SYRIA'S POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA, 1991-2010

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DECLARATION

I do hereby decare that the thesis entitled "**Syria's Policy Towards Russia, 1991-2010**" submitted my me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis may be place before the examiners for their consideration for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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TO MA AND DEUTA

WHOSE LOVE KEPT ME GOING

Preface

This study is the outcome of a five year research period at the West Asian Centre. My interest in Syria arose while doing my M.Phil research work. Syria-Soviet Union relationship has been scrutinised by many scholars because of the favourable relations that they shared starting from mid-1950s till the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The existing scholarship throws light mostly on Soviet Union's relationship with Syria and Russia's political, military and economic ties with Syria. It has been found that the trends of Syrian foreign policy in the post-Cold war period with respect to Russia has not received due attention from scholars. This study is important due to several factors like the involvement of both the countries in Iraq-Kuwait War, Arab-Israeli peace process, post-Civil war Lebanon, and cooperation in military, security and economic issues. Although relationship with Russia is important for Syria for acting as a counterweight to the US influence in the region, the literature on this topic is not as vast as one would expect.

In this study, the year 1991 has been taken as the starting point based on the fact that the decline of the Soviet Union from the 1980s and its disintegration in 1991 was a point of significant systemic change at the international level for Syria, given the Soviet Union's importance in Syrian foreign policy. This study has not covered beyond 2010 because the developments since 2011 marked an entirely new and critical phase in Syria's political history in view of the uprising against the Assad regime. In that sense the impact of the uprising on Syria's Russia policy would be beyond the scope of the present study. The importance of this study lies in the fact that although Syrian foreign policy concerns have changed at times, Russian support has been a key element of this. In this backdrop, this study has attempted to provide a broad understanding of Syrian foreign policy towards Russia under both the presidents, Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad. Another aim of this study is to explore the areas of convergence and divergence of interests of Syria and Russia in the context of some of the main issues of the West Asian region where there was substantial involvement of both Syria and Russia.

Descriptive and analytical methods have been used in this study. Primary sources comprising, interviews, speeches, official reports, relevant UN documents etc have been used. Secondary sources used in this study are books, articles, important newspapers and periodicals. This research work has been based on two hypotheses: "In the post-1991 phase, Syria's policy

towards Russia was guided more by pragmatism than ideology because of systemic changes at the international level" and "the US and Israel were the major factors which decisively influenced Syria's policy towards Russia."

There are a total of six chapters in this thesis including introduction and conclusion. The thesis begins with a discussion of the events which affected Syria right after its independence from French rule. Then the study goes on to describe the broad determinants of Syrian foreign policy. An effort has been made to understand the changing trends of Syrian foreign policy from its independence till the rise of Hafez al-Assad in 1970. The Ba'th Party's emergence was instrumental in deciding Syria's political future from 1963. Therefore, its genesis, principles and policies are also being explored. The year 1970 was pivotal for Syria's political history as Hafez al-Assad came into power. In this chapter, domestic and foreign policy under Assad are explored. Then the Syria-Soviet Union relation is assessed and analysed by taking into account the political, military and economic aspects. All these broadly constitute the introductory chapter.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Iraq-Kuwait War were two major factors affecting Syrian politics in the immediate post-Cold War scenario. Syria's post-Cold War policies are explored and analysed to understand if there occurred any significant shifts. Bashar al-Assad took over the reins in 2000 amidst different political environment than that of his father's time. The continuities and shifts in foreign policy under Bashar is being discussed and analysed. In the light of new circumstances at the international level, Russian policies in general and especially in relation to the West Asian region are being discussed. This is the broad outline of the second chapter.

The third chapter opens with the background of the Lebanese civil war as this was a major event in the West Asian region which had ramifications running into the post-Cold War period. It then goes on to analyse Syria's involvement in Lebanon in the post-civil war situation after the signing of the Ta'if Accord. Simultaneously, Russia's relationship with Lebanon has been discussed. Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon was preceded by growing opposition against it coupled with the assassination of Rafik Hariri. Russia's responses to these events have been analysed. The chapter goes on to discuss the Iraq-Kuwait War which reveals Syria's shift in policy stances in the post-Cold War world. Syria was to a certain extent optimistic about the declared cooperation between the US and Russia in the post-Cold

war situation in relation to matters of major concern and therefore, chose to embark on the West Asian peace process staring with the Madrid peace conference. Russia's role in the peace process is being discussed and Syria's policy responses towards Russia in this context is being analysed.

The chapter four deals with the analysis of security aspect of Syria's Russia policy through separate sections dedicated to the discussions about the role played by both the countries in relation to Hezbollah, Hamas, The War on Terror and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. In this chapter the military aspect of Syria-Russia relations is also being explored.

The fifth Chapter begins with a brief discussion about the Syria economy. It then goes on to briefly discuss the state of Russian economy immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The main thrust of the chapter is to explore economic engagement between Syria and Russia in areas such as energy sector, trade, tourism etc

The final and concluding chapter highlights the major findings of each chapter and tests the proposed hypotheses.

Acknowledgement

Completing a task is never a one-man effort. It is very often the result of valuable contributions of a number of individuals and institutions in a direct manner that helps in shaping and achieving an objective.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Bansidhar Pradhan, Centre for West Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for his impeccable guidance, valuable suggestions and continued support throughout this thesis. His observations and scholastic comments have helped me to improve the draft to a significant extent within stipulated time. He guided, motivated, encouraged and supported me throughout the writing of the thesis. I am very thankful to him for this support in spite of his busy academic schedule.

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Finally, if there is any inadvertent error they are mine only.

New Delhi   ANKITA BORAH

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

APUC   Arab Parliamentary Union Council

DFLP   Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

FTO   Foreign Terrorist Organisation

IDF   Israeli Defense Forces

OPEC   Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PFLP   Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PLO   Palestine Liberation Organisation

PIJ   Palestinian Islamic Jihad

SDT   Specially Designated Terrorists

SLA   South Lebanese Army

SALSRA   Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act

SDGT   Specially Designated Global Terrorists

SDN   Specially Designated Nationals

UAR   United Arab Republic

UNMOVIC United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission

WMD   Weapons of Mass Destruction

List of Diagram and Tables

CHAPTER I

Introduction

After gaining independence, apart from dealing with its internal owes, Syria experienced being pulled into the ambit of Cold War politics. Syrian political leaders at that time were contemplating and experimenting with Arab unity plans. However, throughout much of the Cold War period Syria sought to tread the path of neutrality but eventually came to show inclination towards the Soviet Union starting from the 1950s. Syria's political history and initial years following its independence were important in the sense that the events which took place sought to determine Syrian foreign policy for a long time to come. With the beginning of Hafez al-Assad's presidency, Syria's foreign policy underwent some significant shifts in the 1970s and the Soviet Union came to occupy a significant position in Syria's foreign policy. However, Syria's outlook towards the Soviet Union began changing from the mid-1980s onwards as the Soviet Union was trying to cope with its domestic problems and was beginning to show disengagement from the West Asian region. Most importantly, Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of New Thinking and abandonment of confrontational attitude towards the US made Syria to reassess its policies towards the Soviet Union.

A: Internal and External Issues Affecting Syria, 1946-1970

Syrian Arab Republic is a country to reckon with in the West Asian region due to its historical and geopolitical significance. Syria has been inhabited by people belonging to different religious and ethnic communities for ages. After a long rule under the Ottomans, Syria came under the mandatory rule of French in 1922[1]. People gradually felt the need for independence and there arose nationalism.[2] Syria gained independence from France on 17 April 1946. This was also the time when Cold War was beginning to bring the region into its fold. Syria was vulnerable internally due to a number of factors. Its new ruling elite were divided over the question of how to govern Syria. Syria's politicians were also divided over which side to take in the superpower rivalry or with whom to build relations in the region. Syria's weak internal politics provided an opportunity for external factors to further

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[1] At the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was dissolved. Syria was under Ottoman rule for nearly 400 years. The allied powers divided the larger Syria into different areas. The northern part was divided into Syria and Lebanon and was formally mandated by the League of Nations in July 1922 to be ruled by France. The southern part divided into Iraq and Palestine was to be ruled by Britain. See George Antonius (1934), "Syria and the French Mandate", *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939)*, 13(4), pp.523-539.

[2] Stephen H Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate,* (London,1958) , pp.109-110.

destabilise it by meddling in its internal affairs.[3] Syria became a victim at the hands of stronger regional and international players.[4]

Syria had to experience a series of coups and countercoups just after its short stint with parliamentary form of government. The newly independent country had to deal with a whole lot of issues both internal and external. The urban notables were the ones who led Syria to freedom from the French rule that came to an end in 1946. The National Bloc[5] formed by the notables in 1928 soon showed signs of incapability to rule and sustain political stability. Initially, they were considered as representing the Syrian population at large but in reality they were concerned with their local areas or towns from which they were elected. Soon after independence, the Bloc was split due to internal tensions and the National Party which was dominant in it came to form the first government under Shukri al-Quwatli. The People's Party formed the opposition party. Meanwhile there was a growing politically conscious group of people emerging because of increase in modern institutions and urbanisation.[6]

These leaders who came to rule Syria did not seem competent enough and lacked administrative experience. It is a well-known fact that the formal idea of pan-Arab ideology took birth in Syria[7] and Syrians nurtured the hope of a single Arab state in the Fertile

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[3] Until the first *coup* of 1949, Syria was ruled by the traditional Sunni elite. There was a huge discontent and criticism against the government from the other sections of the society which felt excluded from mainstream Syrian politics. From 1946 till 1949 Syria was not interested in Cold War politics but was affected by inter-Arab affairs. Syria around this time was charting out its future with its neighbouring countries and was planning Arab unity ideas. Moreover, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War generated huge domestic hatred towards the ruling elite. See Rami Ginat, *Syria and the Doctrine of Arab Neutralism: From Independence to Dependence*, (Sussex, 2005), pp.40-41.

[4] For details See Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, (London,1965), pp.46-326.
[5] It was co-founded by Abd al-Rahman al-Kayyali and Hashim al-Atasi . The party was a coalition of nationalist parties whose main objective was to oppose French rule in Syria mainly by diplomatic means and not by armed rebellion. It had the popular support of the people and hence came to form the first government after the French left Syria. But soon domestic socio-economic problems coupled with challenges to leadership of the bloc from the "new modern middle class" weakened its status in Syrian politics. See Sami M. Moubayed, *Steel & Silk: Men and Women who Shaped Syria 1900-2000*, (Seattle, 2006), p.269 and Robert G. Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*, (Westport,2006), p.15.

[6] Mansoor Moaddel , *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse*, (Chicago 2005), p.223.
[7] The idea of pan-Arabism grew from the concept of Arab nationalism. During the Ottoman rule, emergence of Arab nationalism led to the formation of the Ottoman Arab Brotherhood in 1908 which called for the unity of all Arabs and defending Arab rights but it did not speak openly for independence from the Ottoman Empire. Later on two revolutionary parties known as the Covenant Society and the Young Arab Society were formed to press for Arab rights. From this emerged the formation of an Arab army with help from the Sharif of Mecca, al-Husayn ibn-Ali and Britain to lead an armed rebellion against the Ottomans. After the Arab movement won the Arab War against the Ottomans, a formal body known as the Syrian General Congress was formed in Syria

Crescent.[8] The area Fertile Crescent refers to the land that lies in and around the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers consisting of modern-day Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and Western Iran and Northern Egypt. Considering Palestine as a part of the larger Syrian land, the rulers became concerned with the wider Arab problems which in turn also attracted attention of other countries in Syrian affairs. Palestine was a part of the Ottoman Empire and it was due to this that Syria considered it as a portion of its "natural" inheritance. The Syrians voiced their discontent with Jewish immigration to Palestine in the 1940s[9] and finally in May 1948 along with other Arab countries Syria went into war with the newly formed state of Israel. The defeat of the Arab army in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War led to widespread riots in Syria and the army came to blame the civilian leaders of being corrupt and incompetent.[10]

The 1949 coup was only the beginning of a series of coups which came to occupy the political scene of Syria. From 1949-1954, interference of external actors along with domestic issues had a major role to play in the political instability that shook the country. The political rulers were primarily concerned with how to stay in power by spearheading unity plans.[11] Under Presidents Husni al-Za'im and Sami al-Hinnawi Syria wanted to form a union with Iraq. However, the union with Iraq never materialised under both the presidents. In 1951, Prime Minister Nazim al-Kudsi initiated a unity plan known as the "Union of Arab States". Another effort towards forming "comprehensive Arab Union" was put forward by Foreign Minister Khalid al-Azm in 1955. A federal union with Egypt was planned in 1956 after the Syrian parliament passed a resolution on 5 July 1956.[12] This plan took a long time to materialise and on 1 February 1958 this became a reality after President Abd al-Nasser and Shukri al-Quwatli published a joint communiqué announcing the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in the first week of February 1958. The UAR was formally established on 27 February 1958. After its establishment, Syria and Egypt came under the governance of

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which then comprised of modern day Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. Therefore, it can be said that the ideology of pan-Arabism took its formal shape in Syria. See C. Ernest Dawn (1962), "The Rise of Arabism in Syria", *Middle East Journal*, 16(2), pp.145-168.

[8] For details see Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: History of an Ambition*, (Oxford, 1990), p.83.

[9] At the beginning Syria was not completely against Jewish immigration to Palestine during the 1930s. Some of the leaders of Syria were planning to support the Jews in exchange for their and Britain's support towards the opposition against French rule. But gradually as immigration continued and the declaration for Partition of Palestine was passed in 1947, Syria's sentiment turned against the Jewish cause and it became the first country in the region to issue a boycott against the Jews and mobilised troops along the Palestine border. See Virginia Page Fortna , *Peace Time: Cease-fire Agreements and the Durability of Peace*, (Princeton, 2004), p.97

[10] John F Devlin, *Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land,* (Colorado, 1983), pp. 44-45.

[11] Donald L Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (California, 1985), p.493.

[12] Ebernhard Kienle (1995), "Arab Unity Schemes Revisited: Interest, Identity and Policy in Syria and Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27(1), pp.53-71.

the National Union which was set up in May 1957 itself. Under the National Union, the Supreme Executive Committee was formed in order to help in accomplishing the twin goals of anti-imperialism and socialism in both the countries. [13] In 1961, Syrians played an important role in bringing about the dissolution of the UAR and charted out plans for new unity projects. Maamun al-Kuzbari who became the Prime Minister of Syria following the dissolution of the UAR came out with a plan for a "decentralised Arab Union". In 1962 the pro-Nasserites executed a failed *coup* in order to reestablish the UAR which ended unsuccessfully. The Ba'thist regime which came to power in March 1963 brought about plans of a unity project comprising Syria, Egypt and Iraq. However, the negotiations for the unity plan collapsed and did not succeed. [14]

During this period, the West Asian region was a major battleground among the superpowers due to its strategic importance. Be'eri mentions how Syria was dragged into the Cold War politics. He states that in the 1950s, "the rivalry over Syria was interwoven with the efforts of the powers to enlist the Middle Eastern states in the Cold War." Neutralism was the attitude that defined Syria's stance during this period. It was also a result of being influenced by Egypt who was behaving like the "head of the neutralists" in the region. [15] There were tensions due to deployment of troops on the Syrian border in the 1950s by Turkey which was a member of the Baghdad Pact. [16] The pact created security concerns in Syria. Speculations were rife with reports that Britain was increasing its propaganda campaign against Arab states and especially Syria. Meetings between the member states of the pact coincided with the deployment of the Israeli forces along the Syria border. [17]

President Nasser's speech in 1966 which was given on the occasion of anniversary of UAR-Syrian unity mentions how the Baghdad Pact was rejected by the states in the region after repeated attempts to convince them by its member states to join it. The text of the speech said that in 1955, the Turkish Premier Adnan Menderes visited Iraq and held talks with Nuri al-

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[13] Elie Podeh, *The Decline of the Arab Unity: The Rise and Fall of the United Arab Republic,* (Oregon, 1999), p.101.
[14] Kienle, "Arab Unity Schemes Revisited", pp.53-71.
[15] Eliezer Be'eri, *Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society*, (Pall Mall, 1970), pp.131.
[16] Formed in 1955 by Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and UK was a pro-US defence alliance. The main aim of the organisation was to prevent the spread of communism. The organisation was renamed as Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in 1959 after Iraq pulled out. It was dissolved in 1979. See US Department of State Archive, "The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO)", [Online:web] Accessed 13 March 2017, URL:https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/98683.htm
[17] FBIS-FRB-56-233 (1956), "Baghdad Pact Fears Cause Syria Policy", *Daily Report. Foreign Radio Broadcasts,* USSR International Affairs , 30 November 1956 , p.BB19.

Said, the Prime Minister of Iraq. He mentioned that the talks then led to an agreement between Iraq and Turkey. Nasser considered the Pact as a colonisation attempt of the Arab states. He stated in his speech that the agreement said the following:

> Talks were held between the two sides on the need to devise cooperation for the sake of securing the stability and safety of the Middle East. The Turkish and Iraqi governments accordingly decided to conclude an agreement calculated to realise and expand such cooperation as soon as possible. The agreement would include an undertaking to cooperate in repelling any aggression against the two countries from within or outside the area.[18]

From 1946 till Hafez al-Assad's coup in 1970, Syria was involved in three major wars in the region. First was the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The UN Partition Plan for Palestine which was adopted on 29 November 1947 was a prelude to the succeeding war between Israel and a coalition of Arab forces in 1948. The resolution was held by the neighbouring Arab countries as being unfair to the Palestinians. Therefore, an Arab coalition was formed in order to confront the Israeli Army and put an end to the ousting of Palestinians from their homeland immediately after the British mandate over Palestine would end. Syria, Egypt and Jordan who formed the Arab coalition were defeated which was then followed by armistice agreements with Israel. The defeat caused huge uproar in Syria. There were huge anti-government protests and finally the cabinet of the first parliamentary government was forced to resign.[19] This war also created a perennial security concern from Israel for years to come.

This war was soon followed by the 1956 Suez Crisis. It all began as an Anglo-Egyptian rivalry due to Egypt's fierce opposition to the Baghdad Pact. This then gave Israel the opportunity to challenge Egypt's "Arab leadership" based on an "independent foreign policy free from Great Power control." Syria became involved in this War after the signing of the Syrian-Egyptian defence pact in 1955.[20]

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War[21] had a deep impact on Syrian politics for years to come. Syria lost Golan Heights to Israel during the war.[22] The 1967 War came to acquire an emotional

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[18] FBIS-FRB-66-036 (1966), "Nasir Speech on UAR-Syrian Unity Anniversary", *Cairo Domestic Service in Arabic* , 22 February 1966, p.B1.

