

The Russian Intervention in Syria

Iman Abdulwahid Majeed

*University of kirkuk department of construction and projects,
government contracts*

Email: emanma@uokirkuk.edu.iq

Abstract: The subject of this research is "The Russian Intervention in Syria: Motives and Implications." It examines Russia's position on the Syrian revolution and their political support for Syria, with a focus on their military help and their support for a political solution to the Syrian chemical weapons problem. The study takes into account the viewpoint of international relations and looks at the mechanisms and circumstances surrounding the Russian political decision-makers in order to understand the motivations, factors, and interests that drove Russia's intervention in Syria and its impact on shifting the balance of power in the Syrian crisis. With an emphasis on the choice to intervene militarily and its results on the ground, the study focuses on the military and political ramifications of the operation. It emphasizes that the goal of the Russian involvement was to demonstrate Russia's new status as a major player on the world stage, posing a threat to American power and defending Russian interests in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The study's analysis of the actual military actions in Syria reveals that Russia outperformed its initial objectives in Syria.

Keywords: Russian, intervention, Syria

INTRODUCTION

The Syrian crisis began as an internal uprising but rapidly transformed into a conflict of regional and international interests, dominated by geopolitical calculations and strategic considerations. Influenced by the events of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, voices demanding freedom arose in the city of Daraa, which was the initial ignition. The significance of Syria's strategic importance in the Middle East in shaping this crisis cannot be overstated. Syria resisted military intervention for five years, but ultimately decided to intervene militarily in its own country. Following the ongoing conflict in Syria, the Kremlin announced that President Putin has been granted permission to deploy military forces in Syria. This decision was made in response to Bashar al-Assad's urgent request for assistance. Since the end of the Cold War, this signified Russia's first significant use of military force outside of its immediate neighborhood. This action signified a pivotal shift in both the political and military spheres and exemplified Russia's new strategy for interacting with an evolving global landscape. In the future years, it is anticipated to cast a shadow over regional and international interactions.

2011 marked the beginning of the Russian military intervention in the escalating Syrian crisis. Russia's military presence in Syria increased significantly during the escalation, particularly beginning in the spring of 2015. The culmination of this escalation was the launch of aerial military operations in late September 2015. These operations primarily targeted locations and elements of the government-supporting armed opposition on the frontlines. In addition, operations were conducted against the terrorist group ISIS, which had seized control of large portions of Syria.

First: the significance of the research.

The significance of this research stems from the significance of Russia's stance on the Syrian crisis and its influence on regional and international developments in the region. By examining and analyzing the causes for Russia's intervention in Syria, this research seeks to provide a foundation for comprehending future political shifts in the world. In addition, it aims to examine the regional and international political dimensions of the Russian intervention in the Syrian crisis, with a particular emphasis on the implications of this intervention.

Second: the research problems.

President Putin declared Russia's willingness to engage the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria and urged for the formation of a genuine alliance. He charged the United States and Western nations with fostering terrorism.

This Russian intervention in the Middle East has prompted questions regarding the political gains that Russia hopes to achieve through its military involvement in the Syrian civil war. It has prompted inquiries into the motivations and ramifications of this intervention, as well as its relationship to the expansion of Russia's military capabilities. Then, on the evening of Monday, March 14, 2015, Moscow surprised many by announcing that President Vladimir Putin had ordered the withdrawal of the majority of the Russian air force from Syria by the end of September 2015, coinciding with the start of opposition-government talks in what became known as "Geneva III."

The foundation of the study is the direct impact of the Russian intervention in the Syrian crisis on international relations, regional power dynamics, and the international system. This is one of the most essential and controversial topics that provoke discussion. In light of this issue, the study aims to identify the true objectives of the Russian military intervention in Syria by examining the gap between the stated objectives of combating terrorists and extremist organizations such as ISIS and the actual military and logistical support provided to prevent the collapse of the Syrian regime, even if at the expense of the Syrian people.

