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The American-Russian Intervention in the Middle East
Case study: the Syrian Crisis 2011 onwards

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Abstract

The Syrian Crisis was a significant socio-political protest movement in modern Middle East history that led to a civil war against Bashar al Assad’s authoritarian regime. In fact, the crisis in Syria did not only take the interests of the Arab world however, it captured the interest of the international community as well. This research work has two main objectives. First, it attempts to figure out the relationship between two superpowers which are America and Russia from the Cold War until now. Secondly, this research also attempts to find out the socio-political and economic factors before and during the crisis as well as the consequences of post crisis. And most importantly, it aims at answering the question of how American and Russian responded toward the Syrian Crisis.

Key words: Syrian Crisis / protest / Bashar Al Assad / international response / America and Russia
**Resumé**

La crise syrienne a été un important mouvement de protestation socio-politique dans l'histoire moderne du Moyen-Orient qui a conduit à une guerre civile contre le régime autoritaire bashar al Assad'a. En fait, la crise syrienne n'a pas seulement pris en compte les intérêts du monde arabe. il a également capté l'intérêt de la communauté internationale. Ce travail de recherche a deux objectifs principaux. D'abord, il tente de comprendre la relation entre deux superpuissances qui sont l'Amérique et la Russie de la guerre froide jusqu'à maintenant. En second lieu, cette recherche s'attache également à connaître les facteurs socio-politiques et économiques avant et pendant la crise ainsi que les conséquences de la post-crise. Et le plus important, il vise à analyser la question de savoir comment les Américains et les Russes ont réagi face à la crise syrienne.

Mots-clés: Crise syrienne / manifestation / Bashar Al Assad / réponse internationale / Amérique et Russie
الأزمة السورية حركة احتجاج اجتماعية وسياسية هامة في تاريخ الشرق الأوسط الحديث أدت إلى حرب أهلية ضد نظام بشار الأسد الاستبدادي. في الواقع، لم تأخذ الأزمة السورية بعين الاعتبار مصالح العالم العربي. بل استحوذت على اهتمام المجتمع الدولي. هذا العمل البحثي له هدفان رئيسيان. أولاً، يحاول أن يفهم العلاقة بين قوتين عظميين هما أميركا وروسيا منذ الحرب الباردة حتى الآن. ثانيا، يركز هذا البحث أيضا على العوامل الاجتماعية والسياسية والاقتصادية قبل وأثناء الأزمة، فضلاً عن عواقب فترة ما بعد الأزمة. والأهم من ذلك، أنها تهدف إلى تحليل السؤال عن رد فعل الأمريكيين والروس على الأزمة السورية.

الكلمات المفتاحية الأزمة السورية / مظاهرة / بشار الأسد / استجابة دولية / أمريكا وروسيا
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my endearing parents, husband, sisters, brothers, and friends.
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First and almost; I give thanks to almighty god for giving me grace and will to this work. I would like to express my special gratitude to my supervisor Mr Dalichaouch Abderahmen for his understanding. I would like also to thank Dr Hamadouche Mokhtar for his help. Also i would like to thank all my teachers of English Department. I am forever indebted to my parents Salah and Yakouta for their emotional and physical support, to my husband, Hamza, i owe special thanks for his advices and patience, I sincerely thank my husband’s family whose assistance and encouragement urged me to complete this work, I thank my brothers and sisters:Ryadh, Billel, Samir, Hamid, Rafik, Lynda, Wafya, Samouna for their constant help. My great acknowledgement is directed to Djouad Naziha and Lamraoui Meriam Sarah. Finally I would like to express my thanks to all my workmates and classmates for their emotional support: Rima Kaddour, Wided Youcef Khouja, Ahlem Meziani, Habboudji Narjess, Bouthaina Kalli. I really feel speechless to thank all those kind people for their infinite support.
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<td>Arab Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>BPC</td>
<td>the Bilateral Presidential Commission</td>
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<td>CENTO</td>
<td>Central Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>CSL</td>
<td>Cooperative Security Location</td>
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<td>Center Policy Organization</td>
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<td>Forward Operation Sites</td>
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<td>JCP</td>
<td>Joint Comprehensive Plan</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>the Middle East and Africa</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Partnership for Peace</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Program</td>
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<td>VD</td>
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General Introduction

The end of the Cold War marked the emergence of U.S. as the world’s major superpower with strong economic and military advantages. The post-cold war era also witnessed the emergence of a new international system. That system was characterized by the leadership of U.S. as a dominant and a single power seeking to reinforce its presence in many areas in the world.

The American domination led to the retreating of the USSR’s role at the international level, it wasn’t able to enter into a new conflict with U.S. because of the preoccupation with the reform of its internal affairs, this situation changed toward competition because of the great changing in the Russian strategic level and the appearance of the aspects of economic recovery, during Putin’s administration Russia sought to reinforce its global power, restore its international status and save its strategic interests in many regions in the world especially in the Middle East.

The new Russian power was confronted by an actively American move to prevent any Russian penetration in the Middle East that is considered as one of the largest regions of the American influence so that the conflict returned again between the two superpowers, each of them sought to arrange its priorities and interests.

The severity of the American-Russian conflict in the Middle East reached an unprecedented level at the explosion of the Syrian crisis in 2011. The armed conflict between the Syrian regime and the armed opposition led to a great contradiction in the American-Russian interests which had shown by the standing of each of them along with one side of Syrian conflict and providing all sorts of internal and external support.
The importance of this topic lies in its focus on the phenomenon of competition that dominates the relations between U.S. and Russia and their dealings with the issues of the Middle East, especially that the region is witnessing political changes under the umbrella of the Arab Spring, which made the efforts of understanding and explaining this phenomenon related to the competition that is happening in the international arena between the major powers especially Russia and U.S. in order to gain more spheres of influence and to strengthen cooperation.

The main focus of this Mémoire is the American Russian response toward the Syrian crisis since Syria was one of the largest areas where the rivalry between America and Russia reached a peak in light of the current crisis. The fact that prompted many researchers to search for the reasons of this competition and the goals of each party.

Through the use of relevant sources, this research attempts to shed light on the most important areas and issues that U.S.-Russian competition revolves around in the Middle East, as well as reviewing the objectives and strategies of each side in the region. Therefore it seeks to find an answer to the questions posed by the current Syrian crisis, especially with regard to U.S. and Russia taking opposing positions when intervening in the Syrian crisis. This justified the use of the Syrian crisis as a case study to understand and analyze the competitive sides between both superpowers.

Therefore, it pursues answering the following questions: how was the American Russian relation after the cold war until Obama's administration. What are the interests of America and Russia in the Middle East and how did they interfere there. What is the Syrian crisis. Why did America and Russia choose Syria as an area to their competition. How did both American and Russian administrations deal with the current Syrian Crisis.
This mémoire investigates the nature of the American Russian relations after the cold war until Obama’s administrations. Indeed, it demonstrates that the American Russian relations during this period tend to cooperation more than conflict. The main interest of both parties in the Middle East was creating a military presence in the region, particularly Syria which was strategically important. Thus, the military intervention of Russia and America was the best way to serve their interests in the region.

To answer the research questions and carry out the study, the research work is based on the descriptive and analytical methods. It accounts for and analyzes the American and Russian policy in the Middle East and their interests in the region and investigates the American Russian intervention in the Syrian crisis and its impact on their relations.

The Mémoire depends on primary and secondary sources; however, little was written about this topic, mainly books. To begin, in their book Strategic Interests in the Middle East: Opposition and Support for U.S. Foreign Policy, Jack Covarrubias, and Tom Lansford tried through their studying to the American Russian relations in the Middle East to confirm that the examination of the U.S.-Russian competition in the region should be done in the context of the pre US-Russian conflict.

