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Exploring the Influence of US Intervention in Syria

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Dedication

This work is dedicated:

To the soul of my father, Ammar, may all Allah's mercy be upon his spirit

To my dear mother for her endless support, guidance and prayers.

To my lovely wife for her encouragement and patience.

To all my teachers

To all the members of my family.

To my relatives and closest friends

To all those who care about me.

NEFTI Said

Dedication

This work is dedicated:

To my parents, may all Allah protect them

To my lovely wife for her encouragement and patience and to my children.

To all my teachers

To all the members of my family.

To my relatives and closest friends

To all those who care about me.

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Nevertheless, in all of the above efforts to accomplish this research, any errors, mistakes and omissions are solely our own.

Abstract

The foreign policy of a country is an expression of its interests, as there is neither friendship nor permanent enmity, rather there is a permanent interest. The United States has many interests in The Middle East generally and Syria specifically. This research's purpose is to explore the impact that these interventions have on the Middle East, taking the Syrian civil war as a sample. The present study uses a historical, descriptive and analytical approach which historically assesses and provides a rigorous, objective and dynamic explanation of the involvement. The dissertation findings show that both covert and overt US involvement left Syria devastated and exhausted. The shift towards the reliance on local non-state actors, proxies and allies rather than large troop deployments made it easy for the US to kill two birds with one stone; being able to provide protection for its interests besides the minimization of casualties among its troops in the region, let alone avoiding the accusations of great involvement. The civil war in Syria enabled the US to fulfil its outright and secret objectives, adopting one great reason that lies under the title of " War against Terrorism" to end or at least decrease the threats of ISIS in the Middle East.

Keywords: The impact, The intervention, The Involvement, Syria, US foreign policy.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BBC:	British Broadcasting Center
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
IRGC:	Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Corps
IS:	Islamic State
ISIL:	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS:	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
PLO	Palestinian's Arab Neighbors
OPEC:	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAFTA:	North American Free Trade Agreement
WTO:	World Trade Organization
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
USMCA:	U.S. – Mexico – Canada Agreement
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
MENA:	Middle East and North Africa
FDI:	Foreign Direct Investment
USIA:	The United States Information Agency
SMA	Smith-Mundt Act
CPI	Committee on Public Information
CMDR COE :	Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence
UNHCR :	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council
SDF:	State defense force,US
OIR :	Operation Inherent Resolve

NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
ICG:	International Crisis Group
YPG:	Kurdish : People's Defense Unit
DoD:	Department of Defense
FSA:	Free Syrian Army

General Introduction

“It’s about time that we as Arabs take things into our own hands and figure out our own future, rather than [keep depending] on some outside force to do it for us... particularly when intervention by this outside force has not particularly been beneficial to the region in recent history.”, Marwan Muasher, vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (www.aspeninstitute.org)

Background of the Study

Why the persistent need for the United States to be intrusive and intervene in the affairs of the countries of the Middle East. The latter question and more have led the critics, scholars and analysts to be interested in investigating it; as the US is considered a powerful nation, a great country with a global hegemony which owns an influencing authority over the world. Therefore, it became an eminent leader of the whole world. This act of intervention has eventually had a lot of impact, especially in the Middle East for the long term.

In the 1940s, during World War II, the United States used Syria as an important strategic base for its regional anti-German activities. There was an attempt by US diplomacy to obtain the right to construct an air base at Al-Malikiyah, in the oil-rich northeastern corner of Syria. It was denied by the Syrian government. In a policy statement, Secretary of State Hill said, "The US is opposed to armed intervention in one form or another in Syria. We believe that this heroic nation will work out its own destiny free from any outside coercion." (Sabri Abdalla et al., 2020). The only notable exception, which was considered as an act of involvement in the history of Syria, was in 1957 when the US indirectly supported a coup in Syria as part of the Eisenhower doctrine of containing and rolling back Nasser's Arab nationalist and non-aligned movement in the region. The coup set off a series of intra-elite power struggles and transitory alliances, leading ultimately to Al-Assad's seizure of power in 1970.

Later, during Basher Al-Assad's regime, in 2003 the CIA shared intelligence with the Syrian government in the immediate aftermath of September 11th. This cooperation was an attempt to further establish relations following the cooperation between the two countries in the first Gulf War but was halted in 2002 due to Syria's opposition to the invasion of Iraq. Regime change in Syria became a stated US objective around this same time. In an interview with CNN on November 20, 2003, then Secretary of State Colin Powell included Syria in a list of countries he described as "oppressive regimes" and said that the US was "keeping a close watch to determine when changes in these countries may create an opportunity for reform." (Hosoya, 2022). Powell said in an interview with the BBC the next day that he would "like to see a more representative form of government in Syria" (Goda, 2024), and that he viewed the recent changes in the Palestinian and Iraqi governments as examples for Syria to follow. Regime change took on a more literal meaning in the case of Syria, with a presidential directive from George W. Bush in 2006 stating that the US would take steps to destabilize the Syrian government. This was revealed by former CIA agent and Lebanon expert Robert Baer in a 2008 interview with Time Magazine: "I think we would have worked with the Syrian intelligence and also with the Israelis and try to support a popular insurgency. We now have a base in northern Iraq... I signed a finding to do that, and it never materialized, but I think we would have put aside US interests, national interests and done some sort of covert help for the majority Shia... try and nail down the nail in the coffin for (Syrian President) Bashar or force him to change or go even further." This attempt at regime change came to a head in 2011, when protests in the Arab Spring would escalate into civil war.

During the presidency of Barak Obama (2009/2017), the US foreign policy changed from direct intervention using large troop deployment into a new strategic dependence on an increasing reliance on local non-state actors, proxies and third parties to fulfil and save its interests. Therefore, this research aims to tackle the impact of US intervention in depth so as to clarify and undergo the questions to the study.

Statement of the Problem

The Arab Spring in 2010 gave birth to many rebellious acts and coups in many countries in the Middle East, such as Syria. The civil war started in Syria but President, Bashar El Assad, decided not to resign and preserve his regime. Politically speaking, he was observed by many international relations analysts as an oppressor because of the brutality and horrors of the war he waged on the civilians of the region. The change in the United States' policy under the presidency of Barak Obama made him remain passive towards events at first. This action caused the crisis to get even more complicated.

An intervention from the U S as a global hegemony was highly recommended and it can be attributed to several divergent factors, namely changes in the internal conflict and status of opposing factions, increased international pressure, and also minimization of risk associated with greater involvement. Changes in the conflict included the emergence of ISIS as a primary player in the Syrian civil war and also their movements into Iraq. The growing threat posed by ISIS to US allies in the Middle East and Europe led to increased international pressure, particularly from European states, to take a more active role in combating the ISIS threat. "This intern led to US decision-makers believing that it was in the US interest to deal with the ISIS threat so it did not grow to affect the US itself" (SabriAbdallaet al., 2020). In this regard, this research questions the broader impact this intervention has on many levels and the benefits it aims to gain from the region.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of our present dissertation is to shed light on the impact of the American intervention in the Middle East and Syria and explain the reasons behind it. This could not be fulfilled without giving a threshold to the unpleasant and ugly facts of the consequences of the hidden objectives that led to the desire to interfere in Syria and Assad's regime at the time. This study also aims to have an evaluation of foreign policy, the effectiveness of the strategies

practised, and the humanitarian and security implications that could escalate the intensity of conflict in the status quo on the ground.

Research Questions

The study adheres to the following questions so as to serve the objectives being set for the research

1. What are the different figures of the United States' intervention in the Middle East?
2. What are the reasons and the forms of intervention in Syria?
3. What impact has the U S intervention had on Syria?
4. What are the declared and undeclared objectives of the intervention?

Research Methodology

This dissertation is qualitative research which applies a historical and descriptive approach to study and explore the impact of the U.S intervention in the Middle East generally and specifically in Syria. These approaches aim to evaluate objectively the data gathered which will help give plentiful dimensions and figures of the impact of the United States intervention in the affairs of Syria, albeit it is an independent government and a free population and a foreign region. In fact, these approaches will help us describe the events and set an agenda of the forms, objectives and reasons for the interference.

Structure of the Dissertation

This work is composed of two chapters. The first chapter is an overview of US foreign policy in the Middle East, as a historical background starting from the end of World War II, the bipolar period during the Cold War till Trump and Biden's presidency terms. This chapter focuses on the most influential Presidential doctrines that formed the U.S. interventionist history in the region, mainly its invasion of Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the USA response to terror, and finally, the aspects of U.S. foreign policy in the area.

The second chapter entitled Exploring the US intervention in Syria and its Impact on International Relations is more specific on the US intervention in Syria, tackling the main

reasons behind interference there, mentioning its figures and impacts on the political, social, military and cultural aspects and its potential engagement in proxy warfare through the backing of non-state actors including some factions in the Syrian civil war. Finally, the chapter discusses the positives and negatives of US interference and summarizes the lessons learned from that issue.

CHAPTER I

An Overview of US Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Introduction

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Introduction

For decades, the United States has had a significant influence on the Middle East. Concerned about energy security, regional stability, and the development of weapons of mass destruction, the United States has pursued a complicated web of alliances, interventions, and diplomatic endeavours. This chapter digs into the key objectives that guide US operations in the area, such as its constant support for Israel, the continuous war against terrorism, and the search for peaceful solutions to long-standing disputes. It also explores the existence of the US in the region.

1. 1 Historical Background of the US Interference in The Middle East

1.1 The Arab-Israeli Conflict

The historical roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict are in the late 19th century the Jewish immigration set limits on land purchases. After World War 1, Palestine was administered by Great Britain. In 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, which stated its support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The declaration was made without any prior consultation with the Arabs. The Arab-Israeli conflict has a long and troubled history. It is often seen as the longstanding battle between Jews and Arabs that has resulted in creating a lasting impact on the Middle East. The conflict has led to several wars, beginning with the creation of the state of Israel, continual Palestinian resistance, and a blockade which led to what is seen by many today as apartheid-like conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. Tarek et al (2016) note:

In 1987, the first Palestinian Intifada erupted against a backdrop of ongoing Israeli occupation and the inability of the PLO or Palestinian's Arab neighbours to represent the Palestinian people. It was a comprehensive and popular resistance movement that incorporated civil disobedience, general strikes, boycott of Israeli goods, and organized military resistance. (P.37)

Moreover, the involvement of the United States in the Arab-Israeli conflict has greatly evolved as time has progressed, shifting on and off in accordance with its national interests up until the current day. Though the focal point of US interest has been to bring an end to the violence and create peace in the region, often its interests and influence on Israel in terms of firepower have had negative effects and encouraged prolonged conflict rather than the peace it intended. Recent years have shown a drastic shift in US policy and associations in an attempt to bring both security to Israel and an end to the violence.