Third: the research methodology

Multiple methods were employed to analyze the Russian decision-making process behind the intervention in Syria, including the National Interest approach, the historical approach, and the descriptive-analytical method. As a critical explanatory method in international relations, the National Interest approach served as the study's central concept. It asserts that the ultimate and continuous purpose of a state's foreign policy is to advance its national interests. In the instance of Russia's stance towards Syria, the study demonstrates how national interest is the fundamental pivot and driving force behind Russia's decision-making. On the other hand, the historical approach helped interpret the various phases of the crisis and its historical events. It traced the development of the conflict and its historical origins, thereby shedding light on the complexities of the Syrian crisis from a historical perspective. The descriptive-analytical approach served as a scientific instrument in the study to

address and analyze the policies utilized by Russia in its dealings and interactions with parties involved in the Syrian geography.

Fourthly: the study strategy.

In fact, the familiarity of the study's topic, "Russian Intervention in Syria," necessitated its division into two sections. Two aspects of the international system and indicators of Russia's transition in power were discussed in the first section. Regarding the second section, emphasis was placed on Russian-Syrian relations in the context of Russia's support for Syria. Our research was concluded with a conclusion that included our findings.

Chapter one

The international system and the change in the balance of power

The collapse of the bipolar world order at the close of the twentieth century marked the beginning of a unipolar system led by the United States on account of its military power, technological prowess, and global economy. This resulted in the marginalization of the United Nations' role in resolving international conflicts and a lack of concern on the part of the United States for international treaties it had signed, such as its withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol on climate control, rejection of the Missile Technology Control Regime, and refusal to join the International Criminal Court. As the first decade of this century drew to a close, the United States was confronted with two problems:

The first issue: is the decline of the United States' participation in the traditional elements of global power, as a result of the rise of other contending powers.

The second issue: is that traditional elements of power are being replaced by non-traditional elements in measurement and influence, such as information technology, satellite technology, espionage, social media, light and special military forces, command and control units, investments, research and development, utilizing international organizations and international law, and developing small capabilities with enormous destructive power.⁽¹⁾

The first demand

Indicators of Russia's power shift in the international system

Cosmic shifts of power, or political changes in the allocation of power, can be said to have transformed international, political, economic, and cultural life. In recent years, the globe has seen substantial shifts in the balance of international power, shifting from a unipolar and independently led world dominated by the United States for a long time to a multipolar or near-multipolar system. The rise of Asian tigers on the global arena, as well as aspirations by some economically developed countries to assume an active role in international politics, signaled the start of this multipolar revolution.

The first manifestation of power happened with the rise of the Western world, which began in the fourteenth century and accelerated substantially in the late twentieth century, ushering in modernity.

The second transformation occurred at the turn of the century, with the establishment of the United States of America, which became the most powerful nation since the Roman Empire's period. It wielded unprecedented dominion over the world economy, politics, sciences, and culture.⁽²⁾

¹ Fares Mohammed Ahmed Al-Jahishi, "Strategic Equilibriums in Light of a Changing Security Environment," Jordan: Al-Academyon for Publishing and Distribution, 2015, p. 41.

² Badr Al-Shafi'i, "The Russian Role in Syria: Determinants, Mechanisms, and Implications," Middle East Studies Journal, Issue 84, Summer 2018, p. 71.

The third change is currently underway, and we can sense it as "the rise of the rest." Countries around the world have seen economic expansion in recent decades, and this growth and ascent has been especially visible in Asia, hence the term "the rise of Asia." Despite the fact that these countries have hundreds of millions of people living in poverty, they are increasingly integrating into their productive economies. As a result, there are signs of a Russian power shift on the world stage.

First: traditional indications

It refers to measurable indicators based on data from the actual world that can be used to compare countries quantitatively. These indicators include the total population, economic output, size of the armed forces, land area, and geographical location, among others. Singer and Stuart, two researchers, have identified six traditional indicators: total population, size of armed forces, military expenditures, production of iron and steel, and energy consumption.

