continued use of violence and starvation against civilians, its failure to allow humanitarian access, and its violation of the chemical weapons agreement. [19]



The US reaffirmed its support for the Syrian opposition coalition, which it recognized as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. The US also pledged to increase its humanitarian and non-lethal assistance to the opposition and to work with its allies to increase pressure on the Syrian regime to end the conflict. [20]

Overall, the US reaction to the Lakhdar Brahimi and the Second Geneva Conference was one of cautious optimism, with the US supporting the conference but acknowledging the challenges of reaching a peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis.

***B) Russian position:***

The Russian reaction to the conference was ambivalent and pragmatic. On one hand, Russia supported the conference as a co-sponsor and a key mediator, and expressed its willingness to work with all parties to find a political solution. Russia also endorsed the Geneva Communiqué as a basis for negotiations and urged both sides to engage in constructive dialogue. On the other hand, Russia maintained its staunch support for Assad and his regime, and continued to supply them with weapons and diplomatic cover. Russia also opposed any attempts to impose preconditions or deadlines on the talks, or to exclude Iran from participating in the conference. Russia's main objectives were to protect its strategic interests in Syria, such as its naval base in Tartus, its arms sales and its regional influence; to prevent a regime change that could destabilize Syria and create a security vacuum; and to counter what it perceived as western interventionism and hegemony in the Middle East. [21]

**Vienna track:**

On October 23, 2015, it was attended by the United States of America, Russia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Later, it was enlarged to include all regional and international parties involved in the Syrian conflict, including Iran. A road map for resolving the Syrian conflict was approved at the second extended conference, which took place on November 14 in Vienna. A schedule covering three consecutive periods, the last of which finishes in December 2017, is in place. Early in 2016, the United Nations-sponsored negotiating process begins with the goal of determining the terms of a cease-fire, and in the two following periods the proclamation of the formation of democratic and non-sectarian governance is made. Following that, elections with participation from Syrians both at home and abroad will be held under UN supervision.

In light of the fact that the Riyadh conference represented a significant turning point in the Syrian conflict, the opposition parties in Riyadh were urged to align their ranks and ideologies on August 8 and September 9, 2015. The Syrian people agreed to establish a supreme authority to oversee the negotiating process with the regime under the auspices of the UN because they are committed to democracy, as well as to rebuilding the army and security forces, and they do so within the context of pluralism.

The representatives of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar vehemently opposed the draught UN resolution when it was submitted to the Security Council at a FINA group meeting in New York. Nevertheless, the United States of America, working with Russia, presented the draught UN resolution in the Security Council, bearing the resolution No. 2254 as the conclusion of a settlement, despite the objections. It was a search for exits rather than an agreement on a resolution between Russia and the United States of America and not between the parties to the Syrian conflict or between the countries in the region.

The likelihood of resolving the Syrian situation appears to be higher than ever. While all other UN resolutions either dealt specifically with the humanitarian and relief components of the Syrian crisis, Resolution No. 2254 is the first political resolution that dealt directly with the solution to the Syrian issue. [22]

***A) American position:***

The US reaction to the Vienna track has been ambivalent and wary, reflecting its complex and evolving interests and challenges in Syria. The US faces a dilemma between pursuing its counter-terrorism objectives against IS and other extremist groups, and advancing its political goals of ending the conflict and promoting democracy and human rights in Syria. The US also faces a challenge in balancing its relations with its allies and partners in the region, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel, which have different views and agendas on Syria. The US will likely continue to monitor and engage in the Vienna track, while maintaining its pressure and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters. [23]

***B) Russian position:***

Russia's reaction to the Vienna track has been cautious and ambivalent. On one hand, Russia supports the restoration of the JCPOA as a way to ensure regional stability and prevent a nuclear

arms race. Russia also benefits from trade and cooperation with Iran, especially in the energy sector. On the other hand, Russia fears that a successful outcome of the Vienna track could reduce its influence and leverage in the Middle East, especially in Syria. Russia also worries that a revived JCPOA could pave the way for a broader dialogue between Iran and the US on other regional issues, such as Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. [24]

**Geneva 3 conference and the Syrian issue:**

A fresh round of UN-sponsored political initiatives to settle the Syrian crisis began on January 29, 2016, in Geneva, amidst significant disagreements. At this meeting, which emphasized that the opposition's participation is mandated based on the Security Council Resolution 2254's resolutions and provisions being carried out, the opposition made it clear that its presence is imposed. In paragraphs 12 and 13, it was specified that the siege on the besieged districts would be lifted, humanitarian aid would be provided, captives, including women, would be released, and ground assaults and the use of explosive barrels would stop. When the regime rejected the opposition's demands, diplomatic efforts were made to soften the opposition's stance and enter negotiations, despite the opposition's belief that these demands are non-negotiable.