[19] Devlin, *Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land*, pp. 44-45.

[20] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, pp. 246-253.

[21]This Arab-Israeli War took place from 5 June to 10 June 1967. It was a war fought between Israel on one side and Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the other side. At the end of the war, Israel captured Gaza strip and Sinai

angle in the minds of the Syrians. Therefore, the return of the Golan Heights from Israel has been a priority on the agenda during all peace negotiations. Syria's regional foreign policy followed in the aftermath of the dissolution of the UAR and internal conflicts within the Ba'th Party starting from 1963 brought into power a radical neo-Bath regime in February 1966 which went on to support the Palestinian *fidayeen* attacks against Israel. The Palestinian cause was a significant element in Ba'thist ideology and the Palestinian attacks on Israel were given increasing support by the neo-Ba'thist regime led by Salah Jadid in Syria. However, the Palestinian attacks of Israel were not expected to bring about a war-like situation. The deployment of Egyptian forces in the Sinai and the closure of the Straits of Tiran restraining Israeli ships from passing the area finally led to the outbreak of the full-fledged war between Syria, Egypt and Jordan on one side and Israel on the other side. The weakness of the Syrian military and air force was exposed during the war. The superiority of Israeli military in relation to that of the Arabs was out in the open. All these developments brought about a dramatic turn of events in the political life of Syria.[23]

The 1967 war exacerbated intra-Ba'th problems. After the 1967 war, the neo-Bath regime faced problems and was nearing its end. In the meanwhile, Assad who was the Defence Minister during the war advocated different policies to deal with the realities at the domestic level and at the international level. His policies were criticised by the civilian section of the neo-Ba'th led by Salah Jadid which held a radical stance in relation to policies both at home and abroad. Assad with the support of the army and the security forces, seized control from the Jadid government in 1970. After acquiring power, Assad formulated domestic and foreign policies which led to Syria's internal stability and strengthened its regional position.[24]

B: Determinants of Syria's Foreign Policy

The term foreign policy holds great significance in a particular country's political affairs. This study will not attempt to discuss the concept 'foreign policy'. Here attempt will be made to delineate and discuss the broad determinants of Syrian foreign policy. Although domestic

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Peninsula from Egypt, West Bank from Jordan and Golan Height from Syria. See John Quigley, *The Six-Day War and Israeli Self-Defense: Questioning the Legal Basis for Preventive War*, (UK, 2013), 2013, p. 32.
[22] Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: Struggle for the Middle East*, (London, 1988), pp. 142-143.
[23] David W. Lesch, "Syria: Playing with Fire", in Wm. Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim (ed), *The Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences,* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 79-89.
[24] Eyal Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, (London, 2001), pp7-8.

factors and systemic changes at the international level have brought about changes in its foreign policy behaviour from time to time, some of the general determinants of Syrian foreign policy have remained the same. These are historical identity of Syria, geography, ideology and economy.

"Syria is both a country and a concept", wrote Hopwood.[25] In one sentence he aptly summarised Syria's geopolitical complexity. The name referred to different geographical areas at various times. The name 'Syria' was derived from the word *Siryon* which refers to Mt. Hermon in the Bible. Later its mention was found in the works of Herodotus in about 440 B.C. In the seventh century A.D the Arabs used to refer to historic Syria as a large undefined area to the north of Mecca across the Arabian Desert and they named it *Bilad al-Sham* which included present day Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. The word Syria increasingly gained prominence after a number of scholarly works published in the nineteenth century used the term which also helped to generate "Syrian consciousness."[26]

The total land area of modern day Syria which is also known by the Arabic name *Al-Jumhuriyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Suriyyah* (The Syrian Arab Republic),[27] adds up to approximately 186,475 sq.km. Syria holds great geopolitical significance in the West Asian region. Damascus has been a historically important place and has been one of the world's oldest cities. Present day Syria is home to the ruins of various ancient civilisations and empires and connected vital trade routes. It was the base of the Umayyad caliphate and its capital was Damascus. Syria shares its boundary with Turkey in the north, Iraq in the east, Jordan in the South, Lebanon in the West and last but not the least, Israel in the Southwest. It also has a coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea stretching from its border with Turkey to its border with Lebanon. Most importantly, Syria lies in the region which acts as the connecting link between the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe.[28]

Earlier Syria used to refer to a large area which also included the present day Syria. The historical 'Greater Syria' which used to refer to a huge tract of land from the Mediterranean

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[25] Derek Hopwood, *Syria: 1945-1986,* (London, 1988), p.1.
[26] Pipes, *Greater Syria*, p.14.
[27] William Roe Polk et.al, "Syria" , *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, [Online:web] Accessed 13 July 2015, URL: https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria
[28] "Syria: Basic Data", *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, [Online:web] Accessed 13 January 2015, URL:http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=514323435&Country=Syria&topic=Summary&subtopic=Basic+data

Sea, to the Taurus mountains across the Arabian, Sinai and the Syrian deserts. This large undefined area or 'Greater Syria' was later divided into Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Syria and Palestine. Pipes described, "the many sizes and shapes ascribed to Syria point to a key geographical fact; like Germany, historic Syria has no firm boundaries hallowed by age. Instead, its contours change with each war, diplomat, or theorist." [29] After the Ottoman Empire came to an end, French and British mandates were imposed on its provinces in 1922. Later these provinces were divided into different areas for administrative purposes. Palestine and Jordan came under the British mandate and Lebanon and Syria came under French rule. Before coming under the rule of mandatory powers, in the period spanning from 1918-1920, the Arabic provinces or "Greater Syria" was ruled by King Faisal and since then Arab nationalists and various scholars have nurtured this idea of a unified Syria from time to time. This is what they refer to as the "natural Syria" or as the real Syria ought to be.[30] Syrian foreign policy therefore can be said to be based on the idea of a historical greater Syria and the constant reminder of the fact that it was divided and its parts were severed.

Pan-Arabism increasingly gained importance after 1908 when it emerged as a political movement in Ottoman Empire known as the Ottoman Arab Brotherhood. The earliest proponents of this ideology viewed it as a "way of defending their ethnic identity against the West."[31] The word pan-Arabism has in recent times been used interchangeably with Arab nationalism. Following the Sikes-Picot agreement in 1916 and the League of Nations mandate, the Ottoman Empire was divided into various spheres of influence by the major powers of the world which has been called as an imperialist imposition of the state system in the region. After the creation of British and French mandates, Syria felt itself as being cut off from its "Arab environment" and thus deprived of its Arab identity. Syria has emphasised itself as a part of a wider "imagined community". Therefore, pan-Arabism has been a "durable determinant" of Syrian foreign policy as ever since its independence no Syrian leader has been able to "gain credibility for a foreign policy which did not affirm Syria's membership in this wider community and its pivotal role in defence of all-Arab causes."[32] Over the years it has been witnessed that a wide gap has emerged between Syria's pan-Arab ideology and its foreign policy actions. This has been mainly due to the failed unity experiments. Syria's support for Iran during the Iran-Iraq war and its actions against the PLO

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[29] Pipes, *Greater Syria*, pp.14-15.
[30] Ibid. , p.31.
[31] Dawn, "The Rise of Arabism in Syria", pp 145-146.
[32] Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, (New York,2001), pp.134-135.

during the Lebanese crisis are a witness to this. Since Syria has been the most consistent supporter of pan-Arabism, it had conferred upon itself a "special role" of defending the Arab nation against the threat emanating from Israel. Although there has been slight deviation from Syria's conformity to pan-Arabism, Hafez al-Assad has never reached any settlement with Israel which would endanger Syria's national interests. According to Assad, Syrian interests coincided with "wider Arab national goals and without pan-Arab solidarity those goals could not be achieved". This is what Raymond Hinnebusch calls Syria's "role conception or Syro-centric Arabism."[33] Syria has been known as the "beating heart of Arabism."[34] This is to say that it was from Syria that the seeds of Pan-Arabism were sown and later spread to other parts of the region.

Lastly, but most importantly, Syria's border with Israel has given this country a central position in the West Asian region and adds to her geopolitical significance. This border has posed acute security problems for Syria due to perennial tensions with Israel. The border issue has also led Syria to allocate a huge expenditure to its defence budget and to build military ties with various countries. Existence of Israel has been an issue within the Syrian political scene and is deeply embedded in political history. Syria's position as a frontline state in the region has been slightly diminished by Israel's military strength. After years of denial of Israel's existence, Syria has come to terms with the reality. Hinnebusch states that both Syria and Israel struggle to create their own spheres of influence and he cites the examples of Lebanese civil war.[35]

The Syrian terrain needs mention here as geography of a country adds to its sense of security. A strip of mountain ranges cover most of the part in Western Syria leading to slightly elevated plateau in the eastern Syria. The Euphrates river valley cuts across the plateau region of Syria which is known as *Al Jazirah*. Western Syria is more fertile than the eastern Syria as moisture laden air flows across towards this area from the Mediterranean Sea. The highest point in Syria is *Mt. Hermon* which forms the southernmost portion of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. The Golan Heights which has been an area of constant tension between Syria and Israel lie at the southern slope of *Mt. Hermon*. During the 1967 War, Golan Heights

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[33] Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond A. Hinnebusch , *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London, 1997), pp-59-60.
[34] Hinnebusch , *Syria: Revolution from Above*, p.135.
[35] Raymond Hinnebusch (1996), "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26(1), pp.42-57.

came under the occupation of Israel and ever since this area has remained the foremost priority in Syria-Israel peace process. Golan Heights holds huge significance in terms of its strategic edge due to its access to water bodies and also since it overlooks Northern Israel till the Lebanese border.[36]

Economic strength of a country is a decisive factor in determining how soon a country can reach the position of a major player in the region. Unlike many countries in the region, Syria does not have much natural resources reserve. Statistical data of Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) shows that Syria had 1.9 billion barrels of proven oil reserves in 1980. In 1991, the data shows that Syria had 2.2 billion barrels of proven oil reserves.[37] According the *IMF Report 2008*, Syria had 2.5 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Most of the oil discoveries in Syria were made during the period 1970s to 1990s.[38] Syrian economy is a state-controlled economy which faces the challenge of depleting oil reserves from time to time. Syria has been trying to bring in foreign companies for exploration of oil in the recent years. Since it cannot wholly depend on its natural resource reserves to keep the economy running, Syria also depends on foreign aid, trade and investment. Foreign aid and trade put a country under various conditions and constraints from other players and also determine the kind of relationship between them. Syria's biggest foreign aid providers have been Gulf countries, Iran and erstwhile Soviet Union.[39] Syria has shown a great level of cautiousness in terms of sustaining its relations with foreign aid providers and not to become over dependent on those countries thereby decreasing their capability to influence Syria's foreign policy making. Due to its chronic insecurity emanating from the fact that it shares its borders with Israel, Syria has been known to allocate a huge part of its budget to military and defence purposes.[40]

Syria has to deal with a rapidly growing population which creates a burden on the economy. Moreover in a conflict-ridden region like West Asia, Syria also needs a large investment in

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[36] Robert G. Rabil, *Embattled Neighbours: Syria, Israel and Lebanon,* (London, 2003), p.36.
[37] OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletin, "World Proven Crude Oil Reserves by Country, 1980-2004", [Online:web] Accessed 2 May 2017,
URL:http://www.opec.org/library/Annual%20Statistical%20Bulletin/interactive/2004/FileZ/XL/T33.HTM
[38] Syrian Arab Republic (2008), "Staff Report for the 2008 Article IV Consultation" , *International Monetary Fund Country Report No. 09/55*, 19 December 2008, [Online:web] Accessed 1 October 2015, URL: https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2009/cr0955.pdf
[39] Moshe Ma'oz and Yaniv Avner, *Syria Under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks (ed)*, (New York, 1986), p. 63.
[40] Hinnebusch , *Syria: Revolution from Above*, p.145.

defence to equip a large army. During the late 70s and 80s Syria's military debt increased due to huge defence spending. But Hafez al-Assad meticulously diversified external aid donors to avoid constraints on foreign policy.[41]

The changing trends of Syrian foreign policy can be understood by looking at the political developments from its independence. The first government of independent Syria under Shukri al-Quwatli had problems like nepotism, organisational mismanagement and he was seeking a re-election due to which he was pushing for a constitutional amendment. This constitutional amendment met with serious criticism and resistance from various circles finally leading to the fall of Syria's parliamentary system. Syria was burdened with other problems also such as weak economy, creation of political institutions and building foreign policy. The foreign policy domain was important for Syria as it was a newly independent country with new political rulers. In its foreign policy making Syria had to assess its relations with Arab countries in the region, Arab League, its ties with the United Nations, the US and the Soviet Union. Internally, Syria had to explore the areas of investment and interests in relation to other countries. Lastly, Syria also had to devise policy to deal with the remnants of its relations with France.[42]

When after a few years of parliamentary rule, the first *coup* struck Syria, for the first time the army led into politics. Chief of Staff, Husni al-Za'im led a *coup* which toppled the government of Quwatli on 30 March 1949 thereby introducing Syria to a series of coups and countercoups. After Za'im's take over, his regime felt the need to get foreign recognition. Syrian officials were sent to Egypt on 7 April to "give the necessary clarification of the coup" in order to restore warm relations with Egypt. Later on Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon along with US, Britain and France bestowed their recognition to the Za'im regime. The war with Israel in May 1948 left Syria with security concerns and therefore Za'im decided to join hands with Iraq and Jordan and form a union. To avoid the spread of Hashemite power to Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia gave formal recognition to Za'im's regime and also promised to offer financial aid provided Syria maintains its current government properly. Za'im then dropped the idea of pan-Arab unity and adopted anti-Hashemite stance. He then went on to publicly criticise the idea of a "Greater Syria". Gradually Za'im explicitly expressed that

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[41] Ibid. , pp.85-86.
[42] Gordon H Torrey, *Syrian Politics and the Military: 1945-1958*, (US, 1964), pp.74-75.

Syria held anti-Communist stand[43] and that he saw it necessary to build good relations with the US and Britain. But Marshall Plan and Four Point Aid never reached Syria and Syria-US agreement on these issues never culminated. Negotiations with Israel for an armistice also took place in April 1949 but it remained a stalemate. Armistice agreement with Israel was finally signed in July 1949. Soon Za'im lost the support from various sections of people as they were antagonised due to his pro-western policy, anti-Hashemite attitude, autocratic methods of governance and most importantly his loss of interest with the idea of Arab union.[44]

The next government that was formed began a rapprochement towards Iraq. Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi who came into the political scene in August 1949 after overthrowing Za'im from power reinstated civilian government. The People's Party came into power. But the unity plans with Iraq did not succeed. There were reservations regarding the union since it was felt that Britain's influence over Iraq would be extended to Syria thereby affecting Syria's independence over its own matters. The third *coup* in the same year took place and Hashim al-Atassi became the President of Syria. This time it was a regime which was anti-Iraqi in its outlook. These regional alignments were anticipated basically to form a strong Arab front against Israeli threat.[45] Arab-Israeli tensions were gaining momentum in the 1950s with each side buying weapons and strengthening their military. Akram Hawrani who was the "partner" in Adib Shishakli's coup, promulgated a policy of "strict neutrality towards the two world camps" for the new regime in Syria in 1951. During his rule, Shishakli made every effort to keep Syria away from getting too much involved in inter-Arab politics. He advocated that Syria would be the 'Prussia of the Arab states', the 'fortress of steel' from which the 'spark of liberation would fly to the whole Arab world.' Shishakli was thrown out of power in 1954 by the Communists, Ba'th, People's Party and the National Party.[46] The Ba'th Party from this period became an important player in Syrian politics which needs a brief discussion.

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[43] The anti-Communist posture of the Syrian govermnet under Za'im can be explained within the context of the *coup* that overthrew Shukri al-Quwatli. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the US played a vital role in carrying out the 1949 *coup* alongside Za'im to depose Quwatli. Matthew F. Holland, *America and Egypt: From Roosevelt to Eisenhower*, (Westport, 1996), p.140.
[44] Ibid., pp.134-139.
[45] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, pp. 74-90.
[46] Ibid., pp. 101-124.

C: The Ba'th Party and its Policies

The Arab Ba'th Resurrection Party (*Harakat al-Ba'th al-Arabi*) came into being on 7 April 1947. It was founded so as to act as a source of providing solutions to the problems faced by the Arab world during that period of time. Its founders were Michel Aflaq (an Orthodox Christian), Salah al-Din al-Bitar (a Sunni Muslim) and Zaki Arsuzi (an Alawite) who were urban middle class nationalist intellectuals inspired by the nationalist struggles in Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon during the late 1930s and 1940s. Their struggle was mainly against the rule of the British and the French over these areas of the region. During this period, many other local movements also started developing such as the populist nationalist movement in support of landless peasants in the Hama region led by Akram Hawrani known as the Arab Socialist Party.[47]

The mottos of the Ba'th Party are "Unity, Freedom, and Socialism" (*wahda, hurriya wa ishtirakiya*).[48] Ba'th means "renaissance" and its meaning points towards renaissance of "Arab nation by means of Arab Socialism."[49] The party derives its ideology from European socialism. Ba'thist ideology comprises of socialism and Arab nationalism. This ideology was founded in Syria which was a hotbed of Arab nationalism. Gradually, the party saw its growth from being a Syrian party into an "inter-Arab movement" with branches and followers in many countries in the West Asian region. To put forward its views publicly, in July 1946 the Ba'th Party founders came out with a journal named *al-Ba'th*. In April 1947, the first Ba'th Congress was held in Damascus with representatives from Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Since it was a newly established party, it did not have much significance in Syrian political scenario.[50]

When Syria gained independence from France there were a host of issues that it had to deal with both at the domestic and external fronts. At the domestic level, Syria was burdened with issues like inflation, agrarian crisis and unemployment. Moreover, the government that came

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[47] William Spencer, *Iraq: Old Land, New National in Conflict,* (Connecticut, 2000), p.89.

[48] Dilip Hiro, *Neighbours, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran After the Gulf Wars*, (New York, 2001), p.8.