Traditional signs show that Russia has emerged as an emergent great power, particularly in the energy sector, following the fall of the Soviet Union. It is a formidable nuclear and conventional military power. Despite Western sanctions, Russia's economy has rebounded, and the country is actively seeking overseas investments to diversify its economic base. Russia is creating economic alliances with the Eurasian Economic Union in addition to economic unification. Furthermore, Russia aspires to be the BRICS nations' economic and political leader. China has used its veto power several times against US and Western choices regarding the Syrian crisis, proving its coordination prowess in a number of BRICS-related topics such as the Syrian crisis.

Second: Non-traditional indicators

This notion pertains to soft power, because Joseph Nye believes that foreign policy objectives cannot be fully realized through military might alone, but must also include the appealing qualities of soft power, which include a state's culture, ideas, and institutional appeal. It denotes the state's ability to create a situation in which other states are compelled to align their preferences and interests with the framework established by the state, achieved by persuasion and attraction rather than intimidation and force. Soft power is built on two key elements: credibility and legitimacy.⁽³⁾

In its interactions with its neighbors, Russia employs the doctrine of soft power. It sends gas to Central Asian countries, the Caucasus, and Ukraine, while also absorbing millions of surplus workers from these regions into various Russian cities. Russia sells its commodities in these countries and transfers money to them. Russian culture has evolved into a source of national strength, allowing Russia to establish economic and cultural domination in the Eurasian region equivalent to the United States' dominance in the Americas⁴ Russia also aspires to expand its influence beyond areas formerly deemed within the Russian Federation's national security scope. This implies Russia's attempt to reclaim a fresh and important role in maintaining the old Soviet Empire's surviving interests. This function arose amid a complicated international landscape marked by turmoil that has harmed the pillars of the international order, where the United States has dominated and directed its contentious contacts in various forms around the world.

The second demand

³ Hisham Al-Najjar, "Syria and the Major Transformations: Issues of the Arab World... The Future of the Arabs," Egypt: Sama Publishing and Distribution House, 1st edition, 2016, p. 53.

⁴ Raed Mohammed Arheem, "The Impact of Russian Ascent on US Foreign Policy towards the Syrian Crisis 2011-2015," Al-Qadisiyah Journal of Law and Political Science, June 2017, p. 61.

Russia's foreign policy in the Middle East

In terms of oil and minerals, the Middle East region is one of the richest in the world. The region's countries are prominent on the global oil map, ranking among the top oil-producing and exporting nations. Five Middle Eastern countries have oil reserves in excess of 100 billion barrels.

The region is also strategically important among the three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. It controls vital worldwide marine crossings, such as the Turkish Straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, which functioned as Moscow's gateway to the Eastern Bloc for many years, connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and, via the Suez Canal, to the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the region has control over the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, both of which are vital international maritime routes connecting Europe, North America, and Russia to the Indian Ocean and the Far East. As a result, Russia's interest in the Middle East originates from the region's geopolitical location, which mandates taking into account surrounding regional and global variables as potential threats to national security. Russia intends to build good economic links in the region and to use it as a platform for regional and worldwide movement and influence. This necessitates additional investment in the region by Russia, particularly as it attempts to reclaim its role as a significant force on the world scene.⁽⁵⁾

The aims of Russian foreign policy and its determinants in the Middle East cannot be understood without examining its historical context. On the one hand, it cannot be isolated or removed from its natural setting, the Middle East, and its significance to Russia. Geography has imposed requirements on Russia in terms of its interest in the Middle East, given that the Russian Federation is the heir to the Soviet Union, with all of its consequences and considerations, and that, despite changes in many aspects, the orientations and areas of policy remain the same. Russia's involvement in the Middle East is more than just a strategic intervention; it is also about reevaluating the balance of power with the US to the extent that external conditions allow. Moscow aims to shed its reputation as a second-tier global power and works to reshape the global power balance.⁽⁶⁾

