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Conflict in Syria: An Overview

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Abstract:

The cruel conflict continues in Syria, millions of people continue to be in need. Hundreds of thousands have been killed in the conflict between the Assad regime, extremist groups and moderate opposition groups. As the conflict starts to gain a character of a civil war, according to experts on the Middle Eastern region, the international community has to be very careful in handling the situation. It may pose a threat not only to the shaky stability in the Middle East, with extremism involved, it may likely become a serious threat to the international security. If this crisis continues uncontrolled, it could escalate into World War III. This paper sets out to explain the Syrian crisis and analyze it in relation to how it affects the global citizenry. It will also explain some underlying issues and discuss the best possible solutions to address it.

Keywords: Syria Conflict, Civil War, International, Middle East, Suo Moto



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Introduction

The Syria crisis has been described as 'the greatest humanitarian crisis in a generation'. The conflict began in 2011 and spread to engulf much of the country in a protracted, complex, and multi-sided war, it has been characterized as extreme brutality. The conflict is now more than just a battle between those for or against Mr. Assad. It has acquired sectarian overtones, pitching the country's Sunni majority against the president's Shia Alawite sect, and drawn in regional and world powers. The rise of the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) has added a further dimension. To demonstrate the atrocities done by the pro-Assad regime graphic videos of the conflict have been uploaded on YouTube by the rebels in Syria. ISIS uses Twitter for recruiting new members and pushing their ideology and political agenda for the whole world. Much of Syria's infrastructure, economy, and national wealth has been entirely obliterated, and More than 400,000 have died because of the Syrian conflict since 2011, according to the World Bank, and approx. million seeking refuge abroad and over 6 million displaced internally, according to UN agencies. Several countries and groups are involved each with its own agenda while collectively making the situation extremely complex. Key supporters of Syria's administration include Russia and Iran, while the U.S., Turkey and Saudi Arabia all back government rebels.

History

Modern Syria was established as a French mandate in 1920. After Syria declared independence in 1946, it struggled for the next two decades under the political instability. Series of revolutions ended in 1963 when the Baath party took control over Syria. In 1970, the minister of defense General Hafez al- Assad seized power and declared himself prime minister and then president in 1971. He established himself as an authoritarian to rule over Syria for the next 30 years. In consolidating power, he reinvented the face of Syrian politics and the Baath party, dividing the state apparatus between different communities and centering power about him and family.

The regime violently suppressed an armed uprising led by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982 with tens of thousands of dead. It was not only a result of religious differences between the Alawite regime and the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, but also the level of repression imposed by the Assad regime on the opposition. Opposition activities have been made impossible and faced strict responses by the regime since then (until 2011).

2011

Antigovernment protests broke out in Syria in March 2011 in the southern city of Deraa. The government used high forces to crush the protesters. Opposition

supporters eventually began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas. In August, President Obama called on Syrian President Bashar al Asad to step down. In November, Al Quaeda members affiliated Islamic state of Iraq form the nusra front in Syria. **2012**

Violence increased and the country inclined into civil war, as rebel brigades were formed to fight government forces for control of cities, towns and the countryside. In March regime forces retook the control of the third city Homs, which had fallen into the hands of the rebels. It carried out other operations, notably in the central city of Hama, after massive anti-regime protests. On other side U.S began to provide non-lethal aid to Syrian rebels under emergency and contingency authorities. President Obama described use of chemical weapons as a red line.

2013

Crude barrel bombs on rebel zones were released by the government helicopters and planes. Turn of events took place when ISI leaders Abu Bakr al Baghdadi announced the merger of ISI and the nusra front into the Islamic state of Iraq and Al sham. While repercussions were dreadful in August 2013, Sarin gas attack killed more than 1,400 people with chemical weapons in militant-held districts near Damascus. 2014

The aggressions between militants of the Islamic State (IS) of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and rebel groups turned into an open war in the north. At the same time ISIS captured Raqqah, and changed its name to Islamic state (IS). Whereas, militant offensives allowed Damascus to justify its fight as a battle against 'terrorism'.

