

Russian Intervention Strategy in Syria

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Abstract

The research aimed to investigate the Russian intervention strategy in Syria .Therefore the research handled the background of the relation between the two countries. The reasons and the motivations for Russian intervention in Syria and Russian hidden objectives. The study concluded that Russian intervention in Syria is mainly based on Russian interests.

1.1 Background

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia witnessed a period of political and social instability that prevented it from maintaining even the influence areas of neighboring and close to .After the fall of Warsaw Pact some Eastern European countries joined NATO .Anteater on annex countries that were former Soviet republics. This coincided with European Union's extension to include Eastern European countries. Countries such as Poland and Hungary joined NATO as well as Baltic states ,establishment of Asian Islamic states, the independence of Belarus and Ukraine.

In Russia's effort to restore its role as a superpower, it adopted the idea of statehood, sovereignty, and vital space as an ideology with imperialism tendencies Trans passing Russian nationalism and in its effort to restore the role of the superpower. It should be noted that Russia's policy under Putin is not based on a global ideology but on a national basis based on state capitalism, addressing national feelings and refusing West exploit its weakness period. The national position is manifested in non-adoption of principle that was formulated ideologically.

1.2 Study Statement

Russia's military intervention in Syria and its involvement in military operations against terrorist organizations belong to Al-Qaeda is an expression of Moscow's strategy towards Syrian crisis as a matter of death or life. The Russian Church's description of this intervention as a Holy War reveals the importance of this war to Moscow and its policy toward Syria and Middle East in general. Since Russia is considered to be the first target of the rise of radical Islamic movements in the region for historical, geographic, and political and social reasons, as its bitter experience in Chechnya with these terrorist organizations. The problem of the study is to determine the intervention strategy in Syria

1.3 Hypothesis

The research proceeds from a major assumption that Russia has adopted preventive theory as a strategy for intervention in Syria

1.4 Importance of Syria in Russian strategy

Syria is the last stronghold of logistics existence of Russia in Middle East, in particular after the influence decline of the former Soviet Union and dismantled and the consequences of the strategic impact of Russian influence in the Arab region, in particular. Russia has its largest military base in Tartous province which represents the advanced base to control American and Western movements in vital oil areas in Arabian Gulf and African Horn, Red Sea and North Mediterranean. So the Russian government is keen to maintain its influence in Syrian arena and support Syrian regime in all forms and supply everything to help in ending the unrest on Syrian territories.(Jabber2015 ,)

The Russian attitude was clear since the first day of events outbreak in Syria. It supported Syrian regime and its measures against Syrian opposition, including the use of armed force. Politically, Russia used its veto against any resolution condemning it or Western military intervention against Syrian regime in its first precedent. Russian government rejected any military action Syria's strategic importance to Russia stands out in several directions: (Dab, 2013, p. 31)

1.4.1 Economic importance: Syria is an important economic partner of Russia mainly in fields of energy and weapons there are a number of Russian energy companies operating in Syria, notably Gazprom. Syria is an important weapon market for Russia .Russian investments and economic interests are estimated in billions dollars, therefore Russia does not want to lose its economic partner.

1.4.2 Geostrategic Importance:

Since the 18th century Russia's foreign policy has been trying to reach warm waters. Russia's waterways are frozen and early have sought to cope with these forms of conflict with Ottoman Empire to reach Black Sea.

Therefore Russia has leased Tartous naval base in the 1970s under President Hafez Al-Assad. Such base is important because it is being the only remaining Russian base in the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore Moscow supports Assad without any limitations. (Al-Obeidi, 2012, p. 38)

This goal was subsequently incorporated into 2001 Russian naval doctrine, which outlines Russian naval policy objectives until 2010. According to this doctrine, Mediterranean is viewed as a strategically important area, with Russia's aim to secure its maritime presence. A source in Black Sea Fleet Command confirmed in September 2011 that there was a permanent presence of Russian naval vessels at Tartous naval base to denote Russian presence in this ten sioned region and to use it to evacuate Russian nationals when needed, such as Emman ship and Ivan Popnov ship which are carrying a unit of Russian Marines on board

The importance of Syria emerges also with respect to Russia due to the fact that Damascus is the first ally of Iran and the latter is important for Russia in the economic level, where a high proportion of trade between them, especially in energy and weapons fields.