1.2 Cold War Interventions

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the US provided crucial support to individual Iraqi leaders and to the Ba'ath party as a means of preventing the growth of communist influence in the country. That influence was a particularly strong point of anxiety for a number of US administrations. With the onset of the Cold War, Moscow's interest in Iraq grew rapidly. This situation was clearly unacceptable to the US. The chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, to the House of Armed services committee, in February, Dick Cheney concludes (1991) "In this era of shifting regional power balances, our forward military presence supports our aim of maintaining the stability that lets other nations flourish by preventing the emergence of dangerous power vacuums or imbalance and by staving off regional arms races".(p.6) The US leadership pursued an aggressive policy in the Middle East during the Cold War years, using various overt and covert means to safeguard its strategic and economic interests. It implemented some of these means in reaction to real or perceived Soviet threats to US interests and allies. Certainly, the most overt manifestation of the US policy of containment was the series of interventions in the internal politics of Iraq.

Equally important, from the mid to late 60s, President Johnson accentuated a policy of financial and military aid to the countries of the region in an attempt to counter Soviet influence. US regional allies were well pleased with this arrangement. Israel became an ally of the USA after the 1967 war. US aid to Israel has always been significant and at key

points provided a lifeline to the Israeli economy. Long-term aid to Turkey also began at this time. US aid to Jordan was at the highest levels relative to income. Iraq, on the other hand, had become disillusioned with the West and the US hoped to use aid diplomacy to reconcile relations. Jasper states in his thesis 'Security Assistance in the Persian Gulf and the Roots of the Nixon Doctrine' (1997) that " The Shah had shown a decided ability to play off the U.S. fear of Soviet expansion. As early as 1966, the Shah's military purchase agreement with the Soviets had been a method to pressure President Johnson into selling him the F-4. Further, he threatened to" "... sleep with the devil if U.S. arms sales continued to be tied to economic development". "The U.S. recognized that the Soviets were attempting to gain a greater influence in the region as shown by an increase in naval presence, first in 1969 and then again in 1972".

1.3 Iran Invasion

Likewise, the American invasion of Iran led by President Carter in the late 70s is often viewed as the first direct American involvement in Iran as well as marking the end of the Cold War model of bipolar stability. In strategic terms, the American decision to use military force in the Persian Gulf was intended to eliminate any potential challenge to the two-pillar policy (Iran and Saudi Arabia) and to safeguard the Gulf's vast oil reserves that were no longer under total control of Western oil companies. The regime in Tehran was well aware of the importance of the Gulf to the West and consistently used the threat of nationalizing its oil as a means to assert its independence. Sokolsky (2003) says that "In taking direct action in the Gulf, America chose to side with the Arab states and made a lasting enemy of Iran." (p. 0167) . The decision to support Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war can be perceived as a continuation of this policy. In invading Iran, on the surface, the USA clearly violated Article 2 of the UN Charter regarding the threat or use of force against territorial integrity. From an international relations perspective, it can be argued that this was an early example of preventive war as defined by modern theory in that Iraq's invasion was brought on with the

belief that it was inevitable that Iran would attempt to export its Islamic revolution to the Shia majority areas in Iraq, potentially inciting revolt among the republic's own Shia minority. The 1979 Iranian Revolution aimed to reintroduce Islam globally, causing tension with Gulf Arab countries wary of the spread of Shiism. Charles in his thesis acknowledges " Throughout the 1980s, however, Saudi Arabia continued to exercise caution, for in addition to inspiring such spontaneous uprisings, Iran also supported several organized terrorist groups or cells in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait.⁵⁰ In return, Saudi Arabians decided to similarly challenge Iran by supporting groups opposed to Khomeini and by backing a coup attempt in the early 1980s.

1.4 Iraq Invasion

Iraq's development in the late 1990s and early 2000s, before the US invasion in March 2003, significantly affected the Bush Administration's decision to go to war. This is due to the fact that Islamic terrorism, which President Bush claims was his main motivation for the invasion. Hussein's actions during the time were a great catalyst to convincing the United States government and the United States public that war with Iraq was a necessity, which today is widely believed to have been a mistake. A mistaken belief that Iraq was significantly involved in 9/11 or Al-Qaeda went on to be perpetuated by the US government throughout the earlier stages of the war. Finally, the regime change policy catalysed by the neo-conservatives in the Project for the New American Century was a long-standing goal that predated the attacks, and viewed the strategic removal of Hussein as vitally important to United States interests in the Middle East. This was due to the fact that they believed Hussein was a threat to regional security in the area. Tarek et al(2014) assume that " The invasion of Iraq culminated these recent developments of US policy in the Middle East and has significantly affected current US relations with the Middle East and the Islamic World".(p.73)

1.5 Arab Spring

Additionally, the more modern events that affected US foreign policy towards the Middle East were the Arab Spring that began late in 2010. El Hassane (2012) contends that:

The Arab revolutions were considered both as an outstanding transition towards democracy as well as an unexpected regime change fraught with unwanted uncertainties. Hesitations following the early days of the outbreak of turmoil underline the unpreparedness of the decision-makers worldwide to witness such stubbornness from street protesters in the face of long-established dictators. Yet, as the uprisings grew more organized, skepticism waned and declarations from all over the world started to hail the square occupants as legitimate voices for democracy. In fact, the Arab awakening stirred up two diametrically opposed types of reactions from the international community. This distinction in positions epitomized discussions during the United Nations Security Council meetings about Libya and Syria. (p12)

2. The Features of US Foreign Policy Since the Cold War

2.1 Shift towards Multilateralism

Moreover, the rise of multilateralism in United States foreign policy in the post-Cold War period is apparent. However, tensions have emerged over issues of sovereignty, burden-sharing, and the extent of US involvement in multilateral initiatives. After the demise of its superpower rival, the United States faced a world with a deficit of power. It was in the United States' interest to create a system where international rules and norms protected the security and economic interests of the West. Without the Soviet Union, the United States lost its best excuse for not abiding by international law. The traditional style of US foreign policy had become a paradox, which hit its limits in the war on terror. Peter et al (2011) say that "Despite increased public anxiety post-9/11, bipartisan foreign policy consensus was hindered by economic volatility and regional polarization, unlike during the Cold War" (pp. 164–187) . On one hand, globalization had created problems that required multilateral solutions, but on the other, the US lacked the capacity to go it alone. This is the central reason behind the turn from unilateralism to multilateralism.

2.2 Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights

In the post-Cold War era, the promotion of democracy and human rights became one of the key objectives in US foreign policy. In this context, it is important to understand the term democracy. Democracy is more than simply free and fair elections. It implies a system of government and a set of values which give people a reasonable degree of control over their lives. Michael et al (2000) maintain that "Promotion of democracy in the global scene is seen as a logical extension of American tradition. Promoting freedom will produce peace, we have often been told" (p.41). In a speech before the British parliament in June 1982, US President Reagan proclaimed (American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts, 2000 p.21) that "governments founded on a respect for individual liberty exercise 'restraint' and 'peaceful intentions' in their foreign policy". It is also seen as the best form of government for US security. Democratization of Germany and Japan became the cornerstone for stability and peace in regions which for more than half a century before were considered the US' most dangerous security threats. This was repeated at the end of the Cold War by promoting democracy in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Another reason can be found in the fact that democracies lack an inclination to go to war with one another and they are less likely to be a security threat to the US.

On the other hand, power transition theory states that the most dangerous international conflicts occur when there is a change in the leading role of the dominant state in a system. This change in leadership brings a high risk of war. With the end of the Cold War and the only one superpower, preventing conflict at the position of new and/or old great powers becomes important to US national security. A change in new leadership often occurs not through defeat in an election but through a revolution or by a military coup. It is here where the US hopes its stresses on democracy and human rights can prevent conflict and install governments sympathetic to the US. Robert (2012) states that "Despite the reduced

centrality of nuclear weapons in US security post-Cold War, they remain crucial for deterrence and reassurance, especially in the face of proliferation and terrorism threats".

2.3. Economic Interests and Global Trade

There is an old and somewhat disparaging saying in the world of business that when France sneezes, the third world catches a cold. With the changes in the global economic structure beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, this saying would be more appropriately directed at the United States. As the world system has become more international and more interdependent, the United States has felt itself more susceptible to external pressures on its domestic economic decision-making. Since the 1980s, even the most minute fluctuations of the US economy send reverberations across the world. Now more than ever, the US economic health is directly dependent on the health of the world economy. James (1999) says that "Given the perceived importance of global trade and the US role in promoting it, it is clear that consideration of trade issues must inform any discussion of US foreign policy post-cold war".(p.23)

These days, no aspect of US foreign policy can be discussed without considering the amazing impact of the structure of the global economy. The United States has a singularly important role in every aspect of global trade. The United States was the primary architect of today's world trading system - a system that it believes will best serve its own economic and political interests. According to Tony (2021) "Despite perceptions of US dominance in world affairs, some argue that its structural economic power has been declining, leading to policies that align with a declining hegemon rather than a global imperial power". Also, Charles(2004) observes that "In today's interconnected global economy, effective engagement in economic policy is essential for the US to maintain relevance and address national security concerns". (p.101)

One of the defining economic features of US foreign policy post-Cold War has been the promotion of free trade and market liberalization on the global stage. Embracing the

principles of neoliberal economics, the United States has pursued trade agreements, investment treaties, and multilateral initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to commerce and expanding market access for American businesses. Josh(2017) in his thesis confirms that "From NAFTA to the WTO, US-led efforts to liberalize trade have reshaped the international economic landscape, fostering greater interdependence and globalization".(p.14)

In addition to multilateral trade liberalization efforts, the United States has pursued an extensive network of bilateral and regional trade agreements as a key instrument of economic diplomacy. Wolfgang and Rama (2019) take the view that "Through initiatives such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the USMCA, the US has sought to deepen economic integration with strategic partners and leverage trade relationships to advance broader geopolitical objectives. These agreements have not only facilitated market access for American goods and services but have also served as vehicles for promoting regulatory standards, intellectual property rights, and labour and environmental protections". (p.21)

Economic statecraft has emerged as a central component of US foreign policy post-Cold War, with economic sanctions being a key tool for advancing American interests and exerting influence on the global stage. From Iran to North Korea, the United States has utilized targeted sanctions regimes to punish rogue states, deter illicit behaviour, and coerce foreign governments into compliance with international norms and obligations. However, the efficacy and ethical implications of economic coercion remain subjects of debate, with critics pointing to unintended humanitarian consequences and potential blowback effects.

Louis et al (2007) conclude that " Foreign aid and development assistance have long been integral components of US foreign policy, reflecting America's commitment to humanitarianism, global stability, and soft power projection". Since the Cold War, the United States has been the world's largest donor of foreign assistance, providing financial support for economic development, poverty alleviation, and humanitarian relief efforts across the globe. US foreign aid programs have not only addressed pressing social and economic challenges in

recipient countries but have also served as instruments of strategic influence, fostering goodwill, strengthening alliances, and promoting American values and interests abroad.

In conclusion, the economic features of US foreign policy since the Cold War reflect a multifaceted and dynamic engagement with the global economy. From promoting free trade and market liberalization to leveraging economic statecraft and foreign aid as instruments of diplomacy, the United States has pursued a diverse array of economic strategies and priorities in pursuit of its geopolitical objectives and national interests. As the international economic landscape continues to evolve, understanding these economic dynamics remains essential for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of US foreign economic policy in the 21st century.

