



FATIH SULTAN MEHMET INTERNATIONAL
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

UNSC

STUDY GUIDE



fsmimun.com

DECODING SYRIAN CIVIL WAR'S PROXY DYNAMICS
AND UNVEILING GLOBAL INFLUENCES



USG

RAWIA MUSA



CHAIR

TALHA GÖNÜL



CO-CHAIR

HISHAM HABIB
ABDULAZIZ

UNSC

Decoding Syrian Civil War's Proxy Dynamics, And Unveiling Global Influences

Table of Contents

Letter from Secretary General	3
Letter from Under Secretary General	4
Introduction to the United Nations Security Council.....	5
The Proxy War	6
The Civil War	7
1. The Syrian Civil War	8
1.1. The Overview of The Syrian Civil War	8
1.2. Course of Events.....	9
1.3. The Background of The Civil War	10
1.4. Current Status	11
1.5. Weaponry, Warfare, and Sectarian Dynamics in the Syrian Civil War	12
1.6. Syrian Refugee Crisis and Internally Displaced Persons	13
1.7. Casualties Caused by The Syrian Civil War	14
1.8. Human Rights of Syrian Civilians	15
1.9. Crime Wave	16
1.10. Epidemics	16
1.11. Humanitarian Aid	17
1.12. Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview of Syria.....	17
2. Belligerents and Foreign Involvement in The Syrian Civil War.....	19
Country Matrix.....	20
References and Further Reading.....	21

Letter from Secretary General

Dear participants,

With sincere excitement, we extend our warmest welcome to each and every one of you to the 4th session of Fatih Sultan Mehmet International Model United Nations. We are honored to welcome such a distinguished assembly of aspiring pioneers and committed change-makers. The foundation of FSMIMUN rests upon the words of Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror, who said, in order to discover the limits of possibility, you must attempt the impossible.

Inspired by these words, we have embarked on a journey, determined to surpass the limit of possibility. In a world dominated by double standards and injustice, a world in which one's race is a determining factor of their fate, we believe that change begins with a dream, which then solidifies into a conviction. It is from this conviction that the fountain of initiative springs, gradually intensifying until it becomes a gushing current of action that serves as driving force of positive change in our world.

This is precisely our purpose in organizing our conference. FSMIMUN'24 is not a conference to be reduced to a four-day time span, nor is it one to be limited by the borders of city nor country. Unbounded by temporal or spatial constraints, FSMIMUN'24 represents a milestone on our journey of breaking barriers and sparking positive change.

Hailing from all over the world, our diverse organization team has the great honor of sharing this noble journey with our esteemed participants. With shoulders side by side and hearts filled with conviction, let's tread this path, transforming dreams into faith and ideas into actions.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the conference.

Yours sincerely,

Yehya Darwish

Letter from Under Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to FSMIMUN'24! I am Rawia Musa, your Under Secretary-General for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It is an honor to address you all as we commence this journey together.

I commend each of you for your commitment to addressing conflicts and fostering peace. The importance of mediation and peacebuilding cannot be overstated, and I trust in your abilities to contribute meaningful solutions to this ongoing challenge. The history of this region has been marked by conflict, particularly evident in the proxy war dynamics of the Syrian civil war, and it is crucial that we, as the youth of our time, confront and resolve these issues responsibly.

Throughout our time together on this committee, I am confident that we will glean valuable insights and lessons. Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email.

Warm regards,

Rawia Musa

Introduction to the United Nations Security Council

Organization

Established on January 17, 1946, at Church House, Westminster, London, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been a pivotal institution in maintaining global peace and security. While its first session convened in London, the Security Council now operates primarily from the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Over the years, it has convened in various cities worldwide, including Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1972, Panama City, Panama, and Geneva, Switzerland, in 1990. A representative from each member state is required to be present at the UN Headquarters, ensuring the Council can convene promptly when needed.

Mandate

As outlined in the United Nations Charter, the Security Council holds the primary responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security. Its mandate extends to addressing threats to peace promptly. The Charter outlines the four main purposes of the UN, including maintaining peace and security, fostering friendly relations among nations, cooperating to solve international issues while upholding human rights, and serving as a platform to coordinate actions among nations. Member states commit to abide by the decisions made by the Security Council, which holds the authority to issue binding resolutions.

