Research Article

Between Regionalism and Globalism: Exploring the Contemporary and Prospects of Syria in the Middle Eastern Polity

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Abstract

The paper investigates Syria's involvement in Middle Eastern power dynamics and its management of local and international interests. This study uses a qualitative method centered on historical case analysis and geopolitical assessment to understand Syria's role in the process of regional transformation as a historical regional power but emphasizes both its important risks and opportunities. The primary theme of this research is to assess how conflicts between neighboring powers and international partners impact Syria's national policies and foreign relations. In addition to external participation and local players such as Iran as well as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the research looks modern reconstruction. Additionally, the study situates these developments within global shifts, such as changing U.S. and Russian strategies and China's growing presence in the region. By analyzing these elements, it becomes clear that there are some main themes and potential paths for the political and economic advances that Syria can reach if it wants, based on regional ambitions, on worldwide tension.

Keywords

Regionalism, Globalism, Civil War, Middle Eastern Politics, Geopolitics.

1. Introduction

The fact is that Syria has long been a trafficking hub of sorts within the deeply polarized landscape of the Middle East where big power and state interests have a significant dimension in direct contact with regional players. It transformed into a diplomatic battleground in 2011 civil war when shifting power blocs have further exacerbated in conflicts. The war has wrought huge human suffering, with 13 million displaced people, of which 6.8 million are refugees, an economic collapse that has slashed GDP from $155 billion in 2010 to under $60 billion and reconstruction costs worth over $400 billion (UNHCR, Kaya-Kasikci & Glass, 2024). Middle Eastern power struggles have a focus on Syria. As Turkey pursues border security to defeat Kurdish self-governance in the northeast, Iran provides military and financial aid to Assad to maintain influence in the Levant. Other Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are weighing their strategic approaches, with some publicly signaling that they are open to reconciliation (World Bank, 2023).

Syria is a venue for great power competition on the world stage. Since its 2015 intervention in Russia, it has increased its foothold while the U.S. keeps forces to restrain terrorism and support local partners (Hanieh, 2024). A diplomatic shift that would cement the future of Syria to return to the Arab League 2023, but has to be reengaged due to China's spread of the Belt and Road Initiative. Syria's path forward is on the balancing act of reconstruction, diplomacy, and movement in the diplomatic currents in the world, positioned between regional rivalries and global alliances (Abimbola et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

Both 'old regionalism' and 'new regionalism' are tools to analyse Syria's position in regionalism. Syria has thus kept to a state-centric, security based approach through its regional alliances with Iran and Hezbollah under 'old regionalism.' On the other hand, the "new regionalism" depicts Syria as a part of wider economic and multi-actor integration framework, especially with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI in Syria is heavily infrastructure and trade focused but has an element of political interest for Beijing by building strategic influence. The downside to the long run risks including debt dependency, political entanglements and loss of economic sovereignty in return for; short run benefits of economic recovery, a better regional connectivity and integration into the global markets. The time for research that moves beyond traditional nationalism and regionalism, not only at the regional but also cross border interconnections, is at hand. The Syrian civil war has largely displaced millions, which greatly affected neighboring countries like Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, and derailed regional stability. Financial flows from GCC nations to Egypt and Jordan (Khan et al., n.d.).

The Middle East holds 47.7% of the world's proven oil reserves, with events like the 2019 attack on Saudi Aramco highlighting its global significance. Initiatives like China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which includes investments in UAE's Jebel Ali Port and the Iran-China 25-year cooperation agreement, further establish the Middle East within the global economic architecture. Understanding these dynamics requires methodological approaches that address how regional and global scales are produced and interlinked. (Gasco & Abrami, 2024). The paper argues that addressing these three methodological questions offers a framework for understanding contemporary changes in the Middle East. It challenges state-centric perspectives, highlighting the importance of cross-border flows and transboundary processes, which reveal the limitations of traditional frameworks and the social construction of national and regional scales. The paper emphasizes that global-regional relations require a broader positioning of the Middle East, encouraging a nuanced study of the region's complexity, avoiding reductionist approaches common in area studies and mainstream social science. This approach aligns with a new understanding of the Middle East as an increasingly interconnected region, involved in and shaped by global changes. The paper then turns to the Turkish-Iranian-Saudi triangle, analyzing how their strategic interests influence Middle Eastern peace and security. It highlights the enduring issues of territorial disputes, sectarianism, resource distribution, and structural objectives, which continue to fuel enmity, as demonstrated through qualitative conflict analysis (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

Turkey's regional strategy is a combination of neo-Ottoman ambitions and geopolitical pragmatism on display in military operations against Kurdish groups in Syria. Securing Turkey's borders, however, strains relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia and these actions. In other words, Turkey's maritime disputes with Greece and Cyprus, and its support for the GNA in Libya, accentuate Turkey's regional ambitions. Iran, as a Shia power, counters Sunni rivals like Saudi Arabia, particularly in Yemen's proxy war. Enforcing sectarian tensions and regional instability, it has strengthened its alliances with Hezbollah, Syria's Assad regime and Iraqi militias (Yan et al., 2024).

Saudi Arabia seeks to position itself as a dominant regional power within the Sunni Muslim world to counterbalance Iran and Turkey's influence. The Vision 2030 reform plan reflects its intent to diversify beyond oil, though its foreign policy remains largely focused on combating Iranian influence. Saudi Arabia's leadership in the Arab Coalition against the Houthis in Yemen is part of this broader strategy, yet its involvement has been criticized for exacerbating one of the worst humanitarian crises in the region. The 2017 blockade of Qatar, supported by the UAE and Bahrain, stemmed from Qatar's growing ties with Iran and Turkey, further weakening the Gulf Cooperation Council's unity. These rivalries fuel proxy wars, contributing to regional instability. Countries like Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya have suffered immense destruction, displacement, and loss of life. The Syrian civil war alone has claimed over 500,000 lives and displaced millions. The involvement of external powers, such as Russia and the United States, further complicates these conflicts, as regional actors align with global powers to strengthen their positions (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