2.4 Military Interventions and Power Projection

After the Cold War, the United States experienced an upsurge in military interventions abroad that were well beyond anything that they had undertaken during the Cold War. Scholars often claim that these interventions are part of an ongoing process by the United States to maintain and develop its hegemony in the global order, primarily through military means. There were a number of interventions throughout the 1990s, but the key examples include Somalia, the Balkans, and Haiti. These operations projected US military power to areas where there was no direct threat to US national security and thus were in complete contrast to US foreign policy during the Cold War where military interventions were confined to areas where there was a direct threat, such as Vietnam and Korea.

In the same vein, the next major area of power projection was the Gulf in 1991. Secretary of Défense Richard B. Cheney (Gunzinger, 2012) insists strongly that " We are a superpower, and we're always going to want to have the capacity to deploy military force to safeguard American interests and preserve our capacity to influence events in the world".(p.1) This was in direct response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent intervention had widespread international support and involved a substantial Arab coalition, with the US

covering only a portion of the overall cost. This operation was only a partial realignment with the traditional policy of containment, despite the fact that it was justified on containment grounds. After forcing Iraq out of Kuwait, the US did not push on to Baghdad and instigate a regime change in Iraq, which at the time was the stated objective of the UK government.

US polls showed that even at the height of its post-Cold War military triumph, the US public was still reticent to use military force. This sentiment was reflected in subsequent US policy where the ongoing containment of Iraq was achieved primarily through sanctions, with the use of military force being greatly restricted. The sole exception was the four-day Desert Fox bombing campaign in 1998. The post-Cold War period of military interventions and power projection since 9/11 is given the timeframe and distinct change in policy from the years 1992-2001.

The post-Cold War era has witnessed a series of military interventions and regime change operations by the United States, often in pursuit of strategic objectives or humanitarian imperatives. From the Balkans to the Middle East, American military forces have been deployed to topple hostile regimes, combat terrorism, and promote stability and democracy in conflict-affected regions. However, these interventions have been subject to scrutiny and controversy, with debates over the legality, legitimacy, and effectiveness of military action in advancing US interests and values.

In the wake of the September 11th attacks, the United States embarked on a global campaign against terrorism, reshaping its military posture and operational priorities. Stephan and James in their book "Strategic Challenges"(2008) claim that " The road into the next decade will weave through unpredictable terrain in the Middle East as unresolved issues fester." (p.09) The War on Terror has involved a range of military activities, from targeted drone strikes and special operations to large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. They assume that(2008) " Three significant and interrelated drivers will continue to play out in the region: ongoing Islamist extremist violence; Israeli-Palestinian

tensions; and U.S. policies". Moreover, the emergence of non-state actors and asymmetric threats has challenged traditional notions of warfare, necessitating innovative strategies and capabilities to confront and defeat unconventional adversaries.

Despite its overwhelming military superiority, the United States has continued to prioritize alliances and security partnerships as key instruments of its foreign policy strategy. From NATO to the Indo-Pacific, American military alliances have served as force multipliers, enabling burden-sharing, collective defence, and interoperability with partner nations. Moreover, security cooperation agreements and defence assistance programs have facilitated capacity-building efforts and promoted regional stability in strategically vital areas of the world.

In conclusion, the military features of US foreign policy since the Cold War reflect a dynamic and multifaceted engagement with the global security environment. From power projection and interventionism to counterterrorism and alliance management, the United States has pursued a range of military strategies and priorities in pursuit of its geopolitical objectives and national interests. As the international security landscape continues to evolve, understanding these military dynamics remains essential for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of US foreign policy in the 21st century.

3. Figures of US Foreign Policy Interventions in the Middle East

3.1 Political Interventions

To conduct a detailed study of US foreign policy and its implications, it is important to understand the pathways that led to the Middle East. One key figure and the architect of American foreign policy, from which the modern-day approach was derived, is George Kennan. Known for his influential strategy of containment, which was drawn to counter Soviet policies, gave birth to political, military, and economic strategies that would,

in theory, hold back the spread of communism. In the 40s and 50s, the strategies and tactics used in the Middle East were broad and usually based on consent because a line was never drawn to fight the Soviet Union. The actual fear was direct confrontation escalating to a world war.

From the political side and following the Second World War, the bipolar power structure and Cold War era led to the USA solidifying its position in the Middle East. The main force behind their involvement was the containment and prevention of communism. This factor was evident and a common trend in the major US involvements in the Middle East post-1945. If we take today's USA intervention in the Middle East and compare it to the post-1945 era, we can clearly see a significant difference between the USA's current position in world policy and the global balance of power compared to what it was after WW2. Today's USA is geared more towards addressing the security and stability of its own interests rather than a selfless commitment to the global balance of power and countering containment of an ideology that threatened capitalism. Even though the context and balancing factors were different, the USA's guiding principles and ideologies remained consistent in each foreign intervention mentioned in the post-1945 era and beyond.

3.2. Economic Interventions

From the economic side, The US has used its intervention to build and secure Israel as a means to ensure its access to Middle East oil and further its pro-Western economic objectives in the region. Since 1953, the US has opposed radical Arab nationalism or any movement that might be perceived as a threat to Israel. An example, the best example of attempting to achieve American self-interest through the constraining of an Arab state, would be the US hostility towards Egyptian President Nasser and his successive economic policies which sought to nationalize the Suez Canal Company and use its revenue to fund the construction of the Aswan High Dam on the Nile. Nasser's move was seen as a challenge to Western commerce and an attempt to use economic development for pan-Arab ends.

Meanwhile, The Middle East is regarded as an area rich with vital natural resources, the most important of course being oil. Oil is a resource that affects the economic stability and potential of every nation. It is vital to industrial societies, and there is no easy substitute for its uses as a fuel or raw material. As the head of the Texas Railroad Commission stated in 1974, Oil is too important a business ever to be left to the Arabs. Tylor (2012) maintains that: As the century wore on, however, the United States and its oil industry steadily yielded control over the substance. The shifting of the center of oil production from the United States to the Middle East both solidified and destabilized American global power. In the 1970s, pressures on domestic oil supplies, accompanied by the transfer of oil ownership from American and European firms to sovereign states in the Middle East and elsewhere, created economic and political shocks that weakened the foundations of American supremacy and reverberated into the twenty-first century (p.236)

This type of attitude has led the US to seek means to control the production and export of oil in the Middle East, primarily for the benefit of Western companies in extracting and selling this oil. Such objectives have led to the US interest in transforming the oil trade into a bilateral rather than a multilateral agreement between sellers and buyers.

Indeed, The United States' foreign policy interventions in the Middle East have taken many forms over the years. The notion of foreign policy intervention will conflate with imperialism. The best examples of the United States' foreign policy with the Middle East have been built upon five main objectives: to secure the flow of oil, to develop and protect the state of Israel, to maintain a regional balance of power, to eliminate radical ideologies, and to contain the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The economic interventions, such as economic interests and motivation, trade relations and agreements, and economic aid and assistance, have served as both the means and the ends to achieving these objectives. During the 1950s, the US replaced Britain as the guarantor of stability in the Persian Gulf, acting to protect the sheikdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman from

internal and external subversion, ensuring a favourable environment for the US oil companies that had begun to replace the British firms. This was achieved through diplomatic means, military intervention, and the use of CIA action to quell any opposition to the existing rulers.

Additionally, US economic interests in the Middle East have been dominated by the necessity to maintain access to the region's oil reserves. Saman (2018) states that "The strategic location of the Middle East at the junction of three continents and with huge energy resource has long attracted outside powers to the region. The Middle East as a shatter belt region is characterized by deep divisions within and between sovereign states and societies, which are further inflamed by great power competition. The deep internal divisions in the Middle East shatter belt are enhanced by major powers' policies to achieve their objectives". (p.122) It has been a longstanding policy of the United States to prevent the emergence of any indigenous Arab power that might seek to control the resources of the Middle East for purposes deemed inimical to US interests as well as the most typical explanation for US involvement. This has been illustrated by the ways in which the United States has sought to achieve certain goals in the protection of American enterprise and private capital. Military and strategic goals have been formulated in response to the perceived need to protect economic interests in the region.

3.3. Cultural Interventions

Cultural interventions, a crucial and often dominant foreign policy, took place since the creation of the United States. US foreign policy objectives invariably had cultural aspects, and the means through which these were pursued usually were said to involve efforts at persuasion, socialization, and acculturation. Cultural interventions touching American interactions with others, modernism and moralism, are overlapping and often contiguous grand strategies through which US foreign policy was and is conducted. In addition to persuasion, socialization, and acculturation, the category also includes resistance and

immunity, thus negative, as well as positive efforts to insulate or protect US and foreign societies from deleterious outside influences.

The positive and negative aspects of cultural intervention are evident across all cases of US involvement in the Middle East and other parts of the Islamic world. Angel et al confirm that(2004) "The outcome of the "war of ideas" under way throughout the Muslim world is likely to have great consequences for U.S. interests in the region, but it is also the most difficult for the United States to influence" (p.4). Between 1946 and the present, direct USIA activities in the Islamic world were few, and Muslims were almost invisible in its audience research data, although almost any USIA materials created for other parts of the world were also available to educated Muslims. The Middle East has had an important but uneven place in the global strategy throughout US history and grew to have more importance as one of the grist for the modernization and reformulation of grand strategy.

Modernism is best thought of as an ideology or cluster of beliefs that sees modernization not simply as the process of becoming modern but as a necessary and inevitable move from a less to a more rational society through the applications of reason and science to the transformation of social and political institutions. Ever a contested and controversial issue, when US leaders and their Muslim counterparts saw eye to eye on modernization, many resources were mobilized to help bring it about, most of which were the same means that were used domestically to implement national security policies.

3.4. Military Interventions

The influence of various military actions has been profound and played a major role in shaping the current security landscape of the region, The White House in its National Security Strategy report(2000)determines that "The American military is the strongest fighting force the world has ever known. America will not hesitate to use force when necessary to defend our national interests. But we will do so as the last resort and only when the objectives and mission are clear and achievable, consistent with our values and laws,

alongside non-military tools, and the mission is undertaken with the informed consent of the American people. This influence that lies at the heart of the issue when considering its effect on US national security. The most significant period of militarized involvement has come since the Second World War. This ranges from CIA-sponsored paramilitary action and political subversion - such as the 1953 Iranian coup which deposed the democratic Mohammed Mossadeq in favor of the Shah, and the 1963 coup in Iraq which led to the rise of the Ba'ath party and Saddam Hussein - to overt warfare and invasion. The United States' military involvement in the Middle East has been a gradual process, always building upon the previous foundations as time progressed. While the United States only became fully recognized as a major player within the region after World War Two. This involves the relation between America's oil companies and the Middle East, the establishment of the Eisenhower doctrine, and the nature of US support for Israel.