As a result, Russia is working hard to strengthen its diplomatic and military presence in the Middle East and North Africa. However, several problems and impediments stand in the way of achieving this aim. These include challenges in reconciling warring parties in the region, as well as a small number of allied countries in comparison to the West. Russia also has the challenge of not being able to persuade some countries in the region, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council states led by Saudi Arabia, about global oil prices. These governments acquiesce to Western dictates, particularly those of the United States, which seek to lower oil prices in order to suit their own interests at the expense of regional countries. Many analysts feel that Russia is now attempting to establish itself as a necessary regional and worldwide power, believing that it has nothing to lose by confronting the West. This is a forerunner to constructing a new world order that respects Russia's desire and power to shape political, military, security, and economic equations in the area and around the world. However, there are concerns about Russia's reaction if its interests are ignored or if measures are made to limit its regional and international influence. This suggests that Russia is adamant about maintaining its influential and

⁵ Al-Malih, H. (2016). *Russia and the Revolution: From Supporter of the Assassin to an Accomplice in Murder*. Amman: Dar Amman for Publishing and Distribution.

⁶ Bashara, A. (2013). *Syria: Darb Al-Alam Nahw Al-Hurriyah (Path of Pains towards Freedom): Attempt in Contemporary History*. Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.

successful presence in the Middle East and North Africa in a variety of political, economic, security, and military domains. Russia is eager to restore security and stability to the region, having restored its influence and prestige in this sensitive and critical region of the world, owing to its geographical and geopolitical proximity. This is critical because it has a direct and indirect impact on its own security and stability, as well as providing a suitable ground for advancing its interests, both short and long term, which have been significantly impacted by Western countries' attempts, particularly the United States, to control the region's resources.⁽⁷⁾

The following are the key goals of Russia's Middle Eastern foreign policy:

First: Geo-political and security objectives

Russia has a set of geo-political and security objectives that are dictated by the region's topography and demography. The Middle East is an integrated and essential belt that surrounds the Asian republics, and Russia is determined to use all of its resources to avoid any threat to the central and Caucasus regions that it deems its sphere of influence.

As a result, Moscow's attention since the dissolution of the Soviet Union has been mostly on Turkey and Iran, with the goal of infiltrating and controlling these countries due to religious, ethnic, or linguistic linkages between these countries and the Caucasian and Central Asian peoples. Furthermore, improving relations with Iran suits Moscow's interests in combating US influence, as any détente between Moscow and Tehran might help limit Iran's use of the Islamic card among Russian Muslims, particularly in the Caucasus region. Furthermore, Russia regards Central Asia as a critical region.⁽⁸⁾

Internal factors also have a big influence in influencing Russia's foreign policy, with security being a top priority, which led to the distribution of Russian military presence in Syria. The stability of Russia's Syria policy can be related to the geopolitical events developing in Syria, which hoped to enable Russia to realize its aims by recovering its place in the area, which is currently at threat. The fall of the Syrian regime will surely take the US into tight circles that Russia regards as a threat to its national security, so undermining its influence.

Russia also prioritizes the Middle East in its foreign policy to rival the United States strategically and weaken it. This is aimed at participating in recalibrating the balance of global power whenever circumstances allow. Russia is attempting to shed its status as a second-tier global power and is working to reshape the global power balance.⁽⁹⁾

Secondly: economic objectives

The significance of the Middle East for the Soviet Union escalated due to its abundant oil resources. The Soviet Union recognized its importance for the United States, Western countries, and Japan. The necessity for oil became closely linked with the imperative of establishing extensive economic and trade relations to accomplish two main objectives: Obtaining primary resources and capitalizing on trade relations for financial gains and acquiring hard currencies.

⁷ Bashara, A. (2013). The Source Previously Mentioned, p. 59.

⁸ Sultan, Z. R. (2015). The Russian Position on the Syrian Crisis. Journal of Tikrit University for Legal and Political Sciences, 19, 85.

⁹ Mohammed, D. (2012). "Strategy between Military Origin and Political Necessity and its Impact on the Balance of Power Policy." International Politics Journal, Issue 10, 37.