Transnational violence and sectarianism have become major sources of leverage, amplifying instability in the Middle East. Disturbing political and religious extremism together with militia groups accepted by armed forces (Iran-backed Shiite arm groups in Iraq and Saudi-backed Sunni groups) prolong conflicts that already exist. The unstable political situation together with religious divisions in Iraq prevent national unity efforts from succeeding. Diplomatic initiatives along with international collaboration prove essential for settling the described issues according to research findings. Autonomous players from regional powers and global entities together with institutional forms need to maintain a steady hand and peaceful conditions. Diplomacy proved its power in August 2020 when Israel established diplomatic ties with the UAE and Bahrain and Sudan because it shifted regional alliances. Any actual resolution of these conflicts demands attention to the elements of political, economic and social issues that ignite these conflicts (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

The Middle Eastern region remains unstable because Turkey pursues neo-Ottoman goals while Iran advances Persian expansionist policies and Saudi Arabia wages global Islamist political warfare. The implementations made in alliances generate substantial human and financial damage to both parties and yield scant rewards for worldwide societies. The study reveals that regional stability needs consistent cooperation between states. A comprehensive examination investigates regional and regionalist formation in international relations regarding their social historical political determinants. At its core, it emphasizes the culturally and historically constructed nature of regions and regionalism. Throughout history, political communities have interacted through struggles, conquests, and even enslavement, but also through peaceful exchanges of religion, language, and culture. This ongoing interaction has evolved from city-states and empires to the modern Westphalian state system. The formation of international society introduced a new layer of world order, grounded in norms and values. Economic systems, particularly the changing dynamics of capitalism, alongside the distribution of power between states, have shaped these norms, establishing rules and structures that regulate state-to-state relationships (Pişkin Önal, 2024).

The term "region" comes from the Latin *regio*, meaning direction or command, but in international relations, it involves more than just direction. Regions are defined by factors like proximity, cultural similarities, economic integration, and political interaction, but they are socially and politically constructed. The European Union is a prime example of regional integration with shared political and economic strategies. Regional analysis also includes micro-regions within a state and macro-regions across multiple states. Globalization reshapes regions, emphasizing interconnectedness. "Regionalism" refers to the level of connectivity within a region. Hettne and Söderbaum's model identifies four stages: pre-regional, regional, institutional, and identity. The GCC and EU illustrate early and advanced stages of regional integration, respectively (Elkahlout & Hedaya, 2024).

Regionalism, distinct from regionalization, gained formal usage after World War II. Regionalism refers to political integration among neighboring states, while regionalization focuses on economic processes of trade and integration. Both factors are interconnected, as seen in ASEAN, where political integration supports economic integration and vice versa. Regionalism is divided into three waves: early regionalism, new regionalism, and old regionalism. Early regionalism includes ancient trade networks like the Silk Road and the Roman Empire. Old regionalism, during the Cold War, involved alliances like NATO and the Warsaw Pact. New regionalism, post-Cold War, emphasizes multidimensional integration, including economic, cultural, and social aspects, as seen in organizations like the African Union and Mercosur (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

Global politics contains both advantageous aspects and obstacles related to regionalism today. People benefit from this policy because worldwide development takes place through globalizing effects. Regional movements face restrictions from political bodies together with economic systems and regional societal forces. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) encounters criticism because of its consequences on both national sovereignty and geopolitical partition along with uncertainties regarding political debt liabilities. Formal regionalism develops additional strength through the informal process which relies on cultural values fused with historical understandings. Formal institutions of the Arab League did not exist when the Middle East relied on informal systems to conduct trade and migration. While existing with official systems informal systems create difficulties when they establish structures that compete against state-based processes (Hamanaka, 2024).

The development and characteristics of regions and regionalism originate from historical, political and social as well as economic background factors. These phenomena represent both worldwide elements and community-based factors to-

gether with present-day objectives and difficulties experienced by nations and societies in the international system. Regionalism makes possible cooperation and integration though leaders from different regions need to handle their competing interests. European Union institutions continue to expand their integration activities which create benefits for regionalism but Brexit shows the difficulties regional members have in uniting together. The document studies the effect that global political transformations have on International Students Mobility (ISM) throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The text examines the changes in ISM patterns due to the unipolar-to-multipolar world progression while identifying regional education centers as fundamental sites of learning. The research derives data from 2011 to 2020 to investigate how Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) explains both ISM movement patterns and the formation of regional education institutions while analyzing global geopolitical factors during this time period (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

The change from unipolar US-leadership following the Cold War toward diverse multi-polarity has resulted in both regional performer emergence and cross-border cooperation structures. A transformation in International Students Mobility (ISM) reveals that traditional leadership positions of the US and Europe are being surpassed by new educational centers in emerging regions. International student numbers in the US declined to 914,000 in 2020 following an earlier total of over one million prior to the pandemic. The nations of Türkiye and Morocco along with Saudi Arabia have successfully developed their position as local educational centers. By using Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) researchers explore which regional security aspects affect International Students Mobility throughout the MENA region. Political and security variances among sub-regions of the region make it difficult to establish complete regional educational integration. Cooperation and competition drive student mobility. The strategic location of Türkiye enables it to act as a vital connection between Europe and Asia as well as the Islamic world thus becoming an influential institution for students from the Middle East to Africa and Turkic states. Through its Türkiye Scholarships program founded in 1992 the institution has admitted more than 160,000 students worldwide with specifically many students from MENA regions (Hadžić, 2024).

As a part of its Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is targeting to become an education hub by nurturing institutions like King Abdulaziz University and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology attracting international students, especially from the GCC and Islamic world. Morocco also has a strategic location between Europe and Africa, and education has become an important tool of educational diplomacy for the country. Unlike direct funding programs that originate in Sub-Saharan Africa, AMCI scholarships strengthen diplomatic and economic partnerships between Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the nation's growing appeal as a higher education destination, the number of the international students in Morocco was around 20,000 by 2020, with Africans occupying about 60% (Keshavarzian, 2024).