Furthermore, the editors asserted that the U.S.-Russian relations has passed through many steps starting from a conflict in the Cold War then to a little economic competition during the post-cold war, by the coming of President Putin there was a kind of cooperation especially after the 11 September attacks, after that the relationship started to witness a conflict in some issues such the invasion of America to Iraq and the Iranian nuclear case. But what is considered is that the article did not cover the current period that the research seeks to study which is the period after the Arab Spring.
In their article “America, Russia and the Middle East: Greater Challenges and Opportunities”, Kemp and Saunders tried to clarify the Russian and American interests in the Middle East and determined the important challenges that threaten those interests. The research also got to the point that the international environment after the 11 September attacks imposed some opportunities between the two superpowers, what is considerable also is that the study did not cover the current developments.

In conclusion, the research depends on defining the Syrian crisis and the competition phenomenon that dominates the American-Russian relation through their dealing with the Syrian crisis which is considered as one of the largest areas that the conflict goes around. So, the research will explore the reasons for that crisis as well as the objectives of each side.

The following Mémoire is divided into two chapters; the first chapter tackled the American Russian relations and their competition in the Middle East. The latter considers two points, at first it deals with the American Russian relations starting from the post-cold war until Obama's administrations. In the second part, it examines the American Russian presence in the Middle East and the way they compete to influence the region in addition to the interests of each side in the Middle East.

The second chapter deals with the Syrian crisis as an area for the rivalry between U.S. and Russia. For that, it provides a definition and the historical background of the crisis as well as the factors behind this crisis and their impact. This is important to understand the roots of the crisis. Then, it moves to identify the international community's response toward the Syrian crisis including Russia and U.S. and their objectives behind supporting or opposing the Assad's regime.
Chapter One

The American-Russian Relations and their Competition in the Middle East

Introduction

The collapse of the USSR brought new data for the international policy, where the international system became unilateral led by the United States. The end of the Cold War marked a new phase in the American-Russian relations where the former enemies sought to establish new principles of cooperation in order to enhance their mutual relations. This chapter aims to discuss and unveil the nature of the relations between U.S. of America and Russia that had been characterized by an increasing competition all over the globe, especially in the Middle East.

The American Russian relations swung between the friendly cooperation and the mutual disputes. Thus, this chapter covers the whole period of U.S.-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War till their interventions in the Middle East. However, more detailed attention is paid to bilateral relations during the Post Cold War until the 9/11 attacks, which was an attempt to improve both countries’ relations moving to Obama’s administration where the reset policy aimed at fostering the bilateral relations.
I/- American-Russian Relations from 1991-until Obama’s administration

A/- The American Russian Relations after the Cold War

1-From 1991 to 1995

The Cold War can be defined as an ideological and political conflict between the two superpowers, U.S. and the USSR. It lasted for about 46 years starting from 1945 until 1991. Since the end of the Cold War in 1991, U.S. became the only country to spread its influence on the international arena, where it resorted to the implementation of a long-term military strategy that depended on maintaining high-potential capabilities in order to ensure that no other international pole will emerge or compete in the international arena, and the continuation of its control over the world (Goldgeier and McFaul 1).

The breakup of the USSR introduced new facts on the level of the U.S.-Russian relations as it became unequal relations. Russia inherited all that was for the USSR, followed a new policy which was based on having a partnership with the west, not a counterforce. Believing that partnership with the West would put Russia out of its economic crisis, a crisis that was the major cause for the disintegration of the former superpower when the arms race with U.S. led to the catastrophic consequences on the USSR. Hence, the transformation in the American- Russian relations after the conflict was the center of their relationship; cooperation became the significant feature that characterized the inter-relations and throughout the period from the beginning of the 1990s until the beginning of the present century the American-Russian relations remained closer to cooperation than to conflict (Colon 191-205).

Even if the USSR was defeated by the Cold War enemy, but it was and it still dangerous for U.S. since it retained the nuclear weapons, which may pose a threat for the
United States. The proof was that after the collapse of the USSR in December 1991 the American president was the first one to express his sympathy for the Russian president Boris Yeltsin promising financial support and encouraging political and economic reforms. In return, the Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev aimed to cooperate with the United States (Goldgeier and McFaul 4).

In order to evaluate the American-Russian relations, official state visits and high-level meetings should be taken into consideration. Thus, on January 31, 1992, the Russian president Boris Yeltsin visited U.S. for the first time as a president, where he discussed with the American president George H. W. Bush some matters concerning the collapse of the USSR seeking for cooperation in the arms trade field. Also, they agreed on reducing the use of nuclear weapons and on non-proliferation of WMD\textsuperscript{1} as well (the Newly Independent States of the Former USSR: Russia).

The second American-Russian Presidents’ meeting took place in June 1992. During their meeting, both Presidents signed a "Charter for U.S.-Russian Partnership and Friendship" and agreed to lift the restriction on the number of members of the diplomatic mission. Russia also provided "Peace Corps" volunteers with the right to work on its territory and decided to open for the international community its airspace in Eastern Siberia. Furthermore, as a response to the Russian request for the Western aid in 1992, U.S. launched “Operation Provide Hope”\textsuperscript{2}(ibid)

Enhancing cooperation between both countries was needed especially in the military domain, to get rid of doubt and even to promote economic ties between the two countries. On January 3, 1993, George H. W. Bush visited Moscow where he signed with the Russian President at the START II Treaty\textsuperscript{3}, which established limits on strategic weapons for each Party. During the Bush administration, U.S. and Russia signed many agreements on different
issues. For instance, “Cooperation in Space Exploration and the Use of Space Technology”, “Expansion of Contacts between the Scientific and Technological Communities” or (ADTR) “Abolition of Diplomatic Travel Restrictions” (Treaty between U.S. of America and the Union of Soviet).

In 1993, Bill Clinton was elected as an American president and he sought for further cooperation with Russia. The American president Clinton and the Russian president Yeltsin met first in Vancouver in April 1993 where they signed the (VD) “Vancouver Declaration”. They agreed on American-Russian cooperation and commitment to promoting democracy, security, and peace. The establishment of “a U.S.-Russian Commission on technical cooperation in energy and space” was one of the Vancouver negotiations results, which later was called Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (United States Relations with Russia).

In April 1994, both Presidents met in Russia where they stated again their commitment for cooperation, democracy, and human rights. During the same meeting, President Yeltsin stated that Russia is ready for the (PP) “Partnership for Peace” program. Clinton, in turn, emphasized on Russia’s remove for its troops from the Baltic. Both Presidents also discussed mutual cooperation to prevent the proliferation of WMD by emphasizing on the Middle East and the two Koreas (United States Relations with Russia).

It was clear that such high-level meetings became regular, but they did not take the form of friendly political relations to end the manifestations of the Cold War. Moreover, Russia did not become one of the economic partners of the United States, as the volume of trade between the two remained limited. The distinctive element of the American-Russian relations from 1991 until 1995 was the promises between them without getting anything concrete that could pull them out of their suffocating crisis.
2-From 1995 to 2000

In 1997, American and Russian Presidents met to discuss further reduction in nuclear weapons and negotiate the START III Treaty. Both sides agreed on enhancing Russian-NATO cooperation, a month later Russia and NATO signed the “NATO-Russia Founding Act”, which stated that the two parties do not regard each other as enemies and “established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council” in order to promote collaboration on issues of mutual concern. The aim of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council was providing Russia with a voice in NATO (NATO, Russia Create New Joint Council).

NATO’s decision for bombing Yugoslavia affected the American-Russian relations negatively. During the start of those bomb attacks, the Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was on his way to U.S. to discuss the issue of the additional financial aid. As a reaction, the Prime Minister was ordered to turn back to Moscow. This act indicated the beginning of a new phase in the American-Russian relations (Rutland and Dubinsky 7).

During the year 1999, there was only one working visit to U.S. by the Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin in July 1999. This indicated that the American-Russian relations became worse since 1992 to 1998; U.S. and Russia arranged at least two foreign meetings a year (Presidents and Secretaries of State Foreign Travels).