Additionally, The Syrian regime was coerced into attending Geneva 3 by Russia, with Walid al-Moallem serving as the delegation's leader and Bashar al-Jaafari as its leader. In order to start negotiations from the logic of force and limit the negotiations' discussion to humanitarian help, the Syrian regime's readiness to do so coincided with a significant field escalation and escalated bombing.

As a result of the opposition's position on the withdrawal due to the failure to implement Resolution 2254, the feasibility of negotiations other than by stopping the bombing of them or lifting the siege on cities besieged for years, as well as the regime's procrastination regarding any decision regarding change or modification of its positions or positions of his allies, Geneva 3 ended with the United States suspending negotiations. [22]

***A) American position:***

The United States has been actively involved in the Syrian issue and has expressed its views on the Geneva III conference, which aimed to find a political solution to the ongoing Syrian conflict. The US has emphasized the importance of a political transition in Syria and called for

the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers, responsible for governing Syria during the transition period. In a joint statement with other members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), then-Secretary of State John Kerry stated that "the ISSG reaffirmed the need for a political transition in Syria, which is the only way to end the violence and ensure lasting peace and stability. [25]

The US has criticized the role played by the Syrian government in the peace talks and called on the government to negotiate in good faith and engage constructively in the peace talks. In a press briefing, State Department spokesperson John Kirby stated that "the Syrian government needs to stop stonewalling and start negotiating in good faith". [26]

Moreover, the US has been involved in providing humanitarian aid to the Syrian people. The US announced in February 2016 that it would provide an additional \$601 million in humanitarian assistance to Syria and neighboring countries, bringing the total US contribution to over \$5.1 billion since the start of the conflict. In summary, the US has been actively engaged in the Syrian issue and has emphasized the need for a political solution to the conflict, as well as providing humanitarian aid to the Syrian people.

***B) Russian position:***

Russia, as a key player in the Syrian issue, had a significant reaction to the conference and has expressed its views on various occasions. Russia has emphasized the need to preserve Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and has called for a political solution to the conflict. In a joint statement with other members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) in February 2016, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that "the participants of the ISSG confirmed their commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity, territorial integrity, and secular character of Syria". [25]

Russia has also been critical of the role played by some of the opposition groups in the Syrian conflict and has called for a more inclusive political process. In a press briefing in February 2016, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated that "it is important to ensure the participation of all opposition groups in the political process" and criticized some opposition groups for their refusal to participate in the peace talks. [27] Overall, Russia has

emphasized the need for a political solution to the Syrian conflict, while also supporting the Syrian government in its fight against opposition forces.

**Security council resolutions:**

There have been several United Nations Security Council resolutions related to the Syrian crisis that have been vetoed by either the United States or Russia.

**Resolution 2118 (2013):**

This resolution called for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and production facilities. It was adopted unanimously by the Security Council on September 27, 2013. Both the US and Russia voted in favor of the resolution.

*A) American position:*

Reference can be made to statements issued by the US Embassy to the United Nations in September 2013, in which it confirmed that the United States voted in favor of Resolution 2118 (2013) and that it supports international efforts to destroy chemical weapons in Syria. The US State Department issued a statement the same day confirming US support for the resolution. [28]

*B) Russian position:*

With regard to Russia, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated in September 2013 that Russia voted in favor of Resolution 2118 (2013), affirming his country's support for efforts to destroy chemical weapons in Syria. At the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin affirmed that Russia supports international efforts to resolve the Syrian conflict and achieve security and stability in the region. [29]

**Resolution 2139 (2014):**

This resolution called for an end to the use of barrel bombs and other indiscriminate weapons in Syria, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. It was adopted by the Security Council on February 22, 2014, with 13 votes in favor and 2 abstentions. Russia and China both vetoed the resolution, while the US voted in favor.

***A) American position:***

Resolution 2139 (2014) called for an end to the use of barrel bombs and other non-selective weapons in Syria, and to facilitate humanitarian access to civilians affected by the conflict. The United States and other countries supported the resolution and saw it as a necessary humanitarian measure. [30]

***B) Russian position:***

For its part, Russia considered that the decision tends to interfere in the internal affairs of Syria and ignores the ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict in the country. This issue has sparked international controversy and escalated tensions between international powers over the Syrian crisis. [31]

**Resolution 2165 (2014):**

This resolution authorized the delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria across borders and conflict lines without the consent of the Syrian government. It was adopted by the Security Council on July 14, 2014, with 13 votes in favor and 2 abstentions. Russia and China both voted in favor of the resolution.

