



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Syrian Crisis: The Fall Of Assad Regime And Its Impact On Balance Of Power In Middle East.

Author : Aditya kumar

Undergraduate student Amity University Noida

ABSTRACT

The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, is rooted in decades of authoritarian rule, economic mismanagement, and social inequality under President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Widespread unrest emerged from political repression, economic hardships, and sectarian favoritism, particularly against marginalized Sunni Muslims. As the conflict escalated, extremist factions like ISIS gained prominence, complicating the opposition landscape and prompting significant foreign interventions. This multifaceted crisis has not only created a severe humanitarian disaster but has also profoundly altered the balance of power in the Middle East.

The war has notably affected Kurdish aspirations for autonomy, as historically marginalized groups sought self-governance amidst the ethnic and sectarian divides exacerbated by the conflict. The Assad regime's dual strategy of repression and tactical alliances with Kurdish forces against ISIS further complicated the dynamics, leading to shifting alliances that reshaped the region's political landscape.

Sectarian divides have been a critical factor in transforming the Middle East's balance of power. The Assad regime's brutal repression of Sunni protests and its framing of the conflict in sectarian terms rallied Alawite support while alienating Sunnis. Foreign interventions have further polarized the conflict, with Iran backing Assad and Sunni-majority states supporting opposition groups. This sectarian strife has intensified regional rivalries, complicating peace efforts and contributing to broader geopolitical instability. The emergence of ISIS, exploiting the chaos to enforce its radical Sunni ideology through severe human rights violations, has further deepened sectarian divides and complicated prospects for lasting peace in the region.

This report examines the governance strategies of the Assad regime during the Syrian Civil War and their impact on the balance of power in the Middle East. It highlights the regime's brutal

repression of dissent, reliance on external alliances with Russia and Iran, and the resulting human rights abuses that fragmented authority amid rising opposition and extremist factions like ISIS. Iran's military and logistical support has reinforced Assad's position while deepening sectarian tensions, as it seeks to bolster

Shia influence against Sunni adversaries. Russia's military intervention since 2015 has further solidified Assad's regime, enhancing its geopolitical interests and complicating U.S.-Russia relations. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's support for opposition groups reflects its efforts to counter Iranian influence, though challenges such as fragmentation among rebel factions and evolving U.S. policies have complicated its objectives. Overall, the interplay of these dynamics underscores a shifting balance of power in the region, characterized by increased foreign intervention, sectarian strife, and a humanitarian crisis that complicates prospects for peace and stability.

The fall of President Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria signifies a crucial shift in the Middle East's balance of power, following over a decade of civil war. The regime's weakened military, compounded by diminished support from key allies Russia and Iran, has led to significant territorial losses, including the recent rebel offensive that captured Damascus. This collapse has created a precarious state in Syria, characterized by escalating violence and a dire humanitarian crisis affecting over 17 million people. UN officials stress the urgent need for a credible political transition and the preservation of state institutions amidst widespread instability. Iran's influence is notably waning as Hezbollah reallocates resources to confront Israel, complicating its regional strategy and weakening its military posture. The emergence of Islamist rebel leadership poses new security challenges for Israel and risks further destabilizing Iran's proxy networks. As regional and global powers vie to fill the power vacuum, the implications for foreign policy and stability in the Middle East remain profound and complex, necessitating increased international support and funding to address the humanitarian crisis and facilitate aid delivery across conflict lines.

