

The military and diplomatic intervention of regional and global powers in the Syrian war and the failure to restore peace and security in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

This paper titled “the military and diplomatic interventions of regional and global powers in the Syrian war and the failure to restore peace and security in the middle east between 2011 and 2018” examined the armed conflict in Syria that began in 2011 in the wave of popular protests and uprising seeking political and economic change from the authoritarian government of President Bashar Al-Assad. However, Syria degenerated into full scale civil war in 2012. These developments made Syria to appear as a theatre of two significant challenges: the influx of foreign fighters seeking to join various parties in the war and global involvement in multiple power struggles between both regional and international influences. The Syrian civil war has protracted resulting in wanton destruction of lives and property as well as heavy shipments, transfers and exchange of weapons and ammunition among rebel fighters. All of these have culminated into the attendant insecurity that pervades the entire Middle East. Anchored on the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), the researcher adopted the documentary method as well as time series research design in carrying out the study. Findings in the study revealed that military and diplomatic interventions of regional and global powers in the Syrian civil war undermined peace and security in the Middle East. The international actors violated series of Syrian peace agreements (including LIN Security Council Resolution 2254; Geneva I-VII, Astana I-VI; Russia –Turkey ceasefire; Four de-escalation zone pact, etc). Increased hostilities resulted to death toll of over 465,000, one million injured and over twelve million Syrians internally displaced. Syrian refugees scattered in the Middle East countries rose significantly from 21,533 in 2010 to 4,857,617 in 2016. The study, therefore, recommended resolution for ceasefire at the level of UN Security Council, disbandment of various rebel groups fighting in Syria, prosecution of war criminals as well as entrenchment of democratic culture in Syria. The study further contributed to the existing body of knowledge by establishing the empirical linkages between the Syrian war and the rising insecurity in the Middle East which has become a source for concern to the global community.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Military, Global, Peace,
Security, Syria

Article History:
Received: 12 Apr 2023
Accepted: 05 Jun 2023
Available Online: 10 Jun 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Assad’s regime in Syria has been able to maintain a strong hold on power, even with a religious minority as a power base, despite pockets of grievances from opposition groups who feel unduly dominated. The main pillars that sustain the regime’s influence and dominance include the close family circle, the military and various security and intelligence services ultimately led by a family member or trusted person from the same community. Landis (2013), Balfour (2012) and Haddad (2015) all generally believe that al-Assad’s regime principally controls the business elite, which became dependent on good relations with the country’s leaders for its wealth. This also holds truth for religious institutions. The largest opposition to the regime was Islamist, represented by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood throughout the 1970s. This force was violently crushed in Hama in 1982, weakening Islamist political aspirations in the country (Norwegian Church Council, 2016). The current armed conflicts in Syria began in 2011 in the wave of popular reform movements which swept through the Middle East and northern Africa, leading to demonstrations seeking political and economic change from the authoritarian regime of Bashar al-Assad. However, Syria plunged into a full-blown civil war in 2012, following al-Assad regime’s violent response and clampdown to the demonstrations which caused the majority of casualties and destruction. This led to the popular uprisings becoming militarized, and gradually mostly Islamized, with radical armed Islamic groups occupying and controlling large parts of the country (United Nation’s General Assembly, 2012).

At its core, the current armed conflict is between Assad’s government forces and opposition militias, the government and Islamic State (IS) and other militias vying for territory (Norwegian Church Council, 2016). The involvement of a variety of religious identities in the country, and a government that is being dominated by the Alawite minority, shape and influence particular dynamics of this conflict, as different ethnic and religious groups align with different factions in the

civil war. Political undertones such as elitism and conflicts of interest play out the more to prolong the conflict and attach new difficult dimensions, dragging regional and global interests to the conflict. Therefore, the project of socio-economic, ethnic, religious and political polarization and reconstruction of the Syrian war front, which started from pockets of minor protests, has been successfully completed by regional and global interests. This has further deepened concerns about insecurity in the Middle East. More especially, the sectarian dimensions of the conflict intensified with the 2013 arrival in Syria of IS from Iraq. These developments make Syria to appear as a theatre of two significant challenges: the influx of foreign fighters seeking to join various parties in the war, and global involvement in multiple power struggles between both regional and international influences. While the former has increased the brutality of the war in Syria, the latter has prevented any realistic prospect for its swift resolution (Norwegian Church Council, 2016). However, President Bashar al-Assad's government has managed to survive but is locked in an existential battle with a host of rebel forces, including the Islamic State. This study therefore examines the Military And Diplomatic Interventions Of Regional And Global Powers In The Syrian War And The Failure To Restore Peace And Security In The Middle East Between 2011 And 2018.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Regional security complex theory (RSCT). Regional security complex theory is a theory of regional security developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever in the 1980s. The theory was further advanced by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever in their 2003 masterpiece *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, thus making the theory to gain wider global attention. Other scholars that popularized this theory include Bill McSweeney (1993), Mohammed Ayoob (1999), Charles Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein (2002), Michael C. Williams (2003), Tula Kahrs (2004), Rajesh M. Basrur (2006) among others. According to Buzan (2003, P.4);

The central idea in RSCT is that, since most threats travel more easily over short distances than long ones, security interdependence is normally into regionally based clusters: security complexes. Process of securitization and thus the degree of security interdependence are more intense between actors inside such complexes than they are between actors inside the complex and outside of it.

Fundamentally, regional security complex theory explains how security concerns tie together in a regional formation, where geographical adjacency is the factor of paramount importance (Buzan and Weaver, 1998). A regional security complex can be defined “as a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another. This means that a security problem in one country will affect the security of all other countries in that region. Hence, security problem in a particular country within a given region becomes the security concern of all members of that region. The basic concept underpinning Regional security complexes is that “most political and military threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity is often associated with proximity” (Buzan and Weaver, 1998:11). State actors therefore view the world as regional clusters, whereby security complexes are magnified within these clusters (Buzan, 2003: 45). The formation of regional security complex is driven by the assumption that after the Cold War, international relations would take on a more regionalized character. It is also hinged on interaction of anarchy with social and geographical factors. These factors could be manifested in the form of terror, violent conflict, crime, violence, uprisings, war etc. In this case, many different types of threats projectors and actors are clustered in the web of regional security complex studies as a means of providing a broader view and state-centric focus in global security analysis. In other words, regional and global patterns of response to regional security issues may differ but would be distinctively intertwined and tied together in a complex system (Buzan and Weaver, 1998).