In 1999 the Russian President resigned and Vladimir Putin, who won the presidential elections on March 26, 2000, was appointed as an acting President. His main objective was to restore Russia as a great power, where he described the collapse of the USSR as the greatest disaster. Throughout the same year, the American President Clinton visited Moscow to discuss with the new President issues that were already discussed in the previous covenants such as arms reduction and economic reforms. The U.S.-Russian relations during this period
marked permanent changes, as U.S. sought through its military strategy to maintain its military superiority by modernizing its forces, arming them with advanced weapons and maintaining its global dominance in order to ensure that no other pole will compete with it. (Corn 28-32).

In general, it can be said that Russia pursued in its system a policy of preserving the entire territorial integrity, which was inherited from the USSR to restrain U.S. which was threatening the Russian national security, by stirring up crises and support wars near to the Russian borders. In addition to that, U.S. sought to expand NATO to the East and South to threaten the Russian national security through the deployment of missiles and the establishment of permanent military bases (Sulaiman 129-130).

**B/-The American Russian relations after 9/11:**

September 11, 2001, was one of the most important events in the American history; this event provided an opportunity to improve relations between U.S. and Russia, where the Russian President Vladimir Putin was the first leader to express his condolences to the American President and his people. In November 2001, the Russian President Vladimir Putin went on a voyage to the United States. Both Presidents discussed their aim to reconstruct Afghanistan and to fight terrorism. The meeting also included bilateral efforts to combat organized crime and drug trafficking (stent 268-269).

The 9/11's attacks were followed by a war on terror in which Russia facilitated American anti-terror operations in Central Asia, while America supported Russia’s war against Chechen’s rebels. At the same time, President G.W Bush announced the emergence of a new era in the American-Russian relations that was characterized by the strategic partnership between both superpowers. By the end of 2002, Russia was not able to avoid
NATO’s second round of expansion, especially the admission of the three Baltic States that made it disturbed. It did everything in its power to prevent the Baltic States from joining NATO. For instance, Russia refused to solve territorial conflicts with Latvia and Estonia. Although Russia showed disapproval for NATO expansion, its position seemed to be rather mild. For example, in 2002 Putin declared that “NATO membership is a sovereign right of any country” (Kramer747).

The invasion of Iraq by U.S. considered by Russia as a disappointment, because it showed that U.S. was not in need of the Russian approval for its unilateral agenda. Moreover, Moscow was also dissatisfied that Russia lost eight billion dollars “that Iraq owed for past arms deliveries and its old contracts to develop Iraqi oil fields”. In addition to the NATO’s expansion and the invasion of Iraq that caused an inter-dispute in the American-Russian relations, Ukraine presidential elections in 2004 made matters worse. After the famous protest “orange revolution”, the results of elections canceled. In the revote; Viktor Yushchenko, a pro-Western candidate, defeated his pro-Russian opponent Viktor Yanukovych. At that time, the Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the orange revolution was supported by the west (Steele).

U.S. completely disapproved of Russia’s actions on the territory of Georgia. For example, Bush declared: “I've expressed my grave concern about the disproportionate response of Russia and that we strongly condemn the bombing outside of South Ossetia [...] these actions jeopardize Russians’ relations [...] with U.S. and Europe”. The strategic partnership did not last long, as by the end of G.W Bush’s second term Russian troops took control over the former Soviet nation, Georgia. As a reaction, the American President denounced the act announcing that Russia would damage its relations with the free world. The
Russian President Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, showed less importance for the American President’s words and even for the strategic partnership (Mankoff 97).

C- American Russian Relations during Obama’s Administration

In 2008, presidential elections in U.S. coincided with the ones in Russia. Barack Obama became the American President, and Dmitry Medvedev became the Russian President. Obama administration initiated a new set of relations that combined U.S. with Russia despite the ambivalent relations between the two countries, especially due to the fact that the Russian-U.S. relations had undergone many events which affected them. Obama administration came to reset the status with this country, President Obama saw that it is important to establish a constructive relationship with Russia. Philip Gordon Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian affairs at the U.S. Department of State stated:

Positive signs of progress and development in U.S.-Russia relations since the Obama Administration came into office, not least creation of a new, more positive atmosphere in the U.S.-Russia relationship which is vital for the security of U.S. and the world. Eighteen months on, he argued, the “reset” has helped put the relationship with Russia on a sounder footing and led to practical cooperation in concrete areas, from arms control and trade to Afghanistan and the Middle East, though many differences still remain. (qtd in. the German Marshall Fund of the United States).

On one hand, as it is mentioned below, it is clear to see the kind of the reset between these two countries, but this cooperation did not put a definitive end to the differences between them. On the other hand, it is important to mention that after twenty-two years of the USSR collapse under President Vladimir Putin, Russia itself was undergoing some changes.
President Vladimir Putin came up with new trends in foreign policy that declared that the years of weakness and humiliation are over.

In an attempt to improve American-Russian relations, in July 2009 both countries agreed on the establishment of BPC (the Bilateral Presidential Commission), which contained eighteen working groups in different fields such as counterterrorism, military cooperation, health, agriculture, economic relations and energy. The arms control was one of Obama’s priorities, thereby a working group for arms control was created within the bilateral presidential commission. It was clear that the arms control had traditionally been one of the essential elements in American-Russian relations, which made it necessary to think about cooperation in order to reduce the use of weapons. Thus, in April 2010, the two Presidents signed the New START treaty that obliged the two parties to make a 30 percent cut in their strategic nuclear warheads (U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission).

Since 2009, US and Russia sought to improve their bilateral relations, and they did on a number of issues. However, in 2011 some obstacles affected their relations; for example, the two parties did not reach a solution for the dispute concerning the U.S. and NATO establishment of a missile defense in Europe. Russia was not convinced despite the United States' and NATO’s confirmation about the future missile defense system that would not be targeted against them. The Russian side, in turn, asked for an objective evidence to ensure that the new missile system would not undermine nuclear parity with Russia, yet U.S. did not react to this initiative (The Foreign Policy and Diplomatic Activity of the Russia Federation).

In a speech delivered to the Russian Parliament in May 2005, President Putin declared that Russia is a country that must be protected and respected “Our status in the modern world will be determined only by the extent of our success” .qtd in.Democratic Arabic center). In this context, Russia was rebuilding its military power and taking its
regional influence in the military, political and economic spheres. For this reason, it wanted to showcase its strength throughout Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, central Asia and the North Pacific, in addition to strengthening ties in the Middle East, particularly Iran, Syria, and Egypt. For so, it was not difficult to predict the discomfort of U.S. from this Russian geopolitical and military presence in the areas that U.S. was already trying to impose its influence in. For this reason, it reconsidered this Russian strong return as an important factor in international relations.

What Russian wants is to eliminate American missile defense in Europe and Mint without making any concessions. Its military buildup and modernization had serious implications for U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. First, they may become more threatening to NATO allies, especially in Eastern and Central Europe. Second, the increase in military power affected the former USSR nations that tried to get rid of their past as subjects of imperialism including Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Finally, Russian military might be a factor in taking into account conflicts in the Middle East, including the Levant, such as close friction with U.S. over Syria (qtd in. The democratic Arabic Center 94).

The Obama administration took a number of measures to contain the Russian military crowds, among them, was increasing the quality and size of intelligence gathering, analysis of Russian military updates, strategic and tactical objectives, programs and plans. For so, nuclear weapons continued to play an important role in the relations between U.S. and Russia.
It is clear to see that both Russia and U.S. had the ability to bring big damage if nuclear weapons were used by both sides, especially since U.S. was deploying large numbers of warheads to strategic missile submarines. In fact, many of those vessels were at sea and ready to receive orders for a devastating blow to Russia that would be unable to stop them. Contextually to this to reach a compromise solution, both countries signed a treaty agreeing to work in a unifying way against the threat of Iran's nuclear program. The agreement presented a new start because it was one big step of cooperation between both countries (qtd. in U.S.-Russia relations under the Obama administration).