[49] Arab Socialism was a term coined by Michel Aflaq. He chose to distinguish this concept from the broader international socialism. According to him Arab nationalists are socialists and therefore there can be no incompatibility between both the ideas. This concept not only meant a mere class struggle between capitalists and workers but the struggle of all Arabs against all opponents of pan-Arab unity. See John Devlin, *The Baath Party: A History from its Origins to 1966*, (California, 1975), pp.32-33.

[50] Gordon H. Torrey (1969), "The Ba'th: Ideology and Practice," *Middle East Journal*, 23 (4), pp.445-470

to be formed after independence did not include the people from middle and lower classes. Simultaneously, at the external level, there were growing concerns about support provided to Israel by the West and the US attempt to increase its influence throughout the region by forging alliances. These issues led to the rise of radical parties in Syria and Ba'th was one of them. The party soon infiltrated the army and became an attraction for the recruits from rural areas and minorities. The military had to meet the defence requirements due to the perceived threat from Israel and therefore a lot of military recruits were selected from middle class and rural sections of the society.[51]

One important document which delineates Ba'thist principles was the 1947 Constitution of the Party. The first and foremost principle in the Constitution says that "the Arab nation is one and free." Second, the Arab nation has a "personality, from which follows freedom of speech." Third, the Arab nation has an "eternal mission which is to destroy colonialism and extend the hand of friendship to humanity at large." It also contained some general principles which outlined the Party's vision for sustaining an Arab nation. Although it was founded and based in Damascus, it caters to the larger Arab nation. It declares that the only way to attain its goals is to adopt the revolutionary means. The document says that the Party's main objective is to bring "an end to colonialism and unite the Arabs." The Constitution declares that an "Arab" is a person who speaks Arabic and who has imbibed the Arabic life and has a feeling of belongingness to the Arab nation. A constitutional parliamentary regime was prescribed for governing the nation and mentioned that judiciary would be functioning independently. Military service was made mandatory. The foreign policy of the Arab nation is determined by Arab nationalism. It states that Arabs would struggle to destroy colonialism and any treaty posing as a limit to the Arab sovereignty would be abrogated. The economic policy entails socialism although it does not completely rule out ownership of private property but limits it to a certain extent in order to prevent exploitation. External trade and internal economic activities would be under the state government.[52]

The Ba'th Party merged with the Hawrani's party in 1954 and came to be known as the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. The merger took place mainly as an opposition towards Shishakli's rule. During his presidency, the party was banned and Hawrani was sent into exile in Lebanon. Therefore, the party had a prominent role in deposing Shishakli and the merger

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[51] Gerd Nonneman (ed), *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe* (Oxon,2005), p. 83.
[52] David Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria*, (Kent, 1987), pp.63-64

proved beneficial when it won 22 seats out of 142 in the 1954 parliamentary elections.[53]During the years 1954-1958, the party came to hold many prominent positions but had to share power on and off with the Communist Party of Syria. It soon came to realise the growing power of Communists in Syrian politics and to pre vent their power from increasing further, began discussing a union with Egypt.[54]

The 1950s was a period in which there were various developments in the political front both at the regional and international level. These were the rise of Nasser, the Baghdad Pact, Egypt's inclination towards neutralism, the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower Doctrine, Soviet-Egyptian military ties and Syria-Turkish crisis.[55] During this period the Ba'th was emerging as a relatively strong in the political scene. Because of all these developments along with the fear of spread of Communism, Syria adopted "positive neutralism"[56] to exploit the rivalry between the superpowers to its own advantage.[57]

United Arab Republic (UAR), the Syrian-Egyptian union lasted from 1958-1961. Within one and a half year after the dissolution of the union, the Ba'th revived itself.[58] Various reasons can be attributed for the failed unity. One precondition demanded by Nasser before the union was to ban all the political parties in Syria and most importantly, the withdrawal of the Syrian military from political life. The minorities were gradually gaining strength through the military wing of the Ba'th. Realising this and to keep them away from their political bases, Nasser transferred nearly 500 Syrian Ba'thist officers of minority origin to Egypt. In 1959 a few minority officers came together to form a secret Military Committee (*al-Lajna al-Laskariya*) of the Ba'th. The committee was formed in complete isolation and no one from the civilian party hierarchy was included in this. The committee was composed of three Alawis (Muhammad Umran, Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad) and two Isma'ilis (Abd al-

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[53] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, p.183.
[54] Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World,* (New York, 1990), p.43.
[55] George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East,* (Washington DC, 1972), pp. 102-105.
[56] It was adopted by Nasser from the mid-1950s to avoid being thrown into either camp during the Cold War. This policy advocated against having any kind of military alliance with the superpowers but to manipulate their rivalry to one's own advantage. However, Seale mentions that it was Syria who first felt the need for neutralism due to its bitter experiences of the French Mandate, 1948 Arab-Israeli War, establishment of Israel and politics of the superpowers during the Cold War period. Moreover, Akram Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party was the first Syrian political party to endorse a foreign policy "free from all foreign orientation or influence". See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, pp.101-102.
[57]Ginat, *Syria and the Doctrine of Arab Neutralism*, p. 170.
[58] Berch Berberoglu, *Turmoil in the Middle East: Imperialism, War, and Political Instability*, (USA, 1999), p.57.

Karim al-Jundi and Ahmad al-Mir). Although it was against the UAR authorities, the committee played no key role in the secession of Syria.[59]

It was the old guards of the Ba'th Party who were in support of the dissolution of the union, especially Hawrani who eventually became disillusioned with the union with Egypt. Hawrani and Salah al-Din al-Bitar went on to sign a document in support for secession from the unity project. When this became public, there developed factions within the party. The young Ba'thists (or the neo-Ba'thists) who formed the Military Committee developed resentment against the veteran leaders, Bitar and Hawrani. Although the Military Committee was against some of the policies pursued by Egypt under the UAR, they were not in support of dissolution.[60]

The UAR was dissolved on 28 September 1961. After the break-up of the union, a new anti-Nasser regime consisting of conservatives and army officers came to be established. The coup was led by Damascene officers[61] headed by Abd al-Karim al-Nahlawi. Initially, the Military Committee thought that they would benefit from the Nahlawi government formed immediately after the dissolution of the union. However, eventually the Military Committee members of the Ba'th Party witnessed that they had nothing to gain from the Nahlawi government. In this backdrop, the pro-Nasser faction of the Syrian army played an important role in shaping the politics of Syria post-union period till 1963. In 1962, the pro-Nasserite officers along with the Ba'thist officers conducted a coup to overthrow the Nahlawi led government. Both the Nasserite and the Ba'thist officers affiliated themselves to the National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC). The NCRC was dominated by the Ba'th but also had members from Nasserist faction, independents and unionists. In 1963 representatives from Syria, Egypt and Iraq met in Cairo to discuss for a tripartite union. The Cairo negotiations for the union did not produce any concrete results and hence the talks collapsed.[62]

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[59] Pipes, *Greater Syria*, p. 156.

[60] Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalisms*, (Gainesville, 2001), p. 81.

[61] Damascene army officers were a coalition of military officers from Damascus who carried out a bloodless coup against Nasser in 1961 and ended the Syrian-Egyptian union. These army officers were to some degree operating at the behest of the Syrian bourgeoisie who opposed Nasser's socialist policies and in particular land reform measures. See Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba'th* Party, (New York, 2011), pp.29-31.

[62] Martin S. Alexander(ed), *Knowing Your Friends: Intelligence Inside Alliances and Conditions from 1914 to the Cold War,* (London, 1998), p. 241.

The separatist regime which was there in Syria from 1961-1963 represented the return of the old politicians who became dominant in the parliament and the government. De-nationalisation measures were undertaken for banks and industries during this period. A disastrous land reform policy was also formulated under which large tracts of land being expropriated were returned to the big landlords some of whom drove out peasants out of their villages. "Instability-street riots, strikes, and military intrigue-was rife." Nasserites and Ba'thists who mostly came from middle class were disappointed and the unionist sentiments led to resentment among the people. The regime was responsible for the fragmentation of the political scenario which divided nationalists and the leftists over the issue of seeking reunion with Egypt and on what terms. Thus, an "already fragmented political arena was further divided between Nasserites (for union), Communists (against), and Ba'thist (divided)."[63]

As the Cairo negotiations for a union collapsed, the Ba'thists tried to purge the Nasserites out of power and they finally succeeded. The Nasserite officers and pro-Nasserite civilians bounced back and carried out a failed coup on 18 July 1963 which was violently crushed by the Ba'thist army units. The March 1963 coup was mainly led by the Military Committee along with other officers. The committee did not have any hold outside the military and no links in the political field. Therefore, they saw it appropriate to garner support from the traditional Ba'thist leaders. Eventually, the military committee was accepted into the Ba'th Party as the sole military organisation and as allowed to retain its autonomy.[64]

The 1963 coup brought about three important changes in Syrian politics. The rural and minority communities who were earlier not given representation in politics now found a channel to rise up the political ladder. Another new development was the "centralization and modernization of administrative functions under the military and the concomitant, rise in all cities and regions." The third and the most important of all changes was that the military came to penetrate all spheres of political life in Syria. Before the coup, although the military participated in politics, it could do so only with the help of civilian leadership, businessmen, ideologues etc. But after 1963, "the position of the military has been virtually hegemonic."[65]

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[63] Hinnebusch , *Syria:Revolution From Above*, p.43.
[64] John Galvani (1974), "Syria and the Ba'th Party", *MERIP Reports*, pp.6, 25:3-16.
[65] Michael Curtis(ed*), The Middle East Reader* (USA, 1986), p.212.

All the Nasserites and other pro-Egypt unity elements were supressed. Many Nasserites and Communists faced arrests, transfers or removal from key positions. Several loyal Alawi Ba'thists were offered promotions and key positions in the military by Salah Jadid and Assad, who were members of the Military Committee formed in 1959.[66]

The year 1963 brought about an interesting turn to the Ba'th Party's history with the drafting of the 1963 Ideological Report known as *Ba'dh al-Muntalaqat al-Nadhriya* (Some of the Theoretical Starting Points) during the Sixth pan-Arab Congress. After the failed Nasserist coup of July 1963, Ba'thists came to hold the position of absolute power in the political scene in Syria. The 1947 Constitution was no doubt a well drafted document but it "did not go far enough as a programme of action, and certainly not far enough to satisfy all elements which now came to the fore." The Constitution came to be merely seen as putting forward a "theory of struggle based on scholastic writing" whereas the Report endorsed action based on the current realities facing the Arab world. The text of the Report said that Arab unity must take place between states sharing common ideology and not be based solely upon geography which was the case during the failed unity experiment with Egypt. The party has been acting as a vanguard against colonialism and capitalism but given the circumstances of the Cold War, the Report added that "positive neutrality, if anything outweighs non-alignment." Basically, it was a document which acted as a critique of the past "ideological mistakes" and such corrections were deemed necessary to sustain Arab unity in the face of adverse regional and international political environment. Most importantly, it pointed out that parliamentary democracy was a failure in Arab countries leading to military coups and that "popular revolutionary democracy" was the appropriate way of governing the state.[67]

From July 1963 to February 1966, Amin al-Hafiz, a Sunni Muslim became the president of the NCRC which was the supreme organ of Syria. He instituted socialist reforms and the country underwent a remarkable shift towards socialism. Hafiz's government had many young Ba'thists who had a different vision of how the country must be ruled. As a result of this, disagreements started developing among the Ba'thist officers and led to the occurrence of the February 1966 coup and brought the "neo-Ba'thists" into power. Salah Jadid, one of the members of the Military Committee took over power in Syria in 1966. But soon his government faced strong opposition due to a number of policies pursued by it. It took a hard

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[66] Salem, *Bitter Legacy*, p.10.
[67] Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria*, pp. 65-71.

line position in relation to Israel and Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Jordan. His regime accommodated people from minority communities, especially Alawites, in key positions. The Syrian army also seemed more politicised than ever before, "with military competence and attention to duty ceasing to figure at all in the selection of officers for promotion." Another reason for discontent with Jadid's regime was the defeat during 1967 War and the loss of Golan Heights to Israel.[68]Further during Jadid's rule, Syria sought close relations with the Soviet Union. Although Syria undertook the policy of "non-commitment" towards both the superpowers, it was in fact "ideologically and politically closer to the Eastern bloc than to the west."[69]

During Jadid's rule, Ba'th Party became extremely radicalised. Tensions within the party coupled with domestic and regional problems made way for Hafez al-Assad's rise to power; Assad was also a member of the Military Committee. Hafez al-Assad was sworn in as the President in March 1971. According to him, Arab cooperation was necessary to stand against Israel and therefore relations had to be improved with other Arab states." He was pragmatic enough to realise Syria's vulnerabilities and thus sacrifice "Arab nationalism at the altar of Syrian national interests in general and regime security in particular." He wanted Syria to take a moderate stance in matters relating to peace with Israel but a total return of the Golan Heights.[70]

Personalisation of political institutions and deinstitutionalisation of foreign policy decision making started once Assad came into power. The 13 November 1970 coup which brought Assad into power was termed as the "Corrective movement" (*Haraka Tashihiya*). After he took over, Assad began a process of structural reforms. Foreign policy decision making generally involves the interplay of various institutions such as the parliament, political parties, foreign ministry, etc. But maximum powers of foreign policy decision making came to be rested at the hands of the President in Syria after Assad became the head of the state. Hinnebusch argues that the Ba'th Party underwent some reforms under the new leadership of Assad.[71]

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[68] John Keegan, *World Armies,* (UK, 1983), p.562.
[69] Rami Ginat (2000), "The Soviet Union and the Syrian Ba'th Regime: From Hesitation to Rapprochement", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36 (2), p.150-171.
[70] Robert G. Rabil, *Syria, the United States and the War On Terror in the Middle East,* (USA, 2006), p. 28.
[71] Raymond Hinnebusch (2003) , "Globalisation and Generational Change: Syrian Foreign Policy Between Regional Conflict and European Partnership", *The Review of International Affairs*, 3(2), pp.190-208

Assad transformed the Ba'th Party in the sense that it ceased to be an organisation representing "a network of ideologically disciplined militants which stretched throughout society, displacing rival elites and mobilising mass support for revolution."[72] The revolution in relation to Arab-Israeli conflict which Jadid believed in proved to be an attitude with no benefit for Syria. Jadid declared that Syria would not have any relations with the "reactionary" Arab regimes but Assad saw this as a failed policy when Syria's absence in the 1967 Khartoum summit after the Six-Day War did not help fetch aid to its war torn economy. All these issues created difference of opinion between Jadid and Assad which eventually gave way to Jadid's ouster. Earlier, in 1963, the Ba'th had to consolidate its rule with the help of army officers having allegiance to the party but later on it became difficult to make the "officer-politicians" subservient to the authority of the party. Therefore, Assad during his reforms sought to bring about changes in the Ba'th. In the late 1960s, Jadid and his faction of Ba'thist officers dominated the party and were putting the blame of the 1967 defeat on Assad as he was the Defence Minister and Commander of the Air Force. Assad was of the view that if he was responsible for the defeat he must also be given the opportunity to take decisions. Initially the Party was driven by its socialist and Arab nationalist ideology strengthened by the huge support that it enjoyed from the rural populace of Syria. The radicalised army harbouring a sense of angst against Israel was another base on which the Party stood strongly. Most of the portion of such army officers belonged to the rural peasant minorities such as the Alawis, who had to "prove their commitment to the shared Arab identity of the majority Sunni community." But two other pillars of the regime were added to the Ba'th Party once Assad became President. Those were the security apparatus which had most of the recruits from the Alawi community and the other one was a section of Sunni bourgeoisie who were dependent on the regime. He also brought about change in the Arab nationalist idea of Syria and by "recasting of Arab nationalism in a form compatible with Syrian sovereignty." [73] Brown's account of how Assad viewed Arab nationalism stated:

> From the start, Assad expressed his opposition to Jadid's populist revolutionism and urged the need to work with the other Arab states, especially Egypt, even advocating closer relations with Ba'thist Iraq. Proper Arab cooperation would, of course, result in Syria's achieving its legitimate aspirations. Asad held the common view that Jordan,

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[72] Adeed Dawisha and I. William Zartman(ed), *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State* (London,1988), p.28

[73] Hinnebusch , "Globalisation and Generational Change", pp.190-208

Palestine, and Lebanon were parts of natural Syria, which had been disjointed by imperialism. At the same time, like Shukri al-Quwatli and others, he accepted the sovereignty and independence of the several parts as long as they cooperated with Syria against their common enemies.[74]

In the foreword in the book *Damascus Dairy* authored by Shaaban, Fred Lawson stated that Syrian foreign policy under Assad remain largely unknown to the world outside.[75] Apart from foreign policy decision making, the President had extensive powers to decide matters related to internal security, defence and economy. Assad's tight knit group of close associates such as the vice president and army general who were in top ranks in the government and the military all held common interests such as upholding regime legitimacy, protecting resources and maintaining territorial integrity. These common interests bound them together and this helped Assad to have a consensual base on which he could rely upon while taking important decisions. But Assad had the final word in almost every decision of utmost national interest and he was the one who selected the individuals involved in the decision making process.[76]

Hafez's regime was a "personality-based regime" revolving around his figure, its founder and a long-time leader. He was projected as someone who took Syria on its right path after a long period of political turmoil. He was hardworking and meticulous in his work which helped to rally a huge support for his regime. Moreover, the key positions in the regime came to be occupied by his family or the Kalbiyya tribe[77] from which he belonged. [78]He also called for at least five public referendums during his first three years of rule for various issues like confirming his presidency, approving the 1973 Constitution, election to the People's Assembly, etc. Unlike his predecessors who did not take into account the popular public support, he engaged himself in explaining issues to the public and thereby gaining considerable backing for the government policies. But he always made the final decisions in all matters regarding his regime. In this context Seale states that "in spite of the new institutions his rule was personal. For all innovations and improvements, the state that Asad forged was imposed on society, not derived from it."[79]

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[74] L.Carl Brown (ed), *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers,* (London, 2004), p.170.

[75] Bouthaina Shaaban, *Damascus Diary: An Inside Account of Hafez al-Assad's Peace Diplomacy, 1990-2000,*(Colorado, 2013), p.ix.

[76] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, p.69

[77] The Alawite community in Syria is a broad ethnic group which is subdivided into four different tribes. These tribes which comprise the Alawite community are Matawira, Khayyatin, Haddadin and Kalbiyya. See Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, (Berkeley, 1990), p.138.

[78] Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power,* (London, 2007), p. 47

[79] Seale, *Asad of Syria*, pp.177-178.