The main features of a RSC are the differentiation of units, the number of units, the patterns of amity and enmity and the distribution of power. In sum, the structure of a security complex is generated by the states within that complex by their security perceptions of, and interactions with, each other. Basically, RSCs can be “standard” or “centered,” in terms of formation, and alliances. It is standard when it involves at least two powers with a primarily military security agenda; while it is centered when it involves a major or great power with a number of significantly less powerful states. Again, in the case of standard RSCs anarchy dominates; while in centered formations the main power dominates security interaction (Buzan & Weaver, 1998). It is further argued that the security complexes of states depend primarily on the pressures deriving from geographic proximity, and the interplay between the anarchic structure and how balances of power play out in the system. State actors therefore view the world as regional clusters, whereby security complexes are magnified within these clusters (Buzan, 2003). Often, the primary factor in complex definition is “a high level of security threat/fear which is mutually felt among two or more states of the region. States however may have various shared and convergent interests as interdependency need not be a priori conflictual (Buzan, 1983; Buzan&Weaver, 2005).

It is also crucial to pay attention to criteria of regional security, especially considered from the perspective of the region's position in the world system (Kusztal , 2017). Regions should be regarded as mini systems where all other International Relations theories can be applied, such as balance of power, polarity, interdependence, alliance systems, etc.

What is paramount in this exposition which underscores the basic assumption of RSC is that the security interdependence is more intense among the states inside such complexes than with states outside them. In this context, security complexes are focused on relative intensity of interstate security relations. These relations lead to regional patterns shaped by the differentiation among the units or actors of the complex, depicting patterns of enmity and amity among these units and as a result, the distribution of power. In sum, the structure of a security complex is generated by the states within that complex by their security perceptions of, and interactions with, each other. As Ayoob (1999) pointed out, a security community requires a conscious recognition on the part of regional states that they have certain common interests they need to preserve despite the existence of differences, even disputes among them. This recognition leads to regional integration while changing the power structure of the complex (Ayoob, 1999). Thus, the Regional Security Complex Theory uses a blend of materialistic and constructivist approaches. It is materialistic when it uses ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power that are close to neo-realist analyses and it is constructivist when it refers to the process of securitization as a product of inter-subjective interaction, essentially open and subject to influence by a host of factors including state and non-state actors, violent conflicts, crime, hostage-taking, internal displacement, uprisings, terrorism etc (Williams, 2003).

In connection to this study, regional security complex theory (RSCT) offers scientific spectrum with which to understand and appreciate that the Syrian civil war has a wider impact or effect on the security of the Middle East. This underscores Buzan (1998) argument that a security problem in one country will affect the security of all other countries in that region. Hence, the ongoing security problem in Syria has had a spiral effect on the entire Middle East region. In essence, the Syrian crisis has fully attracted the attention and interventions of other countries in the Middle East including Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, in the Middle East, Israel, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait etc. (see, Khalaf & Smith, 2013). This is primarily because “most threats travel more easily over short distances than long ones, security interdependence is normally into regionally based clusters: security complexes. Process of securitization and thus the degree of security interdependence are more intense between actors inside such complexes...” Buzan (2003, p.4).

Therefore, we hinge on the RSCT to make key arguments as follows: first, that the Syrian civil war has been externalized or regionalized to the wider Middle East region, to the point that key drivers of the conflict, including the state and non-state actors, arms and weapons shipments, human displacement, coalition forces, trans-border crimes, violent attacks, peace agreements, military interventions etc are now regionalized, or regionally implicated. Secondly, that the conflict in the Middle East has remained protracted as a result of the regionalization of the conflict, i.e. the militaristic posture of the external parties to the conflict, including state and non-state actors within the Middle East region and beyond –(the U.S. and Russian Federation). In other words, the negative effects that Syrian conflict projects: militarization of the conflict – arming of rebels, weapons shipments, proliferation of small arms and light and light weapons (SALW), use of chemical weapons, human displacements, sprouting activities of terrorist groups and armed groups, etc, are all as a result of the overriding influences, political interests, and orchestrated interventions of regional powers, and by extension global powers. These constitute the key parties to the conflict, and not just the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and his perceived opposition groups or ‘rebel fighters’.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the time series design which involves a series of repeated pre-measurement and post-measurement or before and after observation. This paper equally adopted the documentary method of data collection. This is in tune with the documentary method. Since 2011 when the first shots were fired in the Syrian Civil war, there have been quite a number of recorded and documented accounts about it. Therefore, this study made attempts to dissect some of these sources as it concerns the Syrian Civil war. Hence, through logical interpretation of the data and information embedded in the numerous materials generated for the study which is based on the Syrian civil war and insecurity in the Middle East, it was possible to carefully evaluate facts and draw up relevant conclusions.

4. EXTERNAL INTERVENTION IN SYRIAN CIVIL WAR AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The civil war in Syria has implicated some regional states within Middle East whose geostrategic role and importance political influence in the conflict have become very significant attributes in determining the duration, scope, intensity and character of the civil war in Syria. Iran, for instance, has been an age-long close ally to Syria and thus supports the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in a tacit fight against opposition forces and rebel groups (Goodarzi, 2006; Worth, 2012). Rafizadeh (2014) observes that the Islamic Republic of Iran supported uprisings in other countries against secular governments such as in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and described these uprisings as an “Islamic Awakening,” but in the case of Syrian crisis, the Islamic Republic of Iran did not use the phrase “popular uprising” in its characterization of the conflict in Syria. From the beginning of the conflict, the Islamic Republic of Iran labeled the rebels in Syria as terrorists and foreign backed groups fighting the legitimate government of President Bashar al-Assad. This produced a characteristic shift in the

Islamic Republic of Iran's narrative of the conflict. This therefore means that in the calculation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional strategic and geopolitical and ideological interests, survival of the Syrian government- the Alawite-dominated state, and President Bashar al-Assad is critical.