Conclusion

To Conclude, The United States did not involve deeply in the Middle East only after the Second World War. The United States' significant involvement in the Middle East affairs had three main objectives: having access to the oil of the middle east, guarantying Israel's regional dominance and maintain it as a strategical ally in the region by giving military, political and financial support, and restricting the influence of the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The United States has overtly supported many oppressive regimes in the Middle East in order to pursue its interests in the region. The United States' interventions in the Middle East resulted in many wars and loss of life, especially in Iraq. The United States' interventions also led to the appearance of some kind of Anti-Americanism. The latter appeared that it has turned the United States to a target for terrorist attacks that manifested in the most memorable terrorist attack of 9/11. Consequently, the United States followed a new strategy based on countering terrorism in the region. The US foreign policy and its strategies in dealing with different conflicts and challenges especially the so-called Arab Spring.

CHAPTER II

Exploring the US Intervention in Syria and its Impact on the International Relations

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Introduction

The chapter delves into the complex effects of US action in Syria. It looks at how US interferes there dealing with the main reasons and forms of intervention. It provides a concise board of the declared and undeclared aims of this intervention. At the end, it assesses the impact of US involvement on the trajectory of the conflict.

1. Investigating the US involvement in Syria

The horrific civil war in Syria, which began in 2011, has entangled the US in a convoluted web of diplomatic and interventionist efforts., from limited military operations to backing opposition organizations. The research examines the planned and unforeseen effects of US engagement, encompassing its impact on the emergence of ISIS, the humanitarian catastrophe, and the possibility of a diplomatic settlement.

1.1. Reasons of US intervention in Syria

1.1.1 Historical Background

The current Syrian conflict began in March 2011, following the arrest and torture of a group of teenagers who were influenced by the recent uprisings in other countries. The unrest in Syria then began to spread to other regions in the country and the government, led by the Ba'ath party and President Bashar al-Assad, began to use violent techniques to try to hang on to power. As the violence escalated, there was a Call for President Bashar al-Assad to step down have been prominent since 2011, with demands for reforms alongside. The Syrian regime's repression in response to protests demanding freedoms and an end to authoritarian rule has highlighted its struggle to address democratization movements in the Arab world. In the Brief Review 2011-2013 a team from the Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence (CMDR COE) state that "In light of the continued repression in Syria, the EU reinforced restrictive measures against the Syrian regime based on human rights

activists' reports of some 200 people killed by Syrian security forces in the villages of the northwestern province of Idlib on December 19 and 20, 2011". They agreed to a few of the reforms such as "the institution of a new constitution, but did not make any moves to relinquish any of his power". This lack of cooperation led to the uprising becoming more violent and marks the beginnings of different factions forming within the Syrian conflict.

Many of the different groups involved in the uprising were able to put their differences aside and unite against President Assad, but the artificial unity created by the shared goal of overthrowing the current government did not last long. In the same month the civil uprising began, ISIS, now one of the most infamous terrorist groups in the world, initiated an occupation of Iraq, and there became increased violence in Iraq along sectarian lines. In April 2013, having gained a strong presence in Iraq, ISIS then moved its operations into Syria where there was a power vacuum as a result of the rebel forces having weakened the government's authority. Robin et al say that "Throughout its time in Syria, ISIS made a series of calculated moves to gain territory within the country, enraged both rebellion forces and the Syrian government".(p.11)

1.1.2. Syrian Civil War

The Syrian Civil War was by far the hardest event that took place prior to the US intervention. Granted, the US did not jump into the Syrian Civil War while it was occurring, rather the Civil War helped set the stage for US intervention. Searching for a way to end the war, US backed with several allies would eventually go on to sponsor rebels to fight against the Assad Regime, the event that would bring US into Syria. In order for one to understand the US intervention move, one has to understand the war the US was trying to influence. The Civil War began near the end of the Arab Spring in March 2011, over several small conflicts between anti-government demonstrators and the government forces. Erzsébet (2012) claims that "The Arab Spring uprisings were quickly termed 'revolutions' leading to discussions

about whether the term was being properly applied". The movement escalated when those government forces fired upon peaceful demonstrators. This caused nationwide unrest and violent retaliation from rebels. By July 2011, from the outrage the rebels had caused, several officers and soldiers of the Syrian Army began to defect, creating the Free Syrian Army; which was a large movement against the Bashar al-Assad regime.

1.1.3. Rise of ISIS

The rise of ISIS in Syria was a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. ISIS capitalized on the political chaos in Iraq, sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shias, and the lack of dependable allies. The group's emergence was partially surprising due to short-term elements that led to its rapid surge, despite specialists being aware of broader long-term developments. ISIS's control over regions like Manbij involved brutal imposition of ideology and exploitation of resources, including antiquities. The US intervention in Iraq post-2003 played a significant role in the rise of insurgency that eventually evolved into ISIS, with Saddam Hussein's fall creating a power vacuum. The group's capture of Mosul in 2014 shocked the world, leading to a serious refugee crisis and highlighting the threat to international security. One of the major reasons was to eliminate the threat of terrorism, which was declared a global "cancer".

In Global Terrorism Index 2020 contended that:

ISIL had significant territorial gains in 2014, capturing the cities of Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. At the height of its power in late 2014, ISIL held an estimated 100,000km² of territory, and imposed its rule over 11 million people across Iraq and Syria. ISIL was able to levy taxes and seize oil fields across Iraq and Syria to generate revenue and provide utilities for those living under its control, garnering support and legitimacy". The U.S. aims to destroy each and every terrorist unit, whether it is Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, or ISIS. A setback to Hezbollah was given when the new U.S. administration imposed further sanctions against

Syria and Lebanon targeting Hezbollah. Being an ally of the Assad regime, support of Hezbollah was vital for the Syrian regime. U.S. support for rebels and ISIS is intended to weaken both Hezbollah and the Assad regime.

The 2014 Israeli air strikes against Hezbollah and Iranian commanders in the Golan Heights also signify the broader war which the U.S. aims to initiate against the Iranian-Syrian coalition. The U.S., along with regional allies, trained, armed, and financed some of the rebel groups and provided them required political support. According to the U.S., the aim was to help moderate nationalist opposition groups who were vying for democratic change. This goal aggravates when ISIS emerges as the most dominant group among rebel groups. Fierce fighting and killing ISIL militants in Iraq and Syria are a continuation of the U.S. war against the war on terror. This U.S. action has posed a serious threat to Syria as well as Iraq. The legal and sovereignty challenges of using force against ISIS within Syrian territory further complicate the situation, potentially leading to proxy wars if not addressed internationally. Oluwasey and Felix explain that "The legality of the military interventions of the United States in the Syrian conflict has been debated. the issue of military intervention is one of great concern when considering article 2(4) of the UN Charter which forbids the threat or the use of force on any state. "

chemical weapons stockpile, to which Syria acceded. This successful Syrian chemical weapons disarmament process in 2013-2014 was achieved through a unique joint mission between the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, accommodating both coercive and consensual narratives. This brought seemingly successful results, but a fast rise in ISIS activity in Syria's territorial gains and a further civil war left Syria destabilized and the possession of chemical weapons was ambiguous. The decision to conduct the missile strike was met with praise from Europe and others, but criticism from many in the scientific community and progressive activists. The US administration claimed that their objectives remained solely the destruction of chemical weapons and prevention of their further use, but has done little to follow up this incident, and it was speculated that intelligence of the capability of further weapons led to mishap.

1.1.5 Refugee Crisis

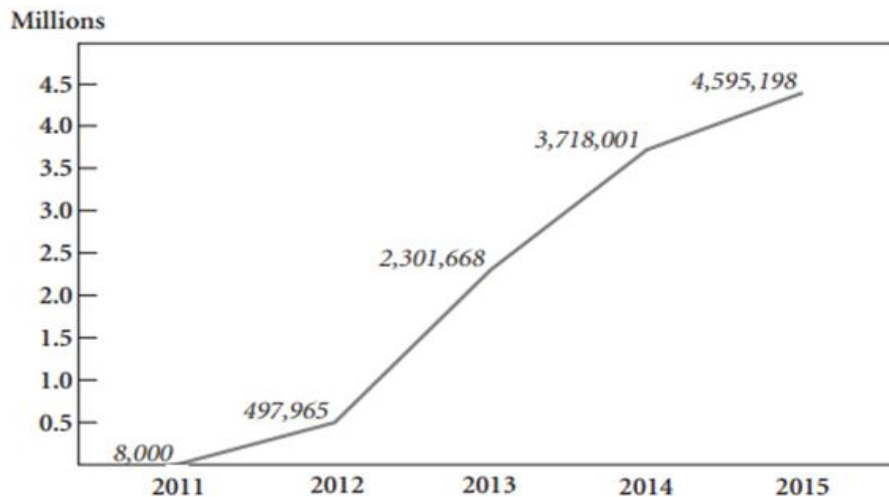
Currently, the refugee crisis is still ongoing and will continue for a long time. So, it is likely that it was a big factor in the US decision to intervene and improve the situation for the refugees. However, there was something else that fully compelled the US to act, and that was when ISIS used chemical weapons on Kurdish Peshmerga.

The US would now like to set up safe zones for refugees inside Syria to prevent them from leaving. Some Turkish news sources have even stated that the US and Turkey are in a secret pact to support the taking of northern Syria and give it to the refugees as a place to stay. Turkey's Operation Peace Spring in 2019 aimed to create a safe zone in northern Syria for refugees to return. Branislav as a Members' Research Service in The European Parliamentary Research Service notes (2019) that "This is the context in which Erdoğan expressed his desire to create a 'safe zone' in Syria, to which Syrian refugees could return, lessening the pressure on Turkish society. The idea had, however, already been proposed by

Syrian Kurds in early 2019". This sparked controversy as a US official denied the report and Turkey called it propaganda.

Refugee crisis is the main reason for US military intervention in Syria. The conflict in Syria has created the world's worst refugee crisis since the end of World War II, and it is continuing to worsen. "The crisis has resulted in millions of people being forcibly displaced, seeking safety in other countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) highlights the alarming number of 79.5 million forcibly displaced individuals worldwide, with a significant portion stemming from conflicts in Syria and other regions". The hardest thing to understand is that when one of Syria's neighbours, Turkey, requested NATO to intervene in 2013, nothing was done. This was due to the fact that the US did not want to get involved and there was a fear that it would spark a bigger confrontation between the US and Russia.

Figure 2: Number of Syrian refugees, 2011-15



Note. Adapted from *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syria Regional Refugee Response."*

The line graph titled "Number of Syrian Refugees, 2011-15" shows the number of Syrian refugees from 2011 to 2015. The number of refugees has been increasing steadily over this

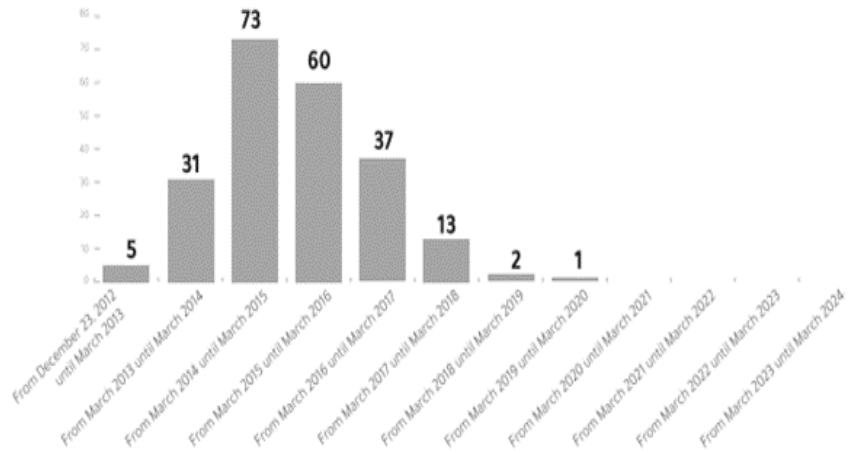
period. According to the graph, the number of refugees more than quadrupled from 497,965 in 2011 to 4,595,198 in 2015.