It is important to know about Assad's sources of influence which moulded his leadership. Assad's model of state-building was influenced by that of Nasser's who according to him was a prominent Arab leader. He gave a considerable amount of circumspection before carrying out internal and external Syrian policies.[80] Assad saw many similarities between Yusuf al-Azma and himself. Azma was appointed Defence Minister in 1919 when he was thirty six years old. Similarly, Assad became Defence Minister in 1966 exactly when he completed thirty six years. At the Battle of Maysaloun, Azma led the Syrian army to fight the French. In case of Assad, he led the Syrian army in 1967 War against Israel. According to Azma, the defeat of the Syrian army against French helped Syria to be "reborn" and become militarily stronger and wiser. Assad was of the view that the 1967 War and the loss of Golan Heights would provide an opportunity to Syria to emerge stronger and achieve its "long-denied-justice".[81]

Since Assad's rise to power took place immediately after the Syria's devastating defeat in the 1967 War, this war had huge impact on Assad's regime and its foreign policy decisions. The main objective of the government was that all the country's resources and manpower were to be mobilised for the liberation of the territories lost from Israel during the war.[82] Unlike Jadid, Assad was not a rejectionist in matters relating to Israel. Jadid and his followers were of the opinion that any kind of settlement with Israel would mean "surrendering to Zionism" whereas Assad's faction was not opposed to settlement altogether. Assad was opposed to a "dishonourable and partial" settlement and therefore he stressed on a just and comprehensive peace with Israel. Assad was also quick to realise that rejectionist attitude and military means to solve problems with Israel would provide Israel a "pretext to strike when it chose."[83]

Although Assad was determined to recover Golan Heights, he chose pragmatism over ideology in his foreign policy strategy. Following ideology rather than pragmatism would have restricted his foreign policy decisions and would have serious problems with Syria's adaptability in new circumstances.[84] Instances such as Syria's intervention in Lebanon by

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[80] Ibid., p.169.

[81] Shaaban, *Damascus Diary*, p.130.

[82] Radwan Ziadeh, *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East*, (London,2011), I.B Tauris &Co Ltd., p.18.

[83] Seale, *Asad of Syria,* pp.155-156.

[84] Bente Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game: Syrian Foreign Policy under the Assads*, (London, 2013), p.18.

going against Palestinians and siding with Iran during the Iran-Iraq crisis exemplify Assad's realistic strategy of dealing with external threats. Hinnebusch therefore rightly described Assad as a realist "rational actor."[85] He argues that under Hafez al-Assad's rule, foreign policy came to be categorised under the realist model. According to this model, foreign policy is mainly determined by "systemic constraints and opportunities, regardless of ideology and internal politics, since survival in that anarchic arena requires all states, over the long run at least, to adopt certain rational behaviour, such as power maximization and balancing strategies". He goes on to define the "rational actor" as someone who sets limited goals as against ideological or revolutionary goals of foreign policy.[86]

Hinnebusch also points out that "goals and strategies" of Hafez al-Assad make up significant factors which shaped Syrian foreign policy. Assad's main challenge was to reduce the revisionism and replace it with realistic policies which were to be achieved with Syria's limited resources and geographical constraints. Assad was consistent in his efforts to pursue realistic and limited foreign policy goals. This was evident when he accepted the UN resolution 242 and 338 which advocated 'land for peace' principle to recover the territories lost to Israel. Other instances which depicted his *realpolitik* principle were his opposition to the intervention of radical Palestinians in Jordan in 1970[87], efforts to build good relations with pro-Western Arab states and his stance during the Iraq-Kuwait War showed that he stood for "regional *status quo*". Assad was of the opinion that Syria had to achieve "strategic parity" in order to achieve a 'just and comprehensive peace" with Israel. According to his perspective, diplomacy with Israel for peace was based on maintaining balance of power. He refrained from getting involved in war with Israel if the balance of power situation did not seem favourable. This "matching means to ends" strategy was evident in his policy towards Lebanese civil war where he exploited proxies in relation to Israel. Assad displayed extreme "tactical flexibility" in order to deal with emerging threats and opportunities at the

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[85] Hinnebusch , *Syria:Revolution From Above,* p.13.
[86] Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*, p.15.
[87] Assad unlike Jadid did not view the taking up of arms by the Palestinians as a successful strategy to carry out resistance against Israel. Assad was of the opinion that by resorting to arms, Palestinians were putting security of the host Arab country, in this case Jordan under serious jeopardy. Therefore, Assad viewed the confrontation between the Palestinian guerillas and King Hussein of Jordan during the September 1970 Jordan crisis with ambivalence. Although Assad ordered interference of Syria troops in Jordan in support of the Palestinian guerillas, he did so with reluctance so as to prevent an onslaught on the Palestinian fighters. See Seale, *Asad of Syria*, pp. 156-158.

international level. He devised a mixed strategy of "limited war, alliance formation and negotiations" by mobilising Syria's limited resources to acquire more beneficial results.[88]

Assad devised a new foreign policy to deal with the circumstances of the day and which put emphasis on an "alignment with Egypt, a necessary partner in any war to recover the Golan and continued close alliance with the Soviet Union, needed to back Syria's military build-up." [89]Syria also began building warm relations with Gulf States who would provide financial resources.[90] Despite making an emphasis on cultivating closer ties with the Soviet Union for military benefits, Assad was willing to forge ties with the US as and when possible.[91]

Assad's strategy of going to war with Israel along with Egypt was an outcome of his belief that only after Arabs retrieved some part of their lands from Israel, they could negotiate peace. Basically, according to Assad peace negotiations were supposed to be a "product of war, but not a substitute." Therefore, Assad went ahead with the war plans with Egypt against Israel in the October 1973 War.[92]

Government institutions underwent a major overhaul after Assad came into power. The most important changes were the establishment of a parliament in 1971 and formation of the National Progressive Front (*al-Jabhat al-Wataniyya al-taqaddumiyya*) in 1972. Assad initially was appointed the Prime Minister by the Ba'th Party's Regional Command in 1970 and on 12 March 1971 through a popular referendum he was confirmed as the President. Apart from reforms in political institutions, the military and the security services also witnessed major changes.[93] A new constitution was unveiled in 1973 which was also instrumental in bringing about changes in the governmental institutions. This constitution entrusted more power into the hands of the president and hence Syria came under a "presidential monarchy." He successfully brought about political stability in his regime that

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[88] Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*, pp.66-69.

[89] Hinnebusch, *Syria:Revolution From Above*, p. 61.

[90] Syria did not adjust its regional policies solely for economic benefits but most of its policies were driven by political needs. Syria received economic aid from the Gulf countries mainly due to its front-line stance in relation to Arab-Israel conflict. Since the Gulf countries supported Assad in this endeavour, the economic advantages that came from those countries were exploited for domestic interests. Volker Perthes (2001), "Syrian Regional Policy Under Bashar al-Asad: Realignment or Economic Rationalization?", *Middle East Report,* No.220, pp.36-41.

[91] Raymond Hinnebusch (1990), *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army , Party and Peasant,* Boulder: Westview Press, p.144.

[92] Seale, *Asad of Syria*, p.195.

[93] Volker Perthes *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad*, (New York, 1995), p. 136.

was almost lost during the period of great internal political turmoil in the country. Assad made the President's post an "undisputed command of the Ba'th state and, through it, concentrated personalised authority in his hands."[94] The 1973 constitution empowered the President to a huge extent. According to this constitution, the President was the topmost decision maker, the chief military commander and the Secretary General of the Ba'th Party. He has the power to nominate and dismiss any member of the Cabinet. The security services were supposed to report directly to the President. The constitution accorded a high degree of autonomy to the post of the President and also helped in building of proper institutions the development of foreign policy beneficial to national interest.[95]

D: Syria-Soviet Union Relations: The Cold War Phase

It is necessary to point that although Syria advocated neutralism during the Cold War period, it had better relations with the USSR than with US. This was due to the Syria's persistent efforts to resist the "spread of imperialism". Although the Soviet Union supported the establishment of Israel in 1947, eventually it sided with the Arabs when it came to witness Israel's pro-Western stance. However, the foundation of Syrian-Soviet relationship could be defined as:

> …..(T)he USSR and Syria were not in complete alignment to the extent that Syria was a Soviet satellite in the region; indeed, there were significant disagreements between the two. It was a negative ideological alliance in that their opposition toward the United States and the West, and not a self-standing unity, defined their alignment; this subtlety was often lost on the Americans, who regularly conflated Arab nationalism with communism.[96]

Pan-Arab unity was considered as an answer to the problems plaguing the Arab world during the Cold War. But this was not the case in Syria. Some of the intellectuals were of the opinion that in order to fulfil some of the country's needs support from non-Arab countries was important. Although the USSR was viewed no different than the West, imperialism

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[94] Hinnebush, *Syria: Revolution From Above*, p. 63.
[95] Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game*, p.15.
[96] Cited in J.K Jani, *The Role of Ideology in Syrian-US Relations: Conflict and Cooperation*, (New York, 2014), p. 54.

seemed a bigger problem for the Arabs and therefore, some nationalists proclaimed that there was no problem in cultivating ties with the Soviet Union.[97]

Relations with the Soviet Union began during the course of Syrian independence. A secret treaty was signed between both the countries on 1 February 1946. In the treaty, the USSR agreed to back Syria in all its activities towards attaining independence from the French. It was agreed to send a number of Soviet military personnel to add to the strength of the Syrian army. The treaty also agreed to promote educational and cultural ties between them. Most importantly, Syria agreed to confer the most-favoured nation status on the USSR.[98] Relations between the two countries witnessed another improvement when Syrian Minister of Economy, Maarouf al-Dawalibi had put forward the proposal of a non-aggression pact in 1950 with the USSR to initiate trade dialogue. The signing of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and tensions emanating from Turkey and Iraq, led Syria to seek further closer ties with the Soviet Union. In the event of any future confrontation in relation to this, the USSR agreed to defend Syria. Military relations between them also soon took off in the same year when Syria bought 44 Mark IV tanks from the Soviet bloc.[99] Economic relations developed between USSR and Syria after signing of an agreement in 1957 of $579 million.[100]A huge amount of Soviet exports to Syria took place during 1957-1961. The construction of Euphrates Dam and other such projects which received Soviet financial support was estimated to be around $90 million. This further cemented their economic ties. After a brief fall in trade between both the countries in 1965, Syrian exports mainly cotton and raw wool to Soviet Union comprised 10 per cent of the total amount. [101]

The role of Khalid al-Azm needs special mention while discussing Syria-Soviet relations. He was one of the first Syrian politicians who felt the necessity of Soviet support in the face of problems that Syria was facing during the 1950s specially the Eisenhower doctrine and the growing US attempt to increase its power in the region. While he was Foreign and Defence Minister, a joint Syrian-Soviet communiqué was released in August 1955 which mainly focused on economic relations. The text of the Soviet side read:

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[97] Carl L. Brown (ed), *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers* (London, 2004), p. 167.
[98] Rami Ginat, *The Soviet Union and Egypt, 1945-1955*, (London,1993), p.70.
[99] Rami Ginat (2000), ''The Soviet Union and the Syrian Ba'th Regime: From Hesitation to Rapprochement'', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36 (2), pp.150-171.
[100] Efraim Karsh, *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (New York, 1988), p.4.
[101] Ibid., pp.150-171.

The economic and technical cooperation will be carried out without any conditions of a political or analogous nature, on a basis of equality and reciprocal economic advantage, of non-interference in internal affairs and complete respect for the national dignity and sovereignty of the Syrian Republic. The parties noted with satisfaction in the course of the talks that the commercial agreement between the USSR and Syria and the payment completed at the end of 1955 had contributed to the development of reciprocally advantageous commercial ties between the two countries.[102]

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was the outcome of an attempt by, Britain and France and US to halt Nasser's rising prominence among Arabs because of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and also to prevent Soviet Union's growing influence in the region. Around this time Egypt and Soviet Union were enjoying strong relations. After the war, the Soviet Union along with the US helped in bringing about a ceasefire. When the war ended, Soviet Union's prominence in the Arab world increased and its relations with Syria deepened. [103]

During the years 1956 and 1967 tensions heightened along the Syrian-Israeli border due to attacks from both sides. Moscow's involvement in the 1956 Suez war was reflected through the increased amount of weapons deliveries to Egypt and Syria. Moscow provided Syria with MIG17 fighter bombers, MIG19 interceptors, T-34, T-54 tanks, self-propelled guns, SAM-2 surface-to-surface missile installations etc. Another interesting turn of events took place when Moscow denied acknowledgement of existence of "Arab terrorism" against Israel. It was appealed to Soviet Union by Israel to lend support in fighting terrorism from its Arab neighbours.[104] Soviet Union strongly condemned Israel during the 1967 War. A government statement given to the newspaper *Pravda* had declared its total support to the Arabs fighting against Israel.[105] A report by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Central Committee in 1971 openly stated that as USSR deemed the action of Israel during the 1967 war condemnable and therefore had severed diplomatic relations with it.[106]

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[102] Cited in Yaacov Ro'I, *From Encroachment to Involvement: A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973*, (Israel, 1974), p.229.

[103] United States Department of State Archive, "Suez Crisis, 1956", [Online:web] Accessed 10 June 2017, URL:https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/97179.htm

[104] Jon D. Glassman *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East*, (Maryland, 1975), pp. 27-37.

[105] Soviet Government's Statement, *The USSR and the Middle East: Problems of Peace and Security*, 5 June 1967, (Moscow,1967), pp.174-176.

[106] Report by CPSU Central Committee to 24th Congress of CPSU Delivered by L.I Brezhnev (1971), "General Secretary of CPSU CC", 30 March 1971, in *The USSR and the Middle East: Problems of Peace and Security*, (Moscow, 1971), p. 291.

The CPSU and the Syrian Ba'th Party convened their first meeting in 1967. A joint communiqué released in August 1967 stated that the meeting included "a general and profound study" of the "theoretical and practical experience", "party system", and "policies" of the two parties. Through this meeting they reaffirmed their common belief in the "final triumph of the peoples struggling for their national political and social independence, unity and socialism." They also emphasised that they would together continue their struggle against imperialism. [107]

The defeat in the 1967 War brought about some differences in Syria-Soviet Union relations. While the Arabs were grateful towards the Soviet Union for the arms and military provided to them, they were equally disappointed with Moscow's policy of "no war, no peace" in the region. [108] Syria felt that it was because Moscow was calculative enough not to take risks by being actively involved in the conflicts and peace talks in the region.[109]

As Assad was driven by pragmatism in the foreign policy arena in general and specifically in relation to Soviet Union, he wanted to strengthen Syria-Soviet Union relations by taking into account mutual interests of both the countries. Assad knew that the Soviet Union wanted to have a reliable base of its naval and military facilities, a strong position in the peace process and most importantly, to pose a challenge to the American presence in the region. At a time when the West was trying to persuade Egypt to come under its peace initiatives coupled with increasing power of Israel after the 1967 War, Assad felt that Syria had to explore all options available to cope with the threats. Assad realised this soon after the 1967 War ended and therefore, went on a state visit to Moscow in August 1967. He met the Soviet Defence Minister Andrei Grechko and successfully restored relations with the Soviet Union on a "businesslike basis, free from doctrinal or emotional ups and downs". Assad knew it well that only Moscow could provide Syria with the necessary military equipment to bring Syria to a position of strength to deal with Israel. He sought to chart out a diplomatic framework of

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[107] Daniel Dishon (1968), "The USSR and Syria", *Middle East Record,* vol. 4, pp. 41-43.

[108] Robert Stephens (1973), "The Great Powers and the Middle East", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2(4), pp.3-12.

[109] Soviet military and economic support was enjoyed by both Egypt and Syria from the 1950s. Most of the Soviet policy towards the West Asian region worked within the framework of the Cold War rivalry with the US. Therefore, according to Soviet policy the conflicts in which its allies Egypt and Syria were involved carried no "intrinsic value". Soviet Union did not want its allies to take extreme steps in any conflict which would undermine its position vis-à-vis US in the international scenario. See Yaacov Ro'I and Boris Morozov (ed), *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, (Stanford, 2008), p.3.

"trust and consultation" within which military relations would take place with the Soviet Union.[110]

Under Assad, Syria-Soviet relations improved to a great extent. There were visits from both the sides affirming their solidarity and friendship against imperialism and Israel's "aggressive activities" on Syria. The Syrian Ba'th Party reiterated its cooperation with the USSR in relation to regional issues. Moscow also reiterated the fact that it respected complete non-interference in internal matters of Syria through various press releases and commentaries. One such commentary which FBIS reported in 1970 read:

> The emergency session of the 10th Ba'th Congress in Damascus confirmed in its resolutions its adherence to the policy of cooperation with the friendly socialist countries, including the Soviet Union. The statement of the Provisional Command of the Ba'th Party confirmed the party's loyalty to this policy. This is understandable because the relations of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries with Syria have always been based on complete mutual equality of rights and respect for sovereignty and independence in internal affairs. These relations have been and remain the most important effective factor in the cause of the freedom, independence, and progress of the Syrian Arab Republic.[111]

As Assad felt the need for strengthening Syria's ties with the Soviet Union, he visited the Moscow in February 1971. However, it must be mentioned that at this time Syria-Soviet Union relations were not without some differences. One main disagreement between both the countries was Syria's rejection of the UNSC resolution 242[112] which was passed on 22 November 1967 as a basis for settling the Arab-Israeli problem. The Soviet Union wanted Syria to accept the resolution. However, this issue did not become an obstacle in their relationship. After Assad's visit to the Soviet Union in 1971, Syria's military and economic ties with the Soviet Union increased.[113]

According to the Soviet Union, the 1973 October War was a "wrong war" as it would have affected the course of détente between the two superpowers.[114] Soon the US and the Soviet

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[110] Seale, *Asad of Syria*, pp. 147-148.
[111] Cited in FBIS-FRB-70-225, (1970), "Friendship with USSR Continues, Unattributed Commentary", *DAILY REPORT,* 19 November 1970, p. A8.
[112] United Nations Documents, "The 1967 and 1973 Wars," [Online:web] Accessed 2 October 2016, URL: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/palestine/ch3.pdf
[113] Karsh, *The Soviet Union and Syria*, pp.8-9.
[114] For the Soviet Union, its involvement in war and peace in West Asia during the Cold War period depended upon its relations with the US and its international position. The 1967 June War was an eye opener for the Soviet government and therefore it opted for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than letting the

Union called for a ceasefire and also for the implementation of the UNSC resolution 242 of 22 November 1967, to which Syria was totally against. The ceasefire agreement in the form of UN Resolution 338 of 22 October 1973[115] was also not acceptable to Syria. This war prompted USSR to supply its Arab allies, especially Syria, huge amount of military weapons in order to prevent another defeat against Israel. Soviet support not only was in the form of military means but Soviet warships were deployed in the Mediterranean for intelligence gathering and to deter Israel to obstruct the shipment of weapons to Egypt and Syria.[116]

The ceasefire that was enforced at the end of the 1973 War was unsuccessful of restraining the militaries of Egypt, Syria and Israel from attacking one another. At this point, both Syria and Egypt wanted the US to undertake the responsibility to lead an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. This led the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger to get involved in an intensive "shuttle diplomacy" to disengage the militaries of all the parties to the conflict. Kissinger's diplomacy led to the signing of a military disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel in January 1974 followed by signing of another disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel in May 1974.[117]

With the beginning of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy following the 1973 October War, Assad was hopeful of a peace deal. Gradually Assad came to realise Kissinger's real objective of diplomacy. Assad came to know that Kissinger wanted to isolate Syria by leading Egypt to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel. Assad was of the view that an Egypt-Israel peace treaty would leave Syria, the Palestinians and Jordan weak in dealing with Arab-Israeli affairs.[118]

Another area of policy differences between Syria and the Soviet Union was in relation to the Lebanon civil war and Syrian intervention. Lebanon's internal political crisis took place in 1975 and in April 1976, Syria's Third Armoured Division made its foray into Lebanon after a request came from Maronites to fight against the Lebanese leftist camp and its Palestinian

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problem to continue. During the 1970s, Soviet Union wanted its détente with the US to continue without any obstruction. This became evident when Moscow was reluctant to cooperate militarily with Egypt during the 1973 War which eventually led to the expulsion of Soviet forces by the Anwar Sadat government. The Soviet government also attempted to bring about a ceasefire agreement by cooperating with US. Weapons supplies to Egypt and Syria during the War was limited. See Nigel J. Ashton (ed), *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers 1967-73*, (London, 2007), pp.62-64.