Islamic Republic of Iran is therefore strongly against forces fighting to overthrow the Alawite-dominated state of Syria and President Bashar al-Assad. This primarily is to ensure that the regional balance of power will not tip against the Islamic Republic and in favor of other Sunni majority states such as the Arab Gulf states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. This is because there have been competing strategic, ideological, and geopolitical interests and traditional rivalry (Persian versus Arabs) between Iran and other Sunni Arab countries in the Gulf. The position of Iran is complicated in the fear that with the Sunnis being in majority among the Syrian population (approximately 72 percent out of 85 percent of Muslim population in Syria), the government that will replace the Alawite-dominated Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad, will more likely be a Sunni majority (Rafizadeh, 2014; Ref World, 2013). Similarly, majority of the Syrian opposition groups and Syrian armed rebels who are attempting to overthrow the Ba'ath party and the government of Bashar Al Assad are ideologically opposed to the Iranian government especially for providing the government with assistance financially, and militarily, along with intelligence, and advisory support. These oppositions and armed rebel groups have therefore developed stronger relationships with other Gulf States, specifically Saudi Arabia and Qatar (Byman, 2006). This implies that a defeat of Assad will significantly shift the regional balance of power against the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, the political undertone of the war in Syria could change if President Bashar al-Assad and his government attempt to build better relationships with the other Arab states, and possibly shift towards their policies and ideological preferences (Byman, 2006).

Ragin (2014) discusses the ideological and political posture of other key regional Gulf Arab state actors which significantly influence the direction of the civil war in Syria. He argues that some key regional state actors have engaged in funding of rebel groups fighting against the Assad regime and their intervention has further created a stalemate and the so called cold war between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Arab countries which support the fall of Assad's government. At this instance, countries which share a border with the Syria (particularly Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan) have been cautious and politically calculated about taking serious steps or changing positions. For example, in when the Arab League held a meeting to vote on suspending the government of President Bashar al-Assad from the League, Iraq, a country ideologically locked in stalemate with Syria, abstained from voting and Lebanon voted against suspending the Syrian government and President al-Assad. On the other hand, the government of Turkey's conflict and tensions with the Syrian government has been more intense in comparison to that of other neighboring countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq). It is important to observe that all these neighboring countries have utilized several phases in describing or characterizing the Syrian civil war, and the flow of refugees. They have used diplomatic initiatives at the beginning, then coercive diplomacy, and soft power - later political and economic sanctions followed balancing, threats, warning, and bandwagoning (Rafizadeh, 2014).

The Syrian civil war attracted attention of both regional and international actors into the conflict. Hence, regional and international responses developed with the escalation of the conflict. Some countries have responded by providing political and economic support to the social movement and thereafter, few of these countries gave political, financial, and logistical supports to various armed groups who oppose the regime of Assad (Nasser, Mehchy and Ismail, 2013). On the other side, some countries have provided the Assad regime political, economic and logistic supports. This international polarization led to a lack of consensus on applying universal sanctions on the regime. In this context, the United States, the European Union, the Arab League, Turkey, Australia, Canada and others implemented various levels of sanctions with the goal of exerting serious pressure on the Syrian regime. The sanctioning states believe the sanctions are intended to target the current Syrian regime without placing undue hardship on the Syrian people (Hufbauer et al, 2011). However, these sanctions have had an undeniable effect on the Syrian economy as a whole, but have gone beyond to affect the livelihoods of the Syrian people in particular. This shows that at the most basic level, economic sanctions are important tools to pressure a country into changing its conduct, but at the long run its effects are often felt much more and deeper than the countries that implement them officially intend (Nasser, Mehchy and Ismail, 2013).

Middle East countries have been variously dragged into the Syrian crisis with each wielding and exerting ideological and strategic posture that underlie their political interests. Many regional rivals are therefore using their financial firepower to buy future political influence and this has ended up splintering Syria's opposition. Qatar and Saudi Arabia have become major supporters of anti-Assad rebels in divergent measures. Ideologically, Qatar and Saudi Arabia share close interests in many respects: both also want to preserve the absolute domestic power of the ruling dynasties and Western demand for their vast energy resources; also both armed by the United States, as Sunni Muslims they share an interest in thwarting Shi'ite, non-Arab Iran and its Arab allies - Shi'ites in Iraq and Lebanon and Assad's Syrian Alawites. However, their interests diverge, particularly over Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups viewed with suspicion by Western powers and in Saudi Arabia (Karouny, 2013). Qatar hosts both a major U.S. air base and influential Islamists exiled from other Arab states; and with its autocracy at home it has aided liberals abroad, especially through its Al Jazeera satellite TV channel. On her part, Saudi Arabia, whose king enjoys special status with the Sunni rebels as

guardian of the holy city of Mecca, has been quite apprehensive and suspicious of the Muslim Brotherhood. The country's view of Syrian Islamist rebels is also influenced to some extent by its experience backing Arabs who flocked to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s; some returned home, like the Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, to wage a campaign of violence intended to topple the house of Saud (Karouny, 2013).

Khalaf and Smith (2013) report that Qatar, a gas-rich state in the Middle East has spent as much as \$3bn since the beginning of the conflict supporting the rebellion in Syria, far exceeding any other government. This made the country to become a prime source of arms to the rebels. Its contributions to the conflict appears to overshadow the western backings for the opposition. Even though Qatar is a small state, it remained the biggest donor to the political opposition, providing generous refugee packages to defectors (estimated at \$50,000 a year for a defector and his family) and has provided vast amounts of humanitarian support. In particular cases, many rebels in Syria's Aleppo province received a one-off payment of \$150 supplied from Qatar. It is further reported that Qatar total spending has reached as much as \$3bn, while rebel and diplomatic sources put the figure at \$1bn at most. It is believed that Qatar's intervention in Syria conflict is part of an aggressive quest for global recognition and primarily an attempt to establish itself as a major player in the Middle East region, especially following its backing of Libya's rebels who overthrew Muammer Gaddafi in 2011. An institute that tracks arms transfers, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2013) remarks that Qatar has sent the most weapons deliveries to Syria, with more than 70 military cargo flights into neighbouring Turkey between April 2012 and March 2013. This further deepened Qatar's influence and entangled it in the polarized politics of the region.