Economic links solidify the depth of Syrian-Russian relations, as the volume of economic collaboration between the two nations accounts for 20% of Russia's economic cooperation with Arab governments. This demonstrates Russia's keen interest in keeping Syria as a market for Russian goods. Concurrently, Syria seeks Russian supplies at lower prices than Western products.⁽¹⁰⁾

Russia also aspires to establish a strategic cooperation with the region's countries, both economically and technically, with immediate economic benefits for Russia and real developmental benefits for the region's countries. As a result, Russia seeks to keep large competitors from economically threatening it. One of the major causes of Russia's position on the Syrian conflict in 2011 was international and regional competition over gas and oil pipelines from Gulf Arab governments. Currently, it is a priority of Russian foreign policy to establish advantageous international conditions that would discourage European countries from importing Russian gas and instead acquiring it from other countries in Syria and North Africa. A scenario like this might result in large losses and trade deficits for Russia, affecting its position in Syria. On May 17, 2013, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov underscored this, noting that Syria is a vital country in the Middle East, and destabilizing it will have serious ramifications. Syria is a cornerstone of Middle East security, and instability in Syria might lead to instability in neighboring countries, particularly Lebanon, posing a serious danger to regional security and critical Russian economic interests.⁽¹¹⁾ The Middle East and North Africa region is one of the world's most important markets for Russian weapons and nuclear technologies, despite fierce competition from Western countries, primarily the United States, aiming to establish influence in this field. Russia's primary goal is to sell weaponry and advanced nuclear technologies to countries in the region that have common interests. However, it still has hurdles in this area because of the West's strong relationships with several countries in the region, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

In summary, Russian geopolitics seeks to destabilize the European Union by imposing a trade-off of Russian influence in exchange for Western acknowledgment of Russian interest zones. The geopolitical strategy also seeks to utilize the Syrian refugee crisis in order to encourage the European Union to accept Russia's role as a savior in the Syrian refugee crisis and enter into a relationship with Russia.⁽¹²⁾

Political aims play a key role in the Russian Federation's Middle East foreign policy. The growth of American influence in the region, particularly after the Soviet Union's demise, posed a substantial danger to Russian interests and became a source of concern for the Russian leadership, which sought to counteract this American expansion. As a result, undermining American authority and restricting its influence became a critical Russian goal, as reflected in its political goals. Russia works to secure its southern borders, which is related to its failure, along with other independent governments, to form organizations or institutions capable of defending those countries, settling border disputes, and calming separatist movements, particularly Islamist ones. History has proven that wars can grow into regional phenomena when these states have common elements. As a result, Russia pursues a preventive strategy in dealing with Islamist and separatist movements by strengthening ties with countries in the region.

¹⁰ Haradan Matar, I. (2017). "The Russian Role in the Syrian Crisis - Motives and Determinants." Iraqi University Journal, Issue 37, 94.

¹¹ Hasan, S. Z. (2015). "Political Change in Syria: Between Internal Demands and External Pressures." Al-Mustansiriya Journal for Arab and International Studies, Issue 52, 102.

¹² Al-Jubouri, M. A. (2013). "The International Roles of Great Powers towards the Syrian Crisis." Journal of Al-Anbar University for Legal and Political Sciences, Issue 10, 18.

Russia's goal is to establish a stable regional structure along its borders⁽¹³⁾ Russia strives to explain its activities in forging relations with anti-US countries in the region, such as Iraq, Iran, and Syria, by establishing a multipolar world order to challenge the unipolar system led by the United States. "Russia" wants to resume playing the global role that the Soviet Union used to play when it was in power. As a result, we find that Russian policy under Putin has seen active engagement in foreign affairs, driven by the desire to recapture the same worldwide role it once held as a superpower.⁽¹⁴⁾

Chapter two

Russian-Syrian relations

The establishment of the Russian consulate in Damascus in the late 18th century signified the beginning of official Russian-Syrian relations. After a century, Russia opened a new consulate in the port of Latakia.⁽¹⁵⁾

Following the collapse of Tsarist rule in Russia and the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, which resulted in the formation of the Soviet Union, Russia adopted a defensive isolationist foreign policy, refraining from engaging in external activities that would distract the state from its internal activities and plans. This time coincided with the bulk of Arab governments being under Western colonial authority, with colonial powers controlling both internal and external affairs, badly damaging relations between the Soviet Union and these countries.