[115] United Nations Documents, "The 1967 and 1973 Wars", [Online:web] Accessed 2 October 2016, URL: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/palestine/ch3.pdf
[116] Karsh, *The Soviet Union and Syria* , pp.11-14.
[117] Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* , (New York,1981), p.35
[118] Seale, *Asad of Syria,* pp.244-246.

allies mainly the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).[119] The Lebanese crisis was seen by the Soviet Union as a "weakening of the Palestinian movement" but it refrained from any reaction which could undermine Syria-Soviet Union relations. During the 1970s Syria and Soviet Union were sharing a warm relationship which Moscow did not want to get derailed. Most importantly, Moscow was not informed about advancement of Syrian troops into Lebanon even though Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin was on a visit to Syria during that time. The then Soviet Union's ambassador to Syria, Nuradin Mukhitdinov, had stated that deployment of Syrian troops in Lebanon during the Soviet Premier's visit was reflective of the fact that Syria was "bent on showing the world how solid its relations with the Soviet Union" were.[120]It is interesting to note that it was the US which supported Syria to send its troops to Lebanon in 1976 and not USSR.[121] USSR was not even informed before Syria embarked on this adventure.[122]Moreover, initially Moscow was not in support of Syria's intervention in Lebanon.[123] The Soviet Union resorted to veiled condemnations regarding Syria's intervention in Lebanon. Assad himself had admitted that during this period of time (1976-1978) there was "a setback" in the relations between Syria and Soviet Union. Even arms deals were postponed and the relationship revived only after Egypt embarked on the process of signing a peace deal with Israel.[124]

Syria's regional isolation in the 1980s due to the Lebanese crisis, its problems with Israel and its declining relations with the US[125] made it necessary to enhance ties with the Soviet Union.

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[119] Bassel Salloukh (2005), "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed", *MERIP,* 35 (236), [Online:web] Accessed 19 February 2016, URL:http://www.merip.org/mer/mer236/syria-lebanon-brotherhood-transformed
[120] Yevgeny Primakov ,*Russia and the Arabs*, Translated by Paul Gould, (New York, 2009), p.182.
[121] Syrian troops entered Lebanon after acceptance of a formal request from President Suleiman Franjieh in 1976. US was silent on this issue and did not show any resistance to this action of Syria. This was inferred as a way of showing "Green light" to Syria's involvement in Lebanese internal affairs. Cooperation between Syria and the US regarding the Lebanese problem could also be seen during the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989. The US along with France, Saudi Arabia and Egypt helped to draw out the Taif agreement which conferred upon Syria "guardianship over Lebanon." See Adnan Khan, *100 Years of the MiddleEast: The Struggle for the Post Sykes-Picot MiddleEast* ,(Maktabalslamia,2016), p.89.
[122] Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, p. 181.
[123] Soviet Union did not want Syria to get embroiled in a regional conflict which would put both of them in problem. Moscow was aware of the fact that Syria was trying to exploit the situation in Lebanon for its own interests. Therefore, although Moscow did not object to Syria's role in Lebanon, it was cautiously watching Syria's moves in Lebanon. See Roger E. Kanet (ed), *The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Third World,* (Cambridge: 1987), p.193.
[124] Seale, *Asad of Syria*, p.287.
[125] US severed diplomatic relations with Syria after the 1967 June War but after the signing of the March 1974 Syria-Israel Ceasefire and Disengagement Agreement relations between both the countries began to improve. However, in the 1980s problems again emerged due to attempted bombing of Israel's El Al flight in April 1986. After the incident US imposed economic sanctions on Syria and also withdrew its envoy from there. See Bernard Wienraub, "US Considers Sanctions Against Syria", *New York Times*, Washington: 28 October 1986, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1986/10/28/world/us-considers-sanctions-against-syria.html, accessed on 2

It must be stated that Israel came to occupy a central position in Syria's policies after the 1967 War and its significance increased after the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in1979. Amidst these, Syria went on to strengthen its relations with the Soviet Union. Syria's military relations also provided confidence to deal with Israel.[126] Moreover, on 8 October 1980, Syria entered into the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation (See Appendix I) with the Soviet Union which Assad was avoiding for many years. The treaty vaguely stated that both side would try to remove any kind of threat causing violation of security and peace of the either parties. However, Syria was not content with the overall thrust of the treaty as it did not stipulate a "strategic agreement" to act as a challenge against any future US-Israeli agreement of such a kind.[127] Hafez al-Assad regarded the Soviet Union as the only "viable deterrent" to the Israeli threat. Soviet military aid to Syria during the early 1980s increased which included MIG 23s, MIG 25s, MIG24s, T-72 tanks, SAM 6SA missiles etc.[128]

Geidar Aliyev, a member of the CPSU was invited by President Assad in 1984, a time when Syria was embroiled in the Lebanese crisis. Apart from reaffirming their friendship, the joint communiqué which was released during the visit pointed towards the fact that problems which the region was facing at that time was mainly due to US "reckless policy" and its unrelenting support to Israel. It said that it strongly condemned 1982 intervention of Israel in Lebanon. Most importantly, this communiqué declared that the Soviet Union greatly valued Syria's concerns surrounding the peace talks. The Soviet Union made it clear that the US-Israeli attempts to strike separate deals with the Arabs would weaken Arabs in the face of "Israeli aggression."[129]

In 1984 on the occasion of 40th anniversary of the establishment of Syria-Soviet Union diplomatic relations, the USSR ambassador to Syria, Vladimir Yukhin reiterated that their

October 2016; "US Withdrawing Its Envoy to Syria", *New York Times*, Washington: 25 October 1986, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1986/10/25/world/us-withdrawing-its-envoy-to-syria.html, accessed on 2 October 2016.

[126] Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*, pp.38-39.

[127] Syria- Arms Imports, *Globalsecurity.org,* [Online:web] Accessed 3 July 2015URL:http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/syria/arms-imports.htm

[128] Hafizullah Emadi , *Politics of the Dispossessed: Superpowers and Developments in the Middle East*, (London, 2001), p.1 21

[129] Soviet Foreign Policy Documents, Soviet-Syrian Communique, *Pravda*, 14 March 1984.

relations were based on "equality and mutual interest." He mentioned that both the countries were trying to reach a "just and firm peace" in the region.[130]

The Iran-Iraq War was an event which led to divergence of interests of Syria and the Soviet Union. Assad was dismayed because of Saddam Hussein's act of invading into Iran on 22 September 1980. From Assad's viewpoint, Saddam led a "wrong war against the wrong enemy at the wrong time". Assad was of the opinion that any war in the region would divide the Arabs and divert them from the main aim of forming a strong front against Israel in order to liberate occupied Arab territories. He made attempts to dissuade Saddam from invading Iran by appealing to Saudi Arabia and Jordan to pressurise Saddam to bring an end to the conflict. Assad chose to support Iran during the conflict which required explaining his stance to the Arab world. After the Iran-Iraq War broke out, Assad went on a visit to the Soviet Union. During his visit, a joint Syria-Soviet Union statement was issued which stated Iran's "inalienable right to determine its destiny independently and without any foreign influence".[131] Initially the Soviet Union declared neutrality in the Iran-Iraq War and went on to impose an arms embargo on Iraq. However, the Soviet Union began providing arms to Iraq by mid-1981.[132]

Syria's disenchantment towards the Soviet Union began several years before the final disintegration. Assad was soon to realise that President Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist policies would have an impact on Soviet foreign policy. Therefore, Assad paid a visit to the Soviet Union in 1985 and he came to know that Gorbachev was planning to democratise the Communist Party and wanted to eliminate ideology from Soviet foreign policy. Following this visit, Assad held a meeting with his advisers where he stated that Syria must "look for other options".[133]

President Hafez el-Assad in April 1982 publicly stated to a French Arabic-language magazine *Al Mostakbal* that he would seek to achieve strategic parity[134] with Israel. Assad denounced

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[130] FBIS-MEA-84-142 (1984), "USSR Ambassador Speech 1984", *Damascus Television Service*, 21 July 1984, p. H1.
[131] Seale, *Asad of Syria*, p.357.
[132] Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a new Foreign Policy,*(UK: 1999), pp.224-225.
[133] Patrick Seale (1990), "Syria" in Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim *(eds)*, *The Cold War and the Middle East*, (Oxford: 1997) ,p.73.
[134] In the 8 March 1986 speech to the General Union of Farmers, President Assad described this policy of Syria which indicated no threat to Israel as was interpreted. He said that when Syria raised this slogan of strategic

American policies when he said to the magazine that the US had no policy towards the region but only supported Israel's policies. He was gradually disillusioned due to the US inability to help in striking a peace process with the Arabs. He stated, "America supports Israel in every sphere and this American support makes our relations with the United States not good. It also renders America's role ineffective and incapable of bringing about an overall peace in the region." He also criticised the 1978 Camp David Accords[135] and made it clear that Egypt would not be accepted into the fold of Arabs.[136]

The Soviet Union under Gorbachev made it clear that it could not support Syria to achieve military parity with Israel. It asked Syria to exert more emphasis on strengthening its defence capabilities in order to deter Israel from attacking. Soviet Ambassador Alexander Zotov in 1989 indicated that the USSR was facing "new realities" and sale of military equipment to Syria would depend on his country's capability to provide those and Syria's ability to pay for them. He also emphasised that the Soviet Union wanted Syria to focus on the principle of "reasonable defensive sufficiency" while dealing with its security concerns in relation to Israel. He mentioned that Syria had incurred a huge military debt to Moscow. This was affecting the Syria-Soviet military cooperation to some extent and he also said that Moscow expected Syria to pay hard currency while procuring certain sophisticated types of military hardware.[137]

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parity with Israel a few years ago it did not mean only military parity but also balance in the political, social, demographic, educational, economic aspects of life. He made it clear that if Syria lagged behind in any of the factors, this would create a wide gap in the substance of this balance. While this was the exact meaning of this policy, it was widely interpreted that Syria sought military parity more than the other aspects which seemed of lesser importance. The military aspect was increasingly gaining momentum in the late 1980s when a war between Syria and Israel seemed imminent and Syria wanted to acquire weapons to defend itself. See Godfrey Jansen (1986), "What Assad Really Said", *Middle East International*, 4 April 1986, No.271, p.8.

[135] In 1977, President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat planned to reach a peace settlement with Israel which eventually led to the signing of the Camps David Accords. Before that Sadat wanted Syria also to follow suit. Therefore, he went on a state visit to Syria to convince Assad but met with disappointment. Assad was of the opinion that a separate peace settlement between Egypt and Israel would "neutralise" Israel's position as an enemy of the Arabs and would provide an opportunity to attack Syria. Assad felt that Sadat had "betrayed" a long term Arab cause. See Burton Ira Kaufman, *The Carter Years*, (New York, 2006), p.25.

[136] Associated Press (1982), "Assad Says he Will Seek More Arms in Soviet", *The New York Times*, Beirut, 7 May 1982, [Online:web] Accessed 7 July 2015, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/07/world/assad-says-he-will-seek-more-arms-in-soviet.html

[137] Caryle Murphy (1989), "Syria Urged to Stress Defense", *The Washington Post,* Damascus, 20 November 1989, [Online:web] Accessed 27 July 2015, URL:http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/11/20/syria-urged-to-stress-defense/93cff72e-55d6-452d-a36a-d855349ee30b/

President Assad felt the need to visit Soviet Union at a time when it was realised by him that Cold War was drawing to an end and a weak Soviet Union in comparison to the US would not prove to be beneficial to Syrian interests. To tone down Syria's apprehensions regarding Moscow's inability to provide military and financial support, a press conference was called by the Soviet Ambassador Alexander Zotov, in November 1989 where it was stated that Moscow was committed to provide Syria all kinds of military help to sustain its security needs but it was reiterated that the principle of attaining strategic parity with Israel would not be supported.[138]

In the 1980s Jewish migration was taking place from the Soviet Union to Israel.[139] While addressing the public in 1990 at the 27 anniversary of the "Corrective Movement", he denounced the emigration by stating that such policies were only benefitting Israel and threating the Arabs. However, he reaffirmed ties with the Soviet Union to which Syria owed approximately $15 billion for military equipment. Assad was disappointed with the East European countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary restoring diplomatic ties in late the 1980s with Israel after breaking relations in 1967. This was also a major concern for Syria with the Cold War coming to an end.[140]

A big blow to the Syria-Soviet Union relations was dealt when the Soviet Union restored diplomatic relation with Israel on 18 October 1990. The restoration of relations between them revealed the Soviet Union's new policy towards the region. The Soviet Union had established consular relations with Israel in 1987. Moscow's economic interests took precedence over ideological and strategic significance in its policy towards West Asia.[141]

Conclusion

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[138] Ihsan A. Hijazi, (1989), "Assad Will Travel to Soviet Union", *The New York Times*, Beirut, 21 December 1989, [Online:web] Accessed 7 July 2015, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/21/world/assad-will-traval-to-soviet-union.html

[139] Although Jewish migration from Soviet Union into Israel was taking place earlier also but during the 1980s and early 1990s the flow of immigrants increased significantly. This was possible mainly due to lifting up of most of the restrictions relating to Jewish migration in the Soviet Union. See Robin Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, (Cambridge, 1995), p.502.

[140] Alan Cowell (1990), "Syrian Leader Assails Change In East Bloc as Boon to Israel", *The New York Times,* Cairo, 9 March 1990, [Online:web] Accessed 7 July 2015, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/09/world/syrian-leader-assails-change-in-east-bloc-as-boon-to-israel.html

[141] Judith Perera (1991), "Economic Self-Interest", *Middle East International*, No.411, 25 November 1991,p. 11.

Syria gained independence from French rule during a crucial period in world history. The Second World War had ended and Cold War between the two superpowers was beginning to grip the region. During the first few years after independence, Syria's political leaders were falling prey to different regional alignment projects. Internal political turmoil and pan-Arab unity aspirations provided the outside powers an avenue to make inroads to the Syrian political life which further worsened domestic matters. Israel was the main cause of threat in the region causing major conflicts in which Syria was also involved. Failed unity negotiations and experiments and a series of defeat of the Arab army against Israel reflected lack of a strong and focused foreign policy to deal with issues troubling Syria. Hafez al-Assad, the Defence Minister and Commander of the Syrian Air Force during the 1967 War, had experience and witnessed all the problems and dilemmas which confronted Syria right from its independence. The first and the foremost step he took after coming into power was to set up a strong foundation for his regime. Then he went on to devise a fairly balanced foreign policy based on pragmatism rather than ideology. He rejected outright rejectionism against Israel and advocated a moderate stance. Under his rule, he sought to forge relations with both the superpowers which would prove beneficial to Syria. But he made it clear through Syria's foreign policy behaviour that Syria would not act according to the wishes of the superpowers. Syria built much closer relations with the Soviet Union than with the US. Although Soviet Union's military and financial help was necessary to maintain Syria's security, Moscow could never acquire the privilege of moulding foreign policy decisions of Syria. The Lebanon crisis and the Iran-Iraq War are excellent examples of the independent nature of policy followed by Syria during the Cold War. However, towards the end of the Cold War new situations arose and Syria felt the weakening of the Soviet Union would create a unipolar world with US emerging as the dominant power. New domestic policies in Moscow coupled with a slight decrease in military sales from the Soviet Union also heightened Syria's apprehensions. Therefore, Assad felt the need to tune Syria's foreign policy in tandem with the new circumstances at the international level.

Chapter II

Russia in Syria's Foreign Policy Framework

In the last chapter it has been discussed that by mid-1980s, Syria gradually grew disillusioned by the policies of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev. In order to counter Israeli threat, Syria was contemplating strategic parity with the help from the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union denied any support for this policy of Hafez al-Assad. The Soviet Union's establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel was another setback to Syria-Soviet Union relations. At this point of time, Syria was also facing isolation due to a number of factors such as support for Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, being listed as a terror sponsoring states by the US and declining aid from the Gulf States. At the international level, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a moment of dramatic change for Syria. As Syria's main military and financial backer, the Soviet Union disintegrated leaving Syria to reassess its policies and undertake certain policy shifts to adjust it to the post-Cold War circumstances. The post-Cold War situation marked an end to bipolarity and the US emerged as the only superpower at the international level. Syria's willingness to engage with the US in a positive manner coupled with the opportunity provided by the Iraq-Kuwait War to forge closer relations with the US, led Syria to make new policy shifts. At this juncture, the main thrust of this chapter is to understand the position that Russia came to occupy in Syria's foreign policy in the post-Cold War situation. Another aim of this chapter is to explore Russia's foreign policy during the 1990s in order to have a better understanding of Syria's policy responses towards Russia.