Compared to the previous U.S. administrations, it was clear that the Obama administration succeeded in having a healthy relationship with Russia, having a strategic vision of what the U.S.-Russian relations would be in the future, this besides of addressing the troubled past of strategic dialogues between the two countries. The inconstancy in American-Russian relations during that period caused frustration for the Obama administration, which realized that the bilateral relations took the form of U.S.-Russian relations during the Post Cold War. If both countries refused to repeat the cycle, they needed to consider how they approach some of the challenging questions on their bilateral agenda and how they might sustain positive developments in their relations.
**Figure one**: Presidents Obama and Medvedev sign the New START Treaty in Prague on April 8, 2010.

II/-the American-Russian competition in the Middle East

A/-the American-Russian presence in the Middle East

U.S. started to enhance its interests in the Middle East after the Second World War, starting with the establishment of a naval base in Juffair, Bahrain. Russians, on the other hand, were drowned in the remnants of the war, Moscow was obliged to consolidate its gains with Europe and Germany rather than compete with the war victor. The signs of competition appeared when the USSR created the Warsaw pact⁶, as a reaction U.S. established the Baghdad Pact which was later known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), in order to prevent any Russian strategic expansion in the Middle East (AlQassab1).

Russians were given hope to expand into the Middle East when Jamal Abd Nasser asked for assistance from the USSR in order to counter the revolution. The Russian
involvement in the region attracted many countries to its influence that split up from the West and join it leaving Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad pact made the southern front of the USSR more secure than before. As a result, a wide number of treaties were signed between the USSR and Egypt, Syria, Iraq and South Yemen (Erenler 175).

The USSR intensified its efforts in the region by supporting the Ethiopian coup d’etat and the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime, later the USSR supported unifying South Yemen with North Yemen, forming the new Republic of Yemen, which was closer to the United States. The competition came to an end by the dissolution of the USSR after the Cold War in 1991, even the east European states from the Warsaw pact released from the USSR after the pact’s collapse; Russia was almost deteriorated during the decade of the nineties under President Boris Yeltsin leaving the region concern for U.S. (AlQassab 1).

In 2000, Vladimir Putin became the Russian president who sought to regain the Russian status as a superpower through challenging the American interests in the region, the Obama’s low involvement in the Middle East paved the way for Russia to the Middle East and provided it great opportunities in order to renew its dominance there, Putin was at the beginning of his presidency, where he intensified his priorities in the region including the increasing number of the involvement in the Middle East. For Russia, the Middle East was a strategic gain of high value (Goldenberg and Smith).

In the coming years, the Russian president took control over Chechnya through restraining the spread of Islam, and then he faced a confrontation with NATO concerning Georgia, in which the Russian-supported separatists defeated the Georgian troops. The Obama administration preferred the Asia-pacific rather than the traditional American relations with Arab Middle Eastern countries, which gave Russia the opportunity to move forward in the
Middle East. Since then, the Middle East became a place where accounts tended to settle between US and Russia concerning their strategies (AlQassab 2).

In order to secure the Russian gains in Syria as Russia was the only one who has authority over Syria’s future, the Russian president sought to improve relations with Turkey, fostering alliance with Iran and controlling over Syria, he also made relations with the Arab Gulf States he created links with the Arab Gulf states because he wanted them to become neutral to the new Russian campaign through a series of official visits with former U.S. allies in the region. The American Russian competition in the Middle East centered on the conflict between the trans-Atlantic states and Eurasian ones, Russia since it was the main supporter for the Eurasian states, believes that the Arab Middle East is an original part of Eurasia. The United States, on the other hand, views the Mediterranean Sea as home to the majority of the Arab countries (AlQassabe 2).

The Obama’s administration turned out to be far from the Middle East, while adopting the Asia-pacific strategy, more than that Obama’s low profile led to the reach of Iran in addition to the growth of the terrorist organizations such as ISIS, AL-Qaeda, and the Iranian-backed militias. It was as a golden chance for Russia to involve more in the Middle East's affairs in a way that opposes the interests of the Arab countries and the United States, this did not mean that the Arabian and American interests were the same; rather, it was clear that the Russian involvement in the Middle East caused harm for both sides (Barnes).

The Obama's policy of reducing the involvements in the Middle East caused harm for U.S. interests and objectives, in that context the President Donald Trump’s policy toward Syria, Iraq, and Iran was decisive in order to regain American status in the region. It was clear that U.S. was interested in the region rather than the former administrations, many visits of the Arab leader to U.S. took place during Trump’s administration such the visits of King
Abdullah II of Jordan, Saudi Arabian Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq. The fates of the Iran nuclear deal, the war against ISIS, Russian-Turkish cooperation, and the Iranian expansionist policy in the region will affect the American-Russian competition there, while victory over ISIS on both the Iraqi and Syrian fronts will increase the stakes for U.S. to regain its historical position in the region (Barnes).

B- The American and Russian Interests in the Middle East

1- The American Interests in the Middle East

U.S. made a set of security relations in the Middle East including the defense security, rights of basing and access and providing equipments, in addition to U.S. support for its allies in the region and equipping them with arms supplier. these relations were particularly intensive with the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, and Israel (Byman and Moller 2).

The United States’ presence in the Middle East was quite wide, even while ignoring U.S. presence in Afghanistan, the evidence was that U.S. posed numerous bases such as FOS (Forward Operation Sites), CSL (Cooperative Security Locations). In addition to the forces beside Gulf Littoral and the Horn of Africa, also in the eastern Mediterranean. The exact number of the military site was hard to identify due to the sensitive of the host nations in addition to the regular changes that occurred in the specifics of the basing. Among those military installations located in the CENTCOM theatre are Kuwait’s Camps Arifjanin and Buehring along with Camp as Saliyah in Qatar (Lostumbo et al24).
One of the most important American interests in the Middle East in addition to the securing of its easy access was the free flow of oil. Since the 1970s America’s main interest in the region was the opening of a market for Japan and Europe. Since the Middle East countries were the main oil producer particularly the states of Persian Gulf. In 2015 the former states produced about thirty percent of total world oil production; twenty-one percent of U.S. imports were received from the region (Monthly Energy Review October 2015).

According to Verrasto, the Gulf may not stay on the same stability of producing oil in the future, a fact that may cause threat not only for the American energy interests but even for the world oil supplies. For that reason, the Republican and democratic administration called for the American energy independence, Obama in turn also sought to reduce the American reliance on Middle East oil through the initiation of large policy measures in the field. Generally the threat to oil may happen in different forms, most importantly when a hostile state invade an oil producer, indeed, the hostile producer would like to sell oil, that would be enough for a long-term, however, the disruption caused by invasion would acquire the ability to manipulate the market, and raise prices.

Jervis states that One of the American’s interests in the Middle East also was to prevent the use of nuclear weapons which was considered by leaders as a main interest in the region. This policy depended on preventing any state from gaining power more than U.S. because it would pose threat for it. However, U.S. did not prohibit the Israel nuclear program because Israel was one of its allies. The successive U.S. administration also considered Israel as a stable and that it would prevent the use of nuclear weapons even when its security will be threatened.
Nowadays, Iran poses threat to the world because of its extensive nuclear program and also it enriched about twenty percent of uranium, in 2015 Iran negotiated with U.S. where they signed the JCP (Joint Comprehensive Plan) of Action designed to disband Iran's nuclear weapons program in exchange for sanctions relief. However, Tehran was opposed to the United States, and its commitment to disband the nuclear weapons is doubtful, even the American critics stated that Iran cannot be trusted (U.S. Department of State).

Terrorism and Counterterrorism also was one of the American’s objectives in the Middle East. Since the 9/11 attacks in particular, U.S. gave priority to the counterterrorism in the Middle East in its policy, and many Middle Eastern countries became valued for U.S. because of their counterterrorism cooperation’s such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. In Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Gulf states, both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations posed strict and deterrent laws for those who finance or support terrorism for jihadist movements in general. The intelligence services of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Syria have all reportedly penetrated al-Qa’ida with human assets (Mueller and Stewart).