***A) American position:***

The United States was one of the co-sponsors of the resolution, and its representative, Ambassador Samantha Power, stated that the resolution was necessary to address the dire humanitarian situation in Syria and to ensure that aid could reach those in need. She also emphasized that the resolution was not a license for military intervention and that the United States remained committed to a political solution to the Syrian conflict. [32]

***B) Russian position:***

In contrast, Russia, which has been a strong supporter of the Syrian government, expressed concerns about the resolution's potential impact on Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's representative, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, argued that the resolution could be used to provide support to armed groups in Syria and that it did not adequately address the root causes of the conflict. [33]

**Resolution 2209 (2015):**

This resolution expressed concern about the use of chlorine gas as a weapon in Syria and called for those responsible to be held accountable. It was adopted unanimously by the Security Council on March 6, 2015. Both the US and Russia voted in favor of the resolution.

*A) American position:*

The United States and Russia both supported the resolution, and their representatives made statements in favor of its adoption. The US representative, Ambassador Samantha Power, emphasized the importance of disrupting the illicit trade in oil and antiquities and of preventing the financing of terrorist groups. She also called on all UN member states to implement the resolution fully. [34]

*B) Russian position:*

Russia's representative, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, also expressed support for the resolution and stressed the need to strengthen international efforts to combat terrorism. [35]

**Resolution 2328 (2016):**

This resolution called for an immediate end to all attacks on medical facilities and personnel in Syria. It was adopted by the Security Council on December 21, 2016, with 14 votes in favor and 1 abstention. Russia abstained from the vote, while the US voted in favor.

*A) American position:*

The United States and Russia both supported the resolution, but they had different perspectives on the Syrian conflict and the use of chemical weapons. The US representative, Ambassador Samantha Power, emphasized the importance of the JIM's work (the joint investigative mechanism) and called for accountability for those responsible for chemical weapons attacks. She also criticized the Syrian government and its allies for obstructing the JIM's work and for continuing to use chemical weapons in violation of international law. [36].

***B) Russian position:***

Russia's representative, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, also expressed support for the resolution, but he criticized the JIM's methodology and its reliance on unverified information. He also accused the Syrian opposition of using chemical weapons and called for a more balanced approach to the investigation of chemical weapons attacks. [37]

**3. Conclusion**

The intricate interplay between US-Russian competition has wielded a profound and multifaceted influence on the Syrian crisis. Divergent geopolitical objectives and ideological disparities between these major powers have markedly prolonged the conflict, obstructing endeavors aimed at securing a peaceful resolution. This conflict has not only exacerbated violence but also stymied diplomatic progress, engendering a complex geopolitical landscape where broader strategic interests intersect.

The direct military interventions of the US-led coalition and Russia in support of opposing factions have further muddled the situation, precipitating direct confrontations, allegations of chemical weapons usage, and strained bilateral relations. Additionally, the involvement of external actors like Iran and Turkey has compounded the complexity, heightening the risk of escalation and impeding international collaboration on pivotal issues.

Effectively addressing the Syrian crisis necessitates a concerted, collaborative approach that prioritizes humanitarian imperatives and regional stability. Diplomatic engagement, dialogue, and compromise are indispensable in charting a sustainable and peaceful path forward. Crucially, resolving the US-Russia conflict within the context of the Syrian crisis is imperative for fostering regional stability and fostering cooperation on shared challenges.

Given the intricate dynamics and formidable challenges inherent in the Syrian crisis, a comprehensive grasp of the ramifications of US-Russian competition is indispensable. Through a meticulous examination of the political underpinnings of the conflict and the respective stances and motivations of the United States and Russia, we can glean invaluable insights into the complexities of the crisis and its reverberations on both regional and global scales.



Looking ahead, it is imperative for the international community to persist in diplomatic endeavors, extend humanitarian aid, and endeavor to de-escalate tensions in Syria. By addressing the root causes of the conflict and promoting dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders, we can strive towards a more stable and peaceful future for the Syrian populace.

In conclusion, the impact of US-Russian competition on the Syrian crisis underscores the urgent imperative for collaborative action to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and forge a sustainable resolution to the conflict.

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