Qatar has been supporting Islamist groups in the Arab world, and this puts it in a bad light among its peers in the Gulf States. Such covert support has fuelled rivalry with Saudi Arabia. Based on this development, Saudi Arabia, which until now has been a more deliberate supporter of Syria's rebels, has stepped up its involvement in the conflict. Generally, backers of al-Assad's opponents and Syria's rebels include Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan (Khalaf and Smith, 2013). Saudi Arabia has therefore stepped up her involvement and moved ahead of small but ambitious Gulf neighbor Qatar to impose itself as the main outside force supporting the Syrian rebels. This move appears to undercut the influence of Qatari-backed Islamist militants. There have been series of disputes and disagreements among Syria's opposition factions in Istanbul which shows a struggle for control between the two Gulf monarchies – Qatar and Saudi Arabia, in which Saudi power has triumphed. Karouny (2013, p.2) reports that even rebel leaders that operate within the northern Syria's border provinces where Qatar has until now been the main supplier of arms to those fighting President Bashar al-Assad, believe that "Saudi Arabia is now formally in charge of the Syria issue." Many Syrian opposition leaders hope, therefore view that this new development could strengthen them in both negotiations and on the battlefield while hampering some of the anti-Western Islamist hardliners in their ranks whom they say Qatar has been helping with weaponry.

Saudi Arabia's influence became elaborate following a failure by one of such Qatari-backed Islamist unit in a battle in April 2013 that gave Syrian government forces control of a key highway. Thus the inability of Qatari and Islamist efforts to control the opposition political stronghold backfired and pushed the Western powers and Saudi Arabia into deeper interventions to constrain the coasts of the Syrian forces. For instance, "The Saudis met leaders of the Free Syrian Army, including officers from the Military Council in Jordan and Turkey, and have agreed that they will be supporting the rebels," he said after attending one of those meetings himself. It is also reported that Prince Salman bin Sultan, a senior Saudi security official, entered into relations with the Syrian rebels, backed by his elder brother, intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan. Generally, the fighting rebels' disunity has been a serious hindrance both in the field and in maneuvering for a possible international peace conference. Qatar and Saudi Arabia also agreed to end the division between a Qatari sphere of influence on the northern border with Turkey and a Saudi sphere on the southern, Jordanian border. This action is believed to minimize or totally avoid the possibility of arms and ammunition getting into the wrong hands, or to the Syrian forces (Khalaf & Smith, 2013). In view of these developments, the United States and European Union attempted to form a National Coalition of which Qatar did not want a confrontation with Saudi Arabia and accepted the expansion. On the other hand, al-Assad, has labeled his enemies Islamist "terrorists" and has his own powerful allies abroad, notably Iran and Russia (Karouny (2013, p.2). The United States and EU powers have been reluctant to supply arms, partly for fear of them reaching anti-Western rebels, including some aligned with al Qaeda. But Britain and France ended an EU arms embargo and tighter, Saudi supervision of supply channels made it easier for United Kingdom and France to explore the chances of sending weapons in the event that planned peace talks failed.

However, it is important to note that Turkey and Saudi Arabia, two leading allies of the West, have also been actively promoting a hardline coalition of Islamist rebels against Bashar al-Assad's regime that includes al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, and this has rather alarmed Western governments especially the United States. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are particularly concentrating their backing for the Syrian rebels on the combined Jaish al-Fatah, or the Army of Conquest, a command structure for jihadist groups in Syria that includes Jabhat al-Nusra, an extremist rival to Isis which shares many of its aspirations for a fundamentalist caliphate (Sengupta, 2015). This is because Western governments including the U.S. are ideologically and firmly opposed to arming and funding jihadist extremists in Syria's long-running civil war. The move also appears to undercut United States' attempt to train pro-Western opposition fighters, which was launched in

2014. Mr Obama first announced the \$500m programme for the training of opposition fighters. Though the number of fighters involved is small and, crucially, the State Department insists that they would primarily fight against Isis and not against the regime. However, the lack of Western action in Syria, especially the failure to impose a “no-fly zone”, meant that regional powers now needed to come together and take the lead to help the opposition (Sengupta, 2015).

Sengupta (2015) reveals that material support – arms and money – have been coming from the Saudis, with the Turks facilitating its passage through the border villages of Guvecci, Kuyubasi, Hacipasa, Besaslan, Kusakli and Bukulmez which have become the favoured routes. Therefore, the joint approach by Turkey and Saudi Arabia graphically illustrates how the interests of the Sunni regional powers are diverging from those of the US in Syria. The U.S. opposition to the arming of Syrian regime rebels funding jihadist extremists in Syria’s civil war was followed by her conducted air strikes against al-Nusra positions in Aleppo – claiming the group was plotting terrorist attacks on the West – on the first day of the bombing campaign against Isis. More importantly, efforts to address and resolve the Syrian conflict through diplomatic means, including sanctions and negotiations have continued to hit the brick walls. Lakhdar Brahimi, the joint U.N.-Arab League envoy to Syria, claimed that opposition leader Moaz al-Khatib’s has made efforts at opening negotiations with representatives of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s government with an endorsement from the wider opposition (Sly, 2013). Although the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic have had a back door arrangement via the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to reach a political reconciliation. The Syrian government has been in discussions with the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia regarding political reconciliation. The Syrian government and the Gulf nations have been in discussion about the Muslim Brotherhood’s presence in the region and their need to defeat their ideology. With the war winding down in Syria, Syrian government is hoping for the Arab League to lift their suspension and resume efforts to champion the peace settlement (Aboufadel, 2018).