The Soviet Union tried to expose all secret contracts between Imperial Russia and other Western governments, particularly Britain and France, involving the split of Arab territories. The Sykes-Picot Agreement, signed in 1916 before the Russian Revolution by Russia, France, and Britain, established the split of Ottoman lands and Arab countries under its control between France, Britain, and Russia. The Soviet Union appears to have attempted to obtain the support of Arab countries by convincing them that it recognized the rights of oppressed peoples and could assist them in their quest for independence.

Syria and the Soviet Union's early relations were influenced by the Soviet Union's attitude on the Alexandretta issue (located in the northwestern corner of Syria and serving as the port for the city of Aleppo). In 1939, the League of Nations resolved to transfer it to Turkey, a decision that was strongly backed by the Soviet Union. This assistance was intended to secure good relations with Turkey in order to facilitate the passage of Soviet ships via the Turkish Straits, the Soviet Union's only outlet to the Mediterranean Sea.⁽¹⁶⁾

However, the events of World War II, in which the Soviet Union fought alongside the Allies, resulted in the decline of conventional international powers (France and Britain) and the independence of most Arab countries, including Syria, in 1944. The Soviet Union was among the first to acknowledge Syria's independence and to express its opposition to any European state's rule in Syria.

¹³ Abu al-Nour, M. M. (2016). The Reflections of Russian Intervention on Iran's Role in Syria. *International Politics Journal*, Issue 204, 49.

¹⁴ Ghalam, W. A. (2017). Geopolitical Competition and Economic Cooperation between Turkey and Russia in the Middle East. *Al-Mustansiriya Journal for Arab and International Studies*, Issue 59, 46.

¹⁵ Kassab, A. M. (2013-2014). Regional and International Dimensions of Russian-Syrian Relations 2011-2012. Unpublished master's thesis, Al-Azhar University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 124.

¹⁶ Abu Mustafa, S. F. S. (2015). The Syrian Crisis in the Context of Regional and International Shifts, 2011-2013. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Gaza University: Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 57.

With this declaration, the Soviet Union aimed to oppose the policy of spheres of influence. Moreover, the control of Syria by European powers would threaten Soviet interests in the region. In 1944, the Syrian foreign minister proposed establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet foreign minister.

The Soviet Union's response to the French bombardment of Damascus and other Syrian cities in 1945 consisted of sending a protest message to the French government. In addition, it urged the main Allies to take the necessary steps to cease military operations in Syria and resolve their differences through peaceful means. This Soviet position positively affected its relations with Syria.

After the conclusion of World War I, the Middle East witnessed an international conflict between two emerging blocs: the United States-led Western bloc and the Soviet Union-led Eastern bloc. After the departure of the traditional powers from the region, these blocs supplanted them. Arab countries were consequently divided between supporting the Western bloc, the Eastern bloc, or taking a neutral stance (not joining either bloc).⁽¹⁷⁾

On the Syrian side, the deterioration of relations between Syria and the colonial powers in the early 1950s led to an initial rapprochement with the Soviet Union, particularly in view of Israeli attacks on its borders, which were supported by the West. This necessitated the acquisition of arms to combat these aggressions.

During this time, relations between Syria and the Soviet Union grew to the level of a strategic alliance, particularly after former President Hafez al-Assad came to power in 1970 and initiated the Corrective Movement. After the expulsion of the Soviet Union from Egypt in 1971, the Kremlin was forced to seek out new partners in the Middle East. Both Iraq and Syria, both of which were governed by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, appeared to be the most viable options. In response, the Soviet Union provided military support and ensured the passage of weapons to both nations. In addition, the Soviet Union provided Syria with substantial political support in international forums and platforms. In addition, it contributed to the development of Syria's infrastructure, particularly in the energy, mining, and irrigation sectors.⁽¹⁸⁾

Syria received significant military assistance from the Soviet Union to combat Israel, which was supported by Western nations, primarily the United States. In addition, the Soviet Union established a center in the Syrian port of Tartus to provide material and technical support to the Soviet naval fleet. In addition, the Soviet Union established the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1925, and Syria sent hundreds of students to the former Soviet Union and Russia to study in a variety of disciplines. Through the embassies of both nations, particularly the Russian consulates and the cultural center in Damascus, as well as the Syrian-Russian Friendship Association, the cultural ties were further strengthened.⁽¹⁹⁾

It is notable that Russian support for Syria was suspended during the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, but resumed during the presidency of Vladimir Putin. This included reopening the

¹⁷ Nwarhan, A. "Russia and Strategic Changes in the Arab World: Geopolitical Implications of the Arab Revolutions." Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 1st edition, 2014, p. 61.