2015

In September 2015 Russia launched air strikes in support of Assad's troops, while remaining on the back foot. Falling the month of October U.S in revert modified Syrian T&E program to focus on equipping existing units which led to the formation of Syrian democratic forces (SDF). For this merger Kurdish YPG fighters came together with other groups, as a part of counter IS campaign, and became a key U.S. partner.

2016

Turkey started operations in northern Syria against IS and YPG force. Russian firepower helps turn the tables for the regime, which begins to retake rebel-held territory, including second city Aleppo in December 2016.

2017

Sarin gas attack on khan sheikhoun killed 80-100. In response firing were done by U.S. Tomanhawk missiles in horns area at AlShayrat airfield. Following to the event Russia, Iran and Turkey announced formation of de-escalation area in Syria. Whereas,



U.S, Russia and Jordan established ceasefire area in southwest Syria.

International Suo Moto:

Russia

Russia is one of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most important allies, simultaneously the survival of the Assad's regime is critical to Russian in order to maintain their own interests. It has blocked resolutions critical to President Assad at the UN Security Council and has continued to supply weapons to the Syrian military despite international criticism.

Iran

Syria is an essential buffer zone for Iran. The fall of Assad and the rise of a Sunni regime would be a strategic nightmare for them. Hezbollah believe Syria is the main transit point for Iranian, as it works as a channel for weapons shipments to the Lebanese Shia Islamist movement. Iran is also believed to have been influential in Hezbollah's decision to send fighters to western Syria to assist pro-Assad forces. Iran also believes in peaceful transition and proposed that it would culminate in free, multi-party elections. After years it first spoke of peace in Syria when world powers met in Vienna.

Israel

Iran's gain in Syria is very much Israel's loss. Israel is determined to disrupt Iranian lines of communication, control and supply to Hezbollah and keep Iranian-run militias well back from the line of separation at the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. It prefers that U.S and Russia should restrain the Iranians, but if necessary Israel is likely to drop in to southern Syria to confront the Iranians and create a buffer zone. It also want to draw in U.S on its side in a wider role than counterproliferation and counter-terrorism.

United States

US supports Syria's main opposition alliance, the National Coalition, and provides limited military assistance to "moderate" rebels. As part of an international coalition US has been conducting air strikes on IS and against the jihadist group. But it has avoided attacks that might benefit Mr. Assad's forces or intervening in battles between them and the rebels. **Turkev**

The Turkish government has been a loyal opponent of Mr. Assad since the start of the uprising in Syria. Turkey is a key supporter of the Syrian opposition and has faced the burden of hosting almost two million refugees. But its policy of allowing rebel fighters, arms shipments and refugees to pass through its territory has been broken by foreign jihadists wanting to join IS. **Conclusion**

We have seen that Syria has gone through immense changes on a social, political and cultural level since Hafez al-Assad became president in 1970. From the analysis of available study, it can be concluded that the conflict in Syria, began with anti-government protests, escalating into full-scale civil war, and has transformed Syrian region. Much of the country lies in ruins, thousands have been killed and two thirds of the population has been displaced, half outside the country. Large numbers of Syrians have pursued refuge in neighboring countries, putting host countries and communities under huge strain, and seriously threatening the stability of some neighboring states. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the EU and other international organizations convincingly demonstrate that the high frequency of violent conflicts has had significant consequences for the development of the Middle East region. Since seven years Arab uprising has upset livelihood and ecosocial condition of the neighboring country hugely impacting Yemen, Syria, and Libya. The greater and lasting challenge is to rebuild Syria's human capital and social consistency. Reconstructing damaged physical infrastructure will require substantial international support and prioritization. To rebuild the lives of internally displaced people considerable resources will be needed. Also in order to retain the humanity and to normalize the condition middling of U.N seems apt in this situation



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