However, the president of the umbrella National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, in consensus with other members of the coalition, claimed they had not been consulted. The opposition rejected talks with any representatives of Assad’s regime, holding it responsible for the more than 60,000 deaths reported by the U.N. since the revolt erupted in March 2011. The coalition argued that while it continues to reject a role for Assad and the leadership of his security apparatus, it would accept talks with any other Syrians, including those serving with the government, as long as they did not participate in any crimes. On the other hand, the United Nations expressed willingness to host the discussions following Syrian government willingness to identify an acceptable delegation (Sly, 2013). This small window of opportunity for a political solution to the Syrian crisis was affected when the government of President Bashar al-Assad rejected a meeting in Moscow with the head of the opposition coalition. According to DeYoung (2013), Syria’s Foreign Ministry said that, despite reports about a Moscow “meeting with the opposition,” the regime was open only to talks inside Syria. The rebel Syrian Opposition Coalition, which has rejected any talks until Assad leaves power, also said there would be no Moscow meeting despite Russia’s apparent effort to start talks, after having invited both sides separately to visit with intentions to help them overcome their resistance to talking with each other. However, before the two rejections, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described Russia’s overture a “very small” but positive opening (DeYoung, 2013).

Although Russia, which has long backed Assad, has repeatedly blocked U.N. Security Council action against him and said Syrians must work out their problems themselves. Events leading to a possible meeting began in 2012, when Moaz al-Khatib, the leader of a Syrian opposition group recognized by the United States and other countries, stated he was willing to meet with Syrian government representatives in exchange for prisoner releases. Khatib’s own group denounced the offer, but it gained traction when the Obama administration and others praised him for seeking a way to end the bloodshed, which has cost more than 70,000 lives (DeYoung, 2013). Meanwhile, President Obama formally recognized a newly formed Syrian opposition group as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, with the intention of pushing for the downfall of President Bashar al-Assad and the formation of an alternative government. According to Obama, “We’ve made a decision that the Syrian Opposition Coalition is now inclusive enough, is reflective and representative enough of the Syrian population that we consider them the legitimate representative of the Syrian people in opposition to the Assad regime,” (Obama, cited in DeYoung, 2012, p.1). The U.S. decision follows similar recognition by France, Britain and others, and it was targeted during the eve of a meeting of the Friends of Syria group of nations in Morocco in 2012 where the group was formally accepted. The coalition was formed with the backings of the United States and the government of Qatar, joining representatives brought from inside Syrian uprising with those working to build support outside the country (DeYoung, 2012).

Recent dimensions of the Syria conflict have been more devastating in all respects. On 1 April 2018, after a six-week operation that killed an estimated 1,700 civilians, Russian-backed Syrian government forces declared victory in Eastern Ghouta, the last rebel-held enclave on the outskirts of Damascus, the capital city. On 7 April 2018, an alleged chemical weapons attack on Douma, a city about six miles northeast of Damascus, killed more than forty people and affected over 500 people. The United States, France, and United Kingdom have claimed that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad initiated the attack, but the Syrian government refuted the claims, and Russia vetoed a UN resolution to allow investigators to access the site of the attack. Following the attacks, the United States, France, and United Kingdom conducted separate air

strikes on three chemical weapons facilities near Damascus and Homs on 14 April, 2018 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018).

Council on Foreign Relations (2018) notes that foreign actors continue to play an important role in the Syrian conflict. In April 2018, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Turkish President RecepTayyip Erdogan, and Russian President Vladimir Putin jointly agreed to protect Syria's territorial integrity and ensure a cease-fire. In March, Turkish soldiers and Free Syrian Army forces seized Afrin in northern Syria, nearly two months after Turkey conducted a major military operation to oust Kurdish militias in the region. Again, U.S. President Donald J. Trump stated that roughly 2000 U.S. troops will remain in Syria to avert the resurgence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The U.S.-led international coalition continues to conduct military strikes against the Islamic State, particularly on the Iraq-Syria border, and provides training and support to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and internal security forces.

4.1 International Sanctions on Syria and Implications on Middle East Security

Sanctions are punitive measures taken by one or more countries to apply pressure on another nation to conform to international law or opinion. This is usually a punishment imposed to a country as a result of breaking a rule or a law. Chemaly (2018) has distinguished between primary and secondary sanctions in international relations. According to Chemaly (2018), primary sanctions are imposed by sanctioning countries on their citizens and companies, prohibiting them from dealing with counterparts from nations that have been sanctioned. This type of sanction may appear in different forms such as the freezing of assets and imposition of trade embargoes. On the other hand, secondary sanctions are those that are indirectly placed on third parties in which the sanctioning country/authority mounts strong pressure on them to stop their transactions and activities with the particular country that has been sanctioned. In some cases, the third parties are threatened and they face the risk of losing access to the sanctioning country, and this is usually related to restrictions on the use of its financial system to carry out international trade. In the case of Syria, there have been both primary and secondary sanctions meted out on the country by different international actors. These sanctions generally extend to spheres of property, trade, security, financing, loans, insurance, imports, petroleum products and energy, technology and other areas. This means that sanctions on Syria has had serious impact on most of the productive sectors of the economy. Many investors are thus discouraged to invest in the country as a result of these sanctions and as such there would be low trade and economic setback in the country. In terms of financing, economists estimate that the need for investment in Syria should be about \$250 billion and \$1 trillion. At present, however, Syria is losing this money which cannot flow into Syria due to the sanctions (both primary and secondary) imposed by the U.S., the U.K., and the EU, which constitute an embargo on Syria's economic development (Chemaly, 2018).