2-The Russian Interests in the Middle East

One common interest that Russia shared with U.S. was providing security for the Middle East, which depended on counterterrorism and preventing the spread of Islam into Russia and its neighbors. In order to enhance that security interest, Russia sought to make alliances in the region particularly with the friendly states such as Iran, Egypt and Turkey; furthermore it aimed to establish a broad bilateral relation with all the Middle Eastern states. However Russia’s interest in counterterrorism may not be simple as one think, presumably, the Russian president did not want to eliminate terrorism completely, because some threat helped him in maintaining influence. Russia's involvement in Syria in which Putin supported
Assad's regime, resulted in a better control for terrorism in the region (Lamoreaux and Marten).

The economic field was one of the Russian interests in the Middle East, including the economic connections such arms sales, nuclear technology in addition to oil and gas markets, furthermore providing support for the oil and gas producers in the Persian Gulf. Russia's main objective in the Middle East was to restrict the American and western influence, generally aimed to weaken the EU and West, in addition, to make Russia vulnerable that would help in destabilizing EU through breaking it from different sides. Putin also was interested in making the American diplomatic leadership complicated in the Middle East and in all regions of the world. The Russian president also poses diplomatic proposal to make the U.S. relations with Middle East harm and complicate. All these actions served Russia’s aim to retrain its global status as a superpower, fighting U.S. presence in the Middle East. in this regard, Russia reestablished its influence in Libya, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. The establishment of the Russian military base in the Middle East was one of the consequences of this policy (Marten and serwer).
Conclusion

The American Russian relations worsened gradually, despite the efforts of both countries to improve their relations, their bilateral relationship was ongoing from bad to worse. All the initiatives of both countries were already discussed in the previous years. The Obama’s administration was similar to the period from 1990 until 2000, through the attempts to improve the bilateral relation, in addition to the events of the 11’Th September. However, one must not ignore the fact that even during periods of tensed relations both countries continued to cooperate on a number of issues, including cooperation in the strategic area of the Middle East which represents a sensitive area that covers a strong hidden competition where both forces are trying to prove their existence and impose their entity to demonstrate their powers.
Chapter Two

The Syrian Crisis as a Case Study to the American Russian Intervention in the Middle East

Introduction

"When the war is over in my country, we will close Syria's doors and we will put a banner that says: (No Entry). We will shed tears of joy alone. Just like how we suffered our grief alone" (A note found in Syrian boy's diary).

Beginning in December 2010, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) experienced a wave of unprecedented uprising against poverty, corruption and political repression throwing away the ruling regime that had been in power for several decades. This revolutionary wave started first in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria and became known as “Arab Spring”.

In March, 2011. Millions of Syrians took place in different cities of Syria. Protesters were calling for more democratic rights and demanding the resignation of Bashar Assad. Soon, In April 2011, the Assad's regime responded with violence, the Syrian Army fired on demonstrators across the country. After months of military battles, the protests turned Syria into an armed rebellion leading the country into a civil war. As a result, over 1000, 00 people were killed and about 2 million Syrians were forced to leave their homes.

This chapter is an attempt to understand the Syrian crisis starting with its definition and its historical background as well as its causes and effects. Moreover; it seeks to tackle the international community's response to the crisis, particularly U.S. and Russia as oppose and supporter respectively.
I/-Understanding the Syrian crisis

A/-Definition and the Historical Background of the Syrian Crisis

1-Definition of the Syrian Crisis

It is an armed conflict between two opposed sides which were the forces of Ba’ath government and forces who want to remove this government, it is dated back to the year 2011, it was the result of the economic problems and the lack of freedom in addition to the Authoritarianism exercised by rulers, more than that, the Arab spring was one of the main reasons that pushed up the Syrian crisis as the successful revolutions that overthrew the Tunisian and the Egyptian presidents gave hope to the Syrian pro-democracy activist (Edewor).

The protest that was made in March 2011 as it was mentioned before was calling for the liberty of prisoners and the resignation of the Syrian president Bashar Al Assad from power the fact that the Assad's family held power for about forty years, as well as the breakup of the Ba'ath party rule. The protest continued in Syria to turn into a violent uprising in April 2011 what led the Syrian president to react aggressively against those civilians through the use of artillery. The large number of those civilians was victims of this counter-revolution by the government (ibid).

2-The Historical Background of the Syrian Crisis

Syria became an independent republic in 1946 with a parliamentary democratic system, after a while the army presided over the leadership, thus bringing about many coups in cooperation with some political and economic elite which consists of landowning and merchant families which were based in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. The first coup took
place on 30 March 1949 by the chief of staff, Colonel Husni al-Zaim that resulted in the breakdown of the elected government of President Shukri al-Quwatli and dissolved parliament. In August of the same year, the second coup occurred by Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi, in which Al-Zaim and his Prime Minister were arrested, tried and executed, as a result, the general elections held in November and Syria reverted to civilian rule (Al Jazeera).

Once again, a third coup happened in December 1949, where Al Hinnawi's regime been overthrown and he was arrested by Colonel Adib Shishakli, accusing him of conspiring with Iraq against Syria. Shishakli confirmed that all governments should include his protégé, Fawzi Selu, as Defense Minister. This is what angered the Prime Minister Maarouf al-Dawalibi who refused, the fact that led Shishakli to initiate another coup on 28 November 1951 through which he arrested Dawalibi and the entire cabinet in addition to some politicians whom he distrusted. According to the hybrid rules that were initiated by Shishakli his regime was considered as a dictatorial one so that he forbid the establishment of any political party except his own party ALM (Al Jazeera).

By the mid-1953 the nationalists and leftists wanted to make an end to the Shishakli regime, the former groups agreed together for his downfall, in January 1954 the army bombarded towns in the Jabal al-Druze with heavy artillery. The regime declared martial law, but to no avail. On 27 February 1954 Syria’s fifth military coup since independence was occurred, by Colonel Faisal al-Atassi, who restored parliamentary rule (Fanack.com). In 1956 Syria signed a treaty with the USSR that states for the need of allowing a Communist foothold in the government in exchange for military equipment. The fact that made Syria and Egypt closer because of their mutual socialist trend. After a while Egypt and Russia united to compose the United Arab Republic but it did not last long because of Egypt dominance, Syria separated from Egypt and it became the Syrian Arab Republic (Oxenreider).
The sixteen’s were characterized by successive coups, civil protest, and other issues such the one of the demilitarized zone in Israel and their occupation of Golan Heights. Finally, the Minister of Defense Hafed Al Assad possessed power after a peaceful coup in 1970, and thus began a new era for 30 years. After receiving power; Hafed Al Assad launched some of the amendments: “Shortly after gaining power, Assad created a new legislature and local councils to govern smaller provinces, consolidated political parties, wrote a new constitution (again), declared Syria a secular socialist state with Islam as the majority religion, and launched a surprise attack on Israel with Egypt” (Oxenreider).

After the death of the Syrian Hafed Al Assad in 2000, his son Bashar Al Assad became the Syrian president at the age of 34 years. At first, Syrian people were positive to the start of his regime hoping that he will make an end to the dictatorial rules which were initiated by his father; indeed, he released about 600 political prisoners. Unfortunately, the situation did not last where after one year the persons who were supporting the reform movements were curbed and even the political leaders were arrested, a year later Syria was accused of owning the weapons of mass destruction, and as a result, U.S. officials had classified Syria in their list of "axis of evil". More than that in 2005 Syria was accused of being behind the assassination of the Lebanese prime minister (peacecoalition.org).