The outcomes indicate that regional education centers play multifaceted roles beyond education, including alliance building, soft power projection, and micro-economic integration. For example, Turkey attracts students from Turkic nations and the Middle East, aligning with its foreign policy objectives, while Morocco targets African students to support its political and economic goals in the region. Partial regionalization in MENA's International Student Mobility (ISM) is influenced by varying security conditions. For instance, tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as Sunni-Shia conflicts, impact student movements within the Gulf. Additionally, the ongoing war in Syria has disrupted traditional ISM patterns, with many Syrian students enrolling in neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, thus reshaping the regional educational landscape (Yaqub, n.d.).

By analyzing the social networks of military and non-military personnel in MENA from 2011 to 2020, the study highlights shift in International Student Mobility (ISM). The Syrian conflict and resulting humanitarian crises have led to high displacement, with many refugees enrolling in host country education systems. Turkey, for example, hosts over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, many of whom have been integrated into the education system, influencing regional security and education strategies. This paper contributes to regionalization theory by linking education with regional security complexes, suggesting that MENA policymakers should address security and political challenges to improve educational cooperation. Initiatives like the Arab League's educational exchange programs could be expanded to mitigate the fragmented security structures in the region. The study calls for a more systematic approach to education policy that integrates security and political considerations, fostering international cooperation and regional stabilization (Dan & Pandey, 2024).

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative study based on critical study of Syria's participation in Middle Eastern politics through the frame of Middle Easternism and globalism. A comparative analysis of post conflict recovery challenges occurring in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan who share the experience of political instability, foreign intervention and reconstruction problems are assessed. The analysis of primary data (treaties, policy documents, Arab League resolutions), as well as the secondary materials (academic studies, think tank reports) are qualitative content analysis (coding based on themes). Reliability of Syria's geopolitical trajectory is increased through data triangulation, which leads to a clear picture of Syria's trajectory.

4. Results

Whether Syria could return back to regional organizations is another critical question, especially taking into account the fact that Assad's regime remained in power after 2011, and civil war significantly destroyed the country. Nevertheless, the reintegration of those states into regional institutions, especially in the Arab world, poses tremendous political, economic and diplomatic challenges. The circumstances, which may pave the way to rehabilitation of Syria in regional organizations starting with the Arab League and other Middle Eastern arrangements, are relative to some factors internal in Syria and other factors which are external and reflect general change in the region and international pressure on it.

U.S. sanctions and internal protests in Iran mean that it can hardly pay to rebuild Syria. That damages Tehran's long term influence while requiring reliance on non-state actors such as Hezbollah. At the same time, Russia, the most decisive military player on the scene in Syria, is now turning to economic returns. For instance, it is putting infrastructure and oil projects first and securing key contracts to rebuild Syria's energy sector, increasing its geopolitical leverage at the same time. The participation of Moscow provides long-term strategic influence, but financial constraints and Western resistance could limit the extent to which Moscow can pursue large-scale post-war economic ambitions in Syria.

4.1. Stability of the Political Leadership and Politics Reforms on Syria

Political Transition and Reforms: Perhaps one of the key prerequisites for the restoration of Syria is the creation of a more politically stable and, therefore, recognized international government. This pertains to governance issues mainly political liberalization, political liberalizations, and availability of basic human rights. Change in the political process towards the increase in governmental and opposition inclusive reconciliation would be very important.

4.2. End of Authoritarian Rule

One component is the ability of the Assad regime or any other Syrian leadership essentially rethink and relinquish the patterns of authoritarian rule that have led to massive protest and instability across the Middle East. The opposition in Syria and other international and regional actors in the Arab world would be willing to come back to the negotiations table if there actually is change from above towards a more liberal system where the opposition has a say, and where the politics of the country are decided democratically. Accountability for War Crimes: The major challenge is that the Syrian government among other things, engaged in war crimes and human rights abuses during the civil war. Despite these trends, the Assad regime has dismissed as baseless many allegations of war crimes; consequently, there is no effective way for reintegration. To re-join regional organizations, Syria has to show its intent for justice, though it may only be limited steps, as international pressure remains high (UN etc.).

4.3. Regional Geopolitical Dynamics and Attitude Changing Alliances. Changing Attitudes in the Arab League

Syria's reintegration into regional organizations like the Arab League requires the support of key Arab countries. Many nations, including the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan, are restoring diplomatic ties, signaling a shift in regional politics. Syria's relations with regional powers like Iran, Turkey, and Russia will influence its reintegration process. Iran's support for Assad has strained Syria's ties with Sunni-Arab countries. Overcoming sectarian tensions, particularly between Sunni and Shia factions, is essential for Syria's reintegration. Fostering pan-Arab solidarity and democratic governance is crucial to moving beyond sectarian divides (Damar et al., 2024).

4.4. Planning for Economic Reconstruction and Roles for Regional Cooperation. Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Syria's return to regional organizations hinges on its economic recovery post-civil war, requiring substantial reconstruction of infrastructure, industries, and institutions. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have shown interest in contributing to Syria's rebuilding, provided political and economic reforms are implemented. Economic cooperation, particularly in energy and trade, is crucial for Syria's recovery. Syria could rejoin regional energy systems, such as the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline, and restore ties with neighboring countries. Gulf states' investments will depend on Syria's ability to demonstrate stability, economic integration, and potential political liberalization (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

4.5. Foreign Pressure and Diplomacy. Diplomatic Engagement with International Actors

Syria's reintegration into regional organizations depends on both regional and international actors. The U.S., EU, and Russia will play key roles, with the U.S. hesitant due to Syria's ties with Iran and its destabilizing influence. A shift in U.S. policy or removal of sanctions could facilitate Syria's reintegration. While Western nations have pressured Syria through sanctions, there is growing recognition that dialogue may be necessary for regional stability. If these powers support Syria's reintegration, it would significantly alter the dynamics. However, global powers may continue demanding accountability for war crimes, linking Syria's regional return to commitments on justice and democratic transition (Darwich, 2024).