Keywords: *-syrian civil war, ISIS, Middle East, Russia, USA, Humanitarian crisis, UN*

Research question

- 1)What are the key factors contributing to the resilience of the Assad regime in Syria, and how do these factors influence the prospects for its eventual fall?**
- 2)How would the fall of the Assad regime alter the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, particularly in relation to Iran's influence and its alliances with non-state actors?**
- 3)In what ways has the Syrian crisis affected the relationships between regional powers, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Russia, and how might these relationships evolve following a potential change in the Assad regime?**
- 4)What role do external actors play in shaping the outcomes of the Syrian crisis?**
- 5)How has the Syrian crisis impacted sectarian dynamics within the region, and what implications would the fall of the Assad regime have for sectarian tensions and power balances among Sunni and Shia groups in the Middle East?**

Research Methodology

Contents Analysis:- *Content analysis is a systematic research method used to analyze and interpret the content of textual, visual, or audio materials. It helps identify patterns, themes, meanings, or biases within communication.*

Qualitative research methodology:- *Qualitative research focuses on understanding human behavior, experiences, and social phenomena through non-numerical data like words, observations.*

INTRODUCTION

The Syrian Civil War, which erupted in 2011, has evolved into one of the most complex and devastating conflicts of the 21st century, marked by a multifaceted struggle involving various domestic factions and significant foreign intervention. Initially ignited by peaceful protests demanding democratic reforms, the situation rapidly escalated as the Assad regime responded with brutal repression. This sparked a widespread uprising that fragmented into numerous factions, including rebel groups, Kurdish forces, and extremist organizations like ISIS. The war has since morphed into a proxy battlefield for regional and global powers, each pursuing their strategic interests.

At the heart of the conflict lies the Assad regime, led by President Bashar al-Assad, who has been accused of egregious human rights violations against civilians, including the use of chemical weapons. The regime's response to dissent has been marked by a violent crackdown, which has only intensified the cycle of violence and fueled further rebellion. As various opposition groups emerged, the landscape of the conflict became increasingly polarized, with some factions embracing extremist ideologies.

One of the most notorious players in this conflict has been ISIS, which capitalized on the chaos to establish a self-proclaimed caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq. The group has been particularly ruthless in its campaign against Shia Muslims and other minority communities, employing systematic violence and human rights abuses as tools of terror. This sectarian violence not only exacerbated existing tensions within Syria but also drew in regional actors who framed their involvement in terms of sectarian solidarity. The involvement of foreign powers has significantly shaped the trajectory of the Syrian Civil War. Iran has emerged as a staunch ally of the Assad regime, providing military assistance and resources to bolster its position. This support is rooted in Iran's broader strategy to maintain influence in the Levant and counteract Sunni-majority adversaries. Conversely, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have backed various rebel groups, viewing the conflict through a sectarian lens and seeking to diminish Iranian influence in the region.



The United States initially supported moderate rebel factions but later shifted its focus towards combating ISIS, leading to a complicated military engagement that included airstrikes and support for Kurdish forces. Meanwhile, Russia intervened decisively in 2015, launching a military campaign that turned the tide in favor of Assad. Moscow's involvement has been pivotal in maintaining the regime's power and has underscored Russia's intention to reassert its influence in the Middle East.

As the war drags on, it has resulted in a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, displacing millions and causing widespread suffering among civilians. The international community has struggled to respond effectively, with diplomatic efforts often undermined by competing interests and geopolitical rivalries. The Syrian Civil War serves as a stark reminder of the complexities inherent in modern conflicts, where local grievances are intertwined with global power dynamics, resulting in an enduring tragedy that continues to unfold. The legacy of this war will likely shape not only Syria's future but also the broader geopolitical landscape of the Middle East for years to come.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors and causes responsible for civil war in Syria

Political Repression

At the heart of the Syrian crisis lies decades of authoritarian rule under the Assad family. Hafez al-Assad seized power in a coup in 1970 and established a regime characterized by strict control over political life, suppression of dissent, and a lack of democratic freedoms.

The political landscape in Syria was marked by a single-party state dominated by the Ba'ath Party, which marginalized other political groups and stifled civil society.

Economic Hardships

Syria faced significant economic challenges leading up to the civil war. The country's economy was heavily reliant on agriculture and oil exports, but mismanagement, corruption, and a series of droughts severely impacted agricultural productivity. The 2006-2010 drought was particularly devastating, leading to crop failures and the displacement of rural communities to urban areas.