Duties

Upon receiving a complaint regarding a threat to peace, the Council's initial approach typically involves recommending peaceful resolutions between involved parties. This may include setting principles for agreements, conducting investigations, or appointing mediators. In cases where disputes escalate to hostilities, the Council prioritizes ending conflicts swiftly. It may deploy ceasefire directives, dispatch peacekeeping forces, or authorize military actions as necessary. The Council also has the authority to impose enforcement measures such as economic sanctions, arms embargoes, or diplomatic penalties to hold responsible parties accountable while minimizing adverse impacts on innocent populations and economies.

Conclusion

The United Nations Security Council stands as a cornerstone in the global effort to maintain peace and security. Through its authority and mechanisms outlined in the UN Charter, the Council addresses threats, mediates conflicts, and enforces resolutions to uphold the principles of the international community.

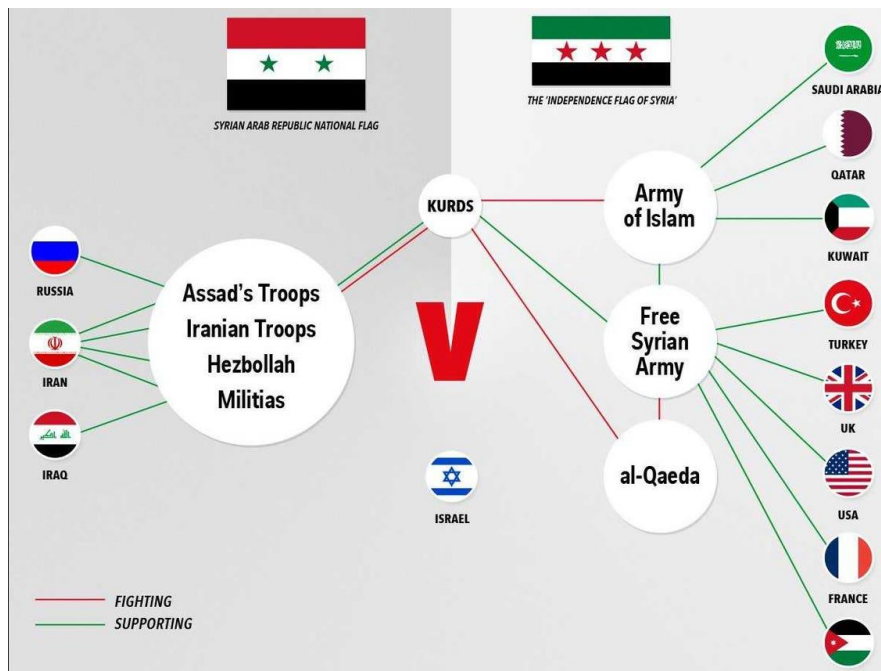
The Proxy War

A proxy war is characterized as an armed conflict between two opposing parties, wherein at least one party is a non-state actor receiving support from an external power, designating the non-state actor as the proxy. While both parties involved may act as proxies, a common scenario involves one party being a nation-state government or a conventional force. The non-state actors, acting on behalf of a nation-state sponsor not directly engaged in hostilities, receive support in various forms such as funding, military training, arms, or other material assistance, thereby sustaining their war effort. The establishment of a direct and enduring relationship between external actors (sponsors) and their non-state clients is crucial for the conflict to be classified as a proxy war.

Historically, during classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, external parties often introduced non-state proxies into internal conflicts, aligning with belligerents to gain influence and further their regional interests. These proxies, typically irregular armies, served as instruments to achieve the goals of their sponsors in contested regions. Examples include the Byzantine Empire using proxy warfare for foreign policy by fostering intrigue among rivals and supporting them in ensuing conflicts. France and England during the Hundred Years' War and the Ottoman Empire's use of Barbary pirates are additional instances of proxy warfare.

The term "proxy war" holds a significant place in academic research on international relations, indicating its frequent application. Recent failures in the implementations of soft and hard power have led to an increased reliance on proxy wars. In the early twentieth century, proxy wars evolved into states sponsoring non-state proxies as fifth columns, undermining adversarial powers in various forms, such as supporting factions in civil wars, terrorists, national-liberation movements, insurgent groups, or aiding national revolts against foreign occupation. An example is the British government organizing the Arab Revolt during the First World War to undermine the Ottoman Empire.

During the Cold War, fears of a nuclear holocaust in a conventional conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union motivated proxy warfare. The Soviet Union found supporting parties antagonistic to the U.S. as a cost-effective way to combat NATO's influence without direct military engagement. The American practice of arming insurgent forces, exemplified by supplying the mujahideen during the Soviet–Afghan War, was influenced by public war-weariness and skepticism.