4.6. Security Threats and Sub Regional Stability. Regional Security Arrangements

Security is a crucial factor for Syria's reintegration into regional organizations. The country's ongoing political instability and security challenges, including insurgent and extremist groups, hinder its return to regional groups. Syria must demonstrate a strong commitment to counterterrorism, collaborating with neighboring countries like Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan to combat groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Active participation in regional security mechanisms, such as the Arab League's collective security, could facilitate its reintegration. The Syrian Civil War, with its complex geopolitical, economic, humanitarian, and security interests, has drawn in multiple local, regional, and global stakeholders, each with differing objectives (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

4.7. Regional Responses

4.7.1. GCC Countries
Since 2011, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, along with other GCC states, supported the Free Syrian Army based on sectarian, ideological, and geopolitical interests. Saudi Arabia backed Sunni-led insurgents, while Qatar supported more moderate factions in the early stages of the conflict. If Assad had been overthrown, GCC countries would have gained more regional influence, particularly to counter Iran's support for Assad. The shift in power dynamics would have led some GCC states to support the opposition or take part in Syria's post-conflict reconstruction. However, Assad's survival altered GCC involvement, leading these countries to gradually open diplomatic channels in Syria while aiming to curb Iranian influence.

4.7.2. Iran
The government of Iran has proven to be an aggressive supporter of Assad by giving him military backing and financial assistance. The regime change in Syria would cost Iran substantial losses throughout the region because of its large financial support to Assad. Shiite factions or reconstruction participation may serve as Iran's main methods of continuing its regional influence based on regional cooperation and the future relations between Syria and Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

4.7.3. Turkey
The Syrian Civil War engagement by Turkey operates from three main strategic reasons which combine security considerations with Kurdish interests and greater position in the region. From the beginning Turkey sided with rebel forces yet it simultaneously engaged in combat against Kurdish militias which formed a connection with the PKK. After the downfall of Assad Turkey uses its influence to design Syria's governance and seeks to determine both Kurdish political rule and potential economic partnerships within the region. Northern Syria presents an opportunity for tensions to develop between Turkey and its rival powers Iran and Russia because they support Assad's government staying in power.

4.7.4. Israel

During the Syrian war Israel made its strategic priority to block Iranian influence while stopping weapon movement to Hezbollah. Following Assad's rule Israel would view the instability of Syria along with its potential breakup as serious threats while also watching any succeeding government in Syria for ties to Iran and militant support. Israel will focus on border defense operations while working together with other international organizations to limit Iranian intervention.

4.8. Global Responses

4.8.1. United States

This research investigates the U.S. strategy in the Syrian Civil War which involved backing moderate rebels and setting Assad apart from the world while implementing economic prohibitions. When ISIS became dominant the United States redirected its strategy by focusing on fighting militant groups especially in northeastern Syria. The United States positions itself to shape Syria's political structure and protective framework after the Assad regime. The U.S. shifted its attention to Iran containment together with Syrian oil field administration after its troops left in 2019. War conflicts and governmental sanctions restrict the availability of reconstruction assistance in Syria.

4.8.2. Russia

The military assistance and diplomatic support together with logistical backing which Russia provided the Assad regime altered the war's equilibrium in 2015. The country maintains three primary interests which include military bases for strategic purposes combined with regional political influence together with opposition against Western regional power. Russia plans to preserve its military bases and political influence during political mediation after the fall of Assad. A power transition would probably prompt Western nations to intensify their push for Russia to uphold human rights standards and rule of law since the country belongs permanently to the U.N. Security Council.

4.8.3. European Union

The EU provides humanitarian support and conducts diplomatic efforts and implements economic sanctions against Syria while offering minimal backing to the rebel opposition forces. If Assad is removed from power the EU plans to participate in Syria's reconstruction efforts while blocking its transformation into an enemy of terrorists. The EU struggles to promote political transformations in Syria because it depends on U.S. backing yet encounters Russian and Iranian dominance within the region. During reconstruction activities the EU plans to advocate human rights protection together with political system reforms while facing various regional obstacles for its efforts.

4.8.4. United Nations

The United Nations continues to be essential in delivering relief aid while promoting diplomatic approaches for Syria. The inability of the Security Council to enact resolutions that pressure the Assad regime has impaired the UN's efforts in Syria because Russia and China keep blocking such measures. After the fall of Assad, the United Nations would take over as the peacemaker and mediator and distributor of humanitarian relief. International community support is key to the United Nations but significant Syria changes need international actors to direct their goals toward the needs of Syrian citizens.

4.8.5. The Effectiveness of Fourth Party Activists after Assad

Once Assad is overthrown, Syria's rebuilding and reintegration will depend on regional and global powers. Russia and Iran will likely ensure Syria remains aligned with the East, while Gulf states may support a secular, Western-leaning government. This power struggle could delay Syria's recovery and deepen regional and ideological divisions. Syria will need significant foreign aid for reconstruction, but the political and geographical dynamics between former allies and adversaries will complicate the delivery of assistance. Additionally, if Syria is fragmented, regional powers may engage in more proxy wars over issues like the Kurds and Iran.

5. Discussions

The Syrian Civil War has significantly changed the distribution of power in the Middle East, redistributed alliances, deepened and stirred animosities and impacted the actions of external players. While the regime of Bashar al-Assad has not been deposing fully the mere idea has been instrumental in influencing the actors' strategic thinking on the region and

global power. The consequences of the civil war both during and after Assad's decline in power have reverberated across the region in several ways: Syria has become divided into areas that are occupied by rebels, Alawites, Kurds, ISIS and other oppositions to Assad that have rendered the country powerless. This has been a subject of anxiety for regional power like Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia hence each power has been influential to promote its own interests in the GGC and contradict its rivals (Triandafyllidou, 2024).

Realizing that the Syrian conflict could serve as an extension of its influence across the "Shia Crescent" from Tehran to Beirut through Iraq and Syria, Iran and Tehran have collaborated closely with Damascus while continuing to support the rebels in their fight against Assad. Iran's behavior of supporting Assad the military and financial way, and sending Hezbollah kind of Shiite militias, strengthens its regional power. Removal of Assad would disrupt this strategic supply line, and Iran would probably turn to sub state actors more. Turkey although opposed to Assad maintains its priority is countering Kurdish forces in northern Syria. Turkey chose to pander to its security concerns and try to take advantage of the opportunities Syria's post-war political order presents to shape it (Ajl, 2024).

Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries first sponsored rebels against Assad because the civil war was an opportunity to weaken Iran regional ally. Al-Assad's removal would be regarded negatively in Iran but it will open up other forms of vices such as extremism or extended turmoil that affects Lebanon and Jordan. In the case of Riyadh, the Saudi Arabia regime would probably prefer a Sunni dominated government in Syria for this reason. Israel has been very sensitive over the war implications to its security especially the investing of Iranian forces and Hezbollah near its borders. Though Israel has responded to those threats with aerial bombardment, when Assad fails, there is potential for Iran's influence to decrease or new turmoil, like jihadi organization in southern Syria. The Israeli plans would just depend on keeping a security buffer and to make sure that no unfriendly force takes over the Syrian side of the Golan Heights (Onwo & Duru, 2024).

Since Russia's intervention in September 2015, the Syrian regime has been crucial to withstand the opposition's forces. Strategic interests of Moscow are linked with protection of the naval base in Tartus and presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. The change of Assad will significantly decrease Russia's influence in the region, which will be compelled to look for new clients or lose its position in the Middle East. The United States and its major Western partners have been mostly concerned with counterterrorism and reducing the suffering in the course of the war. As the US supported some of the rebellion and Kurdish forces, its lack of clear policy has resulted in other powers stepping in to take advantage. Eliminating Assad means US policy makers will be forced to integrate a reconstruction role together with a counter-terrorism agenda, and the delicate game of managing all actors' stakes in the sectarianized post-Ottoman Levant (Del Sarto & Soler I Lecha, 2024).

It also played a great role in escalating sectarian tensions all over the Middle East along the Syrian Civil War. This has been presented as a Sunni revolt against a Shia- aligned rule and therefore has fed sectarianism that has manifested itself in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. This may bring in these countries' further chaos after the downfall of Assad, which reacts worse in Sunni-Shia hostility across the region. Humanitarian as well as refugee issues have made it yet another ordeal. Currently, more than 6.8 million Syrian refugees have left their country, mainly to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan which exert pressure on the economy and social life of these countries. If these crises persist and there is no clear successor to Assad a power vacuum would ensue and therefore aggravate the stability and governance of the region. The most worrisome new element in the Syrian Civil War is the appearance of radical organizations, in particular, ISIS. However, the ISIS group is not entirely eradicated even after the territorial defeat has been registered. It is therefore conceivable that whenAssad's situation arises, there are chances of reactionary emphases regrouping and regaining control if the polity remains fragile (Alnassar, 2024).

5.1. Turkey's Role

Turkey has risen to power and become one of the leading warlords in post-Assad Syria. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is one of the main rebel factions being backed by Turkey, it has therefore expanded Turkish influence in northern Syria. This strategic positioning has helped Turkey solve a critical security issue; the fight against Kurdish groups which Turkey regards as terrorists. Moreover, the measures to support reconstruction in Syria have been taken by Turkey; they started

with concerns to supply electricity and cooperation in production of oil and gas of Syria. Energy Minister Alparslan Bay-raktar stated that there is a firm will and planning to send electricity to Syria/;Syria Electricity has plans for power construction with Turkey/;There are talks with regard to construction of oil pipeline link to Turkey (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

5.2. Iran's Position

Iran and another Shiiite government ally, the Assad Government has been defeated; and Iran's power over Syria fades. Turkish-supported PDLSA has rapidly expanded its territory, which poses a strategic loss for Iran confronting the rapid advances of the Turkish-backed rebels. Iran's attempts of boosting the standing of Assad and creating its base in Syria have been threatened by these unpredictable changes where new opposing forces appear and alliances are reformed (Yan, 2024).

5.3. Russia's Strategy

While Russia has been supporting Syrian regime, at the same time it has been carrying out diplomacy with other players in the Middle Eastern nation. The fall of the Assad administration has forced Russia to rethink its approach to protect its military installation: Hmeimim air base and the naval facility in Tartus. To strengthen its position in Syria Moscow has been working directly with the new leadership of this country; at the same time the state can be multiplex with both cooperative and competitive interactions with Turkey, which is the member of NATO (Priya, 2024).

5.4. Implications for Regional Stability

The change of guard which has happened due to Assad's exit has brought in a new alignment in the Middle East region. Russia is advancing its position through switches in the power relations with Turkey sponsoring groups and changing the balance in favor of the rebels. Iran's lesser part is indicative of changes of sides and balances of power as well as the relationships between local players who compete for their spheres of influence in the post-Assad Syria. These developments are very apropos for understanding various processes and prospects of stabilization of the region as well as the cooperation and conflict between the countries concerned. GCC's policies about Syria have been very influential in determining the stability within a specific region after the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad. Syria's neighbors and six GCC members – the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain – have had a dynamic approach to the Syrian issue especially after the start of the Syrian Civil war in 2011. Here's an analysis of how their policies impact regional stability (Ullah, 2024).

5.5. Early Opposition to Assad

In first years of Syrian Civil War, the GCC countries mainly Saudi Arabia and Qatar were more forky articulating opposition to Bashar al-Assad's regime. The Gulf states viewed Assad's regime as an Iranian partner and that bit an existential threat to their own primacy and stability in the region. They thought that the Bashar al-Assad was a tool of the Iranian imperial policy to dominate the Middle East by creating a famous Shia arc which was supported by Hezbollah in Lebanon and multiple groups in Iraq.

5.6. The GCC's response during the war included

Support for Rebel Groups: Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as key members of the GCC, armed and financed the opposition making the conflict worse, and deepening regional divide. Sometimes this backing was expressed in the form of arms supplies, training, and finance for various pole or some of them had an Islamist orientation. Diplomatic Isolation of Assad: GCC countries headed the international pressure to isolate Syria in the regional and global levels. The IAG demanded the suspension of Syria's membership in the Arab League and supported any international actions that would lead to the ouster of the Assad regime. Proxy Conflicts: It also widened involvement of the GCC countries in Syria, and dragged in Iran, Russia among other forces. Instead this amplified the conflict and made the Middle Eastern region even more divided, the Syrian war evident being a representation of the Sunni Shia conflict (Al-Saadi, 2024).