Social Inequality

Syria is home to a diverse population comprising various ethnic and religious groups, including Sunni Muslims, Alawites (a Shia sect), Christians, Kurds, and Druze. The Assad regime has historically favored Alawites in positions of power within the military and government, leading to feelings of marginalization among other communities, particularly Sunni Muslims who form the majority.

Rise of Extremism

As the conflict progressed, extremist groups began to emerge within the opposition landscape. The rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) was particularly notable as it capitalized on the chaos to expand its influence in both Syria and Iraq. Other jihadist factions also gained prominence, further complicating the dynamics of the war.

Ethnic divides and Kurdish issue

The Kurds are an ethnic group primarily located in the Middle East, with significant populations in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. In Syria, they constitute about 10-15% of the population, predominantly residing in the northern regions of the country, particularly in areas like Kobani, Afrin, and Hasakah. Historically, the Kurds have faced marginalization and repression under various regimes in Syria, particularly under the Ba'athist rule of Hafez al-Assad and later his son Bashar al-Assad.

The Assad Government: Predominantly Alawite, a sect of Shia Islam, the Assad regime has relied on its loyalist forces to maintain control over key regions. The regime has sought to portray itself as a protector of minorities against Sunni extremism.

Sunni Arab Rebels: Various opposition groups, often Sunni-dominated, have fought against the Assad regime. These groups range from moderate factions to more radical Islamist organizations.

Kurdish Forces: As mentioned earlier, the YPG and its political wing, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), represent Kurdish interests. They have sought to establish an autonomous region in northern Syria while maintaining a degree of cooperation with other anti-Assad factions.

ISIS: The rise of ISIS further complicated the conflict, as it posed a threat not only to the Assad regime but also to Kurdish forces and other opposition groups. The brutal tactics employed by ISIS unified many factions against a common enemy.

Sectarian divides between the Shia and Sunni

The roots of sectarian divides in Syria can be traced back to the early Islamic period and have evolved over centuries. Sunni Islam, which constitutes about 74% of Syria's population, has historically been dominant. In contrast, Alawites, a Shia sect that makes up around 12% of the population, have faced marginalization and discrimination.

In a bid to maintain control, the Assad government has employed sectarian rhetoric to depict the conflict as one between a secular regime protecting minorities and a Sunni-led insurgency threatening stability. This narrative has resonated with many Alawites and other minority groups who fear that a Sunni-dominated government would lead to their marginalization or persecution.

By framing the conflict in sectarian terms, the regime sought to rally support from Alawite communities and other minorities, portraying itself as their protector. This strategy effectively solidified sectarian identities and contributed to a climate of fear and mistrust between communities.

Militarization of Sectarian Identities

The Assad government has actively militarized sectarian identities by arming and supporting pro-regime militias composed predominantly of Alawites and other minority groups. These militias, such as the Shabiha, have been implicated in numerous atrocities against Sunni civilians. Their brutal tactics have not only targeted opposition fighters but have also extended to civilian populations suspected of dissent.

Human right violation by ISIS against Shia Muslims

The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) marked a dark chapter in the history of the Middle East, characterized by extreme violence, brutality, and widespread human rights violations. Among the various groups targeted by ISIS, Shia Muslims faced particularly severe persecution. This essay explores the systematic human rights violations perpetrated by ISIS against Shia communities, examining the ideological motivations behind these acts, the methods employed, and the broader implications for human rights and sectarian relations in the region.

Mass Executions: One of the most notorious acts of violence against Shia Muslims occurred during the capture of the city of Tikrit in 2014. ISIS fighters executed hundreds of Shia soldiers from the Iraqi Army who had been captured during the fighting.

Targeted Attacks: ISIS conducted numerous attacks on Shia mosques, shrines, and gatherings. These attacks were often timed to coincide with significant religious events, such as Ashura, which commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, a pivotal figure in Shia Islam.