Proxy wars have significant impacts, as seen in conflicts like the Vietnam War's Operation Rolling Thunder, the Soviet–Afghan War contributing to the Soviet Union's collapse, and the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East between Saudi Arabia and Iran, resulting in substantial

casualties to infrastructure. External support in armed conflicts can increase conflict scale, length, and intensity, hindering diplomatic negotiations, and causing greater infrastructure damage.

The Civil War

A civil war is a conflict between organized groups within the same state, driven by various motives such as gaining control, achieving independence, or changing government policies. Modern civil wars often involve external intervention, leading to high-intensity, organized, and large-scale conflicts with significant casualties and resource consumption. Since World War II, civil wars have increased in duration, resulting in over 25 million deaths and widespread displacement.

Formal classifications of civil wars involve factors like the presence of organized military forces, recognition by the de jure government or international bodies, and adherence to certain conditions outlined by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The causes of civil wars are explained through three main theories: greed-based (economic interests), grievance-based (socioeconomic or political injustice), and opportunity-based (factors facilitating violent



mobilization). Scholars often debate whether conflicts are driven by identity issues or economic interests. Studies suggest that economic and structural factors, such as dependence on primary commodities, diaspora funding, education, and income levels, play significant roles.

Criticism arises against the "greed versus grievance" theory, with some arguing for a more complex understanding of conflict causes. Other factors influencing civil wars include ethnic dominance, political instability, terrain characteristics, population size, and governance issues. Commitment problems, lack of political accountability, and military advantages are identified as additional contributors to the persistence of civil wars.

1. The Syrian Civil War

1.1. The Overview of The Syrian Civil War

The Syrian Civil War also referred to as the Syrian conflict, represents an ongoing and intricate multi-sided conflict within Syria that encompasses numerous state-sponsored and non-state entities. Originating in March 2011, the conflict finds its roots in widespread discontent with the rule of Bashar al-Assad, which manifested through extensive protests and pro-democracy rallies across the nation, aligning with the broader wave of Arab Spring protests in the region.

The initial peaceful demonstrations faced brutal government crackdowns, characterized by violent measures ordered by Bashar al-Assad. The resultant tens of thousands of deaths and detentions marked a critical juncture as the situation evolved from pro-democracy movements into a full-fledged civil war by 2012. Resistance militias emerged across the country, introducing a complex and multifaceted dimension to the conflict.

As the conflict deepened, various armed rebel groups, including the Free Syrian Army, materialized in response to prolonged government crackdowns. By mid-2012, the crisis had transformed into a comprehensive civil war, with rebel forces gaining support from NATO and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, while government forces received backing from Iran and Russia.

The dynamics of the conflict saw rebel forces achieving significant territorial gains, capturing regional capitals like Raqqa in



2013 and Idlib in 2015. However, in a pivotal move in September 2015, Russia intervened militarily in support of the Syrian government, decisively influencing the balance of power. By late 2018, government forces had reclaimed all rebel strongholds, except for portions of the Idlib region.

Against the backdrop of the Syrian Civil War, the emergence of the Islamic State group in 2014 added a layer of complexity to the conflict. The group seized control of extensive areas in Eastern Syria and Western Iraq, prompting the U.S.-led coalition, known as the CJTF, to initiate an aerial bombing campaign against it. The coalition concurrently provided ground support to the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces, leading to the territorial defeat of the Islamic State by late 2017, culminating in the Battle of Raqqa.

Significantly, in August 2016, Turkey launched a multi-faceted invasion of northern Syria, responding to the establishment of Rojava, and engaging in conflicts against both the Islamic State and government forces. Since the March 2020 Idlib ceasefire, frontline hostilities have largely subsided, with the conflict marked by sporadic skirmishes. This overview encapsulates the intricate and ever-evolving nature of the Syrian Civil War, providing insights into its origins, pivotal moments, and the involvement of diverse regional and global actors.

1.2. Course of Events

The ongoing Syrian Civil War involves a multitude of factions vying for control, with the Syrian Arab Armed Forces and its allies supporting the Syrian Arab Republic and the Assad government. In opposition, the Syrian Interim Government, a coalition of pro-democratic and nationalist groups, including the Syrian National Army and allied Free Syrian militias, stands against them. Other factions, such as the Syrian Salvation Government backed by a Sunni militia coalition led by Tahrir al-Sham, and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria with its military force, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), contribute to the intricate dynamics. Jihadist organizations, including Hurras al-Din and the Islamic State (IS), further complicate the situation.

