**Russia's Military Intervention in Syria and its Impact on the Middle East**

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The Syrian conflict, which has displaced millions and caused unimaginable suffering, has been one of the most significant recent events in the Middle East.Russia's military intervention in the conflict in 2015 represented a turning point and received praise and criticism from numerous regional and international organizations. The Russian intervention in Syria significantly impacted the Middle Eastern geopolitical scene and contributed to the current condition of the Syrian war. This paper will explore Russia's engagement in Syria and evaluate its significance in the region's geopolitical landscape.

**Historical Context of the Syrian Conflict**

**Pre-war Political and Economic Situation in Syria**

It is likely that the challenging political and economic conditions in Syria before the outbreak of civil war in 2011 led to the escalation of the conflict. Since the early 1970s, the Assad family has ruled Syria, establishing a one-party, Ba'ath Party-led government (Dzhygalyuk, 2018). Despite initial economic progress in the 1990s, Syria had numerous obstacles in the 2000s, including high unemployment, persistent corruption, and terrible poverty.

Privatizing state-owned firms and creating a new class of wealthy businesspeople with political connections supported the expansion of economic disparity. As a result of their impression that the government was not adequately addressing their financial issues, the less fortunate segments of society became more hostile. Syria's racial and theological diversity further complicated the political situation, as the majority Alawite population faced opposition from Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Kurds.

**Arab Spring and its Impact on Syria**

As a result of the Arab Spring events that began in late 2010, the long-ruling governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya were overthrown (Sahin, 2022). In Syria, however, the protests quickly degenerated into violent battles between the government and the opposition. Authorities' harsh suppression of early demonstrations only helped to incite further turmoil. During the Arab Spring, several of the same issues that drove protests elsewhere in the region also contributed to instability in Syria (Sahin, 2022). Other contributors to the Syrian crisis included sectarian turmoil between Sunni and Shia Muslims and the influence of regional giants like Iran and Saudi Arabia.

**The Emergence of Opposition Groups and the Civil War**

In 2011, the Syrian situation erupted into full-scale civil war as opposition groups gained momentum and some military personnel defected. Initially, the resistance was fragmented and comprised different factions with diverse purposes and philosophies. While many demonstrators wanted Assad to go down and be replaced by a more democratic administration, others desired an administration more accommodating of Islam. Both sides of the civil conflict perpetrated atrocities against civilians. The government launched airstrikes and artillery fire into residential areas, while the resistance resorted to suicide bombers and kidnappings. Initially, Russia and Iran assisted the dictatorship, but they soon grew to rely on the United States and its allies.

**Analysis of Russian Intervention**

**Evaluation of Russian Objectives in Syria**

Many hypotheses abound regarding Russia's regional goals if it persists in interfering in Syria. Russia's principal objective was to safeguard its national security interests by preventing the fall of the Assad administration, which would have led to the spread of terrorism and regional instability (Muhammed & Yassin, 2022). Russian participation in the Middle East is an effort to challenge US hegemony, demonstrate strength, and bolster Russia's strategic position. Notwithstanding conflicting opinions, Russia has inevitably achieved some of its objectives in Syria. Russia's reputation and influence in the region have been enhanced by its presence. It has helped Russia demonstrate its military prowess and secure its status as a significant power. Russia's access to the Mediterranean Sea and its naval station in Tartus have been protected due to the operation.

**Criticisms of Russian Intervention**

Despite considerable criticism of the operation, many of Russia's objectives in Syria have been accomplished. Russia is often blamed for supporting the Assad regime, which is accused of committing war crimes and abusing the human rights of its civilians (Crilley & Chatterje-Doody, 2020). With Russia's help, the Assad administration has continued its brutal campaign against the opposition, displacing millions of Syrians and causing the death of countless lives.

Another criticism of Russia's involvement in the disruption of regional power equilibrium. The involvement of Russia in the Syrian war has escalated regional tensions and heightened competition between Moscow and Washington and their supporters (Crilley & Chatterje-Doody, 2020). It has resulted in heightened tensions in an already unstable region and the beginning of new wars and proxy conflicts.