Due to these interests Russia do not want to risk the loss of base by abandoning Assad because Assad successor will not provide Moscow with what it wants from Syria, especially the presence of an apparent Islamic character on the Syrian opposition forces, especially Muslim Brotherhood, which supports the concern of Moscow's political Islam, which Russia is still Suffer from it on its territory.

Russian motives in supporting Syrian regime:

There are motives of intellectual nature, and other motives of economic and strategic interest. It is difficult to consider any of these motives is the decisive factor in determining the Russian position. Below some of these motives: (Al-Khuli, 2012, pp. 172-73)

1-Searching for selfish nationalism calculations

It is very difficult to ignore Syria importance as a key component in Arab-Zionist conflict and regional issues, but it is unlikely that Russia has built its position regarding Syrian uprising on the basis of this conflict complications. When Arab change events began, The analysis indicate that Arab are against the United States and the Zionist entity, therefore Russia can capture opportunity to improve its position in the region. (Al-Khuli, 2012, p. 173).

2.The fear of political Islam and the effects of Arab uprisings: (Al-Khuly 2012, p. 175)

Russia is keen to keep the ruling power in Syria, because if the power in Syria fall then change train will move to Iran and the Caucasus. The images broadcast by television on Arab protesters in public squares in Tunisia to Sanaa and from Cairo to Damascus, are difficult to consider that they help rulers to control the opposition. Central Asia is deemed as a vital strategic area for Russia in its struggle for power there, with the United States. The issue here concerns the raw materials and oil supplies necessary for the continuation of the development process. In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, all of which are old areas of influence for Russia since the Soviet Union. All of which are also vulnerable to tremors and unrest due to Islamic movements activity and their influence extension in light of movements continuous protest in the Arab world.

3.The line of defense for Central Asia and the Caucasus starts from the Arab world:

According to some experts, there are significant numbers of Muslim population in Russia, which forms a potential ground for Islamic movement's activity, or at least their impact. Russia has at least 25 per cent of its population are Muslims (now they are 25 million people of 145 million) and are living in dangerous areas for Russia (in the Caucasus, the Black Sea, the Volga Basin in Ural and Siberia) . Muslims are the original; population element(without immigrants and Russian settlers) in Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya, North Ossetia, ¹ Kabardiani Balkarskaya, Crimea, Jovashia, Mordavia, Bashkiria, the provinces of Kara Jai, Adlagic, Orega and others republics.

They recall that other important actors from outside and within the region who have a competing role on the regional stage. As well as the United States of America, the European Union and Japan, each of which is trying to have a strong position in the Arab world and in Central Asia (Al-Khuli, 2012, p. 176)

1.5 Justifications for Russian intervention in Syria

Developments that followed emergence Dash and the Declaration of Islamic State have shown the link of Russian national security with region security and stability. So Russia's fight against terrorism should start from its incubator areas in the region, Syria in particular.

The Russian authorities fear from the growing numbers of those who join Daesh from Russia and its neighbors Central Asian countries ,who were estimated totally more than 7,000 individuals according to data from the Collective Security Organization and the Russian Federal Security Service, including 2,714 Russians. Thus, Daesh threat is not threatening Syria and the region, but also Russia, especially when the organization declared that Russia is his enemy, declared jihad against it, threatened to occupy the Kremlin (Sheikh, 2011, p. 116)

Therefore, Russia has given security the priority, and fighting against terrorism is a prerequisite for any other geostrategic interests or factors. Moscow believes that terrorism elimination must be supported in the areas

that support it, including the Middle East, Syria in particular, which has become the incubator of many terrorist organizations, including Daesh, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Nazra Front. It is therefore possible to understand the motives of the Russian military campaign against terrorism in Syria, which comes in response to the requirements of Russian national security in the first place, and not to support Bashar al-Assad as a person, as some say.