Destruction of Religious Sites: In addition to targeting individuals, ISIS systematically destroyed Shia religious sites, including mosques and shrines. The destruction of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra.

Kidnapping and Enslavement: ISIS engaged in widespread kidnapping of Shia Muslims, often holding them for ransom or using them as bargaining chips in negotiations with governments. Some individuals were subjected to sexual violence and forced labor. Reports indicated that women from Shia communities were particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Bashar Al Assad's role and the response of the government

Repression and Control

From the onset of the civil war, the Assad government employed brutal repression as its primary governance strategy. Security forces were deployed to suppress protests, leading to widespread human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings.

Fragmentation of Authority

As the conflict escalated, the Assad regime faced challenges not only from organized opposition groups but also from extremist factions such as ISIS and al-Nusra Front.

Propaganda and Information Control

To maintain legitimacy and public support, the Assad regime engaged in extensive propaganda efforts. State-controlled media portrayed the government as a defender against terrorism and external aggression.

Alliances with External Actors

The role of external actors has been crucial in shaping the dynamics of the Syrian Civil War. The Assad government established strategic alliances with countries such as Russia and Iran.

Attempts at Political Reconciliation

In response to international pressure and changing dynamics on the ground, the Assad government has made sporadic attempts at political reconciliation. However, these efforts have often been superficial and aimed at legitimizing the regime rather than genuinely addressing grievances or fostering inclusive dialogue.

The regime's approach to negotiations has typically involved seeking to isolate moderate opposition groups while engaging with more extremist factions that it can portray as legitimate adversaries. This strategy has hindered meaningful progress toward a political solution and perpetuated cycles of violence.

Involvement of Iran in Syrian civil war

Strategic Alliance with the Assad Regime

Iran has long viewed Syria as a crucial ally in its regional strategy. The Assad regime, led by President Bashar al-Assad, has been a key partner for Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This alliance is rooted in shared interests, particularly in resisting Western influence and countering Sunni extremist groups.

Hezbollah's Role

Iran's support for Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group that has been instrumental in the Syrian conflict, further underscores its involvement. Hezbollah fighters have been deployed to Syria to assist Assad's forces in critical battles. This partnership is part of Iran's broader strategy to create a "Shia crescent" stretching from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon.

Military Engagement and Proxy Warfare

Iran has engaged in direct military operations in Syria while also utilizing proxy forces. In addition to Hezbollah, Iran has mobilized various Shia militias from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to fight alongside Syrian government forces.

Economic Interests

The Syrian conflict also presents economic opportunities for Iran. As the war has devastated Syria's infrastructure, Iranian companies have sought contracts for reconstruction efforts.

Impact on Regional Dynamics

Iran's involvement in Syria has had significant implications for regional dynamics. It has heightened tensions with Israel, which perceives Iranian entrenchment in Syria as a direct threat to its security. Israel has conducted numerous airstrikes against Iranian positions and weapons transfers to Hezbollah in Syria.

Involvement of Russia in Syrian civil war

Russia's military intervention in Syria officially began in September 2015. The Kremlin justified its actions by claiming it was combating terrorism, specifically targeting ISIS and other jihadist groups. However, the primary aim was to bolster the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Diplomatic Maneuvering

Russia employed its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) multiple times to block resolutions aimed at condemning Assad's actions or imposing sanctions on his government.

Peace Talks and Negotiations

Moscow has also sought to position itself as a key player in peace negotiations. The Astana Process, initiated in 2017, involved Russia, Iran, and Turkey working together to find a political solution to the conflict.

Oil and Gas Exploration

Syria is strategically located near several major oil and gas routes, making it an important area for energy exploration. Russian companies have sought to secure contracts for oil extraction and gas exploration in Syria, which would provide economic benefits and enhance Russia's energy influence in the region.

Arms Sales

Syria has historically been one of Russia's largest arms customers. The conflict has allowed Russia to expand its arms sales not only to Syria but also to other countries in the region that are interested in bolstering their military capabilities amid rising tensions.