**Comparison with other interventions in the region**

The 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq and the 2011 NATO assault on Libya are two regional acts analogous to Russia's involvement in Syria. The disintegration of state institutions, the growth of extremist groups, and the spread of chaos and instability throughout the region were unexpected outcomes of these activities, which meant to overthrow autocratic regimes and advance democracy (Muhammed & Yassin, 2022). The presence of Russia in Syria has ensured the integrity of Syria's territory and government. However, the objective was accomplished despite sacrificing countless lives and displacing millions of Syrians. The presence of Russia has exacerbated the instability and bloodshed in the region, heightening tensions with the other nations while simultaneously enhancing Moscow's influence in the region.

**Motivations behind the Russian Intervention in Syria**

**Strategic Interests in the Middle East**

Russia has dispatched armed personnel to Syria to safeguard its regional geopolitical interests. Due to its vast and significant history in the Middle East, Syria is one of the Russian Federation's most reliable partners in the region. Due to its advantageous location at the confluence of three continents, the country is responsible for keeping peace throughout the entire region (Europe, Asia, and Africa). Russia places a premium on having access to warm-water ports in the Middle East. Syria's Tartus is the lone Russian military outpost outside the former Soviet Union. Tartus gives Russia a firm footing in the Mediterranean, allowing it to project its naval power there (Al-Jabassini & Badi, 2023). If Assad's government fell, losing access to Tartus would threaten Russia's strategic interests in the Middle East. Russia sees the regional conflict as a struggle between regional and external powers, namely the United States and its allies. As a result of its involvement in the Syrian conflict, Russia has been able to counter and establish its regional influence more effectively than other states. One possible explanation for Russia's involvement in Syria is Moscow's desire to enhance its international standing by demonstrating its ability to conduct operations outside its borders and compete with the United States in the Middle East. Another reason for Russia's involvement in Syria is Moscow's desire to expand its influence.

**Domestic Considerations**

Domestic factors played a role in the decision to intervene in Syria. President Putin received criticism from a dissatisfied populace about the economy, political repression, and corruption. The intervention in Syria enhanced Putin's reputation as an authoritarian leader who protects Russian interests overseas. Putin's engagement in Syria has allowed him to establish contacts with key countries such as Iran and Hezbollah, which both support the Assad regime. Russia could undercut the influence of the United States and its regional allies while simultaneously spreading its message by establishing these links. Putin could project strength domestically and globally by demonstrating his willingness to use force to safeguard Russian interests in Syria.

**Military and Security Concerns**

Military and security concerns, like the United States, motivated Russia's engagement in Syria. Due to its prominence as a regional partner, Russia has traditionally offered financial and military assistance to the Assad government. Due to the possible growth of terrorism and Islamist extremism in the region, the Syrian crisis directly impacted Russia. Regional and international powers, notably Russia, viewed it as a proxy struggle between the United States and its allies and Russia and its allies. If the Assad government were to fall, terrorist organizations and regional armies would be able to attack Syria, jeopardizing Russia's regional security interests.

**Impact of Russian intervention on the Middle East**

**Geopolitical Changes in the Region**

As a result of Russia's involvement in Syria, the political landscape in the Middle East has shifted significantly. With Russia's support, the Syrian government has recaptured a substantial portion of the nation, altering the regional balance of power (Dannreuther, 2022). The operation directly challenges the long-held hegemony of the United States and its allies and has boosted Russia's position as a regional power broker.

Iran and Turkey have contributed considerably to the Syrian conflict and are now closer allies due to Russia's involvement. Russia's engagement in Syria is part of a more extensive strategy to expand Moscow's influence in the Middle East and secure its position as a regional superpower. This action has been viewed as a vast geopolitical win for the nation since it has made it feasible for Russia to demonstrate its military strength overseas more effectively.