It is important to note that the data in this graph only goes up to 2015. The Syrian Civil War is still ongoing, so the number of refugees is likely to be much higher today.

1.1.6 Chemical Weapons Attacks

Syria has continued to unleash many chemical attacks on civilians living in Syria. In 2013, there was a large-scale chemical weapons attack in the suburbs of Damascus. The United States blamed the Syrian government for the attacks and Russia for not ensuring the complete destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program and threatened the use of force. In its report *Civil Rights Defenders claim* (2017) that "The April 4th, 2017 chemical weapons attack in Khan Sheikhoun was indeed a shocking and horrifying event, resulting in the deaths of at least 92 people, including 33 children". "This attack was part of a series of major chemical weapons attacks in Syria, where civilians were the primary victims, comprising 97.6% of the direct deaths from such attacks". The recent and continuous use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government has become a catalyst for U.S. involvement in Syria. This is because the use of chemical weapons in warfare is illegal under international law and the images and reports of the atrocious effects on civilians have led to public and political pressures on governments throughout the world. This has forced the U.S. government to reconsider its current standpoint on the Syrian crisis. Right now, the U.S. has no real long-term strategy in Syria and a regime change similar to the Iraq war is out of the question. However, the continued problems in Syria and the U.S. involvement in fighting ISIS may lead to further and deeper U.S. involvement in Syrian affairs. This might lead to a tipping point in the very tense situation between the many different factions in the Syrian war.

Figure 03: Chemical Attacks Per Years



Note. Adapted from *Syrian Network For Human Rights Report 15 March,2024.p19*

The bar graph shows the distribution of 222 chemical attacks across several time periods. The time periods are labelled "From December 23, 2012 until March 2013" and continue in yearly increments until "From March 2023 until March 2024". The highest number of attacks occurred in the period "From March 2013 until March 2014" with 73 attacks. There were then 60 attacks in the following period, "From March 2014 until March 2015". The number of attacks then dips significantly.

1.1.7 Counterterrorism Efforts

At the outburst of civil conflict in 2011, Syrian government found itself under tough internal strife and rebel insurgencies, but as ISIL grew and begun to capitalise on unstable Iraq, Obama would declare Syria a 'Regional arm of global jihad' and offer military support to counter terrorism. This marked a significant turn point as prior calls for Assad to step down did not entail US military involvement.

The US interest to counter acts of terrorism was a relatively modern development in its foreign policy, dawned on 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. The subsequent War on Terror saw US military deployments in the Afghanistan and Pakistan conflicts. Whilst

terrorism was not a major factor in US foreign policy, the Arab Spring and its consequence to national security policies were certainly important in determining US intervention in Syria. In contrast, minimal foreign intervention occurred in Syria, attributed to factors like the absence of a strong opposition, regional destabilization concerns, and Russian and Chinese vetoes at the UN Security Council. Additionally, US foreign policy in the Middle East historically aimed to limit political participation of certain groups to safeguard economic and strategic interests, contributing to human insecurity in the region.

1.1.8 Regional Stability

The effects of damage or loss on the oil fields of Syria were a further concern. Loss of oil revenue would further add to the sustained damage to the Syrian economy and infrastructure and would leave the burden of reconstruction to the succeeding Syrian government. This is also seen as the potential early stages of occupation as the U.S. and its allies aim to destroy IS followed by a transition to support a stable Syrian government. Oil companies, particularly European companies, may assess this as an opportunity to gain cheap access to oil fields with a cost of paying compensation at a later date in the event of damages, a scenario which would cause further unrest and discord in shambled post-conflict Syria. William(2004) confirms that "With the relative unlikelihood of European intervention, the U.S. and its allies would be concerned with preventing the loss or damage to oil fields, and an important part of protecting regional stability is seen as preserving the status quo of regions which are conducive to U.S. interests".

The IS had taken control of a large amount of territory in both Iraq and Syria and had taken upon itself the role of a state, with stated aims to function as a resourceful and robust state. The IS would aim to use the oil as financial revenue to further enable it to perform greater military action. Carsten et al (2013) claim that "The U.S. Department of State had declared the IS a self-proclaimed Islamic state aimed to destroy all states and that the

group was a clear threat to global and particularly Western interests". In this context, with the envisaged potential for IS to control and hold oil flow in the region to ransom, using the oil to finance terror, the future threat to the global economy was assessed as very high. Based on the estimated threat to the global economy, it was assessed that the U.S. and its allies could not afford to allow IS to control Syrian oil.

Briefly, the instability in the region posed a threat to the stability of oil markets. One of the estimated reasons behind U.S. involvement was the concern for the effects of the conflict on the regional oil market. Patrick and Simon (2005) confirm that "The U.S. would be concerned that a Syrian threat to close the Strait of Hormuz could potentially send oil prices soaring, which would cause damage to the global economic recovery and with specific regard to the U.S. economic recovery from the 2008 recession. However, the threat of IS control of Syrian oil was more worrying". (p.3)

1.1.9 Protecting Allies

When the Arab Spring reached Syria, the US sought to encourage reform rather than to isolate the Assad regime. When protestors took to the streets in 2011, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said (2011) that "many of the members of Congress of both parties who have gone to Syria in recent months have said they believe he's a reformer." After it became clear that Assad was not a credible reformer and that the situation was sliding into a civil war, the US began to shift towards aiding the opposition. This also had the effect of drawing the US closer to Syria's Islamist-lean opposition backers, Turkey and the Gulf Monarchies. The US thus far has aimed to restrict its involvement to backing rebel forces from behind rather than taking the initiative with substantial investment or using direct force on their behalf. US involvement has also succeeded in enhancing its image and relationships with its allies.

This portion of the US intervention in Syria also serves a national interest in protecting allies. Before Syria's upheaval, Syria and the US had an uneasy relationship. The US emerged from the Cold War with a strategic interest in isolating Syria, which had been allied with the Soviet Union and which Washington saw as a spoiler in a dozen different peace processes. US sanctions were imposed and the Syria Accountability Act was passed in late 2003.

1.2. Forms of Intervention in Syria

1.2.1. Overview of US Intervention

The USA has variously used military force, diplomatic pressure, and economic sanctions in its attempts to influence the Syrian conflict. It has supported various factions within the Syrian opposition, often apparently acting at cross-purposes. Though always a key player in negotiations, it has, especially under the Trump administration, tended to appear a reluctant mediator. Its primary goal has been to weaken or remove Assad, as a prelude to a negotiated settlement with which it is engaged in joint action with Russia. In recent years, it has shifted to a more minimalist approach to Syria, being less overtly involved and focusing more on preventing the re-emergence of ISIS. This follows widespread criticism of a lack of coherence and consistency in its Syria policy. Andrew (2019) in his article asserts that "This ranged from the Obama administration's half-hearted semi-secret arming and training program for anti-Assad groups, perhaps best characterized by an incident concerning the 'moderate' New Syrian Force in which it handed over its supplies to Al-Qaeda and was then attacked by US planes, killing 20". (p.11)

1.2.2 Diplomatic efforts

Dorsey (2012) states that during Obama's first term, the president attempted to improve US-Syria relations and sought Assad's help in alleviating the Iraq conflict. The negative portrayal of the Syrian government's response to the crisis has, however, influenced

this engagement, particularly the Syrian government's use of force. According to Khashan, "US efforts to engage Assad regarding the crisis assumed that the Syrian leader had the intent on reversing his previous alliances, particularly with Iran, and that an acceptable political agreement on the crisis was possible. He also adds (2012) that the Obama administration failed to understand the nature of the Syrian-Iranian alliance and only seriously miscalculated Assad's intention. This led to US efforts to engage Assad, further damaging US relations with their Arab allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, and increasing regional suspicions over US goals in the region". This initialization has depended upon the Bush and Obama administrations to intercede for the current Syrian crisis. As pointed out already, the Bush administration had mostly acted against Syria but had made only small attempts to change the Syrian regime. Christopher (2016) "In contrast, Obama's establishment has put in extra effort in trying to find a political resolution to the Syrian crisis". Unfortunately, the previous efforts for a political resolution have not been a success and until now the future for such an endeavor does not look bright. The efforts can be classified into two main categories: efforts made to engage the Syrian government and attempts of international mediation as well as UN involvement.

1.2.3 Economic Motivations for US Intervention1

Economic sanctions, trade embargoes, and freezing of assets of key government officials are forms of coercion by stopping short of the use of physical force. They are usually designed to avoid human costs on both sides. In the case of Syria today, The President of the Security Council at its 7038th meeting, on 27 September 2013 said that " the US and its allies have fulfilled these conditions by having already been several years in the making and the passing of UNSC res. 2118 has shown that compliance will not be too costly for the Bashar regime, Russia, and China". As it is questionable how much the US actually wants Syria to give up its chemical weapons with fear of them falling into terrorist hands, Wyn et al(2021) in article confirmed that "Obama can still be content with arguing that the costs of defiance were

too low for military intervention through chemical attacks had managed to stay under the threshold of public support".

The US-led coalition's intervention has given a broader understanding of the US's long-term strategy through its approach to dismantling Syria's chemical weapons program in the wake of the infamous Ghouta attacks in mid-2013. Utilizing economic concepts, it can be argued that the US had taken the right approach at that time in securing the future of the US dollar's position as the dominant international currency. In a speech from the White House in September 2013, US President Barack Obama stated, "Over the past two years, what began as a series of peaceful protests against the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad has turned into a brutal civil war. Over 100,000 people have been killed. Millions have fled the country. At that time, the world tried to use acceptable action to prevent the regime from using chemical weapons on a large scale...." With deep concern for the humanitarian crisis and the high possibility of intervention", US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid made a crucial warning to the US administration to not put 'boots on the ground' in Syria. With the current commitment to no ground troops and the previous wars in Iraq had already strained the finances of the US, the best way to minimize losses in the pursuit of an ideal can only resort to the best possible outcome in a resource allocation sense.

1.2.4 Humanitarian aid

To begin, it is safe to assume that an overwhelming refugee crisis is one of the most pressing humanitarian concerns related to contemporary intervention in the Middle East, particularly in Syria. In an article, Britannica Online Encyclopedia concludes that the Syrian civil war has caused an estimated" 13 million citizens to have fled their homes, and at least 6.5 million seeking refuge in other parts of the country. In addition, over four million people have fled Syria, a figure which has placed an enormous burden on neighbouring countries, as well as European Union member states". It is evident that the implications of this mass exodus

are significant at both the domestic and international levels. Kenda in The United Nations Development Programme article(2022)" From a Syrian cultural perspective, the mass departure of citizens is leaving irreparable damage to the nation's social fabric".