The conflict has drawn in several foreign countries, such as Iran, Russia, Turkey, and the United States, intensifying the overall situation. Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah support the Syrian Arab Republic militarily, while the U.S.-led international coalition focuses on combating the Islamic State. Turkey has been involved since 2016, occupying parts of northern Syria, engaging in conflicts with various factions, and supporting the Syrian National Army (SNA). The conflict has also spilled over into Lebanon, involved Israeli interventions against Hezbollah and Iranian forces in western Syria, and featured Israel's official stance of neutrality.

Despite a peak in violence from 2012–2017, the crisis persisted into 2020, with the Syrian government consolidating control over a significant portion of the country. While frontline fighting had mostly subsided by 2023, occasional flare-ups occurred in northwestern Syria, and large-scale protests emerged nationwide in response to autocratic policies and economic challenges, reminiscent of the 2011 revolution.

The toll of the war has been devastating, with an estimated 470,000–610,000 violent deaths, marking it as one of the deadliest conflicts of the 21st century. Multiple parties involved, including the Assad government, IS, opposition groups, Iran, Russia, Turkey, and the U.S.-led coalition, have faced accusations of severe human rights violations and massacres from international organizations. The conflict has triggered a significant refugee crisis, with millions seeking refuge in neighboring countries and beyond. Despite various peace initiatives, including the March 2017 Geneva peace talks led by the United Nations, the persistent fighting highlights the formidable challenges in achieving a lasting resolution to the Syrian Civil War.

1.3. The Background of The Civil War

The roots of the Syrian Civil War can be traced back to the non-religious Ba'ath Syrian Regional Branch government, which came into power through a coup d'état in 1963. Following various coups and leadership changes, General Hafez al-Assad declared himself President in 1971, marking the beginning of a pervasive personality cult surrounding the Assad dynasty. This era was characterized by the systematic suppression of civil and political freedoms, dominating all aspects of daily life.

The authority in Ba'athist Syria revolved around Alawite loyalist clans, the Ba'ath party, and the armed forces, bound by unwavering allegiance to the Assad dynasty. This one-party state persisted until the first multi-party election in 2012. Hafez al-Assad introduced a new constitution in 1973, empowering the Arab Socialist Baath Party to lead the state and society, exerting control over civilians, legal trade unions, and educational curricula. The constitution eliminated Islam as the state religion, provoking public outrage and demonstrations, notably led by the Muslim Brotherhood.

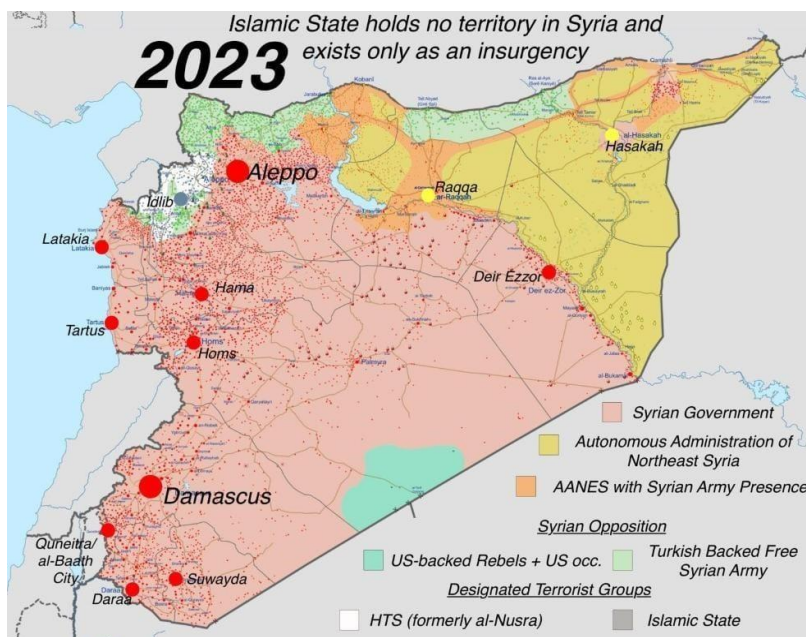
From 1976 to 1982, the Assad regime forcefully quelled Islamic revolts. The Ba'ath party strategically portrayed Assad as the guiding father figure, advocating dynastic rule. Slogans like "Assad or we burn the country" became integral. Hafez governed with an iron fist, utilizing censorship, mass murders, forced deportations, and torture to suppress dissent. His death in 2000 led to his son, Bashar al-Assad, succeeding him.