Specifically, sanctions imposed on Syria have come from different international actors including the United Nations, European Union, the Arab League, the U.K and the United States. More generally, Islamic countries (except Iran) widely condemn Syria's activities under the regime of President Assad. Both the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) encouraged sever sanctions on Syria under the watch of Assad during the Syrian conflict. It is important to remark that the Arab League supported sanctions against Syria, which is a rare occurrence in view that Arab League had accepted sanctions against one of its member only once before in its history, and that is the sanctions imposed on Iraq in the early 1990s. Another heavy sanction on Syria includes its suspension and withdrawal of its membership of the organization of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), which has about 57 member states (Portela, 2012). The content of EU's Syrian sanctions and that of the U.S. are similar in some sense to the point of matching the EU and the US closely – an effective transatlantic partnership. Despite disagreeing on some elements and scope of the arms embargo, the EU and U.S. measures almost converge in terms of semblance and uniformity. This coincidence makes it difficult for European companies to take over trade links earlier engaged by companies originating from the U.S, as commonly done by non-Western operators. Switzerland has also encouraged sanctions similar to that supported by the EU. And in the same way, Turkey which has played a role of regional power and which is bounded by Syria went ahead to met out sanctions more stricter than it had even done in the previous times on their neighbours. Turkey's sanctions appeared also in the aspect of arms embargo, trade sanctions with increased taxes on Syrian goods and border blockade, assets freezes, and severance of diplomatic relations (Walker, 2012).

McDowall (2018) notes that U.S. sanctions on Syria predate the crisis, but were extended in view of the war in Syria and especially the clampdown on protesters by President Assad's forces in 2011. The U.S. sanctions on Syria are wide ranging and cut across virtual all facets of the socio-economic and political life of the country. The U.S. sanctions have frozen the assets of the country. This has affected many big investors and hundreds of companies, including individuals in government, military and security personnel and others accused of being involved in the use of chemical weapons. McDowall (2018) confirms that the U.S. imposed sanctions that ban exports, sales or supply of services, along with any new investments, into Syria by any U.S. person. There is also embargo on any business deal by U.S. citizens in Syrian in oil and hydrocarbon products, or their import into the United States. This means that U.S. origins cannot finance or engage in any business transactions by foreigners especially if it connects to the Syria economy.

These sanctions prohibited transactions regarding property and interests in property of the Government of Syria and certain persons; transactions or dealings with foreign persons as determined by the Secretary of the Treasury in consultation with the Secretary of State; as well as a freeze on all property and interests in property of the Government of Syria, its agencies, and entities under its control that are in the United States or within the possession or control of U.S. persons (Balfour, 2012). The U.S. sanctions further prohibits transactions by a U.S. person, regardless of location, that involve any type of new investment in Syria, supply of products and services, or trade in petroleum or petroleum products of Syrian origin, as well as any approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee by a U.S. person, regardless of location, of a transaction by a foreign person that would be prohibited if performed by a U.S. person or within the United States (Balfour, 2012). On the other hand, the European Union (EU) imposed sanctions on Syria in May 2011 over the regime's clampdown on peaceful protesters and for its violation of human rights. The EU sanctions have been renewed several times since the Syrian conflict began in 2011. As the U.S. sanctions, the EU sanctions covers a wide-range of areas and include asset freezes, travel bans, trade restrictions, financial sanctions and an arms embargo. The trade ban was particularly directed at items that could be used militarily or for repression, luxury goods, precious stones and metals and equipment or technology for some oil and gas sectors including exploration and production, refining and gas liquefaction. These sanctions affected ordinary Syrian citizens, the government and army. The EU sanctions bans procurement of some medicines by preventing transactions with foreign banks and stopping many international drug companies from dealing with Syria, she said (Mcdowell, 2018). The European Union sanctions have remained more comprehensive and elaborate covering all sectors of the Syrian economy. The EU has adopted the sanctions to mount more pressure on the Assad regime to end the crackdown on the citizens, withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities, implement democratic reforms and participate in the peace process. The EU sanctions against Syria contains up to 17 sets of restrictive measures (Council of the European Union, 2012). These sanctions are spread across different sectors and such had serious effects on the Syrian government as well as its citizens, especially the business environment. The foreign investors are also affected by the EU sanctions.

4.2 Impact of the Syrian Civil War on Socio-Economic Development

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) stated that the Syrian protracted conflict has cost the country \$388 billion in economic and social damage. Particularly, the cost of material destruction, including damage to roads, infrastructure, homes and other physical objects, was estimated at \$120 billion (Middle East Monitor, 2018). The Syrian conflict have had serious impacts on the country's people, with more than 400,000 estimated deaths and over half the population driven from their homes in the Syrian conflict which has been described as the largest refugee crisis since World War II. A new World Bank report estimates that as of early 2017, the conflict in Syria has damaged or destroyed about a third of the housing stock and about half of medical and education facilities, and led to significant economic losses (World Bank, 2017a). The report of the World Bank (2017b) remarks that the impact of the Syrian on physical infrastructure is quite significant. The major conflict areas affected include cities such as Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus, and many smaller towns. Both the government and the rebels have operated in these areas and such has had tragic effects on the people living in these areas. The conflict resulted to the collapse of these cities in which many houses and public places, including public utilities were destroyed. Infrastructures such as public roads, schools, bridges, water boreholes, hospitals, etc. have all been destroyed in the battle between government forces and the opposition rebels.

Before the outbreak of the conflict, Syria had already made remarkable improvements in its urban life, in which 56 percent of the population lived in urban areas. The two largest cities, Damascus and Aleppo, had about 37 percent of the urban population and 20 percent of the total population. The 2010 census data of Syrian showed that there were 4,128,941 conventional dwelling units across Syria's 14 governorates. Also in 2012, there were about 2,881,392 housing stock in about eight examined governorates (Syria Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). In cities such as Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, etc, where conflict had been intense, much destruction of physical properties had been recorded. Many residential buildings were either partially or fully destroyed. This was followed by a lull in real estate investment. An estimated number of 316,649 housing blocks were exposed to attacks, in which Aleppo alone risked 64 percent of the attacks on housing units, followed by Homs at 16 percent. The damage estimated across the examined cities showed that about 78,339 residential housing units were destroyed while about 238,311 housing units were partially damaged (World Bank (2017b). Table 1 presents details of the housing damage in Syrian cities, while table 2 contains housing damage estimates across Syrian Governorates.