In the case of Syria, the active warring factions and intermittent Kurdish regional successes mean that displaced citizens are often prevented from returning to their homes, and instead are forced to seek new lives in different regions or countries. This emigration of skilled, professional and middle-class individuals will no doubt deal a severe blow to Syria's human capital, and will thus impede the nation's ability to rebuild in the foreseeable future. From an international standpoint, the heavy burden placed on neighboring countries as well as the European Union has sparked much debate over the best way to assist refugees without exacerbating the situation. Amir Salameh (2022) assumes that "This dilemma is significant due to the eligibility of refugees as a first stage towards intervention and has thus created a complex discourse on the relative morality of taking in refugees versus trying to solve the root of the problem in Syria". (p.7)

The US has provided extensive material and financial support to a number of Syrian organizations providing aid to various war-stricken sectors of Syria. This has included a wide range of supplies and training and has targeted a variety of sectors ranging from medical services to local governance. While this program's objective was to further the US security mission by creating reliable proxy forces to combat ISIS and the Assad regime, it is a form of humanitarian support in that it attempts to improve the overall security and quality of life for Syrian civilians living in rebel-held areas.

Humanitarian aid has also emerged as a major form of US intervention in Syria. This became evident from August to September 2013 when US warships were positioned in the Mediterranean Sea. The official rationale was to deter further use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime on its population. However, a widely recognized implicit motive was to be prepared to launch missiles against Syrian government forces deemed responsible for the

chemical attacks. By itself, this action would fall under a humanitarian intervention since its purpose is to protect civilians from the scourge of chemical warfare. In United Nations (2024) meeting "Though this specific manoeuvre was not executed, it underscores the connection between the US security agenda in Syria and humanitarian objectives".

1.2.5 Military Interventions by the United States in Syria

Before the U.S. led a coalition to fight ISIS in 2014, various considerations of U.S. military intervention in Syria had been contemplated. U.S. military intervention in Syria has been complicated due to the strategic, political-military, and ethical aspects of various forms of intervention. At other times, U.S. military intervention was viewed as too little, too late, betraying commitments to Syrian groups and damaging American credibility. BBC in its article mentioned (2015) that "Since March 2011, the U.S. Intelligence Community had been secretly aiding the internal Syrian opposition. By late 2012, the U.S. had become involved in plans to train and arm indigenous Syrian rebel groups. This plan, known as Timber Sycamore, was implemented by the CIA with Saudi and Jordanian cooperation". More public measures of overt U.S. military aid to Syrian opposition forces were contemplated but deemed both unfeasible and unduly provocative to the Assad regime's state allies, Iran and Russia. At the same time, any U.S. military support of Kurdish factions was weighed against the potential alienation of NATO partner Turkey.

2.Exploring the Impact of US Intervention in Syria

2.1 Background of US Intervention

The United States' involvement in Syria has been innovative and significantly involved a shift in US foreign policy. The US joined the Syrian civil war not with the aim of overthrowing Bashar Al-Assad but to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. The US has pursued various strategies to combat ISIL using methods such as air strikes to provide support to anti-Assad rebel groups on the ground, engaging their own troops

in an attempt to eradicate the terrorist group. However, evidence suggests that the US has been far more involved than it claims to be and the impact of US intervention has been substantial. It is too early to measure the success of the US war with ISIL in Syria. Despite early signs of progress, the odds are heavily stacked against the Trump administration's strategy that the US has launched a war with an unclear end game, mission, and exit strategy. It is possible that by the time this paper is written, an entirely different US strategy in Syria will be underway. Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations Glenn (2015) says "The US has led a war with ISIL with increasing commitment since Operation Inherent Resolve was launched in October 2014, named under Obama's administration. Coalition forces have killed several key trans regional ISIL leaders since June 2015, by a U.S. drone airstrike".

At times, it has been difficult to determine whether the US was engaged in wars against both ISIL and the might of the Assad regime and its supporters. US priorities have pluralized, the war has become really confusing, and the failure to formulate a clear strategy has diluted a once-strong anti-Assad stance. Recent events are a clear indicator that US involvement has extended beyond simply combating the Islamic State. After launching air strikes on a Syrian air force base in April, US involvement has been met with direct hostility from the Assad regime. The BBC (2017) said "The downing of a Syrian army plane by a US jet created a scenario in which the US and pro-Assad forces are engaged in a perilous struggle for their own strategic interests".

2.2 Impact on Syrian Civilian Population

The Syrian Civil War has had a devastating impact on the civilian population of Syria and has presented a conjuncture where a humanitarian crisis necessitates external intervention. A number of contemporary armed conflicts have resulted in an increasingly disproportionate percentage of civilian casualties and the war in Syria has been no exception to this trend. The US, through its direct and indirect involvement, has been a key contributor

to the harm incurred by Syrian civilians. The recent intervention by the US using air strikes and arming vetted rebels, though conducted with the intention of upholding the norms of humanitarian intervention as presented in the Just War tradition, ended up violating jus in bello principles, having done little to protect Assad's political opponents from continuing aerial attacks and has reportedly resulted in civilian deaths and the displacement of minority groups at risk from IS and other jihadist groups. The air campaign has resulted in the displacement of a large number of civilians from a number of areas across Syria as they sought to escape the intense and prolonged aerial bombardments. For an increased number of civilian populations, the air campaign has resulted in a change of residency and for some, these changes can be transformed into long-term or permanent exile from their original homes. Amanda (2019) says that "US attempts to protect the Kurdish minority group from IS through expansive military support have also resulted in Turkey conducting its own military campaigns in Syria using the rationale of creating a buffer zone to prevent Kurdish forces from infringing upon Turkey's sovereignty and to repatriate Syrian refugees in Turkey to this zone". A large number of civilians residing in these areas are now at risk from the effects of modern warfare as they become a contested space for ethno-political interests.

2.3 Influence on Regional Stability

Syria has always been a very strategic and important country in the Middle East, both for those living in the country and for outside nations, due to its location in a critical area of the world, coupled with its resources. Thus, the internal fractioning of the country has had dire repercussions on the stability of the region. Great Damage notes that Turkey in particular has felt the consequences of US intervention in Syria. This is due to the involvement of Kurdish troops, who Turks have seen as rebels and their involvement has triggered action from the Turkish military into Syria. Christopher (2012) notes that "This has not only exacerbated tensions between Turkey and the US, but it is a serious regional issue due to the

fact it could potentially drag Turkey into Syrian affairs and exacerbate the current situation into a wider regional conflict". (p.1)

Aron (2017–Nitonalinterst.com) claims that " It is important to note that no Syrian-Kurdish party demands independence. Many Kurds may privately dream of a Kurdish state, but most feel that this is not a realistic proposition for the scattered Syrian-Kurdish enclaves. The Kurdish movement in Syria has instead focused on language rights, the citizenship issue, permission to celebrate Newroz" and would have a domino effect by instigating the demand for a similar Kurdish region in Iraq and possibly igniting separatist aspirations for Kurds in Iran. This has serious potential to destabilize the greater Middle East. United States' involvement in creating a viable opposition to the Assad regime has been another major factor in increasing the already high level of refugee spillover into neighbouring countries.

Over half of Syrian refugees are outside of the country and their presence is exacerbating tensions in host countries, particularly Lebanon and Jordan. This is seen as a factor contributing to increased instability in the region. In its Summary Report and Conclusions, Turkey 28-29 July 2015 states that "The countries neighbouring Syria and hosting large numbers of refugees are struggling to find an appropriate response to the labour market impact of the massive refugee influx. With no or limited legal access to work, Syrian refugees are working informally which is putting increasing pressure on already vulnerable local labour markets, causing further deterioration of working conditions and wages and leading to growth of informal economies of host countries".

2.4. Political and Diplomatic Consequences

US intervention substantially weakened Syria's relationship with neighbouring Iraq. In the build-up to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Syria was accused of supplying the Iraqi regime with weapons and other military support. This resulted in the United States imposing economic sanctions on Syria, which were detrimental to its economy. Following the accusation, there was a realignment in alliances in the region as Syria sought to protect itself

against US hostility through greater cooperation with other Arab states and Iran. A Report for Congress on April 22, 2003 claims that "The alliance between Syria and Iran has been a persistent feature on the political landscape of the Middle East for more than three decades. Moreover, since its inception, it has had a major impact on developments in the region, as witnessed in recent years with the 2003 Iraq war, the 2006 Lebanon conflict and Iran's role in the Syrian civil war". Consequently, this led Iraq to support Syrian opposition groups and, in worst-case scenarios, allow militant Islamist groups to launch attacks on Syrian government targets.

The combination of US intervention in Iraq and subsequent support from the Iraqi government for the Syrian opposition has greatly undermined relations between the two states. This often resulted in intense diplomatic disputes and military engagements between Syrian and Iraqi proxies on both Iraqi and Syrian soil. US intervention is seen as a catalyst for these events, as former Iraqi president Nouri al-Maliki attributed the current political tension between the two states to the fall of Saddam's Baathist regime, which was backed by Syria. Andrew (2024) asserts that "US intervention in Syria has therefore led to a spillover of the conflict into its neighbour and a significant strain on bilateral relations between the two states". (p.14)

2.5 US Intervention in the Syrian Civil War

The first major increase in US involvement was the use of red lines concerning the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. In BBC (2018) article argued that "The Assad government had used chemical weapons on several occasions, but the first major incident occurred on August 21, 2013, in the Ghouta suburb of Damascus". In response to this, the US almost took military action, but instead agreed to a deal by the Russian government to dismantle Syria's chemical weapon arsenal. This was a big turning point in the war, as it prolonged the conflict and more effectively drew in US participation. After the agreement, President Obama announced the first phase of a military campaign targeting the

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria beginning in August 2014. This campaign would at first only target ISIS, but then gradually phase into a larger US involvement focused more on the Assad regime. After Russia began its air campaign in Syria, President Obama announced that the US was suspending its contacts with Russia over maintaining the cessation of violence in Syria. Jane (2014) assumes that "This was a reflection of the increase in tension between the US and Russia involving the Syrian conflict".

The US first became involved by vocalizing its support for the protestors and calling for President Bashar al-Assad to step down from power, in hopes of preventing an escalation of violence in Syria. Then-President of the United States, Barack Obama and his administration imposed several economic sanctions against the Syrian government and those who supported them. This was the extent of US involvement during the initial stages of the uprising. The United States has been involved in the Syrian Civil War since the uprising in March 2011 against the Assad regime. US involvement has increased in stages, with each stage overlapping the next. Mohammed claims that "The initial reason for US involvement was an extension of the Arab Spring, which included countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. However, events have led to a gradual increase in US participation".