It is therefore possible to understand the motives of Russian military campaign against terrorism in Syria, which comes in response to the requirements of Russian national security in the first place, and not to support Bashar al-Assad as a person. Russia, by its decision, does not only support the Syrian state. But it protects its national security from the escalation of the Daesh threat, and its repercussions on Russian income, especially with growing ties of the organization with its counterparts in the Russian Caucasus. (Sheikh, 2016, p. 116)

1.6 Reasons for intervention

Among the most important reasons for intervention are the following

1-The historical relations between the two countries at the level of economic and military cooperation achieved by the two countries. Syria represents the most important foothold in the region for Russia. Syria's geopolitical location makes it extremely important. It was believed that the war against terrorism, both on Syrian territory and in the Caucasus, is imposed on Russia and Syria at the same time. In the light of fear the fighters return from Syria to the Caucasus, that Russia considers the Syrian front as its first defensive line.

Syria today attracts thousands of them, seeking martyrdom. Putin considers radical Islam is the biggest threat to his country. In general, Russia's interest in the Syrian crisis is very important one. On the one hand, under Putin's third term, Russia needs to regain its status as a superpower in the international system. On the other hand, Putin is keen not to repeat what he considers a deception or betrayal of his country when Western countries used a resolution to establish no-fly zone (UN Security Council Resolution 1973) to intervene militarily in order to overthrow Qadhafi regime and exclude Moscow from what it sees as "spoils" shared by those countries. (Dyab, 2013, 74)

2-Syria has been the main strategic ally of Russia in the Middle East early 1970s. The relationship between the two countries has been strengthened during more than four decades. Damascus has become the cornerstone of Russian policy in the region after the declination of the relationship between Cairo and Moscow on one hand, and the development of relations between Moscow and Tehran, which is the main partner of the Syrian regime, on the other hand.

3-Syria is a geographical extension of the southern borders of Russia. Moreover Russia has its military base in Tartus port dedicated to provides services to Russian Navy, and to serve Russian ships that carry out military missions. It is the only one in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Aden. The importance of this is highlighted in the light of Russia's tendency to strengthen its presence in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea after the Crimean Peninsula was annexed to Russia in 2014. This is embodied in the new military doctrine, which includes to assure permanent military presence of Russia in the Mediterranean and the strengthening of Russian strategic positions in Black sea, in response to movements of the United States and NATO in the Black Sea, against the background of the Ukrainian crisis.

4-Russia is a major market for Russian weapons since it depends on Russian armament, as well as important 4. Russian investments in energy sector, and the fact that Syria is an important transit, if stable, to transfer energy

1.7 Russian intervention strategy in Syria

In autumn 2015, Russia took intervene decision directly in Syrian conflict. This decision has changed dramatically the political landscape at three levels. At the local level, the balance between armed groups in Syria has been turned upside down. Preliminary results of Russia's participation in Al-Assad forces and, after the strikes, such forces gained morale as well as an important advantage against anti-regime forces.

At international level, the intervention has provoked new argument in an attempt to understand Russia's new strategy. At regional level, Russia's intervention has caused a number of short-term conflicts between Ankara and Moscow. The Russian intervention appears to be a deliberate strategic effort to support Syrian regime through direct military forces, because the support provided by Hezbollah and Iran is insufficient.

Russia is likely to have decided to intervene in cooperation with Tehran, which, according to some news sources, is strengthening its military support for Syrian regime. The Russian decision includes other possible targets, including maintaining the vital western region of the regime, protecting Russia's sea and air ports to reach Syria, and extending Moscow's control over the situation in general.

On a larger scale, Russia seems committed to exercise its influence in the Middle East, where Syria offers an opportunity to achieve its goal. In one way or another, The military deployment in Syria is similar to the scenario Russia adopted to control the Crimea in 2014. Initially, Russia takes proactive steps ambiguous and conspicuous statements of leadership and unclear goals, coupled with the gradual construction of troops, benefiting from the cover provided by the activities and facilities of the former Russian in Syria.