A: Impact of International and Regional Factors

According to Huntington, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and eventual end of the Cold War brought about changes in the global political scenario in three significant ways. Changes could be witnessed in the "global power structure; the bases for the alignment and antagonism of states; and the prevailing type of war in the world." Cold War period was characterised by a bipolar world system wherein both the superpowers attempted to create their own areas of influence and dominate different parts of the world. During the Cold War period, each superpower tried to promote one's own ideology. Huntington points out that much of the debate in the post-Cold War period revolved around analysing the type of world order. Huntington stated that the world order that came to be formed after the disintegration

of the Soviet Union was neither unipolar nor multipolar but "uni-multipolar". According to him, in this new world structure, the US would work towards achieving its global interests and would also try to promote its interests around the world. Due to this, conflicts are likely to take place in different regions of the world between major regional powers and the superpower as the regional powers might feel dominated in their own region. Therefore, a "natural basis for rivalry exists between the US and the principal regional powers".[1] Under this system a single superpower exists and it resolves important international issues by cooperating with major powers. On issues of disagreement, the single superpower exercises its veto to rule out the actions of all major powers combined.[2]

The term "New World Order" came to be used to refer to the situation of post-Cold War global political scenario. The concept was first used by Gorbachev in 1990 during a speech. Gorbachev had stated in the speech that "world progress" depended on cooperation of the world community without ideological and other differences. He stated that the "movement toward a new world order" would be possible through "co-creation" and "co-development."[3] The term gained popularity when President George H.W Bush used this term in his 16 January 1991 speech while addressing the nation on the occasion of US-led coalition's operation known as "Operation Desert Storm" against Iraq during the Iraq-Kuwait War. The following is an excerpt from his speech:

> This is an historic moment. We have in this past year made great progress in ending the long era of conflict and cold war. We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order—a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations. When we are successful—and we will be—we have a real chance at this new world order, an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the U.N.'s founders.[4]

The speech reinstated the fact that it no longer faced threat from the Soviet Union. President Bush had stated "the US has its goal much more than simply containing Soviet Union into the

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[1] Cited in Samuel Huntington, (2003), "America in the World", *The Hedgehog Review*, pp.7-18
[2] Samuel Huntington (1999), "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs*, 78 (2), pp.35-49.
[3] Excerpts of Address by Mikhail Gorbachev (1988), 43rd U.N. General Assembly Session
7 December 1988, Accessed 19 August 2016, URL: https://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm.
[4] President Bush Speech (1991), "George H. W. Bush Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq", 16 January 1991,
Accessed 4 December 2015, URL: http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-3428

community of nations." Even the strategy of containment was declared by the Bush administration as redundant and hinted "towards a more cautiously conceived, accommodative approach to the US-Soviet relations."[5]

Patrick Seale argued that the Cold War was a "mixed blessing" for the Arabs and also for the Syrians. The Arabs did not benefit much from their relationship with the Soviet Union as Israel did from its relationship with the US. According to him, the relationship of the Arabs with Soviet Union was fraught with "muddle and mutual frustrations than by real friendship and cooperation". He was of the opinion that Israel was "an insider" hinting its close relation with the US and he also said that US's foreign policy was to a great extent influenced by Israel for its own benefit. This was not the case with the Arabs and Moscow. Initially, the Soviet Union's relation with the Arab countries in West Asian region was a close one in the 1950s and 1960s but gradually became a "burden" for Moscow.[6]

President Bush gave a speech on 11 September 1990 before a joint session of the Congress. This speech was made in the context of the Iraq-Kuwait War and also to emphasise that in the changed international scenario the US was considering new foreign policy objectives. The US came to realise that cooperation with the Soviet Union and other countries would be beneficial rather than confrontational. He also made an important point that the "power" of the US must not be doubted and that it would always be one of the leaders in international politics. He stated:

> We are united in the belief that Iraq's aggression must not be tolerated. No peaceful international order is possible if larger states can devour their smaller neighbors. Clearly, no longer can a dictator count on East-West confrontation to stymie concerted United Nations action against aggression. A new partnership of nations has begun. We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, a new world order—can emerge: a new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavor. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we've known. Recent events have surely proven that there is no

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[5] Hooshang Amirahmadi (ed), *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives* (Albany,1993), p.368.
[6] Avi Shlaim and Yezid Sayigh(*ed), The Cold War and the Middle East*, (Oxford, 1997), p.76.

substitute for American leadership. In the face of tyranny, let no one doubt American credibility and reliability.[7]

President Hafez al-Assad had delivered a speech on 1 April 1990 at an *iftar* banquet which he hosted in the Dimashqiyah Hall on the occasion of the month of Ramadan. Syria was greatly concerned about the consequences of the end of the Cold War. He reiterated the fact that the Arab world was facing many difficulties and these were gradually becoming complicated. During his speech he made it clear that the term "new world order" seemed "imprecise" because according to him, for "an order to be international, it has to abide by the legitimacy" and all the countries should be a part of it. He pointed out that Syria could not be a "part of an order" which was biased and committed aggression against it. He went on to add, he hoped to "see a new world order based on legitimacy, justice and equality among all nations."[8]

The aftermath of the Iraq-Kuwait War unleashed a huge threat in the minds of the Arab countries regarding their national security. Therefore, a decision was made to form a political, economic and security Arab front composed of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Syria and Egypt. An agreement was signed on 6 March 1991 which came to be known as the Damascus Declaration. However, the declaration did not gain much credibility as the GCC countries preferred cooperation with the US through bilateral agreements rather than depending on Syria and Egypt for regional security. Significance of Syria's role in forming the regional balance in the post-Cold War situation can be derived from the fact that the declaration was signed in Damascus. The unwillingness to comply with the declaration by the Gulf countries and eventual withdrawal of Egyptian and Syrian troops deployed in Saudi Arabia diminished the significance of the declaration almost completely.[9]

In April 1992 Assad embarked on a tour of the Gulf in order to garner Arab unity. Assad had earlier urged Saddam to call the Iraqi troops back from Kuwait citing the consequences if foreign troops from Western countries intervened. He warned that such a situation would provide a pretext for the foreign troops to pose a threat to the regional security and solidarity. During the tour he reiterated that under such circumstances Israel would find an opportunity

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[7] President George H.W Bush Speech (1990), "Address Before a Joint Session of Congress", 11 September 1990,
Accessed 1 April 2016, URL: http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-3425
[8] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1992), "Syrian President on Problems Facing Arabs and Islam; Israel; New World Order", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio,* Damascus, ME/1345 A/3, 2 April 1992.
[9] F. Gregory Gause, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States,* (New York, 1994), pp.132-137.

to disrupt peace in the region and would try to cause divisions among Arabs. Therefore, the main aim of his tour was to remind the Arabs that they could confront challenges only if they stayed united.[10]

A radio commentary by the Syrian radio station which coincided with Assad's tour reiterated that "Arab solidarity was a basic objective of Syrian policy." It went on to announce that Syria was facing "serious dangers" arising from "stormy international developments, which Zionism has exploited, using all its capabilities, to promote heavy Jewish immigration to occupied Palestine and create hostility towards the Arab nation in a way that facilitates the implementation of its expansionist schemes."[11]

At this juncture, it becomes important to point out that the concept of 'new world order' held a complete different meaning from the perspective of the Arabs. The victory of the Western led forces during the Iraq-Kuwait War actually meant defeat for the Arabs due to the divisiveness and the havoc that was let loose in the West Asian region. From the Arab perspective, dissolution of the Soviet Union led to two important consequences. Firstly, the absence of the Soviet Union created a power vacuum and Moscow's balancing role in world politics seemed similar to instability and imbalance. For example, the use of military means to solve a political crisis (as in case of Iraq-Kuwait War) or to bring about stability seemed to offer a feeling of terror rather than peace. Secondly, Soviet Union's disintegration conferred upon the US a sense of having predominance in world affairs and an upper hand in dealing with matters relating to developing countries and at the United Nations.[12]

President Hafez al-Assad was apprehensive of the "New World Order" and according to him the present world order would prove to be detrimental to Arab interests. Assad was of the opinion that with the end of the Cold War, the balance of power in the international political level ceased to exist and the "main winners have been the Arabs' enemies." Assad was concerned about the fact that when regional blocs were being formed in different parts of the world, the Arabs were creating troubles for themselves by "putting their security in the hands of outside powers." He felt that the need of the time was to fight such challenges which

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[10] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1992), "Syrian Commentary says Asad's Gulf Tour is a Step Towards Arab Unity", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio,* Damascus, ME/1361 A/5, 22April 1992.
[11] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1992), "Syrian Commentaries on Asad's Gulf Tour Warn Against Arab 'Fragmentation'", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio*, Damascus, ME/1362 A/1, 23 April 1992
[12] Larbi Sadiki (1995), "Al La Nidam: An Arab View of the New World (Dis)Order", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 17(3), pp.1-22

would be harmful to Syrian interests. Syria's participation in the US-led coalition against Iraq during the 1990-1991 Iraq-Kuwait War and its willingness to take an active part in the peace process had improved Syria's relations with the US. But relations between both the countries still remained uneasy as US did not remove Syria from its list of terror sponsor countries and had imposed a blockade on Syria's arms acquisition. The dissolution Soviet Union which was a major arms provider during the Cold War now led Syria to acquire arms from countries like China and North Korea. Syria's economic and military dealings with Russia and the East European states witnessed a decrease in the first few years of the post-Cold War but managed to continue.[13]

One issue which was a main source of tension for Syria was the newfound role for the US as the only superpower in the world. Throughout the 1980s, Syria had been at odds with the US policies towards the region and hence feared an adverse reaction. Hafez al-Assad once in his 1981 speech stated that the United States "wants us to be puppets so it can manipulate us the way it wants. It wants us to be slaves so it can exploit us the way it wants. It wants to occupy our territory and exploit our masses."[14]This statement summed up the Assad's concerns regarding US's policy in the region.

Therefore, the need of the hour after the end of the Cold War was to mend its deteriorating relations with the US. After the 1967 War, the US had severed ties with Syria which resumed in 1974 following the Agreement on Syrian-Israeli Ceasefire and Disengagement.[15] One major step of Syria which sought to improve its ties with US was Syria's cooperation with the US-led coalition against Iraq during the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. The 1989 Taif Accord was another instance when Syria could show its cooperation with US to bring an end to the Lebanese crisis. Syria also embarked on the peace process with Israel which came to be sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union. To further give an impetus to the relationship with US, Syria involved itself in the release of Western hostages held captive in Lebanon during 1980s. Syria also lifted the restrictions on the travel of Jews in Syria.[16] The issue of

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[13] Raymond Hinnesbusch, *Revolution From Above,* (Oxon, 2001), p.156.
[14] Barry Rubin *The Truth About Syria*, (New York, 2007), p. 98.
[15] UNSC Resolution 350 (1974), *Security Council resolution 350* (1974) *on the Agreement on Disengagement between Israel and Syrian Arab Republic and the establishment of the UN Disengagement Observer Force*, 31 May 1974Accessed 2 October 2016, URL:
http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/350(1974),
[16] IBP Inc., *Syria Energy Policy*, *Laws and Regulations Handbook, Strategic Information and Basic Laws*, Vol. 1, (Washington DC, 2015) , p.41.

Syria being on the US List of Terrorism has been a constant irritant in Syria's international image and was a hurdle in the way of improving its relations with the US. In 1994 the US State Department listed Syria as one of the seven states which sponsor terrorism. Since the list first came out in 1979, Syria has been named on it. The US wanted to take steps to prevent Syria from further being a "sponsor of terrorism." The Hindawi Affair [17]in 1986 again led US to pressurise Syria to give up supporting terrorist activities.[18]

In the midst of such adversarial circumstances, Syria seemed so eager to improve its relations with US that in June 1990, both the countries reestablished their diplomatic relations. Relations were severed in 1987 following the Hindawi Affair. The threat emanating from rising US influence in the region was so compelling that the major objective behind restoring relations with the US can be called as a defensive strategy of Syria's own survival. The main policy motive of Syria during this time was not to establish a "new Syrian order" or to say a regional order but to prevent any new regional order from happening.[19] It can be stated that Syria wanted the regional *status quo* to remain as was before the Iraq-Kuwait War.

B: Domestic Factors

During the early 1990s, Syria was witnessing favourable economic conditions due to higher oil prices and the aid received from the Gulf countries. Keeping this in view, Syria opted for limited liberalisation of the economy in order to deal with gradually rising unemployment which was on the rise because of increasing population. Another reason was to integrate Syria into the global economy so as to continue with the regime's policy of ensuring the Sunni urban elite's political support deemed important for its survival. Moreover, without the political and economic backing of the Soviet Union, it proved to be difficult for the Assad regime to maintain the earlier "barricades" to prevent outside influence affecting domestic politics. Under such circumstances, Syria had to look for alternatives to maintain its regional

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[17] The Hindawi affair was the incident which involved the attempt to bomb an El Al flight from London to Tel Aviv in April 1986. This incident had huge repercussions worldwide. Nezar Hindawi, a Jordanian who planned the bombing claimed during the interrogation that he had links with high ranking Syrian Air Force Intelligence and that he sought refuge in Syrian Embassy. See Elaine Sciolino (1986), "Britain Breaks Syrian Ties; Cites Proof of Terror Role; EL AL Suspect is Convicted", *The New York Times*, 25 October 1986, Accessed 12 August 2016, URL: http://www.nytimes.com/1986/10/25/world/britain-breaks-syrian-ties-cites-proof-of-terror-role-el-al-suspect-is-convicted.html?pagewanted=all

[18] Ronald Reagan, "Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Speaks on United States Diplomatic and Economic Actions Against Syria," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*: *Ronald Reagan*, (1986), p.1552.

[19] Eyal Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, (London, 2001), p.49.

and international position and therefore was compelled to open its borders for new and advanced technologies such as satellite broadcasts, computers etc. [20]

In order to encourage investments in the Syrian economy, investment Law No. 10 was passed in 1991 by the parliament. This law aimed at attracting both local and foreign investors (both private and "mixed") in various fields of the economy. In accordance with the law, capital investments above $240,000 could be made after authorisation of the projects from Higher Council for Investments.[21]

The issue of Assad's successor loomed large in the 1990s. Assad's health was deteriorating and his public appearances became less frequent. Assad made just three important appearances for the Syrian public. Finding and grooming a successor fit to govern Syria without tempering Assad's policies and legacy became a major domestic issue. This led to Bashar al-Assad's training period as the future leader of Syria. [22]

One of the most important changes that occurred at the domestic front was that confrontation between the Syrian regime and the Muslim brotherhood reduced to a great extent. The Hama revolt of 1982 which was efficiently crushed by the Assad regime was reminiscent of struggle between the Syrian regime and Muslim brotherhood. The slight improvement in the Syrian regime's attitude towards Muslim brotherhood was because of some reasons. One main reason was that the Syrian regime began to show more willingness to accept the exposition of religious faith of the citizens such as wearing of veil, increased participation of people in Friday prayers, establishment of many religious schools across the country etc. Another reason was that in the 1990s, the Syrian regime released a number of Muslim Brotherhood members who were jailed following the 1982 Islamic revolt. Most importantly, the moderate clerics and people who were not much involved in religious offices were allowed to take part in the People's Assembly elections throughout the 1990s. Hence, it can be said that the Syrian regime came to tactfully deal with the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1990s.[23]

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[20] Ibid., pp.180-189.
[21] Volker Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (New York, 1997), p.58.
[22] Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*, pp.163-166.
[23] Ibid., pp.196-201.

C: Post-Cold War Syrian Foreign Policy

The post-Cold War period was a phase of transition for many countries in the world in terms of bringing about transformation in their foreign policies. An important fact needs mention here is that the end of the Cold War was not an abrupt one but a gradual process. Syria was a country which had more or less favourable ties with the Soviet Union. Their relations have been not been always positive or outright negative but definitely they had their own agreements and disagreement over various issues during the Cold War period. In the prelude to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and formal end of the Cold War, the 1980s proved to be a period during which Syria had to take significant foreign policy decisions in relation to the Iran-Iraq war, weakening of the Soviet Union, the fear of US hegemony in the region and most importantly, Syria's isolation in the international scene. Given these issues affecting Syria, the present study would undertake the task of locating Russia's position in Syria's foreign policy framework.

Syria underwent some foreign policy changes in the turn of the 1990s. According to Assad, under the immediate post-Cold War situation, US who remained as the only superpower would try to form a new regional order under its leadership. This situation dictated that Syria cultivate closer relations with the US and show cooperation with the US on Arab-Israeli issues in order to become a part of the new regional order, a policy which was a significant shift from previously held policy of the Cold War period. However, this did not imply Syria's willingness to remain absolutely subservient to the US. Syria sought to retain its "maneuverability and freedom" in its policies towards the US and other countries.[24]

It would be appropriate to state that post-1991 Syrian foreign policy had to be restructured in a way to meet the new "realities of balance of power." The main aim was to adapt better to the post-Cold War world order. Syria made a major policy shift by gradually accepting "Israel's reality" and wanted to take advantage of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis so as to show itself as a "responsible power" in US's diplomacy in the region.[25]

The Syrian government's decision to join the US in the Iraq-Kuwait War in 1991 was an

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[24] Ibid., p.68.
[25] Raymond Hinnebusch (1996), "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syria-Israeli Peace Negotiations", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26(1), pp.42-56.