2.6 Declared Aims of the US Intervention

In Just security newspaper on April 29, 2022, Tess and Brianna mentioned that "The US declared its direct intervention in Syria on September 22, 2014. The four main stated aims of the US intervention were: i. To "degrade and destroy" ISIS; ii. To "create circumstances for a transition from the Assad regime to a real transitional government"; iii. To seek a political solution to the Syrian conflict; and iv. To reduce human suffering resulting from the conflict". The first aim is very clear and simple to measure.

However, measuring the success of the second aim is more complex, and requires clarity over what would represent a "real transitional government". The third aim is more subtle than the other two. The US and its allies want to use the UN peace talks as a tool to

influence the nature of the post-conflict political settlement. This would ultimately be derived by changing the balance of power in the Assad regime's favour such that the regime and its allies are forced to concede more ground. This process has been viewed by the Syrian government, Russia, and Iran as an attempt to weaken the Assad regime's position, and as a violation of Syrian sovereignty under the pretence of a political settlement. The final aim can be viewed as a moral and emotional appeal to American and Western public opinion, which may be seen as a response to the collective guilt aroused by the failure to prevent the preceding mass atrocities.

This is the Richard Falk critique of Obama's talk of rescue and redemption that is often used as a euphemism for stopping atrocities, as well as to public perceptions of the intervention. Although the aims of the intervention are expressed in high-minded language, the primary goal of the intervention is to change the behaviour of the Assad regime. This is particularly true of the third aim. The Ambassador Jonathan Cohen, Acting Permanent Representative U.S. Mission to the United Nations New York City March 27, 2019, in his speech said that "Measures to compel the Assad regime to halt or reduce attacks on opposition forces and civilians started soon after the UN General Assembly resolution in February 2012 when the US called on Syria to allow humanitarian aid into areas suffering from food shortages. This culminated in May 2014 when the US, France, Germany, and the UK proposed a resolution aimed at referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court". (p.1)

He also said that "As a Security Council, we should demand the regime respect international humanitarian principles and human rights standards. We encourage Special Envoy Pedersen to finalize a political settlement by and through the Syrian people, and we must see full implementation of Resolution 2254". (p.1)

The intention behind that aim reflects a belief in the Liberal tradition that places faith in the possibility of the rectification of the wrongful behaviour of states. The US

intervention during the Iraqi Civil War provides a parallel where high-minded language was used to describe the nature of the intervention, reflecting a faith in the possibility of change for the better in Iraq. Munafrizal (2017) "This idea of noble intent is at odds with realist interpretations that would claim that foreign policy is an exercise in the pursuit of national interest and that state behaviour is unlikely to change without a fundamental change in the rules of the international game brought about by the emergence of a more powerful norm or an alteration in the distribution of power between states".(pp182-183)

2.7 Hidden Aims of the US Intervention

US intervention in Syria was not aimed at making America safer, reducing the Syrian war, or promoting democracy. The realist perspective states that policy is often based on high politics to benefit the state to a specific end. Power politics is clearly evident when considering the close ally of Iran in Syria. The USA and Iran may have improved relations in the last year; however, it is clear that Iran and the USA are still set on conflicting national interests. Any form of Iranian influence in the US sphere of influence in the Middle East is perceived as a threat to US security and regional stability. Conversely, the removal of Iranian Revolutionary Guards from Syria would be damaging to Iran due to the threat of an ISIS counteroffensive on Iranian soil supported by the radical Sunni ISIS.

A report on aljazeera.com (2024) "The IRGC said it launched missile attacks against the "perpetrators of terrorist operations in the Islamic Republic, particularly ISIL", in Syria, state media reported. It claimed to have launched four Kheibar missiles at ISIL positions in Idlib. "We assure our nation that the Guards' offensive operations will continue until avenging the last drops of martyrs' blood, " it said. Joint operations and proxy fighting on opposite sides have led to friendly fire incidents between US and Iranian-backed forces in the war.

Due to the disputed nuclear deal and the potential for Iranian forces in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to threaten US allies in Israel and the Gulf states, Iran may continue to be seen

as a threat to US regional interests in the Middle East long after the Syrian war. An Iranian loss in Syria is something the US and its regional allies would hope to achieve for security reasons in the long term. US allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel are likewise concerned with Iran and its goal to ensure Iranian moves in Syria do not threaten their security. The US politically or indirectly militarily backing is necessary to alleviate fears from friendly states and to prevent them from taking independent action in Syria against Iranian interests. Ilan et al (2016) state that "Still, the primary goal in Syria must continue to be weakening and containing jihadi groups, keeping them on their heels to prevent attacks on the United States, Europe and regional allies. This is not an optimal outcome, but it's far more preferable than pursuing unrealistic and unrealizable goals that could drag the United States into endless and distracting wars it cannot win against far more committed and determined adversaries".(pp.7-8) Unseating Assad from power would remove a long-time Russian ally and weaken Iran's influence in the region. This would be preferable to the US than a direct confrontation with Iran in Syria or an Israeli intervention. Step by step, the weakening of Iran seeks to accomplish and protect America's dominance and the status quo in the Middle East.

3. Impact of US Intervention on Security

US intervention in Syria has been tainted by inconsistency and contradiction, reflecting its struggle against the backdrop of a post-unipolar international order for ideational and material hegemony in liberal interventionism. Ruairidh (2019) says that "US promotion of liberal values and an image of Syria in accordance with a Western security identity has served to provoke and challenge the fragmented Syrian opposition; however, its failure to defend such values with direct support has yielded a situation where those factions resiliently adhere to such ideational security out of mistrust in US capabilities and reliability". (pp.166-185)

A security dilemma has been established between these actors and the US mission creeps into direct intervention against Islamic State while still pushing a diplomatic solution

for a transition government has baited the Assad regime into labelling the US as an enemy state also subject to national interest security values, forming a fragmented 'ontological security community' with an existential threat to the other at its own core. Green and Griffith assume that "a transition in the speech act of US security from a representational to a traditional notion with Syria becoming a primary referent object and effect of security about survival with relevance to intervention and power to the post-ISIS status quo". (pp.49-68)

The intervention reflects a US vision of securitization that Syria should have been its strategic subaltern's decision to challenge the humanitarian securitization of today with US and international public opinion demanding greater accountability to not repeat past failures in Syria and take responsibility for the sticky situations it now faces. Ultimately, the balance of power will weigh the success of these acts and the US realizing its current or future Syrian security identity must bring all together in a linkage of a security alliance or revert to further international law-breaking for the sake of global security.

3.1 Impact on Political Stability: Attempting to Overthrow Syrian Regime

Recent attempts to overthrow the regime have seen a push from the US to carve out spheres of influence within Syria. Turkey's recent involvement in operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch saw US aid and backing of Turkish operations to support the fall of the regime and defeating of IS, rather than fight against the SDF. Micheal et al (2016) claim that "This, in turn, led to the US funding and training of a 30,000-strong force on the border of Rojava", (p.32) again with the same intent. US involvement led to some success, however, the recent agreement between Russia/Iran and Turkey has moved US prospects further as they had lost the proxy war with increasing Russian intervention and support of Assad. This led to a speech by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, outlining US goals in Syria post-IS, (news.stanford.edu)"with intent for regime change, containment of Iran, de-escalation of conflict and providing the desired outcome of the US-led coalition against Assad". A final attempt at regime overthrow has implications with the recent Western strikes on the 14th of

April 2018. This attempted to weaken the legitimacy of the Assad through weakening of military power and government resources in response to the alleged use of chemical weapons on the town of Douma, and his echoed intent to use chemical weapons and reclaim rebel-held territories in Syria.

The objective of the US was for the Assad regime to fall so that the government was placed by a far more favourable government to the US. This essentially meant a government conforming to US interests, and a neo-liberal economy. Due to political conditionality, the US made it clear that any support would rely on political transition in accordance with US interests. US aid was used to avert the implementation of any dictatorship or theocracy that would harm US interests. This led to the framing of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Oppositional Forces as a transitional government to the current regime. Intel Brief (2021) in an article entitled 'Assad Clinging To Power In Syria With Iranian And Russian Assistance' that "US aid to this government was significantly greater than that Russia/Iran had provided to the Assad regime due to status and legitimacy. The ceaseless support and funnel of arms to oppositional groups at this point had led to a significant shift in the balance of power".

The US had identified with the Syrian opposition and their intent to overthrow the Assad regime and thus, had engaged in action to support the collapse of the current government. Despite the fact that intervention was seen to be taken at a certain point, the US had provided aid to oppositional groups in hopes of weakening the Assad regime causing its overthrow. They had done so by exterminating any opportunities for Assad to once again become the face of the government, either through parliamentary elections or a negotiated settlement. Moreover, The U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva (2013) insists that "the US stressed the support of the Syrian people and supported any opportunity for free elections in the hopes of no longer having the regime in place. Steps planned by the

US had substantial risk and the Assad regime had shown open hostility to the US aid towards groups in hopes of lessening its legitimacy". (P.1)

3.2 Establishing Military Bases: A Strategic Move by the US

The bases themselves would also act as a deterrent to prevent Turkish acts of aggression on US-SDF forces while thwarting Russian and Iranian attempts to gain access and top the US influence by changing the facts on the ground. This was witnessed by a Russian air campaign on locations with US personnel. The US has not a great record of withdrawing military installations, and there is a potential for prolonged guerrilla warfare and insurgencies to force the US out. So long as the US keeps these bases, there is also a risk of direct war with the Syrian government and its allies. Celeste et al (2011) as a SETF staff member assumes that " A clash at Al Tanf, where the US occupies a 55 km exclusion zone to the North, in which the Rukban refugee settlement is located and attempts to block a Damascus-Baghdad trade route, resulted in a previous blockade of food and supplies made to Rukban by the Syrian government". (p.16)

The plan to construct the military installations was ambitious and intrusive. Daniela (2017) says "In February 2017, the US sought to increase their involvement in Syria so as to achieve said influence, stepping up a failed program to train a large force of anti-government fighters and hiring thousands of private contractors". (p.23) As conditions prohibited the US from working with both anti-government and Kurdish forces, US special operations pushed for the establishment of a base in Northern Syria to support an expanded SDF. Though troops wanted to rent space from allied countries and local forces, this was not the case, Dareen (2020) says that "as pointed out by SDF General Mazloun Kobani in a personal meeting with Trump, the US would fund Kobani's forces and control oil revenues with the purpose of preventing the government from taking those same resources. With the hunt for a legal basis to remain, it is clear that the US aims to retain influence over the long term". (pp.2.3)

Sydney (2022) resumed that "focuses on how the US desired to keep a long-term engagement with Syria, to contain regional threats and aiming to control the natural and financial resources of the country". (pp.31.33) First, to analyse the statements made by US officials on the construction of 15 US bases in Syria, to then discuss the background of the base construction and the real motivations behind it. Establishing US military installations in Syria was a significant element of the country's involvement in the Syrian Civil War. These installations serve a handful of purposes for the US, chiefly a means to retain durable influence to affect an eventual end to the conflict on terms favourable to the US, while also serving as a strategic point to contain regional threats to US allies in the Middle East and to the US itself. A speech by General Joseph Votel to the House Armed Services Committee revealed (2018) the scope and intentions of these installations, where specific mention was given to support allied forces in their operations and prevent the resurgence of an ISIL-controlled territory. (p.2)

4. Assessment of the impact of US intervention on the trajectory of the conflict

4.1 Evaluation of US Foreign Policy

The US foreign policy has proven to be largely ineffective in the context of the ongoing civil war inside Syria. By lambasting the Assad regime and calling for its ouster, the US placed itself firmly in opposition to the current government of Syria. With this complete estrangement from the former status quo, any hope of influencing the Assad government effectively was lost. Rashid (2022) assumes that "The entry of extremist elements into the ranks of the Syrian opposition further complicated US strategy, as it was loath to support any rebel groups militarily due to the violent and chaotic history of such transactions between the US and various militant organizations".