5.7. Change of Health Policy After Assad Has Proven Resilient

When the Syrian civil war started getting protracted and Assad regime proved to be very Aristotelian and resistant with underlying support from Russia and Iran, the GCC countries tended to form a new strategy. The GCC itself over the years also changed its position from being a rather hostile one to Syria. Normalization with Assad (UAE and Bahrain): In the process, the UAE, for instance, started stand gradually from its previous position to normalize relations with Assad. Also in 2018 the UAE retore the ambassador to Syria, a strong indication of diplomatic relations normalcy. Bahrain and other gulf Cooperation Council (gcc) also followed the same path, abandoning the right or moral grounds to support or oppose the regime of Assad. Syria's Return to the Arab League: Syria rejoined the Arab League on the 28th of May, 2023 after they were expelled from the organization in 2011. This was a dramatic change of positions from the GCC most of whose members were encouraging return of Syria to regional diplomacy. The role of the UAE can hardly be overestimated, as it was the country that pushed for Syria's comeback with the need to maintain stability and unity of the Arab states. In line with the improving relations between them, the GCC countries have, for example, recently begun expressing concern in the reconstruction Syria. This has involved debates on reconstruction of the physical infrastructure as well as economic structure of Syria; however, these are mainly depending on the political change in Syria and the solving of problems associated with the war (Mustafa, 2024).

5.8. Impact on Regional Stability

The evolving policies of the GCC countries toward Syria have had several significant implications for regional stability, Increased Fragmentation and Polarization: The initial backing for opposition factions and the Gulf's engagement in the conflict aggravated the division of sectarian nature in Syria and the region as a whole. This amplified the rivalry of Sunni and Shia; the actors in the region could not come to an agreement and see eye to eye on peace making.

5.9. Shifting Alliances

Accompanying change in the positions stating that it is time to normalize the relations with Assad by some of the member states of GCC has resulted in the change of the sides in conflict. This has downplayed the voice of opposition factions towards Assad in the GCC especially Saudi Arabia which has been more unforgiving on the regime. The kept internal disagreement of GCC concerning Syria corresponds to general regional cleavages particularly Saudi Arabia and UAE combining different approaches towards Iran and Syria.

5.10. Syria as a Proxy for Rivalries

Because of its strategic importance in the region, Syria has become a theatre for proxy war between the GCC states and Iran. Syria has become the focal point of the current Sunni-Shia conflict due to Iran joining the party for Assad's side. To some extent, these policy changes are designed to constrain Iran in Syria and to stake the GCC's claim to be a key player in the region's reconstruction.

5.11. Potential for Reconstruction and Stability

While discussing the nature of the emerging cooperation with Syria, which is gradually shifting to the process of postwar recovery, the GCC countries starting the process of normalization of relations with Damascus are gradually choosing the type of their involvement in the Syrian reconstruction process. But this will mean balancing of relations with Iran and Russia that have strengthened their positions in Syria and can exercise great control over any repair work. The possibility of the region and Syria maintaining stability lies in the proper management of all international interests. This paper aims to explore how Syrian foreign policy, especially after the survival of the Bashar al-Assad's regime during and after the civil war, interact with international norms. That is why the analysis of the main directions and guidelines for the Syrian foreign policy showed that it conforms to some principles of the global governance while violating others depending on the regional and international actors, as well as the strategic goals of the state. Below is a detailed analysis of Syria's foreign policy in this context (Yousef, 2024).

5.12. Compliance with the Norms Set Among the Global Governance Systems

5.12.1. On Support of Sovereignty and Non-Interference

Another fundamental point of the Syrian foreign policy obvious for the period of Assad's rule and even more evident after its stabilization, is commitment to the principles of state sovereignty and non-interventionism. This attitude is consonant with the original principles of global management that have emerged as part of the UN Charter and focus on the sovereignty and the inviolability of territories. The government of Syria has always been vocal in the fight against the intrusion of foreign forces especially those of the Western and regional ones citing sovereignty as their main reason. This is even more so where it applies the label of foreign-backed insurgency to the international support for the opposition during the civil war. Syria has also backed other states experiencing external aggression and threats to their autonomy and sovereignty, including Iran, Venezuela, and North Korea-Arabian Frank this is because most of these states' problems have been described by Syria as part of a universal struggle against imperialism led by Western states (Mohammadpour & Soleimani, 2024).

5.12.2. International Organization Relations and its Multi-State Engagement
The UN at Syria continues to participate in various activities of the international organizations as a responsible member of the global governance. However, the isolation syndrome that was apparent mainly in the post-civil upheaval period and more so after the suspension from the Arab League and severed relationship with Western powers, Syria continues to have diplomatic relations with many multilateral organizations. Since Assad's rule, Syria remains an active member of the United Nation system while defending its sovereignty, and denounces interferences in other countries. The Syrian government has also tried to use such forum as the United Nations Security Council to frustrate measures that the government regards as dangerous to its sovereignty. Syria reconnecting with the Arab League, another regional norm is that of cooperation and dialogue. This was more cemented in the year 2023 when Syria was allowed back into the Arab League an indication that the Arab nations were slowly turning the corner on accepting their neighbor once again (Bukhari, et al., 2024).

5.12.3. Obedience to International Humanitarian Law in Some Places
While Syria's activities have elicited increasing indignation by the world, especially regarding abuses of human rights, it has also given some thought on the application of IHL in specific aspects. On some occasions, Syria, for instance, has felt compelled to justify its actions to the effect that it was fighting terrorism. Moreover, it has provided for discussion on regional levels so connected topics as aid and reconstruction of the affected areas that fit to the modern trends of global politics in which reconstruction of the devastated zones and providing humanitarian assistances are topical.