"unprecedented reversal of previous government's policy." Hafez al-Assad had realized that it was a welcome opportunity and he therefore seized it. The US was interested in taking up a new initiative to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and invited Syria to join. In addition to this, the US did not object to Syria's presence in Lebanon. Participation in the coalition also entitled Syria to financial benefits from the Gulf States which were a huge relief for the weak economy. [26]

According to Wallsh, Syria's alliance formation strategy was followed as the policy in the changed situation after the Cold War. He stated that during the Cold War, Syria resorted to the strategy of "balancing against threats." Disintegration of the Soviet Union and change in the international structure from bipolarity to unipolarity led Syria to rely on a "diverse and nuanced assortment of strategies." He also stated that "these strategies remain a function of threats, but vary inasmuch as those threats- and newfound opportunities-fluctuate more frequently in a less stable unipolar world." He wrote:

> Specifically, when the United States projects its power offensively and in a threatening manner, Syria will, as expected, join forces with others to balance against the United States. But when the United States restraints its use of force, the Syrian response varies. The default approach seems to be neither balancing nor bandwagoning, but rather forging closer ties with other regional actors in order to achieve maximum diplomatic flexibility by avoiding both dependence on and confrontation with the world's greatest superpower. At certain junctures in time, however, Syria has turned towards the US either to secure offensive gains in the regional theatre or to check domestic rivals at home.[27]

According to Rubin, 1990s proved to be a crucial phase in Syria's political history. The collapse of the Soviet Union had huge impact of Syrian foreign policy. He stated that this development had devastating effect on Syria's interests and therefore Hafez al Assad went on to describe Israel as the "main beneficiary" of this situation. Soviet Union which was a major arms supplier in the Cold War period disintegrated, raising concerns about the procurement of military equipment and weapons. Therefore, the "apparent lessons for Hafiz here were the need to struggle in order to preserve the regime, find a new patron, and unite the country

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[26] Bente Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game: Syrian Foreign Policy Under Assads*, (London, 2013), pp. 36.
[27] David Wallsh (2013), "Syrian Alliance Formation Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Impact of Unipolarity", *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs,* 37 (2), pp.107-123.

behind himself" in order to face potential threats in the post-Cold War period.[28]

Although Syria adjusted its long held ideology of pan-Arabism according to different situations, the post-Cold War brought forward new concerns. With the Soviet Union gone from the international scene all Syria hoped for was the unity of the Arab world against new challenges. According to Assad, Arab unity was at stake because of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Bouthaina Shaaban writes in the book titled *Damascus Diary* that this war instilled fear in Syria that the Arab world would be divided like never before given the changes at the international level.[29]

With the end of the Cold War and primarily the collapse of the Soviet Union, Assad became increasingly convinced with the idea that greater reliance on diplomatic means was a better way to achieve its foreign policy goals. After the 1970s, Syria's struggle with Israel mainly centered on regaining its lost territories. Soviet Union was a major backer of Syria in strengthening its military capability which was necessary as a part of Assad's policy to recover lost territories to Israel from a position of strength. As military support from the Soviet Union ended and newly formed Russia did not have much to offer militarily, Syria chose the path of diplomatic means to deal with problems relating to Arab-Israeli conflict. [30]

In the post-Cold War era, Syria accommodated its foreign policy to new realities. This involved strengthening links of Arab solidarity with "moderate" countries with which Damascus had tense relations[31] Syria took support from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to approach the US. However, Syria considered the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolar international system as an "unqualified disaster to the Arab nations, and tried to preserve some relations with post-Soviet Moscow". In December 1991, Syria officially recognised the Russian Federation as the USSR's successor, and in May 1992, a Russian parliamentary delegation led by Vladimir Shumeyko, Deputy Speaker of the Supreme Soviet, visited Damascus. In September 1992, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara went to Moscow and

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[28] Rubin, *The Truth About Syria*, pp. 97-98.

[29] Bouthaina Shaaban, *Damascus Diary: An Inside Account of Hafez al-Assad's Peace Diplomacy, 1990-2000*, (Colorado, 2013), p.15.

[30] Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London, 1997), p.200.

[31] Syria sought to renew its relations with Egypt in December 1989. This move by Syria was significant in the sense that earlier Assad had announced that relations with Egypt would not be renewed if the Egypt upheld its treaty with Israel signed in 1979. Assad visited Egypt in July 1990. See Zisser, *Asad's Legacy,* pp.49-50.

discussed new directions of bilateral relations. During these talks, Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev told him that although "[mutual] relations will develop dynamically, taking into account of all the positive elements which have accumulated previously," the anti-Western ideological dimension so important to Soviet-Syrian ties would be eliminated.[32]

The end of the Cold War led Syria to make "strategic reorientation" in its foreign policy and establish positive relations with the US. Although Syria tried to forge warm relations with the US, this did not suffice for "what had been at the core of Syrian-Soviet cooperation: arms deliveries and a partner to outweigh the regional impact of US support for Israel." Russia was absorbed in its internal affairs and was also seeking to improve relations with Israel and as well as with Arab countries. Therefore, throughout most of the 1990s, Russia rather "passively followed" events in the region.[33]

Raymond Hinnebusch pointed out that Syrian foreign policy has been a response towards the developments taking place at the international level. At the end of the Cold War, as Assad grew concerned about the international changes, certain foreign policy shifts were undertaken in order to minimise the negative effects of the post-Cold War world order at the regional level. As Syria's relations with the US were uneasy, Syria sought to improve ties with the US. Syria was wary of the probability of increasing hegemony of the US in the region in the post-Cold War situation and therefore, it made efforts to cultivate closer relations with the "other powers" both at the regional level and at the international level. One of the main priorities of Syria was to acquire arms from North Korea and China. Syria went on to establish economic and military relations with Russia and East European countries although at a minimum level. Iran became an important regional ally for Syria in order to keep the dominance of the US in the region within limits. It must be mentioned that in the post-Cold War period Syria lost the benefit of exploiting the East-West rivalry efficiently to its benefit.[34]

In September 1990 when US Secretary of State James Baker made rounds of the region in a bid to find potential ally for the US-led coalition against Iraq, this also paved the way for a new peace process to take place in the post-Cold War period. In March 1991 the first few

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[32] Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe*, (London, 2007), p.27.
[33] Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game,* p.201.
[34] Raymond Hinnebusch, *Revolution From Above,* (Oxon, 2001), p.156.

exchanges between US, Israel and Syria began to facilitate a peace process. Syria was irked by Yitzhak Shamir's, the then Prime Minister of Israel, policy of "increasing Israeli settlement in occupied Palestine." Shamir had also adamantly refused to recognise the Golan Heights as a territory taken from Syria by Israel when he said, "peace has nothing to do with land. This is the State of Israel and this is Israeli land. Nobody can change the borders of Israel." Assad reacted to Shamir's remarks by stating "if these discussions had taken place prior to the Gulf crisis, Shamir would have agreed to them, but he now believes that the Arabs are weaker than before and would do whatever is asked of them." It is well understood by this remark that the weak stature of the Soviet Union at the international level was making Syria feel vulnerable while dealing with its adversaries. It seemed important for Syria to turn the negative environment into a positive one by grabbing all the opportunities coming its way to put Syria's foreign policy on the right track.[35]

The Golan Heights hold a great deal of significance for Syria. Since the end of the Cold War, the political and military dynamics in the region changed. Syria had realised in mid-1980s that its intention of recovering the Golan Heights by acquiring strategic parity with Israel was becoming redundant. War with Israel was by no means beneficial and seemed self-destructive. The only way which seemed viable was to take the path of peace with Israel which could offer a sense of security and return of the Golan Heights. Assad claimed that in the changed international political scene, peace seemed a "strategic choice" given the changes in the regional and international stage.[36] Syria showed considerable readiness to enter into negotiations with Israel. Syria felt that the US government under Bush would prove to be a "possible friend and ally" and put pressure on Israel to go ahead with the peace process. In the early 1990s, when a peace treaty with Israel seemed possible, Assad declared that Syria was looking forward a "just and comprehensive peace". He also announced that after signing a peace treaty with Israel "regular relations" would be established. He chose not to mention the word "normal relations" to describe its future relations with Israel after a possible treaty. He did this to differentiate and deemphasise Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979 in which the word "normalisation" was used at a time when Syria was strongly against peace treaty with Israel. [37]

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[35] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary,* pp.18-20.
[36] Alon Ben-Meir (1997), "Why Syria Must Regain the Golan to Make Peace", *Middle East Policy,* 5 (3), pp.104-112.
[37] Zisser, *Asad's Legacy,* pp.104-107.

Hinnebusch argues that Assad's foreign policy was guided by rational and realistic considerations. This became clear when Assad decided not to pursue certain goals of foreign policy which seemed too unrealistic such as achieving "strategic parity" with Israel and rather chose to pursue more realistic goals by adapting strategies accordingly to deal with the external factors both at regional and international level.[38]

In case of Syria, for many years the Palestine question was considered intrinsic to the issue of recovery of the Golan Heights. As the Madrid Conference proceeded paving the way for multilateral peace negotiations, Syria gradually separated the Palestine question, which was so fiercely supported before the 1990s, from its peace process with Israel. It can be said that Syria had to remain contented with a peace track with Israel while compromising on the Palestine question. The main reason behind Syria change in its attitude towards the issue of Palestine was mainly because of the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords (framework for a peace agreement) between PLO and Israel which was understood as an "insult and a stab in the back" by Arafat. With the signing of the Oslo Accords, Syria felt that its role as a leader of the Palestinian question was being challenged. In addition to this, it was felt that the cause of the Arab front, which was formed with the aim of putting pressure on Israel during peace negotiations, would be weakened or even dissolved.[39]

Eyal Zisser goes on to show three stages of post-Cold War Syrian foreign policy under Hafez al-Assad. The first stage lasted from 1990 till 1992. This was a period when Syria was reeling under a fear from the US due to a host of issues ranging from its role in Lebanon to its terrorism record. During this period Syria had joined the US-led coalition to fight Iraq and went ahead with the peace process by taking part in the October 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. The second stage of the peace process phase which began in January 1992 and reached an impasse in 1996. The peace process strengthened Syria's regional and international status and also helped to cement its relations with the US and Europe. On the other side Syria was threatened that it could become isolated and marginalised due to increased influence of the US and its Arab allies in the region after finalising peace with Israel. The signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords and Israeli-Jordanian peace Treaty in 1994 made Syria anxious about its regional position. It was felt that these peace treaties would push Syria "into a corner" and would face regional isolation. The third stage began in 1996

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[38] Hinnebusch , *Syria: Revolution From Above*, p.146.
[39] Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*, pp.88-89.

and ended in 1999. With the coming of Benjamin Netanyahu into power, the peace negotiations reached a deadlock[40] and there were speculations about war between Syria and Israel as situation between the two countries deteriorated significantly. Syria was also facing other regional tensions such as downward spiralling of relations with Turkey and Jordan. The then Minister of Information of Syria, Muhammad Salman had stated that "an imperialist-Zionist conspiracy was being hatched against Syria, aimed at harming it and its ruling regime.[41]

Prime Minister Mahmud al-Zu'bi delivered a policy statement on 18 November 1992 at the People's Assembly in Damascus. He stated that major systemic changes have affected world politics in a significant manner. He stated that the changed international and regional environment impacted the Arab world in a negative manner. He stated that Syria was exposed to many political, economic and military pressures which were directed at weakening its status and ability to act independently. Zu'bi emphasised that under huge pressure due to international changes Syria was forced to renounce its "principled position" in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict and other pan-Arab matters (most importantly the Palestine question). Al-Zu'bi reiterated that Syria is geographically situated at a crucial position in the region and its pan-Arab approach especially its independent stand on various regional issues reflects its "policy of self-reliance." He stated that Syria would always put forth its opinions strongly and would be prepared for all adverse situations. Regarding the broader Arab issues he stated that Syria will "continue its efforts to rectify the Arab situation" and strive towards forming an Arab front and remove all obstacles that hinder joint Arab action. It would also aim to strengthen the role of the Arab League and also ensure and emphasis adherence to its charter. He mentioned that Syria would continue to support the Nonaligned Movement by "entrenching its bases, uniting its stands, and increasing its effectiveness in the international arena to enable it to develop its structure and readjust its methods of action to the realities of the new international state of affairs, so that it may remain a strong supporter of the people of the Third World and staunch defender of their just causes." It was mentioned that Syria would nurture good relations with Russia, East European countries and the CIS countries and

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[40] According to the Syrian government, peace negotiations conducted from 1992 to 1996 led to an agreement under which Israel would withdraw from the Golan Heights to 4 June 1967 lines. There are different versions of reasons for the failure of the peace negotiations after 1996. For accounts which throw light on Syrian government's willingness to reach a final settlement with Israel in relation to the Golan Heights are Shaaban *Damascus Diary*, pp.137-155 and Patrick Seale and Linda Butler (1996), "Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26(1), pp. 27-41.
[41] Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*, pp. 72-73.

would promote cooperation in various fields.[42]

D: Syria's Policy under Bashar al-Assad

Assad was grooming his eldest son Basil al-Assad to succeed him. He had also become quite popular among the Syrian people. In January 1994, Basil died in a road accident and a younger Bashar al-Assad was chosen to take over power. At the time of Basil's death, Bashar was studying to become an Ophthalmologist in London. Since Bashar did not have much experience of Syrian politics, he had to be groomed and readied to be a successor for the president's post when the time came. From 1994, Bashar had to put aside his studies and build his position within the military and security apparatus. He was inducted into the army and soon he rose through the ranks to become a Major in 1995. He graduated from the Higher Military Academy in 1997 and in 1999 he was conferred with the rank of Staff Colonel. In order to bolster his military man image, Bashar was required to give speeches at military events along with Defence Minister Mustafa T'las. Chief of Staff Lieutenant G. 'Ali Aslan and T'las were known to have given support to Bashar as the future president of Syria. Top leaders in the military and security apparatus who were likely to oppose Bashar in inheriting as the future president were removed from their posts. Two most important removals were Major General 'Ali Haydar who was at that time the Chief of the Special and Major General 'Adnan Makhluf, Commander of the Republican Guard. Since senior Assad had reservations about his brother Rif'at al-Assad's intentions, he was removed from the position of Vice-President dealing with national security portfolio. He also accepted the resignation of long-time Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Hikmat Shihabi. Many senior army officers were also replaced with younger officers in those positions. Ali-Shawkat, brother-in-law of Bashar became the second most important man in the Syrian Military Intelligence and Major General Hasan Khalil was installed as the Chief of Military Intelligence after removing Major General 'Ali Duba. It seemed necessary to generate Bashar's popularity among Syrians and in order to do so posters having portraits of Hafez, Basil and Bashar were displayed at public spaces. The significance of the posters was to highlight "the new trinity" with captions in Arabic meaning "our leader, our ideal, and our hope".[43]

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[42] FBIS-NES-92-230 (1992), "Prime Minister Delivers Policy Statement", *Al-Ba'th*, 19 November 1992, p.57.

[43] Flynt Leverett , *Inheriting Syria: Bashar's Trial by Fire*, (Washington, D.C: 2005), pp.60-63.

It is important to reflect upon the differences between Hafez and Bashar in terms of the kind of environment that moulded their views. Hafez's political career was shaped by the rise of Arab nationalism, Arab-Israeli Wars, the Cold War rivalry and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Bashar's exposure to the liberal environment of the West and modern technology helped to project his image as a "modernizer" which would reflect the traits of a 21st century leader. During his initial years in Syrian politics, Bashar led a drive against corruption from the country. In connection to this long-time Prime Minister Zu'bi was replaced with Mustafa Miru and Bashar was behind the corruption charges against Zu'bi. Bashar also showed willingness for political reforms, notwithstanding the fact that such reforms would not challenge regime legitimacy. Bashar inherited an ailing economy. In order to reduce the impact of strategic rent-seeking on the economy, he sought to introduce economic liberalisation and "controlled" opening to the global economy.[44]

Bashar al-Assad took over power as the president in July 2000. The most important issue during the transition of power from senior Assad to Bashar was that he had to be portrayed as a "loyal keeper of the flame rather than as a bold reformer." No major or fundamental changes were to be expected or welcomed while charting out a new foreign policy course. A fundamental break from his father's policy would gravely undermine the legacy of Hafez al-Assad's role as president spanning a time period of three decades.[45] Even though no huge step was taken to change earlier policies, Bashar indicated a slight shift from his father's policy in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He declared that unlike before, his regime would lay more emphasis on pan-Arab issues and less importance to pragmatism in its policies at regional and international level.[46]

The prime foreign policy objective of Syria under Bashar was to acquire strategic support and resources to prevent US and Israel from harming Syria also to ensure domestic stability in the transition phase of transfer of power. Bashar put forward an "ambiguous" foreign policy. It was ambiguous in the sense that Syria was seeking to forge multiple alliances both in the regional and international arena with the aim of weakening threats and exploiting the alliances for its benefit. The freeze on the Syria-Israeli peace track was an important issue which needed acute attention. Initially, Bashar had appealed to Israel to conform to the peace

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[44] Raymond Hinnebusch (2003), "Globalisation and Generalisation Change: Syrian Foreign Policy Between Regional Conflict and European Partnership", *The Review of International Affairs,*3(2), pp. 190-208.
[45] Leverett , *Inheriting Syria*, p. 29.
[46] Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, (London, 2007), p.21.

agreement reached between Hafez's and Yitzhak Rabin's government for a complete withdrawal of the Golan Heights to 4 June 1967 lines. The main reason for holding on to the agreement reached under Hafez was that the regime derived huge legitimacy from the peace process at that time. The eruption of the Second *intifada*[47] and suppression of the Palestinians by Israel's Ariel Sharon government made the prospect of engaging in peace process to regain the Golan Heights difficult. Therefore, Bashar deviated from the earlier stance and announced that the Palestine question formed an integral part of Syria's peace plan with Israel.[48]

At the October 2000 Arab Summit which was convened in Cairo after the outbreak of the second *intifada*, Assad in his speech strongly insisted that all Arab states should consider severing ties with Israel. Apart from the Palestine question, he stated that peace would also entail the return of the Lebanese land from Israeli occupation. He urged the Arab states to boycott Israel and insisted that Arabs should aim for a "peace of the strong" and not "peace of the weak".[49]

In an interview that he gave to *Al-Sharq a-Awsat* in February 2001, Bashar al-Assad claimed that Syria held on to the same demands regarding the peace process with Israel as was during the time of Hafez al-Assad's rule. He went on to emphasise that the word "comprehensive peace" and stated that Syria had to take into account the Palestinian and the Lebanese peace tracks as well. In the interview he stated:

> We are not after a peace agreement on paper only. The agreement is only the means, while peace on land is the aim. So, if the agreement were not based on a just, comprehensive peace, this peace would be fragile; that is temporary. So we are only ready to sign a peace agreement that we are sure will continue. We cannot guarantee the continuity of a peace that does not restore the rights to all the Arab sides without any exception. So the signing by one Arab side will not resolve the problem. This has

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[47] Also known as *Al-Aqsa Intifada* was an intensified uprising of the Palestinians against Israel following the failed Camp David Summit in July 2000. The spark for a series of violent incidents first took place when Ariel Sharon, Opposition Leader of Israel's then government visited East Jerusalem where the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Temple Mount is situated. See "Al-Aqsa Intifada timeline", *BBC News*, 29 September 2004, [Online:web] Accessed 30 December 2016, URL:http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3677206.stm

[48] Hinnebusch , " Globalisation and Generalisation Change", pp. 190-208.