The fact that the US engaged in arming and training exercises with rebel groups regarded as moderate, all while refusing to commit them to a course of action against Assad's

forces, demonstrates a lack of clear strategy. When the rebel groups armed and trained by the US began losing significant ground to both Assad government forces as well as to extremist elements within the opposition, the US found itself in the awkward position of being unsure of whether to support its proxies or to distance itself from them in light of their apparent ineffectiveness. This lack of strategic clarity has contributed significantly to the failure of US policy in Syria.

4.2 Effectiveness of Strategies

The US has implemented a series of largely failed strategies in Syria beginning with President Obama's "do nothing" approach. This strategy shifted when the US decided to fund and arm the "moderate" Syrian opposition. In a conflict as murky as Syria's, it was always going to be difficult to judge who the moderate opposition was and in practice weapons given to the FSA often ended up in the hands of Islamic extremist groups. Furthermore, the US was a mere bystander as ISIS came to power. At the peak of US inaction, ISIS was vastly growing in strength and taking over large portions of Iraq and Syria. It was only when ISIS threatened US interests in the region and the beheading of American journalist James Foley that the US enacted a serious strategy to weaken and defeat the Islamic state. Michael (2016) says that "One of the first steps to weaken ISIS was the increase of airstrikes in Iraq and Syria which were praised for stopping ISIS from advancing in the region and damaging its warfighting capabilities".

Furthermore, it is known that US special forces were deployed to aid and train SDF forces in Northern Syria which were instrumental in retaking lost land from ISIS. This was capped off by the defeat of ISIS in their de facto capital city, Raqqa. At first glance, it can be seen that these strategies were somewhat successful. However, at a closer glance, these strategies were only successful in weakening ISIS and not confronting the root causes of the problem. This was proven to be a problem when the Turkish invasion of Northern Syria put

the defeat of ISIS into question. Human Rights Watch Report 2024 entitled "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon" "Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria".

Now with a severely weakened SDF, ISIS has the opportunity to regain lost land as US forces deserted an SDF left to defend itself. US policies with regard to proxy conflicts between the Assad regime allies and rebel groups were often contradictory and did more harm than good. A famous example of this was US involvement in the rebel-held southern city of Daraa. In a Middle East Report N°187 on 21 June 2018 claims that " In 2017, Daraa was declared a "de-escalation zone" in a deal brokered by the US, Jordan, and Russia. However, in 2018, the US withdrew support for the rebel groups, leaving the militias with no choice but to reconcile with the Assad regime". This was a clear violation of the "de-escalation zone" agreement and it resulted in the regime gaining more territory and dealing another blow to the opposition.

4.3 Lessons Learned

Another key result of the Syrian conflict was the need for the US to re-evaluate strategy and assess its effectiveness. There are a number of operational and tactical lessons that the US should take from this, some of which stem from mistakes and other shortcomings. Operational lessons would be assessing the effectiveness of partnered operations. Oystein et al (2023) assume that "When the US began to arm the rebels, it did so through the CIA. This created an environment where different groups were competing for influence from the US and led to conflicting goals. At times the CIA fought the Pentagon-backed YPG, which was also problematic". (p.13) This illustrates the haphazard manner in which the US went about its Syria policy. The biggest problem, however, was the support for groups with limited capacity. This was to prevent mission creep, but in reality, hampered the chances of success for these groups. This type of support was typified in the failed train and equip program which sought to vet rebel troops, pull them out of the theatre and then train them abroad before inserting them back into Syria. The plan was overly ambitious and the DOD ended up spending half a

billion dollars to train only 150 soldiers. Vera et al (2020) confirms that "When these soldiers went back into Syria, many were ridiculed by locals and quickly defeated by ISIS. This was a far cry from the original plan which was to train moderate rebel forces to fight both Assad and Islamist militants".

Conclusion

This chapter found that a number of interrelated circumstances has resulted in a complicated and changing narrative about US participation in Syria. To counter the rise of ISIS, stop chemical weapons use, maintain regional stability and hedge against Iranian influence, USA has adopted a multipronged strategy. These have taken various forms such as limited force deployments, air strikes and support for opposition organizations.

However, the effectiveness and long-term consequences of these activities remains to be seen. The Syrian civil war is still ongoing leading to an international humanitarian crisis and destabilizing the region even though some argue that American involvement helped end ISIS. The situation is further complicated by other powerful countries like Iran and Russia being involved.

Looking ahead, it is unclear what direction American involvement may take. With a huge human toll and no way to win clearly, U.S involvement might be cut back on.

General Conclusion

This study highlighted the impact of The US foreign policy in the Middle East specifically in Syria. It is a descriptive and historical dissertation concluded that since the end of the Second World War, the United States has sought to gain and maintain a superpower position in the Middle East. The American's main aims were to maintain its access to the most important world energy resources, support its close ally Israel, and prevent the rise of other powers or influences that could negatively affect its interests in the region. The first chapter provided a broad insight into the different figures of the United States' intervention in the Middle East. It described that the history of the United States' foreign policy towards the region was marked by contradictions and characterized by duplicity.

On the one hand, the United States claims freedom and democracy for Middle East countries. On the other hand, it advances its interests and protects and supports Israel. The American role in the area throughout the second half of the twentieth century is presented through adopting several strategies of intervention, such as political and logistic support, establishing military bases to interfere in such countries, financial and economic support, causing crises, encouraging ethnic minorities, proxy warfare and military intervention. Therefore, the United States favours autocratic regimes at the expense of democratic groups if the latter are seen as threatening in any way to the United States' interests and objectives. The United States military intervention in the Arab world has created fragile states, caused enormous loss of life, and turned many countries in the Middle East into a safe-haven for terrorist groups, especially in Syria.

The second chapter set out the double standard of the values and principles of the United States and the mechanism of its implications in foreign policy towards the events of the Arab Spring. The Syrian case was the most complicated war between the wars that were launched in the Middle East and North Africa under the so-called Arab Spring. The American

administration's hesitant reaction towards the violent crackdown on protesters in Syria led to the escalation of the crisis and the intervention of different actors in the Syrian civil war. It has consistently said Al-Assad has lost his legitimacy. However, no action has been taken against him in this regard and the United States' only influence and intervention in Syria has been fixated on either the fight against the ISS or the conflict regarding the use of chemical weapons. Syria would never matter as much to the United States as it did to Russia and Iran. Both countries committed extensive resources and intervened directly to support the Syrian regime. In contrast, the United States was not willing to do as much to unseat the regime. Moreover, Americans fear catastrophic success, the fall of the Assad regime might bring Islamic extremists to power. Therefore, the US did not intervene directly against the Assad government.

Furthermore, the dissertation explained the most important reasons for the US intervention in Syria and its forms. The intervention outwardly glorifies democracy and the fight against tyranny, but inwardly it is considered economic. This is evident in the preservation of energy sources such as oil and gas and the facilitation of their passage to allies such as Turkey and Israel. America is always keen to strengthen and support these allies in order to monitor and control the region politically and diplomatically.

Nevertheless, the US intervention in the Syrian civil war has not ended the conflict between the people, protected them from chemical weapons, fought jihadists such as ISIS, or ended the refugee file. Between the lines, it aims to destabilize and weaken the region. The US is entrenched in the region and is creating other secondary conflicts on the Syrian borders. This includes the issue of the Kurdish state and supporting the opposition of Bashar al-Assad, who symbolizes Iran and Russia, the eternal enemy of America. That led to the reappearance of bipolarity and renewed the file of the Cold War in the interface. That program as well, is embodied in the conflicts between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The American intervention included combat air strikes, drone attacks and the deployment of a limited number of troops, embedded within the main US proxy, the SDF. The latter spearheaded the American war against the self-declared Caliphate of ISIL, whereas the FSA was abandoned due to its misalignment with American objectives in Syria.

Finally, America's entry into the Syrian affair was not only about protecting its economic interests. It was also about weakening Iran politically, economically and militarily. Hence, it is considered the first threat to Israel. It was deeply about limiting its expansion and stopping its nuclear production and uranium enrichment. Most importantly, this intervention was about removing the fear and hesitation of the Gulf states from confronting Iran. It was about fighting jihadists and Islamists and their fear of standing against America and Europe, as the Egyptian case is the best example which interprets their horror of any Islamist renaissance after their failure against the Islamic revolution in Iran in the seventies of the last century.

All things considered; the present dissertation argued that there has been a shift in American foreign policy from direct military intervention towards proxy-based warfare in the last decades. Future studies could prolifically explore this strategy further by shedding light on the shadowy side of non-state actors' accountability and unfolding their potential role as an internal destabilizing factor of states.

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الملخص:

إن السياسة الخارجية لدولة ما هي تعبير عن مصالحها، فلا صداقة ولا عداوة دائمة، بل هناك مصالح دائمة، وللولايات المتحدة الأمريكية مصالح كثيرة في الشرق الأوسط عموماً وفي سوريا على وجه التحديد والتي تظهر من خلال تدخلاتها المختلفة. هدف هذا البحث هو استكشاف أثر هذه التدخلات على الشرق الأوسط، مع أخذ الحرب الأهلية السورية كعينة. وقد استخدمت الدراسة الحالية منهجاً تاريخياً وصفيّاً وتحليلياً يقيّم تاريخياً ويقدم تفسيراً دقيقاً وموضوعياً وديناميكياً للتدخل الأمريكي. وخلصت نتائج المذكرة إلى أن التدخل الأمريكي السري والعلني على حد سواء ترك سوريا مدمرة ومنهكة. كما أن التحول نحو الاعتماد على الفاعلين المحليين والوكلاء والحلفاء بدلاً من نشر قوات كبيرة جعل من السهل على الولايات المتحدة ضرب عصفورين بحجر واحد؛ إذ استطاعت توفير الحماية لمصالحها إلى جانب تقليل الخسائر البشرية في صفوف قواتها في المنطقة، ناهيك عن تجنب الاتهامات بالتورط الكبير. لقد مكنت الحرب الأهلية في سوريا الولايات المتحدة من تحقيق أهدافها العلنية والسرية في آن واحد، متخذة من هذه الحرب سبباً واحداً كبيراً يندرج تحت عنوان "الحرب ضد الإرهاب" لإنهاء أو على الأقل تقليل تهديدات تنظيم داعش في الشرق الأوسط.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية، سوريا، التدخل، التأثير، الإرهاب