In 2008, there was a meeting between the Syrian president Bashar Al Assad, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy and the Lebanese president Michel Suleiman where they discussed the basis of better diplomatic relations between countries, furthermore; they organized a meeting with Qatar and Turkey for the goal of Middle East peace. These improvements came to an end in 2009 when U.S. renewed economic punishments against Syria accusing it alongside the United Nations for supporting terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaeda (Oxenreider).
From summer 2011 onwards, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad refused to halt attacks and implement the meaningful reforms demanded by protestors. In July 2011, accounts emerged from witnesses, victims, the media, and civil society that government forces had subjected civilians to arbitrary detention, torture, and the deployment and use of heavy artillery. The Syrian people were also subject to the Shabiha, a heavily armed state-sponsored militia fighting alongside security forces. Assad consistently denied responsibility for these crimes, placing blame for the violence on armed groups and terrorists, and yet denying humanitarian access to civilians. By the end of the year 2011 new signs of the crisis appeared:

“You now have on average as many as forty people being killed a day. That’s one dynamic; the killing has increased, particularly since the Arab League monitors arrived at the end of December” (qtd in HuffPost UK). In other words, the number of people who were killed since December 2011 is highly increased to the extent that more than forty people were assassinated per a day especially when the Arab League Monitors came.
**Figure two:** the situation in Syria

![Syria Map](source: ISW)

**Source:** BBC

**B/- Causes and Effect of the Syrian Crisis**

**1- The Factors behind the Syrian Crisis**

Before the crisis Syrian people suffered from a set of social, economic and political circumstances. Syria characterized by high rapid population growth. During Assad's reign, Syria's population reached 23 million inhabitants; they were living in limited spaces and the majority in hard conditions. In fact, this high increase of population led to the widespread of unemployment, poverty, inflation of food prices, low incomes and rise of inequality. According to the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) Reported that 45.2 percent of
the population had been plunged into poverty by the end of 2009 and over 40 percent of the labor force had been pushed into unemployment. This means that the quarter of the population was living in extreme poverty. As a consequence of growing population rate and decreasing jobs viabilities, the Syrian people decided to revolt against Al Assad's regime (Aljazeera).

Moreover, Sectarianism and Ethno minorities are considered as one of the main causes of the Syrian crisis." The Syrian civil war is intensely sectarian conflict" Syria was far from religiously homogenous. Although, there was an overwhelmingly large Sunni majority that accounts for over two thirds about 70% of the population. The ruling elite including Bashar al Assad to the Alawite sect, a branch of Shia Islam which accounts for approximately 13% of the population. Most Alawites were concentrated in the north-west of the country (Lawrance 36).

In 2000, Bashar al Assad promised his population to make a social market economy which was provided for economic openness and rural development, however this did not happen and the Assad’s family acquired about 60% of the economy, what led to uprisings in Damascus that took the form of a struggle between the rural population and the wealthy ruling class. Concerning the economy of Syria before the crisis, The world Bank classified it as a lower middle income of approximately USD 2,8000. Unemployment is high at over 8% and GPD (Gross Domestic Product) "seemingly solid by developed country standards, but strictly below when starting from a low, developing country base" ( Miller 23).

Economist Paul Collier concludes that the greatest determinants of civil conflict are low growth because as he puts it' "low incomes means poverty. And low growth means hopelessness" .However, the economists and scholars proved the improvement of the economy before the crisis but the distribution of benefits of growth was not equal. This
imbalance and inequality paved the way for several socio-economic challenges such as the rise of higher unemployment mainly among young people reaching 10.9% (shahad 9).

Politically Speaking, the country was under Syria's president Bashar Al Assad who ruled the country for several years. His period of regime characterized by a full of corruption and dishonesty. As a matter of truth, people's right was abused and particularly after the enactment of the emergency law. Under this law, security forces practiced the most brutal actions against any suspect. The law prohibits any political demonstrations; government political activities including demonstration were violated, extending the torture and mistreatment of citizens by the army. In fact, they were putting in the prison without any reasons. The law sharply limited any non-governmental and non-approved political organization (Bauer 17).

In addition to the economic, social and political causes, there were other external causes that pushed the Syrian crisis in 2011, most importantly, the Arab Spring. In December 2010 uprisings against governments started in Tunisia as a reaction to the killing of a fruit seller by a soldier who was protesting his right of selling fruits in the road-side, after a short time these upheavals spread in some areas of the Arab world including Syria, Egypt, and Libya. Meanwhile, the Arabic leaders who were suffering from such protests made some governmental changes as an attempt to calm people's anger. These protests which were based on the necessity of the change in government policies and leaders were called "the Arab Spring". "the people protesting in these countries were People of largely the same ethnicity, speaking the same language and facing a highly similar Social, economic and political Malaise presided over by seemingly self-serving or indifferent" (Michael 7).
2- The Impact of the Syrian Crisis

The Syrian crisis which was transformed from uprisings into a civil war had huge negative implications not only on the domestic side but it also threatened the global stability. The Syrian citizens were the most affected victims of the conflict, the death rate was relative it was difficult to set the exact number of the killers, however the Syrian Center Policy Research (CSPR) announced that The number of people killed during the war is estimated at 470,000, while the UN estimated that the number of the killers reached only 250,000 by the end of 2014. Due to the small number of the Syrian populations, the number of dead was considered as a huge one, even the remaining Syrians were living under horrible conditions and most of them escaped to the neighboring countries searching for a decent life. According to the UN reports one-fifth of the whole population were registered as refugees in the United Nation High Commission of Refugee (UNHCR) (Haran).

The number of refugees was escalating as conflict escalated, wherein 2012 there were 100,000 refugees, who increased by April 2013 into 800,000 then it was doubled to 1.6 million in period of four months, now there are about 4.3 million Syrians dispersed throughout the region, what led to the classification of the Syrian population as the world's largest refugee population by the UN mandate. Moreover, the Syrian young generation was living under the horror of war and they were prohibited access to the simplest requirements of life such as education and healthcare, about 400,000 people were living in regions where there was not even what to eat, and where people were dying from hunger. The Syrian Crisis also affected the health sector where more than 700 doctors and medical workers dead through the attacks on hospitals since the beginning of the conflict, this caused the reducing of people's access to the healthcare services (UN says).
As it was mentioned below Syrians were considered as one of world's largest refugee population, this created another problem represented in the refugee's education, there were some schools that were able to divide the school in order to make rooms for the Syrians, while others couldn't do that, and even the families were not able to afford the transportation to carry their children every day. The UN announced that more than half of the Syrian refugee under the year of 18 had left the schools for months and other for years; this would affect Syria's future negatively (Akkoc).

On the economic side, generally Syria was destroyed, these huge destructions imposed sanctions and punishments on Syria by the great powers resulted in large toll on Syrian economy, in addition to the reducing of the Gross Domestic Product(GDP) since 2012(SCPR15). Trade also witnessed a decline of 46.6 percent in 2013; it was the result of the supply of goods, high commodity prices and the direct and indirect damage to hundreds of thousands of commercial outlets. More than that in 2014, consumer prices rose by 53 percent from 2013 (SCPR21).

While comparing the Syrian pound to what it was before the crisis and after it, it is clear that it dropped to one-sixth of its pre-war value and foreign currency reserve depleted to between US$2 to 5 billion from US$18 billion .Moreover, the employment conditions became progressively worse, as well as the lack of the security protection what lead about 13.8 million to leave their livelihood especially women .Even health, education, and income standards have all became worse. Poverty increased by 85 percent in 2015 alone (SCPR 46).

The tourism sector was also affected by the armed conflict; the destructions included the strategic Syrian areas such as Damascus and Hams where the former suffered from the incessant bombing and fighting. The armed conflict comprised also the destruction of about 290 heritage sites 104 were severely damaged while 24 were completely destroyed including
the United Nation Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) world heritage sites in the country. Before the crisis Syria had about 2.5 billion of oil barrels, more than any neighboring country. However, the struggle between the Syrian government and the rebel forces and the ISIS as well caused the damage country's infrastructure, including oil and natural gas pipelines, oil fields and much of the electric grids. More than that, large areas of oil fields were seized by the ISIS. Syria today has not retained its status of oil producer and even if the international community tries to restore peace in the country it would take several years for Syria's oil sector to get back to its feet (Cunningham 2015).