Table 1. Housing Damage in Syrian Cities

City	Units in 2010	Damaged Units in 2017		Damaged Units in 2017 (% of 2010 value)	
		Partial Damage	Destroyed	Partial Damage	Destroyed
Aleppo	662,323	154,465	49,830	23.3	7.5
Raqqa	55,746	7,214	2,418	12.9	4.3
Dar'a	30,532	3,678	922	12.0	3.0
Douma	18,786	3,476	884	18.5	4.7
Dayraz-Zawr	48,430	15,107	4,849	31.2	10.0

Homs	216,191	37,350	12,526	17.3	5.8
Hama	101,902	2,531	3,020	2.5	3.0
Idlib	46,014	1,164	2,916	25.3	6.3
Tadmur	3,178	1,042	272	32.8	8.6
Kobani	20,801	2,226	814	10.7	3.9
Total	1,181,813	238,311	78,339	19.8	6.5

Source: World Bank (2017b) *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria.* Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/27541/The%20Toll%20of%20War.pdf> Accessed 12 April, 2021.

Table 2. Housing Damage Estimates Across Governorates

City	Units in 2010	Damaged Units in 2017		Damaged Units in 2017 (% of 2010 value)	
		Partial Damage	Destroyed	Partial Damage	Destroyed
Aleppo	889,884	236,947	68,743	23.3	7.5
Raqqa	145,374	27,054	8,899	12.9	4.3
Dar'a	157,430	44,081	12,596	12.0	3.0
Rif Dimashq	600,955	103,794	40,259	18.5	4.7
Dayraz-Zawr	171,679	48,070	13,734	31.2	10.0
Homs	356,577	97,936	28,144	17.3	5.8
Hama	305,518	18,402	27,547	2.5	3.0
Idlib	261,302	73,165	20,904	25.3	6.3
Total	2,888,719	649,449	220,826	22.8	8.6

Source: World Bank (2017b) *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria.* Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/27541/The%20Toll%20of%20War.pdf> Accessed 12 April, 2021.

An outcome of the destruction of urban city and the properties was the massive heaps of debris in Syrian cities. The conflict in Syria accumulated tons of debris which would require a tasking evacuation process. The World Bank report (2017b) noted that about 14.9 and 5.3 million tons of debris have accumulated in Aleppo and Homs, respectively. While it would require about six years of continuous work and 26 million truck-kilometers to clear the debris in Aleppo, in Homs, it would take about 2.5 years and 2.3 million truck-kilometers. The evacuation of the debris poses some significant challenges. It is costly to clear, it would take a lot of time to clear the debris, the operations could possibly result to other environmental risks, such as accumulation of dusts, carbon dioxide emissions, and water resource pollution, all of which pose serious health risks. Thus, inhabitants in the affected areas always resist any attempt at locating crushing sites. Physical damages in Syria directly resulted to significant disruptions in economic networks, human capital, and public service delivery. Physical damage to the electricity infrastructure has been sever, even though all the country's hydroelectric dams and six of 18 power plants remain operational, four extra plants are partially damaged, and one has been destroyed. Related to this was the problem of fuel shortages, especially in view that the conflict could not allow for effective operation and maintenance of the plants, thus, the huge records of drop in public power supply. Power generation which was about 43,164 GWh in 2010 dropped to 16,208 gigawatt-hours (GWh) in 2015, representing a drop of 62.5 percent. This is mainly as a result of the unavailability of fuel to power the plants. The power generation capacity declined with about 30 percent between 2010 and 2015. In this situation, most cities only had few hours of electricity per day. The government has also adopted a rationing policy via load shedding throughout the country, despite its sever effects on the delivery of other public services, such as water, education, and health care services (World Bank, 2017b). In particular, availability of electricity makes water supply possible but when there is no electricity water supply will be seriously affected. Table 3 shows status of electricity grid and major power plants in Syria's cities; while table 4 shows how water supply has been affected in Syria as a result of the physical damage on power generation facilities.

Table 3. Status of the Electricity Grid and Major Power Infrastructure in Seven Cities in Syria (%)

City	Physical Status			Operational Status		
	No Damage	Partial Damage	Destroyed	Functioning	Partial Function	No Function
Aleppo	89.39	3.81	6.80	0.33	99.00	0.66
Idlib	94.29	1.43	4.29	92.86	2.86	4.29
Hama	99.24	0.51	0.25	0.25	99.75	0.00
Kobani	66.67	33.33	0.00	66.67	0.00	33.33
Tadmur	30.00	70.00	0.00	10.00	90.00	0.00
Douma	88.24	5.88	5.88	23.53	64.71	11.76
Raqqa	94.59	0.00	2.70	13.51	86.49	0.00

Source: World Bank (2017b) *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria.* Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/27541/The%20Toll%20of%20War.pdf> Accessed 12 April, 2021.

Table 4. Damage in Water and Sanitation Infrastructure (Eight Governorates)

Asset Type	Baseline Coverage	Destroyed	Partially Damaged	Total Damage	Percentage of assets with damage
Well	234	3	29	32	14%
Water Tower/Tank	176	8	34	52	30%
Water Treatment Plant	8	0	5	5	63%
Sewage Treatment Plant	4	0	1	1	25%
Dam	5	0	0	0	0%
Other Drainage Str.	3	1	1	2	67%
Pumping Station	21	0	12	12	57%
Storage Reservoir	2	0	0	0	0%
Water/Sanitation Office	3	2	1	3	100%

Source: World Bank (2017b) *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of The Conflict in Syria.*