5.13. Problems with Global Governance Framework

5.13.1. In this Subject Area, Human Rights Violation and War Crimes Shall be Addressed
Perhaps the most egregious norms of global governance violate by Syria's foreign policy since the end of the Assad regime is the persecution of human rights and international humanitarian law involving organized violence during the Syrian Civil War. The Assad regime has been cited to have employed chemical weapons in attacks on civilians, besieged areas, and employing torture, and executions to dissenting citizens. It is with regards to these actions that I question the dominant global human rights culture as captured in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Conventions. Subsequently, Syria continues to deny any such activity and its allies have joined in accusing the west and others of fabricating such stories for political reasons and as part of a regime change campaign against Syria. Syria's ties to Russia and Iran, the two countries that have protected Assad from the international sanctions and a military intervention, have only deepened the crisis in the global governance regime that seeks to punish perpetrators of human rights violations (Colan, 2024).

5.13.2. Comparison with Authoritarianism and the Degradation of Democracy
This paper argues that with the Assad regime in power, Syria represents an exception to conventional international politics, that supports free elections and the liberties of people. Syria affairs are mostly synchronized with other authoritarian counterparts including Russia, Iran and North Korea hence them polices are regarded as perpetuating an authoritarian system as opposed to liberal democracy propagated by the West. Further, the Civil war and the domestic opposition crackdown, as well as the suppression of democratic movements by Assad, creates added difficulties for the identification of how Syria's policies fit into the global governance structure of chosen characteristics as political freedoms pluralism and democracy.

5.13.3. Reliance on authoritarian Partnership

Syria's economic and military ally with Iran and Russia, both of which are perceived as threatening to challenge the current post-World War Liberal order puts Syria in a position of being against Western led global Institutions. These alliances have let Syria stand up to outside pressure for regime change and restore stability for the Assad regime. Even though Russia and Iran believe in a multipolar world system, Syria's dependence on those powers directly opposes the western global order based on democracy, human rights and market economics. These traits are in some way reflected in Syria's foreign policy it supports those powers in their opposition to the US led sanctions and regime change in other nations.

5.13.4. Selective socialization in International Security Norms

Syrian FP also gives headache regarding the international order especially issues to do with counter terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons. Internally, the Assad regime has been accused of various times in the conflict receiving and aiding terrorist organizations including helping Hezbollah in Syria and permitting Iranian backed militia in its territory. Syria's support for groups like Hezbollah or Hamas was another reason why it was considered an international pariah: those are supra-regional players seen as troublemakers around the Middle East and beyond. This combination of sponsorship hampers the international fight against terrorism, and undermines the security architecture created by organizations such as the UN Security Council.

5.13.5. Global Politics and Conflict: Changing Foundations of World Order

Since civil war and Assad's comeback to power, Syrian foreign policy has shifted and provoked changes in regional bonds that put the region in geopolitical turbulence. The enhanced activities of Russia and Iran in Syria have upset the existing status quo, and destabilized the traditional US partners and the western led security architecture in the Middle East. Moreover, Syria has been engaging in proxy wars for example in Yemen supporting the Houthi rebels that have devastated neighboring states hence violating the international principles of regional stability.

5.14. Future Directions

To avoid further fragmentation of conflict in Syria especially along sectarian lines, or continued foreign intervention, for or against certain parties, it is necessary to work at the core conflicts leading to the situations while at the same attempt to establish the necessary processes and means of postwar reconstruction and sovereignty. The following directions provide detailed insights and recommendations, incorporating facts, figures, and lessons learned from the recent chaos following the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime:

5.14.1. Building the Framework for Democracy

The failure to establish an inclusive polity led to sectarianism and external interference in Syria. After the Assad regime's fall, the lack of a unified opposition and deep divisions among Sunni, Alawite, Kurdish, and Christian groups exacerbated the chaos. A UN-backed initiative, where all factions engage in comprehensive talks, is essential. Previous efforts, like the Geneva peace talks (2017-2019) and the Astana process, lacked effective enforcement and true inclusivity. The United Nations would make an ideal third-party mediating organization to guarantee fair negotiations that will bring peace to the region.

5.14.2. Decreasing Sectarian Divide

Syrian internal chaos emerged through sectarianism because the Alawite leadership (12% of the population) controlled both political and military responsibilities under Assad yet the Sunnis (70% of the population) were excluded. Alawites suffered from public resentment after Assad exited power while their position in society worsened the country's separation into conflicting groups. A Truth and Reconciliation commission based on the South African model presents a solution for establishing a unified national story. Educational promotion of peaceful collective identities would help resolve sectarian differences while creating unity between various groups in the country.

5.14.3. Enhancing Local Administration towards Reconstruction

Decentralization offers benefits like local autonomy and stability, as seen in the Kurdish-led administration in northern Syria. The international community should promote similar governance models while considering Syria's political landscape. Rebuilding Syria, estimated to cost over $250 billion, should focus on inclusive, transparent processes to avoid reinforcing corruption and sectarianism.

5.14.4. Foreign interference and proxy conflicts
Various external powers including the US and Russia together with Turkey Iran and Israel continue to contest influence and control in the Syrian domain. The downfall of Assad brought about fresh conflicts between Turkey and its activities in the north alongside Iranian-backed military groups. The United States withdrawal in 2019 led to both Turkey and Russia taking control of the power void. A conference organized by either UN or OIC should bring together Iran along with Turkey and Saudi Arabia to create a non-interference policy and extract support units from the Region.

5.14.5. Challenging Radicalization and Ensuring Stability at the Frontier
ISIS-like groups remain a potential threat post-Assad. Since its territorial loss in 2019, ISIS has exploited the political vacuum to regroup, with over 300 operations in 2023, mostly in eastern Syria. The global community must continue fighting terrorism and address the root causes of radicalization. Preventing cross-border terrorism and unauthorized arms trafficking requires better border control and enhanced cooperation between Iraq, Jordan, and Syria.