Naval Presence

Russia's military presence in Syria has allowed it to establish a foothold in the Mediterranean Sea. The naval facility in Tartus serves as a critical logistical base for Russian naval operations, enhancing its ability to project power across the region.

Involvement of Saudi Arabia in Syrian civil war

From the onset of the Syrian civil war, Saudi Arabia positioned itself as a supporter of various opposition groups fighting against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. The kingdom's backing was rooted in its desire to see the fall of a regime that it viewed as an ally of Iran, its main regional rival.

Funding and Armament

Saudi Arabia provided significant financial support to rebel factions, including the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other Islamist groups. The kingdom funneled money through various channels, including direct aid and through intermediaries such as Turkey and Jordan.

Sunni Solidarity

Saudi Arabia's support for Sunni opposition groups was not only a political move but also a reflection of its ideological stance. The kingdom sought to bolster Sunni factions as a means of countering what it perceived as Iranian expansionism and Shia influence in the region.

Promotion of Salafism

Saudi Arabia's involvement also included promoting Salafi ideologies among some rebel factions. The kingdom has historically supported Salafi groups globally as part of its broader religious agenda.

Countering Iranian Influence

By supporting anti-Assad forces, Saudi Arabia aimed to counteract Iranian influence in Syria and prevent Tehran from establishing a land corridor through Iraq to Lebanon, where Hezbollah operates.

Refugee Support

Saudi Arabia has contributed to initiatives aimed at assisting Syrian refugees both within Syria and in neighboring countries like Jordan and Lebanon.

Syria after the fall of Assad's regime

Regional Power Dynamics

In Northeast Syria, particularly in certain areas of Aleppo, control remains with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which are backed by the United States. Recently, a five-day ceasefire between the U.S. and Turkey along the Euphrates River has ended, leading to reports of military buildups and escalating tensions in the region.

Golan Heights Situation

Israeli forces have reportedly advanced several kilometers into Syrian territory, as indicated by various media outlets. Additionally, Israel has conducted hundreds of airstrikes targeting military installations and supplies across Syria, which it claims are defensive actions.

Preserving Syrian Institutions

Syria faces three critical challenges: ongoing conflict, severe humanitarian and economic crises, and the urgent need for a credible political transition. It is essential to maintain state institutions, establish an inclusive governance framework, and ensure free and fair elections—key elements outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015).

Severe Humanitarian Needs

Years of conflict have devastated essential services, leading to the collapse of schools, healthcare facilities, and aid operations. There are alarming shortages of food, fuel, and other supplies due to disrupted trade routes and border closures. Furthermore, funding is urgently needed for relief efforts. The 2024 humanitarian appeal for Syria is among the least supported globally, having received less than one-third of the necessary funds with only two weeks remaining.

Funding Requirements

In response to the dire situation, the United Nations has allocated \$32 million from its Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support vital humanitarian initiatives.

Implication of the fall of Assad's regime on Iran

Iran's Response to the Syrian Situation

Iran's initial restrained reaction to the developments in Syria can be attributed to several factors. Many Hezbollah fighters, traditionally aligned with Iran, redirected their focus toward conflicts with the Israeli military in Lebanon. Although there were announcements about Iraqi Shiite militias being deployed to bolster Assad's forces, they ultimately did not enter Syria. This cautious approach indicates that Iran assessed its direct involvement would unlikely alter the conflict's outcome.

Iran continues to monitor developments in Syria closely through the Astana process, collaborating with Russia and Turkey. One of Tehran's goals is to limit the increasing influence of regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which has aimed to counter Kurdish forces in northern Syria. Previously, Iran viewed attacks on Kurdish positions by the Syrian National Army—a coalition of pro-Turkish militias—as unacceptable violations of Syrian sovereignty.