1.7.1 The strategic dimensions of Russian intervention

The Russian intervention carried several messages as follows:

- A. Possibility to fill the potential strategic vacuum in the region after the US exit
- B. To highlight and confirm Russia's role as a major power in a highly sensitive area for the international movement of interactions.
- C. The inability of the US and the West to stand alone in managing international crises.
- D. Protect Russia's strategic interests by maintaining a permanent maritime presence in the port of Tartous and Lattakia, which will facilitate the movement of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean Sea and away from any potential pressure from Turkey.
- E. The Russian presence in Syria contributes to preservation of Russia's status as a major supplier of gas to Europe and to prevent of creating pipeline for transporting Qatari gas through Syria and Turkey to Europe.
- F-To confirm attempts failure to isolate Russia, and the attempt to create common ground with European countries to end the sanctions imposed on Russia due to Ukrainian crisis.
- G-To show the elements of Russian developed military power, and confirm that possession of these elements to use, not only to deter.
- H. To confirm that the political solution is the basis for Syrian crisis. But political solution to be possible it requires a certain balance between the conflicting forces in Syria. This is what Russia tried to achieve after the imbalance in favor of some of the forces

1.7.2 The strategic positioning of the Russian intervention: (Yunus, 2016, p. 125).

Some researchers argue that Russian military intervention is an extension of Russia's effort to be stationed in the Middle East and to secure a permanent outlet on the Mediterranean. Most Russian military bases are located on the Black Sea. This means that Russian intervention is a strategic positioning aimed to find Russian positioning stations in the Middle East, and on the Mediterranean Sea, to overcome attempts at geographical encirclement by NATO

-The fortification of Russian military base in Tartus port and Russian air base in Hameimim, in addition to the establishment of a large Russian military base near Lattakia. This means that Russian military intervention aimed at maintaining minimum areas controlled by Assad regime. These areas are permanently included in the so-called "fruitful Syria", which means the geographical boundaries controlled by Syrian regime along the coast, which in most government institutions, industrial zones and harbors are concentrated

1.7.3 The political maneuver: The Russian military intervention in Syria is considered as a political maneuver with political objectives aimed at giving impetus to political conciliation, mediation and negotiation to preserve the survival of Assad regime in order not to lose one of its most important allies in the Middle East. For Russia, Assad fall means Russia's loss of economic investment, its economic and military support for regime, against military facilities, and economic advantages. Therefore Russian military intervention is therefore a direct political guardianship of Assad-controlled areas of Syria to protect Russian interests.

It is possible to say that the Russian military intervention in Syria began tactically and aimed to ensure a permanent location for Russia in the regional interactions in the Middle East through the military presence in Syria to maintain Russian interests and to build new alliances with pivotal regional countries such as Egypt to circumvent the imposed isolation on Russia from Western countries. In contrast, Russia faced a complicated regional and international reality as a result of the intensification of the international and regional roles in Syria, the complexities of the internal conflict and the escalation of the targeting of Russian military presence in Syria in the framework of proxy wars.

A prolonged war of attrition, in the absence of completion of the processes of calm and settlement of the conflict in Syria, which is subject to reconciling the interests of the conflicting regional and international parties, and not only resolve conflicts between the local parties.

1.8 The objectives of the Russian intervention in Syria

Russia has set two primary objectives primarily for its direct military intervention in Syria to support the Syrian forces of legitimate regime: First, to prevent the US coalition from taking any steps that would identify "liberated areas" and impose an air embargo on them, and thus prevent the Syrian armed opposition from gathering in those areas and launching ground attacks under the cover of an air coalition forces, and this is being prepared for many months, whether through direct action by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, or indirectly by France, whose president declared the need to support what he called liberated areas. The second is the desire of the Kremlin to support the "legitimate" regime in the fight against terrorism, and at the same time push for meetings or agreements between the various Syrian forces, including the political system of a political settlement, which allows Russia to preserve its interests. In Iraq and Libya. (Jaber, 2015)

The first goal was announced six days after the start of the Russian bombing in Syria by the Deputy Russian Foreign Minister, where he stressed that his country refuses to establish a no-fly zone in Syria, suggested by Turkey, citing the need to respect the sovereignty of States. The second objective is under process. Russia has

announced a security and logistic alliance to exchange security information with Iran, Iraq and Syria, and to continue to work alongside Syrian forces and Kurdish Peshmerga forces. Moscow has acknowledged that it has provided these forces by weapons, in addition to Iranian Revolutionary Guard volunteers who have been fighting for a while in Syria along with members of the Lebanese Hezbollah (Al-Otaibi, 2015)