5.14.6. Humanitarian Assistance and Refugee Repatriation
The civil war has displaced 6.8 million internally and forced 5.5 million to seek refuge abroad. Refugee camps in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon remain overcrowded and under-resourced. Any repatriation efforts must be safe, dignified, and voluntary. The international community, particularly UNHCR and ICRC, should provide adequate funding for infrastructure, health, and housing in repatriation areas. Addressing land ownership and legal conditions for restitution will also aid in this process.

5.14.7. Arizona's focus for the next four years will be
Rebuilding Economic Foundations and Employment Opportunities. Syria's living conditions have worsened post-Assad, with over 90% of Syrians expected to live in poverty and more than half unemployed by 2024. Key industries like agriculture, energy, and manufacturing have been severely impacted. Proposed solutions include the European Union and Gulf Cooperation Council leading a reconstruction fund, ensuring fair and effective distribution of resources. Emphasis should also be placed on protecting youth from extremist and criminal involvement.

5.14.8. Utilizing International Assistance for Polarized Mediation
One can underscore a change in the UN mission in the Syrian Arab Republic from a humanitarian one to a peacebuilding mission. The UN could use a properly equipped, large scale, Chapter VII mission, to disarm the combatants and supervise implementation of cease fire agreements. International relation players such as US, Russia, and China need to be enlisted in supporting neutrality. Lessons learnt from previous interventions like the Dayton accords being a yard stick in tackling competing interests.

5.14.9. The formation of opportunities for Regional Economic Integration
Fiscal interaction can contribute toward peace and security to bear long term fruits. Syria's joining in regional infrastructure projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Arab Gas Pipeline can help into its connection into the Middle Eastern economy. Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan must enter into trade agreements and increase interdependence because there is a tendency for countries with such relations not to go to war. To be precise, International Bank for reconstruction and development study in 2023 proved integration enhances regional economy by 15 percent within a decade in Syria's case.

5.14.10. Mess Associates: Promoting Accountability and Justice
The post-Assad transition also requires legal measures for confrontation of war crimes and violations of human rights of Syrian people. To address the crime that was committed during civil war, it recommended formation of mixed court system with both international and domestic judiciaries. These mechanisms will not only bring justice but will also clearly demonstrate intention of international players to develop the rule of law and will attract wider participation. The future

of Syria relies on how the country will address sectarian politics, internal politics, and regional politics for sovereignty, stability and unity to prevail. Maintaining its sovereignty and governance while also integrating into the international community the country can avoid the deepening of chaos in the state and contribute to the constructive role in the Middle Eastern states relations.

6. Conclusions

Regionally directed forces together with global influences determine the political fate of Syria in the Middle East. Internal politics and external relationships in Syria went through significant changes due to the Syrian Civil War because Russia and Iran as well as Turkey and the Gulf states made Syria's problems even more severe. The restoration of political unity along with postwar recovery continues to be difficult because different regional groupings with opposing blocs formed in their place. Security dilemmas and sectarianism alongside proxy wars work against stabilization efforts in the country. Since both Russia and China and the United States engage in shaping Syria's international relations stability and peace agreements remain challenging to obtain. Syria's standing in the international order requires establishing strategic alliances coupled with foreign investment for rebuilding efforts while satisfying upcoming supporters' needs. Political transformation within Syria combined with international and regional cooperation will establish sovereignty and stability.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the understanding of regionalism and globalism in shaping Syria's political landscape. By examining state sovereignty, security dilemmas, and foreign interventions, it expands the discourse on proxy conflicts and international relations theory. The findings reinforce realist perspectives on power politics while also highlighting the role of constructivist approaches in shaping Syria's identity and alliances.

6.2. Practical Implications

The research offers policy recommendations for Syria's reconstruction and stabilization. It emphasizes the need for balanced diplomatic engagement, strategic alliances, and foreign investment to ensure long-term recovery. Policymakers can use these insights to navigate Syria's geopolitical constraints, mitigate external interferences, and enhance cooperation among regional and global actors.

6.3. Limitations

This study primarily focuses on geopolitical and security aspects, leaving room for further exploration of economic and societal reconstruction efforts. Additionally, due to the rapidly evolving nature of Middle Eastern politics, some findings may require periodic reassessment to remain relevant. The study also encounters data limitations due to restricted access to conflict-affected regions.

6.4. Future Research

Further studies should investigate Syria's post-conflict governance structures, the role of regional economic frameworks, and the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative on Syria's reconstruction. Additionally, exploring grassroots peacebuilding efforts and the influence of non-state actors** in Syria's future stability would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the country's trajectory.

7. Recommendations

7.1. Policy Recommendations for Syria's Reintegration into the Regional Economy

7.1.1. Under Structured Conditions, Syria Should Engage with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
Syria should engage with GCC at a structured governance condition, while ensuring transparency of funds in the reconstruction, taking anti-corruption measures and undertake gradual political reforms to attract long term investments.

7.1.2. Bilateral Economic Agreements
Syria could look to trade under bilateral economic agreements with its neighboring countries such as Iraq Lebanon, Jordan to form part of regional market and to rebuild an infrastructure to participate in cross border trade facilitation.

7.1.3. Making the most of the Astana process
The best way for Syria to secure economic cooperation is to invoke the Astana process (Russia, Turkey, Iran) and at the same time limit engagement with Arab League states to broaden investment sources.

7.1.4. Regional Development Bank Initiative
The possibility of establishing a Middle Eastern Development Fund with finance from GCC and China for rebuilding the key infrastructure, and with the mechanisms of control of funds directed towards reconstructing what was destroyed.

7.1.5. Alternative Diplomatic Mechanisms
With the UN having this limited power of enforcement, Syria must resort to other bilateral or regional coalitions such as the Arab League, BRICS, or Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to negotiate issues around reconstruction aid and diplomatic normalization.

7.1.6. Energy and Infrastructure Cooperation
If agreed, such energy pipelines could traverse Syria through transit agreements on provision to the Mediterranean, bringing economic importance to regional supply chains and ensure investment in necessary infrastructure.

7.1.7. Gradual Market Liberalization
The main economic reform actions Syria needs to take to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) are the easing of business regulations, benefiting from regional investors, and allowing a reintegration into the global financial system through a phased diplomatic engagement.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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