The potential decline of Syria as a key ally in Iran's regional strategy represents a significant setback both strategically and ideologically for Iranian leadership and advocates of interventionism. However, it is crucial to recognize that Iran still maintains other influential allies in the region, including the Houthis in Yemen, Shiite militias in Iraq, and a Hezbollah that, despite its challenges, has demonstrated its capability to engage effectively with the Israeli military. Thus, while the resistance axis is weakened by Assad's potential fall, it does not completely dissipate. Officially, following Bashar al-Assad's potential downfall, Iran's Supreme Leader has reiterated the necessity of Iranian "advisors" in Syria, claiming their presence is aimed at safeguarding Iran against threats from groups like ISIS. He has also suggested that Assad's fall was a result of U.S. and Israeli orchestration. However, beneath this official narrative

lies a likely internal assessment regarding the costs associated with supporting Assad's regime. It's important to note that there is growing public dissatisfaction within Iran regarding the financial burden imposed by these regional interventions, especially amid significant domestic economic challenges.

Implication of the fall of Assad's regime on balance of power in Middle east.

The potential end of the Assad family's nearly fifty-year rule in Syria is poised to significantly alter the regional power dynamics, as both local and international actors are likely to vie for influence in the vacuum created by this major regime shift. While Western nations, Arab states, and Israel may attempt to limit Iran's presence in Syria, it is improbable that they would endorse a radical Islamist government to take Assad's place.

Key Considerations

Iran

For many years, Iran has leveraged Syria to extend its influence in the region through various proxy groups operating within the predominantly Sunni nation. Tehran, alongside Hezbollah, has played a crucial role in assisting Syrian government forces in reclaiming lost territory. The Islamic Republic has also deployed commanders from its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to provide military guidance to Assad's forces, which has been vital in maintaining his grip on power.

Lebanon

Experts suggest that developments in Syria will have significant repercussions for Lebanon, where the fragile truce between Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel is precariously positioned. Hezbollah has been instrumental in supporting the Assad regime but has suffered setbacks due to its ongoing conflict with Israel. Should Syrian insurgents reach the Lebanese border, Hezbollah's critical supply lines from Iran—traversing through Syria and Iraq—could be severed, severely limiting Tehran's influence over its proxy in Lebanon.

Turkey

Turkey has aimed to enhance its influence over President Assad to strengthen its regional position and better manage Kurdish separatist movements along the Turkish-Syrian border, thereby establishing a buffer zone. Ankara has represented rebel factions in negotiations with Russia over the past decade, culminating in a ceasefire agreement between the Syrian government and opposition forces in 2020. Despite its backing of opposition groups, Turkey has not dismissed the possibility of reconciling with Syria.

Conclusion:-The Syrian Civil War, which erupted in 2011, has evolved into one of the most complex and devastating conflicts of the 21st century. It has drawn in a multitude of actors and interests, fundamentally reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. The multifaceted nature of the war, characterized by the Kurdish issue, the Shia-Sunni divide, and the involvement of regional and global powers such as Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, has rendered any resolution exceedingly challenging.

The sectarian divide between Shia and Sunni Muslims has been a crucial element in the Syrian conflict. The Assad regime is predominantly Alawite (a sect within Shia Islam), and its survival has been bolstered by support from Iran and Hezbollah, both Shia entities. Conversely, many Sunni groups have opposed Assad's rule, viewing it as an extension of Shia dominance in a predominantly Sunni country. This divide has fueled violence and exacerbated tensions not only within Syria but also across the region, as Sunni-majority countries like Saudi Arabia have supported opposition groups.

Iran's support for Assad has been unwavering, providing military advisors, financial assistance, and militia support to bolster his regime. This alliance is rooted in a broader strategy to expand Iranian influence in the Levant and counteract Sunni powers. Conversely, Russia's military intervention in 2015 marked a turning point in favor of Assad, allowing him to regain substantial territory.

Moreover, any political solution must address the aspirations of various ethnic groups—including Kurds—and tackle the underlying sectarian grievances that have fueled violence for over a decade. A comprehensive peace process would require genuine dialogue among all stakeholders, including those

currently marginalized or excluded from negotiations. In conclusion, while the fall of the Assad regime seems plausible under certain circumstances, it is essential to recognize that such an outcome would not automatically lead to peace or stability in Syria.