Initially seen as a potential reformist, Bashar failed to fulfill promises and, instead, cracked down on civil society groups and political reformists. Bashar contends that all opposition forces are Islamists

seeking to dismantle his secular leadership, dismissing the existence of a 'moderate opposition.' This stance, coupled with allegations of violence and human rights abuses, contributes to the ongoing complexity and challenges of the Syrian Civil War.

1.4. Current Status

In October 2019, a significant development occurred in the Syrian Civil War as Kurdish leaders in Rojava, a Syrian region, announced a substantial agreement with the Assad government. This agreement followed the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria and aimed to seek Syria's support in countering Turkish forces hostile to Kurds.



An influential NGO analyzed the situation, noting that after twelve years of the devastating civil war, the conflict seemed to have reached a frozen state.

While around 30% of the country remained under opposition control, intense fighting had largely ceased, and there was a noticeable regional shift toward normalizing relations with the

Assad regime.

The conflict, renowned as one of the most complex globally, involved various international and regional powers, opposition groups, proxies, local militias, and extremist factions, resulting in extensive suffering for the Syrian population. Nearly half a million lives were lost, 12 million people were displaced, and widespread poverty and hunger persisted. Despite attempts to broker a political settlement, the Assad regime remained firmly in control.

As of 2023, the civil war had significantly calmed, reaching a stalemate. The once-dominant brutality had given way to an uneasy equilibrium. Hopes for a regime change had diminished, peace talks proved unproductive, and some regional governments reconsidered their opposition to engaging with Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. The government had reclaimed control over most of the country, consolidating Assad's hold on power.

1.5. Weaponry, Warfare, and Sectarian Dynamics in the Syrian Civil War

Chemical Weapons

The Syrian Civil War has witnessed the use of chemical weapons, including sarin, mustard agent, and chlorine gas. The 2013 Ghouta chemical attack prompted international reaction, and subsequent investigations attributed 98% of chemical attacks to the Assad regime. The OPCW's findings in 2020 and 2021 implicated the Syrian Air Force in multiple chemical attacks, leading to Syria's suspension from the OPCW.

Cluster Bombs

Syria, not a party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, reportedly began using cluster bombs in September 2012. The Syrian Army's use of these banned weapons has drawn criticism from human rights organizations, causing civilian casualties and leaving unexploded bomblets.

Thermobaric Weapons

Russian thermobaric weapons, also known as "fuel-air bombs," were employed by the Syrian government. These devastating weapons, such as the TOS-1 Buratino rocket launcher, targeted urban areas. The Syrian Air Force also faced accusations of using thermobaric bombs against rebel-held territories, further intensifying the conflict.

Anti-tank Missiles

Various anti-tank missiles, including Russia's 9M133 Kornet and U.S.-made BGM-71 TOW, played a significant role. Russia supplied anti-tank missiles to the Syrian government, while the U.S. provided rebels with TOW missiles, contributing to the complex warfare dynamics.

Ballistic Missiles

Iran used Zolfaghar ballistic missiles in June 2017 against ISIL targets in eastern Syria, marking the first mid-range missile use by Iran in three decades. These missiles traveled 650–700 kilometers, impacting the conflict dynamics.

War Crimes

In 2022, a German court sentenced Anwar Raslan, a high-ranking official of Bashar al-Assad's regime, to life imprisonment for complicity in murder, sexual assault, and torture. This unprecedented trial under "universal jurisdiction" in Germany showcased a commitment to accountability for crimes committed during the Syrian war.

Sectarian Dynamics

The Syrian conflict has exhibited deep sectarian divisions, with the Alawite minority, associated with the Assad regime, facing threats from predominantly Sunni rebel groups. Alawite casualties have been substantial, reflecting the intense sectarian nature of the conflict. Christians and Druze communities also experienced persecution and division, adding to the complexity of the Syrian civil war. Sectarian tensions have been exacerbated by the involvement of militias and non-Syrian Shia forces, leading to human rights abuses and sectarian massacres.