¹⁸ Aid Jaber Qatib, "Motives of the Russian Position in the Syrian Crisis," Journal of Tishreen University for Research and Applied Studies, Issue 2, 2017, p. 132.

¹⁹ Rami Abdullah Abdel Mohsen Abdel Qader, "The Balance of International Powers and Its Impact on the Syrian Crisis," Unpublished Master's thesis, Al-Aqsa University, 2014, p. 88.

Russian naval base at the port of Tartus and conducting military deals with Syria, as well as providing military experts, weapons, and modernizing the Syrian army's equipment.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the arrival of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria and President Putin in Russia in the year 2000 marked a significant development in Russian-Syrian relations, resulting in the reestablishment of their strategic alliance in 2005. This occurrence was marked by a rise in arms trade between the two nations.

It can be said that Russia has been and remains Syria's most important ally for many years. Russia has remained Syria's primary source of modern armaments, military training, and significant support in the face of American pressure on the Syrian regime, particularly since September 11. During the crises that followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia's influence was significantly diminished, and the United States imposed regional and international isolation on Syria.

Results:

1. Pragmatism and political leadership are the two major determinants of Russian foreign policy on the international stage. After benefiting from the economic recovery, rebuilding state infrastructure, and combating corruption within the country, the political leadership of Russia now seeks to strengthen its economic standing among the world's main developed economies. The Russian leadership is well aware that there is a progressive shift in the global hierarchy of power, and this coincides with their desire to reclaim their position in the international system.

2. The geopolitical significance of the Middle East to Russian foreign policy is primarily tied to ensuring the survival of states in the region, which are continually threatened by Western nations, led by the United States, that seek to weaken them and prevent them from regaining their position in the international system. From this perspective, Russian foreign policy in the region has been directed toward countries that resist the imposed policy of isolation and resist attempts to weaken them. These nations pursue policies that oppose American hegemony.

3. From the perspective of Russia, the current situation in the Middle East represents Western efforts to redraw the regional alliance map to service their own interests. This will ultimately undermine Russia's engagement policy in the region. On the other hand, the geographical and religious proximity of Middle Eastern nations to Russia, as well as the region's negative experiences with political Islam, have influenced Russia's posture against the Arab Spring, which led to the rise of Islamist movements to power.

4. In fact, Russia's foreign policy ambitions to be part of a multipolar international system, with Russia as one of its poles, have compelled it to prioritize the Middle East as one of the most crucial regions of Western influence. In this context, pragmatic calculations of national interests continue to play a significant role in determining Russia's regional engagement.

5. Russia's foreign policy towards the countries in the Middle East is heavily influenced by the region's economic significance. Recognizing that economic factors are the primary determinant of Russia's status and its external relations, the Middle East market serves Russia's energy-based economy. Cooperation with some countries in the region, especially in the energy sector, has aided Russia in securing energy supplies for its strategic markets and shielding them from rivals.

6. Due to the emergence of terrorist organizations in Arab East countries in recent years, the security situation in the Middle East has been closely tied to Russia's foreign policy. The proliferation

of these terrorist threats has increased the likelihood of their expansion into Russia's border regions. Therefore, securing Russia's borders requires maintaining regional stability and averting involvement in new conflicts. To achieve this objective, Russia has prioritized strengthening its ties with nations confronting these threats, making this a central objective of its Middle East policy.

7. Putin was able to accomplish a number of benefits as a result of his intervention in Syria, the most significant of which was the improvement of Russia's international standing vis-à-vis the United States and its relations with influential actors in the international system. In addition, Russia succeeded to alter the power balance on the ground.