II/-The International Community's Response to the Syrian Crisis U.S. versus Russia

A/-The Russian Response toward the Syrian Crisis

The Russian interests in West Asia dated back to the imperial period, where the world was divided into two ideologies communism and capitalism, relations between Syria and Russia were good since the president Hafez al-Assad took power in 1970, at that time Russia was one of the main powers to provide the Syrian regime with arms and it kept its military base there at Syria's Mediterranean port of Tartus (Meyer and Carey).

Russia’s pretension for protecting Syria used as a way to protect its own properties, and to dominate the region, since Syria sits in the heart of the Middle East bordering the Mediterranean Sea to the west, it was strategically important to Russia's naval force. The Russian Black Sea Fleet is limited by the narrow Turkish straits and would, therefore, need a more stable port to access to the Mediterranean Sea. The Russian military involvement led to the fulfillment of another base in Khmeimim, Latakia, which were used for aviation purpose, more than that Russia wanted to restore its pre-cold war position and to be treated as an
effective element in resolving the international crises and challenges, such as terrorism that was affecting the region and the world. Russia wanted to prove to the world that the USSR was a thing of the past, and Russia is closely connected to today’s world as it was in the past. Whatever shapes the new world order, Russia remains necessary for solving global problems (Novikova).

Economically speaking, Russia wanted to keep the Middle East disturbed in order to serve its financial interests and to keep the oil prices high. Moreover Russian companies invested about 20 billion dollars in Syrian oil and gas industry in addition to the lucrative contracts that would be lost if the Assad regime fall as it has already lost more than four billion US $ worth of weapons contracts when the Libyan regime fell, one of those contracts was the twenty-five year contract (2013-2038) with Soyuzneftegaz Company for oil and gas drilling and exploration in an area off the Syrian Coast, from Tartus to the city of Banyas, which covers 2,190 square kilometers (Stafford).

The Syrian president Bashar Al Assad wanted to restore the oil fields and power plants that were seized by rebels and the ISIS, the Assad forces, with the help of Russian air strikes, began to retrieve those areas in northern and western Syria. During a meeting between Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid Muallem and Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin in November 2015, Mr. Muallem said that “We have data that oil and gas deposits on a shelf off the coast of Syria have enormous potential. And we hope to see not only Russian warships in Syria but also platforms for extracting oil.” The Syrian foreign minister wished that the Russian companies develop the Syrian offshore oil deposits. And he added also during the same meeting that Syria is ready to give the Russian companies all the possible rewards (Damascus wants Russia to develop Syrian oil).
The energy sector also was one of the Russian interests in Syria, Russia was conscious of the Syrian strategic position and its importance to serve as a possible site for a network of oil and gas pipelines to Europe as well as Turkey, and these seemed to be threatened by the Russian own hegemony over the export of gas to the European continent because Russia's share of total European gas imports exceeds 64 percent. For that reason, Russia wanted to invest in Syria’s energy sector because it would help in its energy development rather than compete with it (Al Saadi).

Both proposed pipelines that were put by Qatar with support from U.S. and Iran placed Russia under pressure, in 2009 Qatar proposed to make a pipeline to transfer its gas to the northwest via Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria to Turkey. Russia did not want anyone to compete it in the area over the energy market, for that reason the Syrian president was put under pressure and he was obliged to refuse, however, in 2011 Kremlin accepted another proposal Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) which was proposed by Tehran to the Assad government. The Russian support for the Syrian regime was for the sake of blockade the development of Qatar gas pipeline. Russia also sought to make itself as a connection point for the new offshore gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Israel, Cyprus, and Greece (Berke).

Finally, Russians were also troubled of the emerging of the Islam which can cause threat for Russia if it reaches the Russian borders. They had a view of the Islamist jihadists in Chechnya and the Caucasus as being cruel and violent. Although Russia had developed many measures against terrorism, there were more than 80 attacks by suicide bombers in Russia, killing or wounding around 5000 people. For Putin, the civil war in Syria is a training ground for Chechen fighters who will eventually come back to fight against the Russian forces (Hamilton).
The Russian position toward the Syrian crisis can be summarized in the speech of the Russian president Vladimir Putin at UN Gen Assembly

Russia has always been consistently fighting against terrorism in all its forms. Today, we provide military and technical assistance both to Iraq and Syria and many other countries of the region that are fighting terrorist groups. We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian government and its armed forces that are valiantly fighting terrorism face to face. We should finally acknowledge that no one but President Assad's armed forces and Kurds (ph) militias are truly fighting the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations in Syria (70th Session of the UN General Assembly).

In other words, Russia’s main interest in the Middle East was providing security through fighting terrorism; the Russian president showed that providing Syria and Iraq with assistance is necessary because they are fighting terrorist groups. Putin recommended Assad’s armed forces and Kurds for their fighting against terrorism.

The Russian –Syrian relation was known by friendship since about 45 years, making Syria a Russian ally. The Russian president provided security for Syria since the beginning of the civil war, through providing military aid including the weapons and the military training for the armed forces in accordance to interstate contracts. On October 2015 Putin deployed a Russian military power in Syria in response to the request of the Syrian president Bashar Al Assad. Russia started air strikes against the revolutionists in Syria, deploying SU-25 attack planes, SU-24M and SU-34 front bombers, that were defended by SU-30CM fighters (Rodgers).
The Russian military intervention in Russia caused the increasing number of deadly violence. Indeed the security situation in Syria became gradually worse, in addition to the victory of both the armed rebels and ISIS against the Syrian government, the fact that pushed the Russian military intervention forward. “Even if this is little more than political theatre, Russia is making its biggest move in the Middle East, hitherto America's domain, since the USSR was evicted in the 1970s"(War in the Muslim world).

On the coming days, the Russian Air Force launched bombard attacks on the territories controlled by ISIS. The Russian Ministry of Defense sources stated that those attacks were of “pinpoint accuracy”, the evidence was that from 5 November 2015, 3,000 fighters of ISIS escaped to Jordan. The Russian military involvement in Syria described as follows: "In Syria, we (the Russian military – the auth.) do not have the task to destroy any significant infrastructure. In the depth of the Islamist front, there is nothing, except command posts, communication centers, fuel, arms and ammunition depots, training camps, vehicle and armored weaponry storage areas." (Rodgers).

**B/-the American Response toward the Syrian Crisis**

Relations between U.S. and Syria strained for nearly five decades. Syria, according to successive U.S. administrations, was a country involved in threatening and hostile actions of U.S. and its allies in the region. These actions include all hot spots in the post-Cold War era such as the supporting terrorism and its development in the field of WMD .U.S. linked Syrian support to terrorism by supporting Hezbollah and Palestinian Resistance Movements. With the beginning of the events in Syria in 2011, the American attitude towards what was happening was to insist on the Syrian regime to carry out reforms that met the demands of the protesters. Therefore, the U.S. statements remained limited to call for stopping the violence, working towards a political solution and threatening to impose severe sanctions unless the
Syrian regime initiated genuine political reforms. In 2013, U.S. President Barack Obama decided to change his position and move toward providing combat weapons to the Syrian opposition and sending U.S. officers and experts in Jordan and Turkey to train the Syrian opposition and provide support (Bichara).

Since the spread of reports of the Syrian regime's use of nuclear weapons, U.S. threatened to take harsh measures in case of using chemical weapons. President Obama stated in his famous statement that the use of chemical weapons is a red line and that Syria would have serious consequences if it used chemical weapons against the people and the Syrian opposition, however new reports arrived at the White House confirms the use of regular Syrian forces for the Sarin Gas\textsuperscript{10}. The fact that prompted U.S. to move its naval forces in the Mediterranean in order to prepare for a military strike against Syria. However, all efforts by Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry to build an international coalition to help in the implementation of a military strike on Syria on charges of using the Syrian regime for chemical weapons in the countryside of Damascus failed. In this complex situation, Russia made a proposal to U.S. of America that Syria hand over its chemical arsenal to the international community in exchange for avoiding Syria from any military strike, The initiative was approved by U.S. and Syria, thus the Syrian regime began delivering its chemical shipments (Houssein).