1.6. Syrian Refugee Crisis and Internally Displaced Persons

Refugees

In 2015, the number of Syrian refugees reached 3.8 million, with around 667,000 seeking refuge in Lebanon, 1.7 million in Turkey, and others in Jordan and Iraq. The European Union reported 13.5 million refugees in need of assistance in Syria as of September 2016. By 2022, the refugee count surpassed 5.6 million, with over 3.7 million in Turkey, facing blame for economic challenges, increased fees, and targeted attacks.

Return of Refugees

The post-war challenge includes repatriating millions of refugees. The Syrian government's "law 10" raised concerns as it could strip refugees of property. Fears of negative consequences, such as forced conscription or prison, upon return have been expressed. Additionally, the government's actions under an anti-terrorism law, including property seizures, have faced criticism.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Violence in Syria has internally displaced 6.2 million persons as of 2022, including 2.5 million children. In 2015, an estimated 10.9 million Syrians, nearly half the population, were displaced. Ongoing crises in northwest Syria forced 6,500 children to flee every day in January 2020. The plight of boys held hostage by ISIS in northeastern Syria has drawn attention, highlighting the challenges faced by children abandoned by their home countries.



Youth in Detention

As of January 2022, hundreds of boys are held hostage by ISIS, facing inadequate conditions and limited access to food and medical attention in detention facilities. The situation raises humanitarian concerns for their well-being and the challenges associated with reintegration into society.

Foreign Fighters and Families

Approximately 40,000 foreigners, including children, traveled to Syria to join or work for ISIS. When ISIS lost control, surviving women and young children were detained in camps. Boys, some as young as 10, were imprisoned, facing overcrowded conditions. At the age of 18, they are transferred to regular prison populations, sharing beds with wounded ISIS members.

1.7. Casualties Caused by The Syrian Civil War

Overview

The Syrian Civil War, spanning from March 2011 to the present, has inflicted a devastating toll on the country's population. Accurate casualty figures are challenging to determine, given the complex nature of the conflict and discrepancies in reporting. This account provides a snapshot of the human cost, acknowledging the staggering impact on civilians, combatants, and children.

Early Years:

- By January 2013, the United Nations reported 60,000 deaths, later revised to 80,000 by May 2013.
- The death toll reached 92,901 by April 2013, with estimates suggesting it could surpass 100,000.
- Specific areas, notably Homs, bore a disproportionate share of casualties, with up to a third of all deaths occurring in this city.

Combatant Deaths:

- Determining the number of "armed combatants" posed challenges, with at least half of confirmed deaths estimated as combatants from both sides.
- UNICEF reported over 500 children were killed by February 2012, contested by the Syrian government.
- Opposition sources claimed over 5,000 children were killed by March 2013.

Evolution of the Conflict:

- A U.N. study in August 2014 cited 191,369 deaths, prompting concerns about the accuracy of statistics.

- A Syrian Centre for Policy Research estimate in February 2016 indicated 470,000 deaths and 1.9 million wounded, affecting 11.5% of the entire population.
- A 2018 report mentioned 82,000 forcibly disappeared victims and 14,000 confirmed deaths due to torture, as per the pro-opposition SNHR.

Impact on Civilians:

- Various monitors attributed over 90% of civilian casualties to the Syrian Armed Forces and pro-Assad forces.
- Attacks on civilian populations, such as the 2017 bus convoy bombing and the 2020 rocket attack on a school in Idlib, exemplify the grim toll on innocent lives.
- UNICEF's warning in January 2020 highlighted escalating violence affecting over 500 children in the first three quarters of 2019.

Ongoing Tragedies:

- As of January 2020, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported over 380,000 deaths, encompassing civilians, government soldiers, militia members, and foreign troops.
- Airstrikes by Russian forces in Idlib in January 2020 resulted in civilian casualties, including children.
- Israeli raids in June 2020 claimed seven fighters, with ongoing violence targeting civilians and communities.
- The start of 2022 witnessed continued violence, with children being among the victims in northwest Syria.

1.8. Human Rights of Syrian Civilians

The Syrian conflict, ongoing since 2011, has been plagued by severe human rights abuses, political repression, and war crimes committed by various parties involved. Both the Syrian government and rebel forces face accusations of egregious actions, with international condemnation directed particularly at the Syrian government.

Reports have surfaced, detailing evidence of systematic killing and torture of detainees, described as some of the most significant war crimes of the 21st century. Siege warfare has been associated with severe human rights violations, including blocking humanitarian aid, confiscating food, cutting off water supplies, and targeting farmers.