Russian intervention objective is characterized by simplicity and reality and matching with limited Russian resources. Russia aims to keep Assad regime as a political entity that provides an easy route to Russian influence and guarantees Russia a stake in any political settlement within the country in the future. Russia is not trying to control Syria, nor to return the Alawites to full control of the entire country, nor to the defeat of the Islamic state, or to the elimination of Iranian influence, and certainly not to pursue the dream of building a soft democracy within Syria.

The most prominent declared goal of Russian military presence in Syria was the elimination of a Daesh organization; this is part of a series of interim steps, but the fact that there has not yet been a real military confrontation between Russia and Daesh inside Syria, although the announcement of Russian military operations in late September, Russia has been keen to eliminate Daesh in three days, Russia has carried out only 5% of the strikes against Daesh sites of a few out of dozens of raids carried out against the sites of the Syrian opposition. Which indicates that there are other objectives beyond Daesh, are required before the existence of Daesh, and not limited to support or maintenance of the Syrian regime.

Different parties are talking about five objectives that outline Russian military intervention strategy in Syria

1-Securing Russia's influence over the Mediterranean Sea, in Syria, the last Arab country allied to Russia in the Middle East

2 - Working in American direct space, through establishment of military bases on the Turkish borders with, to balance with US influence in Ukraine.

3 - to face extremist groups in the Middle East, to prevent them from returning to Russia, and also to be closer to the border with Turkey, a country with influence and influence on the Caucasus fighters and Central Asia Moscow's dangerous enemies.

4. To keep Russian ally President Bashar al-Assad in Syria and maintaining the Syrian army system, the old Arab ally of the Soviet Union and then Russia

5-To strengthen the alliance with Iran in Syria, which forms the maritime port of the vital Silk Road of China-Russia-Iran to reach the warm waters of the Mediterranean Sea. This way needs Afghanistan to reach Iran and Iraq to reach Syria, with the paradox that Afghanistan and Iraq are countries occupied by America to cut the Silk Road between China, Russia and Iran in Afghanistan and between Iran and Syria in Iraq. The US project has suffered a major defeat in both countries

1.9 Implement of intervention strategy

Russia adopts a phased plan to implement its strategy in Syria

1-Through securing the Russian military base in Latakia, where the completion of the large radars in Salnafa and in the mountain range of the Syrian coast, was deployed Dabab T 90 modern around the Russian base in Latakia, and deployment of missile defense system linked to satellite, and the transfer of dozens of tons of Advanced military equipment via an air bridge between Russia and Syria.

2-Depending on Syrian army on the ground and provide logistical support without engaging in ground war significantly, and comes in the forefront of logistical support to provide air support and information, and opening Russian satellites for Syrian Sukhoi aircraft, after Moscow refused to meet this Syrian request previously, The exchange of information and the submission of Moscow images taken by the satellites for the movements of armed groups, centers and gathering methods of supply warehouses and weapons caches, as well as the introduction of the Syrian military communications system in the Russian system, including meetings of military leaders T Satellite.

3-To start military operation soon to stabilize the ally system through air and information support to restore some important and sensitive areas, consequently weaken the Turkish role, while at the same time restore important areas of the hands Daash, to prove what Russia and Syria say that the Syrian army is the only force capable of fighting Daash on the ground after the American failure to hit it by air and fighting over land through groups trained by US intelligence in Turkey and soon joined the Nusra immediately after entering the Syrian territory (Salami, 2015).

1.10 Conclusion

Russian Syrian relationship is rooted to the second half of the twentieth century during the former Soviet Union era. Hafez Al Assad has enhanced such relation. Syria is deemed as a strategic ally to the Soviet Union and to Russia. Such relations were based on the exchange benefits for each of them. So the Russian intervention in Syria is not to protect the Syrian regime but to maintain its strategic interest in Syria.

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