Importantly, the Syrian conflict has badly shattered the economy of the country. As the report of World bank (2017) shows, the losses in GDP between 2011 and 2016 sum to about four times the size of the Syrian GDP in 2010. The physical destruction, casualties, forced displacement, and breakup of economic networks have all had different levels of negative impact on the Syrian economy. Syria's GDP declined by about 61 percent between 2011 and 2015, and by an additional 2 percent in 2016. This was typically about 63 percent drop as against the GDP figures in 2010. In real terms, the actual GDP fell \$51 billion (in 2010 prices) short of the counterfactual GDP in 2016. These differences between counterfactual and actual GDP numbers between 2011 and 2016 would result to a cumulative GDP loss of about \$226 billion in 2010 prices, about four times the 2010 GDP figures. Following the Syrian conflict, many people lost their job and livelihood, with little hope for the implementation of social security programmes. Job lost in Syria was put at a record approximately 538,000 per year on average between 2010 and 2015, thus, some 482,000 people are added to the number of unemployed persons yearly. As World Bank report (2017) showed, about 7.7 percent, or nine million individuals are not engaged in any economic value generation: 2.9 million of them are unemployed and 6.1 million are inactive. Youth unemployment increased to 78 percent in 2015. To worsen the situation, the government of Syria, in a bid to cut public spending, has further reduced subsidies which have further caused significant increases in prices of goods and services including food items in Syria. For instance, Fuel oil increased 10-fold from 2011 to 2015, while prices of rice and sugar, increased 2.3-fold in the same period. Approximately six in 10 Syrians now live in extreme poverty today. As of December 2016, 5.8 million Syrians who lived in extreme poverty received in-kind food assistance. The World Food Programme alone shares more than four million food baskets (supplements for about 1,700 kilocalories per day) each month.

The damage caused by the Syrian war extended to airports, railways, and ports. Prior to the conflict, Syria could boast of about 26 airports with paved runways, and five airports with runways of more than 3,000 meters. During the pre-conflict period, Syria's three international airports, at Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia, together handled an annual average of 2.5 million passengers on 13,000 flights. In present conflict situation, the only international airport that operates in Syrian is the Damascus Airport. The conflict has virtually affected the Syrian railway system which had about 2,423 km in total length and the railway has remained damaged and non-operational. In the health sector, there was 35 percent complete destruction of pre-conflict health infrastructure in Aleppo: 14 hospitals and 57 medical centers were destroyed as of December 2016. Particularly, in Raqqa about 80 percent and 79 percent of health facilities were partially damaged in Raqqa and Dayzaz-Zawr respectively (World Bank, 2017b).

4.3 Destruction of Lives and Property in Syria

The conflict in Syria has had serious impacts on human lives, and displacement has been the most dramatic. Syria had some 20.7 million people in 2010 before the outbreak of the conflict (World Development Indicators, 2012). Since 2011, the conflict has deflated the populations in Syria as a result of internal displacement. The population of Syria has continued to reduce dramatically following the ongoing war in the country. In addition to internal human displacement, there have been series of demographic movements and migration taking place in Syria, most of which are not well documented. Generally, it is difficult to determine in exactitude the casualties recorded in the Syrian conflict. The casualties that are directly related to the conflict in Syria are estimated to be between 400,000 (UN, as of April 2016) and 470,000 (Syrian Center for Policy Research, as of February 2016; World Bank report, as of 2017). Table 4 contains data provided by reliable sources on the casualties in Syrian conflict.

Table 5. Loss of Lives and Key Demographic Indicators in Syria

Indicator	Number	Source/Comment
Syria: Pre-war population (2010)	20,720,602	World Bank (WDI figures) based on UN Population Division data and national census reports.
Estimated population within Syria as of December 2016	18,792,029	IOM. UN Population Division projections at 18,564,000 for 2016.
Estimated total number of deaths as a result of conflict since 2011	400,000 – 470,000	UN (400,000 as of April 2016); Syrian Center for Policy Research (470,000 as of February 2016).

Internally displaced persons since 2011*	5,715,168	IOM (Jan 2017). UNOCHA lists 6.3 million IDPs in Dec 2016, including the 513,833 persons “affected by shelter damage” and displaced within their own community as displaced. IOM does not.
Registered Syrian refugees	4,857,617	UNHCR (December 2016, since 2011)
Cumulative Syrian Asylum Applications	884,461	UNHCR (April 2011-Oct 2016). *Note that those arriving in Europe may remain registered in other countries.

Source: World Bank (2017b) The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of The Conflict in Syria.

The table above therefore shows that the Syrian conflict had severe effects and implications, not only on the socio-economic development of Syria, but has led to the loss of lives and property. The data presented has therefore confirmed research hypothesis one which states that the military and diplomatic interventions of regional and global powers in the Syrian conflict undermined peace and security in the Middle East.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings show that the military and diplomatic interventions of regional and global powers in the Syrian conflict undermined peace and security in the Middle East. The regional and global powers including the United Nations, European Union, Arab League, United States, United Kingdom, Russia, China, France and Middle East countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey etc. engaged in flagrant violations of series of Syrian peace agreements (including UN Security Council Resolution 2254; Geneva I,II,III,IV,V,VI,VII; Astana I,II,III,IV,V,VI; Russia-Turkey Ceasefire; four de-escalation zones pactetc). International organizations like the UN, Arab League, the EU, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), state actors in Middle East and other international actors imposed sanctions on Syria failed to achieve effective implementation of the sanctions. The UN Security Council Resolution 2254 failed. The EU sanctions were selectively implemented. Russia and China had consistently vetoed UN resolutions against Syria, despite China’s claim and pretentious sanctions and condemnation against the Syrian government. Following the investigations carried out in this study and the consequent findings established in the study, the following recommendations in which we may hang our intellectual beliefs and prospect for further studies on the subject matter have been proposed:

- The United Nations Security Council should make a resolution for ceasefire in conflict areas and back it up with severe sanctions to defaulting global and regional state and non-state actors either directly or indirectly involved in the ongoing Syrian civil war. This will ensure comprehensive implementation of specific peace agreements reached by stakeholders.
- Since most global powers claim they are sponsoring rebels who fight against ISIS in Syria, the UN Security Council should make a resolution to disband the thousands of rebel groups fighting in Syria and be replaced by United Nations special force in Syria. This will stamp out the political factors/interests that fuel the conflict, forestall multiplicity of armed groups and contain proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Syria and across the Middle East.

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