ISIS forces have faced criticism for public executions, killing captives, amputations, lashings, and persecution of gay and bisexual men, with accusations of crimes against humanity.

Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions have been pervasive, with suggestions that the Syrian government forcibly disappeared over 65,000 people, leading to at least 60,000 deaths through torture or poor conditions in government prisons.

Mass murders, amounting to a "policy of deliberate extermination," have been attributed to the Syrian government, notably at the Saydnaya military prison. Concerns have been raised regarding the conduct of US-led coalition airstrikes, with the UN suggesting potential war crimes due to insufficient precautions.

In late 2019, reports emerged of thousands of women and children being kept under inhumane conditions in a remote camp as violence intensified in north-west Syria. Amnesty International reported war crimes and violations committed by Turkish and Turkey-backed Syrian forces in 2019, including summary killings and unlawful attacks.

A 2020 report highlighted severe abuses against children, including rape, sexual slavery, torture, and forced training for killings. Ongoing violations, including attacks on humanitarian sites and civilian facilities, have been reported in 2020, underscoring the persistent challenges in addressing human rights issues in the Syrian conflict.

1.9. Crime Wave

During the Syrian Civil War, as the conflict intensified, criminal activities surged across cities due to the breakdown of the civilian state and the non-functioning of police stations. The increase in crime included higher rates of theft, with criminals looting houses and stores, and a rise in kidnapping incidents. Local National Defense Forces (NDF) commanders were implicated in war profiteering through protection rackets, looting, and involvement in organized crime. Both the government and the opposition relied on criminal networks, especially due to international sanctions. Notably, Syria became a significant location for manufacturing Captagon, an illegal amphetamine, contributing to a regional drug trade.

1.10. Epidemics

The Syrian conflict severely impacted the healthcare system, rendering approximately 35% of the country's hospitals non-operational and making regular vaccination programs impossible. Displaced refugees posed a disease risk, particularly in besieged areas where malnourished children were reported. The deterioration of living conditions in rebel-held areas led to the spread of infectious diseases, including measles, typhoid, hepatitis, dysentery, tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, and the disfiguring skin disease leishmaniasis. The contagious and crippling poliomyelitis also became a significant concern, with over 90 reported cases by late 2013.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the healthcare crisis in Syria, deepening economic deterioration and leaving the population vulnerable. In September 2022, a cholera outbreak was reported in several regions of the country, linked to the use of contaminated water for growing crops and reliance on unsafe water sources.

1.11. Humanitarian Aid

The Syrian Civil War prompted the largest humanitarian emergency response in history, with UN agencies requesting \$6.5 billion in December 2013. The coordination of international humanitarian efforts was managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) through the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP). The delivery of humanitarian aid faced immense challenges, with only a fraction of besieged populations reached, emphasizing the difficulties in assisting. Various countries and organizations contributed aid, with the United States, European Commission, United Kingdom, Kuwait, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Japan, UAE, and Norway among the top donors. The complex geopolitical situation also involved neighboring countries like Israel and Iran providing aid. The COVID-19 pandemic added another layer of challenge, affecting Syria's health infrastructure and economic stability. Despite ongoing efforts, the Syrian population continued to face humanitarian crises, including epidemics and economic deterioration.

1.12. Demographic and Socioeconomic Overview of Syria

Demographics

Syria, located in the Middle East, had an estimated population of 19,454,263 in July 2018. The ethnic composition included approximately 50% Arab, 15% Alawite, 10% Kurd, 10% Levantine, and 15% other ethnicities, such as Druze, Ismaili, Imami, Assyrian, Turkmen, and Armenian. The religious landscape was diverse, with 87% Muslims (including Sunni, Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia), 10% Christians, 3% Druze, and a small Jewish community primarily residing in Damascus and Aleppo.

Socioeconomic Background

Socioeconomic inequality rose notably after the implementation of free-market policies by Hafez al-Assad, continuing under Bashar al-Assad. These policies favored a minority, particularly those connected to the government and the Sunni merchant class in Damascus and Aleppo. In 2010, Syria's nominal GDP per capita was \$2,834, lagging neighboring countries like Lebanon.

The emphasis on the service sector disproportionately benefited a select portion of the population, exacerbating disparities. Youth unemployment rates were alarmingly high, especially in impoverished areas, triggering discontent, particularly among conservative Sunnis.