As a result of Russian participation, the region is now confronted with additional difficulties. Saudi Arabia and Iran, who back opposing sides in the fight, are at odds, and the instability in Syria has exacerbated the situation. Due to the rivalry between the two states, the likelihood of conflict in the region has increased (Dannreuther, 2022). But, due to the involvement, the already complicated situation in Syria has become much more complicated, making it more challenging to reach a peaceful resolution.

**Influence on Regional and Global Powers**

Due to Russia's military engagement in Syria, the balance of power in the Middle East and internationally has shifted dramatically. Russia and the United States disagree on resolving the Syrian civil war, and their divisions have increased due to their involvement (Dannreuther, 2022). The United States has accused Russia of leveraging this conflict to further its regional ambitions and undermine US goals. As a result of their support for rebel factions in Syria, regional powers like Turkey and Saudi Arabia have had their authority challenged by the Russian operation. Because of their involvement, Russia and Iran have become critical players in the Syrian conflict, altering the regional balance of power. Despite this, Russia's regional involvement has improved its ties with countries like Egypt and Iraq (Dannreuther, 2022). These nations have found Russia a powerful ally in diversifying their foreign policies and reducing reliance on the United States.

**The Humanitarian Crisis and Refugee Crisis**

The forced exodus of millions of innocent people due to Russia's involvement in the Syrian crisis has caused a humanitarian catastrophe. Due to the intervention's destruction of infrastructure and essentials such as healthcare and education, the local population's situation has deteriorated. Because of the violence, millions of Syrians have fled their country, seeking asylum in Europe and bordering countries. Society, the economy, and politics have been impacted by the migration of refugees into receiving nations, mainly Europe. The majority of these consequences are felt in Europe. It has increased the number of political organizations that support extremist beliefs and the hardening of negative sentiments toward immigrants. Despite the dire circumstances, Russian officials have been accused of impeding rescue attempts and aggravating the plight of the local populace. Concerns have been expressed over Russia's commitment to protecting civilians in combat zones and upholding humanitarian law in light of this action.

**Role of Other Regional and Global powers in the Syrian Conflict**

Because of the involvement of other nations, both regionally and internationally, each with its geopolitical interests and objectives, the crisis in Syria cannot be understood as a strictly domestic matter. Their presence has further complicated Syria and the broader Middle East by prolonging the conflict and raising sectarian tensions. A more considerable regional and international effort is required to address the origins of the war and establish a durable political settlement to resolve the situation (Sever, 2020). Also, the Syrian government and opposition parties must be involved.

**Iran's Involvement in the Conflict**

The Syrian government may be able to count on Iran as a vital ally. Syria and Iran have had a close relationship since the 1980s when Syria supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq War (Mansour & Thompson, 2020). Since the beginning of the conflict, Iran has been a significant source of material and monetary support for Syria. In addition, it has sent troops and instructors to assist the Syrian military. Iran is engaging in the fight primarily to safeguard its regional interests, challenge Saudi Arabia's hegemony, and maintain its strategic alliance with Syria.

**Saudi Arabia's Involvement in the Conflict**

Throughout the conflict in Syria, Saudi Arabia has been a major funder of the rebels. Many rebel parties in Syria have received military and financial support from the Saudi government to destroy the Syrian government and diminish Iran's regional influence. Saudi Arabia and its allies are competing with Iran to dominate the area, and the Saudi monarchy has leveraged the Syrian conflict to advance these goals (Sever, 2020). Saudi Arabia's involvement has exacerbated sectarian tensions in an already volatile region. Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran are engaged in proxy warfare.

**Turkey's Involvement in the Conflict**

Turkey has joined the fight there to protect its interests and prevent the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous zone in northern Syria. In northern Syria, the Turkish military has fought with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) while aiding various rebel organizations (Sever, 2020). Due to the United States backing for the YPG in its war with ISIS, Syria, and Russia, tensions have escalated between Turkey and the United States.