U.S. support for the Syrian opposition continues in a very clear way than in the past. In 2014, Washington decided to suspend the Syrian embassy in U.S. and demanded that the Syrian regime's diplomats leave. But the U.S. administration was well aware that diplomatic measures alone will not bring down the Assad regime, but rather the financial and military support of the opposition is able to do so. In this context, Washington announced that it was taking additional measures to support the Syrian opposition materially and politically.
Moreover, the U.S. administration was working with Congress to allocate an additional $27 million in aid to the Free Syrian Army. Despite Washington's desire to resolve the battle in favor of the moderate opposition and to topple Bashar al-Assad's regime with weapons, it agreed to hold the Geneva II\textsuperscript{11} conference in an attempt to find a diplomatic solution to the Syrian crisis. However, the hardening of the positions of the parties (the opposition and the regime) supported by U.S. and Russia led to the failure of this conference and then took U.S. in September 2014 to launch air strikes against the organization of the Islamic State in Syria (Azza).

The United States' position toward the events in Syria was governed by a set of motives and objectives that the U.S. administration sought to achieve, the first goal of U.S. in Syria was to reshape the political map in the region. Although the division of former Sykes-Picot was able to dismantle the region, it did not prevent a regional axis that was opposed to U.S. and Israel. The second objective that U.S. sought to achieve was to prevent the arrival of weapons to those who were considered as terrorists. The weapons that were sent from Iran through Damascus to Lebanon to support Hezbollah and weapons smuggled across Syrian territory to Iraq will be disrupted through the Syrian regime's work to cope with the boiling state of the country (Sedhayn).

One of the goals that U.S. sought to achieve was related to the energy crisis, especially natural gas. U.S. concerned about Russia's plans to regain its position as one of the world's energy poles, Therefore, U.S. was impeding any force seeking to change the basis of the energy equation in the world based on American superiority through the direction of direct control over the sources of energy and control prices and impose hegemony on areas whose wealth can change the nature of international roles (Al Assaf24).
Conclusion

As a conclusion crisis usually means any event that is going to led to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society which is considered to be negative changes in the security, economic, political and social affairs leading to the collapse of the old regime .in fact Syrian crisis is not something new for Syrians who witnessed throughout history many uprisings .indeed, the Syrian crisis was a significant event in the modern middle east history. As a part of unprecedented protest movement across the region, the Syrian crisis followed the Arab Spring’s successful revolution which started as a result of many social, economic, political factors that led to a Syrian civil war which lasted until recent days, and led to the international community’s involvement in the region, based on implicit and explicit interests.
General Conclusion

The main element through which the rivalry between U.S. and Russia in the Middle East goes around cannot be limited to one field that is the access to the existing energy sources in the region, but there are other areas that are no less important than energy and also play an important role in raising the pace of competition between them, including geopolitical field. The American and Russian dealing with the region's issues reflects a clear divergence in their respective strategic as a result of conflicting interests in the Middle East, thus, The Russian strategy depends on the idea that the Middle East is a space close to its southern borders and that any instability in it would affect many of its republics, which could threaten its national security, in addition to The fact that this area constitutes an outlet for access to warm water as well as an important market for the promotion of weapons to obtain financial returns that contribute in the recovery of its economy.

The American strategy on the other hand focuses on the necessity of a permanent presence in the Middle East through different methods, whether through the direct military presence or through the establishment of political and economic alliances with the countries of the region, in order to encircle Russia and prevent it from penetrating into what America considers as its vital area, which means that U.S. was wary of a new Russian return, which it sees as a threat to its presence in the Middle East, Thus, U.S. adopted a strategy to expand competition and transfer it to areas of Russian influence, especially in Syria, in order to make Russia busy with problems and crises with no opportunity to rearrange its internal and external problems and to return as a strong and rival party that threatens its interests in the Middle East.
Concerning the new Russian return, which restored the competition with U.S. to the international arena; it is linked to the arrival of an ambitious leader who sought to restore Russia's old status. This was not the only factor, Russia also was helped by the rise in energy prices, which contributed to the recovery of its economic potential, and thus Russia has the capacity to present itself as an alternative to the Middle East.

In the context of the Syrian armed conflict between the Syrian regime and its opponents of different ideologies, inconsistencies and disagreements have emerged in the U.S.-Russian positions towards the Syrian crisis, as a result of the clash of interests and strategic goals between both sides. America regards Syria as the heart of the Middle East and must be controlled in order to establish a world order that will keep it in the lead and not allow any rival forces to rise, It also knows that whoever controls Syria can tighten its influence to the entire region and whoever succeeds in this can control the world. While Russia views the Syrian crisis and the U.S. position as a threat to its strategic interests in the Middle East, also it is aware that the overthrow of the Syrian political regime and the establishment of another political regime in its place will pave the way for redrawing the geopolitics of the Middle East in order to serve the interests of US of America and lead to the removal of Russia from the Middle East so it rushed to provide all forms of support for the Syrian regime.

The research came to the conclusion that competition that is happening in Syria between U.S. and Russia is, in fact, the extension of their broader competition over the Middle East. This is because Syria has a position on many levels not only geopolitical but also economically. All these things have greatly affected the events in Syria and made the solution depends on the agreement of the visions and the convergence of American and Russian interests.
Endnotes

1 WMD: A weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological or other weapon that can kill and bring significant harm to a large number of humans or cause great damage to human-made structures.

2 Peace Corps: is a volunteer program run by the United States government. The stated mission of the Peace Corps includes providing technical assistance, helping people outside U.S. to understand American culture, and helping Americans to understand the cultures of other countries.

3 Operation Provide Hope: was a humanitarian operation conducted by the U.S. Air Force to provide medical equipment to former Soviet republics during their transition to capitalism.

4 START II Treaty: was a bilateral treaty between the United States of America and Russia on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. It was signed by United States President George H. W. Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin on 3 January 1993.

5 START III Treaty: was a proposed bi-lateral nuclear disarmament treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation. It meant to drastically reduce the deployed nuclear weapons arsenals of both countries and to continue the weapons reduction efforts that had taken place in the START I and START II negotiations.

6 Orange Revolution: was a series of protests and political events that took place in Ukraine from late November 2004 to January 2005, in the immediate aftermath of the run-off vote of the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, which was claimed to be marred by massive corruption, voter intimidation and direct electoral fraud. Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, was the focal point of the movement's campaign of civil resistance, with thousands of protesters.
demonstrating daily. Nationwide, the democratic revolution was highlighted by a series of acts of civil disobedience, sit-ins, and general strikes organized by the opposition movement.

*Warsaw Pact:* formally known as the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, was a collective defense treaty signed in Warsaw, Poland among the USSR and seven Soviet satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

*CENTCOM:* U.S. Central Command (U.S.CENTCOM or CENTCOM) is a theater-level Unified Combatant Command of the U.S. Department of Defense. It was established in 1983, taking over the 1980 Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) responsibilities.

*Axis of Evil:* The phrase axis of evil was first used by U.S. President George W. Bush in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, and often repeated throughout his presidency, to describe foreign governments that, during his administration, sponsored terrorism and sought weapons of mass destruction

*Sarin Gas:* Sarin, or NATO designation GB (G-series, 'B'), is a highly toxic synthetic organ phosphorus compound. A colorless, odorless liquid, it is used as a chemical weapon due to its extreme potency as a nerve agent

*Geneva II:* was a United Nations-backed international peace conference on the future of Syria with the aim of ending the Syrian Civil War, by bringing together the Syrian government and the Syrian opposition to discuss the clear steps towards a transitional government for Syria with full executive powers
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