Drought Impact

Between 2006 and 2011, Syria faced an unprecedented drought, leading to widespread crop failure, increased food prices, and a mass migration of farming families to urban areas. This migration strained infrastructure already burdened by the influx of 1.5 million refugees from the Iraq War. The drought, linked to anthropogenic global warming, continues to impact the ongoing civil war, with water supply being a frequent target of military actions.

Human Rights Situation

Syria's human rights situation has long been criticized by global organizations. Even before the uprising, strict control prevailed over free expression, association, and assembly. The country was under emergency rule from 1963 to 2011, with stringent restrictions on public gatherings. Despite expectations for democratic change, Bashar al-Assad failed to implement improvements. The imposition of a controversial ban on female Islamic dress codes in 2010 and the failure to substantially improve human rights further intensified criticism.

Natural Gas Pipeline Feud

Some experts argue that the Syrian Civil War has roots in a feud between Russia and the United States over natural gas pipelines passing through Syria to European markets. The U.S. and allies sought the Qatar–Turkey pipeline to reduce dependence on Russian gas, while Russia aimed to thwart this and instead build the Iran–Iraq–Syria pipeline. Allegations suggest that covert CIA operations were initiated to spark the Syrian civil war, aiming to pressure Bashar al-Assad to resign and favor a pro-American president to approve the Qatar-Turkey pipeline. This pipeline dispute is considered a key factor in Russia's involvement in support of Assad, aligning with his rejection of the Qatar-Turkey pipeline. The presence of U.S. military bases near gas pipelines in Syria has sparked speculation about protecting American natural gas assets. The Conoco gas fields, previously under ISIS control, have been a focal point in this geopolitical struggle.

2. Belligerents and Foreign Involvement in The Syrian Civil War

Syrian Factions

The Syrian Civil War involves various factions, both domestic and foreign, falling into four main groups. Firstly, Ba'athist Syria, led by Bashar al-Assad and supported by Russian and Iranian allies. Secondly, the Syrian opposition, comprising the Syrian Interim Government, a coalition of democratic, Syrian nationalist, and Islamic political groups, and the Syrian Salvation Government, a Sunni Islamist coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Thirdly, the Kurdish-dominated Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, along with its military wing, the Syrian Democratic Forces, is supported by the United States, France, and other coalition allies.

Lastly, the Global Jihadist camp consists of the Al-Qaeda affiliate Guardians of Religion Organization and its rival, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Foreign countries have played a significant role in supporting these factions, turning the conflict into what is often described as a proxy war.

Foreign Involvement



Key supporters of the Syrian government include Iran, Russia, and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah. Syrian rebel groups received support from the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Britain, France, Israel, and the Netherlands. CIA operatives and U.S. special operations troops, under operations like

Timber Sycamore, trained and armed rebel fighters, costing around \$1 billion annually since 2012. Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia militant group, actively supported the Ba'athist government forces, with an increasing deployment of troops across Syria since the 2011 revolution. Their involvement, backed by Iranian weaponry and training, complicated the conflict dynamics and drew Israeli airstrikes against Hezbollah and Iranian targets in Syria.

Spillover

In June 2014, ISIL members crossed from Syria into northern Iraq, gaining control of significant Iraqi territory. The Syrian conflict's impact spread into Lebanon, resulting in sectarian violence in the North Governorate and armed clashes between Sunnis and Alawites in Tripoli. The Syrian Arab Air Force conducted airstrikes against ISIL in coordination with the Iraqi government in Raqqa and al-Hasakah.

Country Matrix

1. Australia
2. Belgium
3. Canada
4. China
5. Egypt
6. France
7. Germany
8. Greece
9. Iran
10. Iraq
11. Italy
12. Jordan
13. Kuwait
14. Lebanon
15. Norway
16. Oman
17. Palestine
18. Qatar
19. Russian Federation
20. Saudi Arabia
21. Sweden
22. Syria
23. Turkey
24. United Arab Emirates
25. United Kingdom
26. United States of America

References and Further Reading

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_revolution

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_Syrian_civil_war

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

<https://shelterbox.org/syria/the-syrian-conflict-explained/>

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9381/>

AKSU KARGIN, İ. (2023). THE IMPACT OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR ON INTRAFAMILIAL RELATIONS AND THE PARENTAL FUNCTIONING OF SYRIAN REFUGEES. *Journal of Management and Economics Research*, 21(3), 16-35.