References

- *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR): The Syrian Civil War*
<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/syrian-civil-war>
- *Brookings Institution: The Roots of the Syrian Conflict*
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-roots-of-the-syrian-conflict/>
- *United States Institute of Peace (USIP): Understanding the Syrian Civil War*
<https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/03/understanding-syrian-civil-war>
- *The Atlantic: Why Syria's Civil War Started*
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/03/syria-civil-war/474732/>
- *Foreign Affairs: The Causes of the Syrian Civil War*
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2013-06-01/causes-syrian-civil-war>
- *Middle East Institute: The Kurdish Issue in Syria*
<https://www.mei.edu/publications/kurdish-issue-syria>
- *International Crisis Group: The Kurdish Question in Syria*
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/syria/kurdish-question-syria>
- *Al Jazeera: Understanding the Sectarian Divide in Syria*
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2013/5/27/understanding-the-sectarian-divide-in-syria>
- *The Washington Institute: Kurds in Syria: A New Political Reality*
<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kurds-in-syria-a-new-political-reality>
- *Carnegie Middle East Center: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Civil War*
<https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/74087>
- *Human Rights Watch: "We Will Destroy Your Culture": ISIS's Campaign Against Shia Muslims*
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/07/07/we-will-destroy-your-culture/isis-campaign-against-shia-muslims>
- *Amnesty International: Human Rights Abuses by ISIS in Iraq and Syria*
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/06/human-rights-abuses-by-isis-in-iraq-and-syria/>
- *United Nations: Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/syria/report-independent-international-commission-inquiry-syrian-arab-republic>
- *The Guardian: ISIS's Campaign of Terror Against Shia Muslims*
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/13/isis-terror-shia-muslims>
- *The Brookings Institution: The Persecution of Shia Muslims by ISIS*
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/06/01/the-persecution-of-shia-muslims-by-isis/>
- *The Atlantic: Bashar al-Assad's Role in the Syrian Civil War*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/bashar-al-assad-syria-war/494091/>

- *Foreign Policy: How Bashar al-Assad Survived the Syrian Civil War*
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/13/how-bashar-al-assad-survived-the-syrian-civil-war/>
- *Council on Foreign Relations: Bashar al-Assad's Regime*
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/bashar-al-assads-regime-syria>
- *BBC News: Profile: Bashar al-Assad*
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12449161>
- *Al Jazeera: Assad's Government Response to Protests and Rebellion*
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/8/18/syrian-government-response-to-protests>
- *Brookings Institution: The Role of Iran in Syria*
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-role-of-iran-in-syria/>
- *Council on Foreign Relations: Russia's Role in the Syrian Civil War*
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/russias-role-syrian-civil-war>
- *Al Jazeera: Saudi Arabia's Role in the Syrian Conflict*
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2016/10/19/the-role-of-saudi-arabia-in-the-syrian-conflict>
- *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Iran's Strategy in Syria*
<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/75910>
- *The Guardian: How Russia, Iran, and Turkey Shape the Future of Syria*
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/01/how-russia-iran-and-turkey-shape-the-future-of-syria>
- *Foreign Affairs: The Fall of Assad and Its Consequences for Iran*
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2012-05-01/fall-assad-and-its-consequences-iran>
- *Brookings Institution: The Geopolitical Implications of a Post-Assad Syria*
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/04/03/the-geopolitical-implications-of-a-post-assad-syria/>
- *The Washington Institute: Iran's Interests in a Post-Assad Syria*
<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-interests-in-a-post-assad-syria>
- *Carnegie Middle East Center: What Happens if Assad Falls?*
<https://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=54600>
- *International Crisis Group: The Consequences of a Post-Assad Syria for Iran*
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/syria/consequences-post-assad-syria>