**Prospects for the Syrian Conflict and the Middle East**

It is doubtful that the Syrian civil war, which has been ongoing for a decade, will ever end peacefully. Due to the continuous armed confrontation and the involvement of various local and international soldiers, the war has escalated. More clarity should be given regarding the region's or Syria's probable future. The likelihood of a peaceful resolution is drastically diminished if the regional and international troops are involved in the conflict.

**Possible Outcomes of the Conflict**

If the government can maintain control of the country despite intermittent militant attacks, the Syrian conflict may finish with the status quo. Humanitarian and refugee issues would persist, leaving the country unstable and divided. Alternatively, the Syrian government or the opposition could emerge victorious (Sever, 2020). With the power dynamics in place and the involvement of other parties, this is extremely unlikely. If there is any prospect of genuinely ending the bloodshed, the warring parties must consider a peace pact.

**Prospects for a Political Solution**

A political resolution to the Syrian situation is impossible. Since the Syrian government has consistently refused to negotiate, international efforts to mediate a political accord have been fruitless for years. Due to their instability and ties with terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, the opposition forces are unreliable allies in any democratic process (Heydemann, 2020). A political solution will only be successful if all parties are prepared to participate in honest negotiations and make the required concessions. It is vital to include civil society and women's advocacy groups in the negotiation process to ensure that any solution is long-lasting and addresses the issues that provoked the conflict in the first place.

**Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction Efforts in Syria**

**International Aid Efforts**

When the conflict began, the international world provided humanitarian assistance to Syria. The UN has coordinated relief operations, and numerous charitable organizations and nations have provided finances, food, housing, and medical supplies. The objective of the relief mission was to deliver vitally needed supplies to individuals in need, particularly in combat-isolated areas. Despite the international community's most significant efforts, the breadth of the catastrophe persists. 13 million Syrians, including 6.7 million internally displaced individuals and 5.6 million refugees in bordering countries, require humanitarian assistance, according to the United Nations (Sá et al., 2021). As a result, just a tiny portion of the necessary funds for humanitarian efforts had been raised. Millions of Syrians have reduced access to basics such as food and healthcare due to a need for more funding.

**Challenges in Delivering aid to those in Need**

Many obstacles have hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria. Due to the ongoing conflict, it has been difficult for humanitarian relief workers to access certain areas, particularly those administered by armed factions. It has taken longer than anticipated for help to reach some communities due to government restrictions on its distribution. As a result of aid diversion by armed groups and corruption, humanitarian activities have yet to be successful. There needs to be coordination between the authorities and aid organizations. Humanitarian organizations are supposedly subject to operational constraints and occasional government involvement. Charity provision to the needy has been hampered by inefficiency and wasted effort due to a lack of coordination.

**Reconstruction Efforts in Post-conflict Syria**

Rebuilding Syria will take a substantial commitment of time, money, and strategy. The conflict has reportedly caused $400 billion in damages, and it will take years to reconstruct the economy and infrastructure of the nation (Kolodko, 2023). One of the many objectives of the restoration effort is the repair and modernization of public structures, including hospitals, schools, and homes. This is one of the primary goals of the rehabilitation effort. Other objectives include the expansion of the economy and the provision of new employment opportunities. The Syrian government has begun its reconstruction efforts with help from Russia and Iran. Despite this, the continuing carnage and the government's record on human rights have dissuaded international donors from contributing to the rehabilitation effort. Before major reconstruction can begin, the United Nations has highlighted the importance of finding a political solution.

**Conclusion**

The involvement of the Russian military in Syria and other crises in the Middle East has radically altered the path of those conflicts. As a result of Russia's political and military support for the Syrian regime, the balance of power currently favors Syria. This action has altered the region's geopolitical landscape and called into question the role of other global and regional powers. Yet, it has also been criticized for allegedly violating human rights and neglecting the humanitarian tragedy in Syria. Regional and global forces must contribute constructively to finding a peaceful resolution if long-term stability exists. The capacity of Syria to recover from the war's devastating impacts will be strongly impacted by attempts to rehabilitate devasted areas and provide relief to in-need populations.

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