[49] Bashar al-Assad (2000), "President Assad/ Cairo Summit Speech," 21 October 2000, [Online:web] Accessed 12 July 2016, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=439:president-assad-cairo-summit-speech-october-21-2000-3&catid=106&Itemid=496

been proved by previous Arab peace experiences with Israel.[50]

The importance of Golan Heights in Syrian foreign policy could be sensed in Bashar's first inaugural speech on 17 July 2000 after assuming the presidency. He stated that achieving peace with Israel in relation to the Golan Heights was a "strategic choice" but while doing so Syria would ensure that its sovereignty and dignity would be kept intact.[51]Again on 22 June 2001, Bashar al-Assad reiterated Syria's national priority by talking about the Golan Heights and the peace process with the French television:

> In this regard, Israel still occupies our Golan and this is a topic that preoccupies us. The liberation of our territory is at the top of our national priorities and is as important to us as the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace that we have adopted as our strategic choice, but not at the expense of our territory nor at the expense of our sovereignty. Our territory and our sovereignty are a matter of national dignity and no one at all is allowed to compromise any of them.[52]

During early years of his rule he tried to continue "cautious manoeuvring between East and West while attempting to straddle the fence." Political dialogue was conducted with Western Europe, Arab countries and most importantly the US. Bashar wanted to bring about a new chapter of improved relations with its neighbours especially with Turkey, Jordan and Iraq to some extent.[53] Heydemann argues that Syria's alignments with countries at the regional level and at the international level specially initiating good relations with Turkey, Jordan and Europe helped to "balance against threats."[54]

After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the US became ever more concerned with its security and tried to strengthen relations with its allies in the region. Those countries which were considered to be espousing anti-American posture came under the watchful eyes of Washington. The US brought together its allies in the West Asian region and abroad under

[50] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (2001), "President Al-Asad Discusses Regional Issues, Challenges Facing Syria", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat,* ME/4068 MED/5, London, 12 February 2001.
[51] Bashar al-Assad (2000), " HE's First Presidential Term Inauguration Speech",17 July 2000, [Online:web] Accessed 31 July 2015, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132:the-golan-heights&Itemid=470
[52] Bashar al-Assad (2001) "HE's Interview with the French Television", 22 June 2001, [Online:web] Accessed 31 July 2015, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132:the-golan-heights&Itemid=470
[53] Eyal Zisser (2003),"Syria and the War in Iraq," *MERIA,* 7 (2), [Online:web] Accessed 8 April 2016, URL: http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2003/06/zisser.pdf
[54] Steven Heydemann (2007), "Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World", *The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution*,pp. 23-24, [Online:web] Accessed 10 May 2016, URL: http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2007/10/arabworld/10arabworld.pdf

the banner called 'War on Terror' and openly declared that those who would not join this or stay neutral would be looked at with suspicion.

As it has been already stated, Syria's alleged support for terrorist groups has been quite a concern for the US. It has not been condemned due to its direct involvement but because of its support for groups which have been declared as terrorist groups by the US. These groups or organisations which Syria is believed to be supporting are Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad etc. Apart from the infamous Hindawi Affair, Syria was also alleged to have been behind the bombings of the US embassy in 1983. Assassination of Rafik Hariri, former Prime Minister of Lebanon in 2005 was another such incident which drew immense pressure against Syria's presence in Lebanon and its support for terrorist activities. This was a significant issue to tackle during the initial years of Bashar al-Assad's rule. After 2005, the international pressure mounted on Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon. Bashar al-Assad's most severe test to his presidency occurred after the 11 September 2001 attacks. It was realised that cooperation was required with US in the "War on Terror" campaign. Assad also went on to condemn the attacks on civilians and important places of US. Through a radio broadcast he urged the international community to "eradicate all forms of terrorism and guarantee the protection of basic human rights, notably the right of all humans to live in security and peace wherever they are." Syria helped the US by interrogating various persons associated with al-Qaeda and once foiled an attempt by the terrorist group's plan to attack US personnel.[55]

Later on Syria had differences with the US while cooperating on the terrorism issue. The US's unilateral action of invading Iraq in 2003 met with serious disagreement from the Syrian side. Assad during an interview stated that "the US demands are usually unidentified and are sometimes contradictory. For example, they call for giving up mass destruction weapons and when we call for giving up those weapons from the whole region, they object." It was also made clear that Syria acted in cooperation with the US due to its own principles and convictions but its opinions had differed with regard to the war in Iraq.[56] Another issue

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[55] Robert I Rotberg (ed), *Worst of the Worst: Dealing with Repressive and Rogue Nations*, (Washington D.C, 2007), p.284.

[56] Bashar al-Assad (2003) "HE's Interview with Al-Hayat Daily", 7 November 2003, [Online:web] Accessed 17 December 2015, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=158&Itemid=471

which lessened its cooperation on terrorism was when US began to accuse Syria of allowing militants into Iraq through its own territory to create an atmosphere of chaos there. In an interview given to *PBS TV* in March 2006 Assad stated:

> Many American delegations came and talked to us about the same issue. They used to start by saying the United States cannot control its borders with Mexico, and end up by saying that Syria has to control its borders with Iraq. This means that a super-power cannot control its borders and we can. Iraqi delegations came and talked with the same logic; and there were unfounded accusations. We told our Iraqi brothers that we were prepared to cooperate in that regard. We told all these parties that regardless of the American demand, and regardless of any pressure, we have an interest in controlling our borders, because the chaos in Iraq had a direct impact on the security situation in Syria. So, we have an interest, but cooperation requires two parties.[57]

With the end of the Cold War Syria turned increasingly towards Europe. French President Jacques Chirac was the only European leader to attend the funeral of Hafez al-Assad. Europe's significance in Syria's foreign relations became evident when Bashar paid one of his first state visits to Germany, Britain, Spain and France and not to Russia which was a long-time friend. Syria was drawn towards Europe in order to revive its weak economy and to gain political protection what Syria view as growing US hostility in the region. After 11 September 2001 attacks, both the US and Europe made requests to halt Syrian support for the radical Palestinian factions during the second *intifada*. However, Syria and Europe both were against US invasion in Iraq in 2003. Europe was disappointed with the human rights situation in Syria and pressure to take necessary measures for improvement. From 2000 Syria was involved in a negotiation process with Europe to form a trade partnership known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Around this time, Europe emerged as the leading trade partner of Syria. However, there some apprehensions with the partnership negotiations as it was view within Syria that Europe wanted political and economic reforms in Syria as a precondition for the trade talks to succeed. [58]

Israel's withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000 left Syria with less bargaining capacity in its policy of "steadfastness" towards Israel. Prior to this, Syria could take the advantage of Hezbollah as a proxy to put military pressure on Israel's "security zone" in South Lebanon in order to coerce Israel to resume peace process. At the regional level, Bashar had to make

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[57] Bashar al-Assad (2006) "HE's PBS TV Interview", 30 March 2006 , [Online:web] Accessed 17 December 2015,
URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=158&Itemid=471
[58] Hinnebusch , "Globalisation and Generalisation Change" , pp. 190-208.

moves to mend its relations with Turkey and Jordan. Syria's relations with Turkey were troubled for many years. Some of the reasons which plagued Syria-Turkey relations for many years are the sharing of the Euphrates river water, alleged Syria's support to terrorist activities of the Kurdish PKK against the Turkish state and strong Turkish-Israeli ties. Under Bashar, Syrian delegations were sent to Turkey which led to the signing of several economic agreements. Syria also worked towards improving relations with Jordan. Syrian-PLO relations needed mending and therefore, Bashar ensured Yasser Arafat's presence at senior Assad's funeral but Arafat's reluctance to take support from Syria for the peace negotiations proved to be an impediment. Syria's warm relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia which existed under senior Assad continued under Bashar's administration. Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia declared their support for Syria if attacked by Israel. The September 2001 attacks pushed Syria to consider itself a part of the Egypt-Saudi Arabia axis. Bashar's government also grew closer to Iraq. This was one of the most important strategic shifts undertaken in the foreign policy arena at the regional level. After the Iraq-Kuwait War, UN sanctions were imposed on Iraq which was crippling the economy. Syria also needed an ally who shared similar sentiments regarding the US's role in the region. Increasing threat of US coupled with a frail economy, led Syria to forge a relation mainly based on "geo-economics". Iraq diverted most of its import contracts from Jordan to Syria and by 2000, Syria was receiving around 200,000 bpd of crude oil from Iraq which was sold at higher prices in the international market.[59]

E: Russia's Regional and International Priorities

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a watershed in modern history of world politics. New geopolitical realities came into the scene with the emergence of independent Eastern European and the Central Eurasian countries. The former bipolar world order gave way to a unipolar one which came to be replaced by a dominant US hegemony in world affairs and decimation of USSR as a "weaker" power in comparison to US. This section will cover period from 1985 till the break-up of the Soviet Union. This timeline is taken in order to highlight Syria's concerns during the tenure of Gorbachev's presidency and his policies such as *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* which were the primary factors in bringing about an end to the Cold War.

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[59] Ibid., pp.190.208.

The "New Thinking"[60] policy under Gorbachev propelled a number of changes in Soviet Union's foreign relations which were followed for a long time. At the 43rd UN General Assembly session, Gorbachev publicly announced the changes that the Soviet Union was prepared to make in its foreign policy. He outlined in his speech that the world was entering a new era wherein "progress will be based on the interests of all mankind" and a country's foreign policy too "should be determined by the priority of the values of all mankind." Most remarkably, he called for a "de-ideologisation of interstate relations" which indicated that the USSR was discarding its previous concept of ideology in its relations with different countries in the world. Another important point mentioned by Gorbachev in his speech was that the USSR was preparing to reduce the strength of its armed forces deployed at Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and German Democratic Republic (GDR) and also cut down the volume of its conventional arms. Finally, Gorbachev's speech highlighted the importance of improving USSR's relations with the US, its Cold War foe. On USSR-US relations Gorbachev said:

> Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America span 5 1/2 decades. The world has changed, and so have the nature, role, and place of these relations in world politics. For too long they were built under the banner of confrontation, and sometimes of hostility, either open or concealed. But in the last few years, throughout the world people were able to heave a sigh of relief, thanks to the changes for the better in the substance and atmosphere of relations between Moscow and Washington. No one intends to underestimate the serious nature of the disagreements, and the difficulties of the problems which have not been settled. However, we have already graduated from the primary school of instruction in mutual understanding and in searching for solutions in our and in common interests.[61]

Between 1985 and 1988, Gorbachev's policy of New Thinking led to "re-examination" of Moscow's policy towards regional conflicts and confrontational position in relation to US. In 1989-1990, the Soviet Union's international power declined as domestic political crises shook the foundations of Moscow's international power base.[62] *Perestroika* in general meant restructuring of the Soviet economy and *Glasnost* referred to political openness.[63] These

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[60] Gorbachev introduced a number of changes in areas of foreign policy, economy and also society with a view to strengthen Soviet Union and to improve relations with the US. For details see US Department of State Archive,"Gorbachev and New Thinking in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1987-88," [Online:web] Accessed 15 May 2016, URL: http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/rd/108225.htm

[61] Excerpts of Address by Mikhail Gorbachev (1988), "From CNN Cold War, 43 rd General Assembly Session," 7 December 1988, [Online:web] Accessed 1 August 2015, URL:http://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm

[62] David H. Goldberg and Paul Marantz (eds), *The Decline of the Soviet Union and the Transformation of the Middle East*, (Oxford, 1994), p.1.

[63] Peter Zwick (1989),"New Thinking and New Foreign Policy under Gorbachev", *Political Science and Politics*, 22(2), pp.215-224.

policies were considered as the root cause for bringing about rapid dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Differences between Syria and Soviet Union widened in the late 1980s when in 1989 the USSR ambassador to Damascus, Aleksander Zotov, publicly stated that Moscow would no longer support Syria's goal of achieving "military-strategic parity with Israel." Moscow wanted Syria to take part in a peace negotiation with Israel with a "greater commitment than ever before" and not from a position of military strength. New diplomatic efforts by Moscow seemed to be supportive of a reduction in arms supplies to the region. Arms supplies to Syria also witnessed a significant reduction from an average of $2.3 billion per year to $1 billion during 1985-1989.[64]

By the time Gorbachev was ousted from power with the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, there had been a massive transformation in most Soviet policies towards West Asia. This transformation was accelerated by the failure of the August 1991 abortive coup d'état that enabled Gorbachev to eliminate many of his most opponents. The most significant area of change was in Moscow's relations with Israel. Not only did Gorbachev restore full diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1991 and join with the US in co-sponsoring a UN resolution reversing the "Zionism is Racism" resolution[65], but he also allowed hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel. Arab states were upset by this, as they saw the immigrants, many of whom had advanced degrees, as adding to the military and scientific power of Israel. Despite Arab criticism, Gorbachev allowed the flow of emigrants to continue, primarily to win the favour of the United States, although he justified his action on human rights grounds. Moscow also joined the US in co-sponsoring the October 1991 Madrid Arab-Israeli peace conference. It was one more sign of growing cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, although the US clearly played the dominant role at the conference. [66]

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[64] Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a new Foreign Policy,* (UK,1999), p.52.
[65] The UNSC Resolution 3379 was passed on 10 November 1975 with the help of the Soviet Union and its allies. In 1991, the US along with the Soviet Union called for revocation of the resolution keeping in mind the changed international circumstances such as the Iraq-Kuwait War and the gradual weakening of Communism. See Paul Lewis (1991), "U.N. Repeals Its '75 Resolution Equating Zionism With Racism", *The New York Times,* UN: 17 December 1991, [Online:web] Accessed 29 August 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/17/world/un-repeals-its-75-resolution-equating-zionism-with-racism.html
[66] Robert O Freedman (1995), "Israeli-Russian Relations Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union", *Middle East Journal,* 49 (2), pp. 233-247.

The interview of Primakov in 1990 by the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* showed the changing dynamics of Soviet-US relations by the end of the Cold War. This is as follows:

> We have drawn up "rules of conduct" that have been successfully applied to extricate us from inflexible confrontation and create conditions of stability in relations between the two countries and in the world in general. We reckon that at this stage a civilized character has been imparted to our relations. The "Cold War" has thus ended and is a thing of the past.[67]

The diplomatic activities between the Soviet Union and Israel were beginning to show positive signs from the late 1980s. One month prior to establishing diplomatic relations between both the countries, Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) Supreme Soviet International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations Committee visited Israel in September 1991. In his interview to *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* he described USSR's mood:

> There is no doubt that the time has come to establish relations between the Union authorities and Israel and then, in accordance with our sovereignty and accords, to move on to sharply increase links between Russia and Israel and to fill them with specific content. This concerns both inter parliamentary contacts and other contacts in the economy, culture, and so on. Clearly it was a mistake to sever diplomatic relations at that time and this must be corrected, but in such a way as not to damage our relations with third countries. For a quite long time the Israeli leadership occupied a cautious position vis-à-vis Russia, proceeding from the priority of the possibly speedy establishment of diplomatic relations with the Union and subordinating all other actions to this. But the August coup in the USSR made its own amendments, clearly altering many aspects of Tel-Aviv's approach as immediately after these events came the invitation from Ben-Eliezar, chairman of the Knesset Commission Foreign Affairs and Defense.[68]

Soviet Union's successor state, Russia emerged as a totally different entity from its former self. Geographically, it was much smaller than the Soviet Union and no longer shared its boundaries with the West Asian region. The Soviet Union had geographical proximity to Turkey and Iran whereas Russia now came to be sharing its borders with Caucasian and Central Asia states. In military and economic terms also Russia was inferior to that of the Soviet Union. The ideological basis of foreign policy behaviour of the Soviet Union was replaced by pragmatic and geopolitical considerations. Territorial integrity became one of the

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[67] FBIS-SOV-90-197 (1990) , "Primakov Interviewed on US", International Ties ," International Affairs, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* , FBIS Daily Report. Soviet Union, 11 October 1990, p. 7

[68] FBIS-SOV-91-194 (1991), "Lukin Interviewed on Official Visit to Israel", *International Affairs*, FBIS Daily Report, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta,* 7 October 1991, p.66

foremost concerns of the newly formed Russian Federation when the Chechnya crisis*[69] emerged. Central Asian and Caucasian countries were given primary importance. Russia came to give more priority to Turkey and Iran in the West Asian region over other countries. The rest of the Arab countries seemed to be of lesser significance "with an almost complete disappearance of any Soviet-style commitment towards the 'progressive' cause of Arab anti-imperialism."[70]

The Central Asian and the Caucasian states (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) were of greater importance to Russian foreign policy as they were considered as the "soft underbelly" of the region. A total of 15 states emerged after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In Central Asia five new states were formed namely Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. These states became a link to the West Asian region by being situated between Russia on one side and Turkey and Iran on the other side. The issue of Islamic revival in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan was a cause of concern for Russia which required a close observation of the internal situation of these new states. There were fears looming about the emergence of radical Islam through Iran's influence in the newly formed states after a long period of religious suppression under Communism. Another task for Russia was to curb the organised criminal networks involved in arms and drugs smuggling which were operating between Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Most importantly, Russia was faced with a competition for influence with US and its NATO partner, Turkey in these countries.[71]

Boris Yeltsin, who was a politician from the Soviet days, became the first President of Russia in 1991. Russia under Yeltsin was known to be pro-US and one of the main priorities was to maintain favourable ties with the West. Yeltsin's policy could be considered as continuation of Gorbachev's New Thinking. Due to the pro-Western stance in its policies, Russia under Yeltsin came to be seen as a "junior partner" of the US at the international level.[72] Andrei Kozyrev who was the Foreign Minister in Yeltsin's government was of the view that Russia

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[69] In 1991, a republic from Northern Caucasus declared its independence from Russia. It was posing a threat to its territorial integrity of Russia. See Emmanuel Karagiannis, *Energy and Security in the Caucasus,* (Oxon, 2002), p.55.

[70] Cited in Hannah Carter and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds), *The Middle East's Relations with Asia and Russia*, (London, 2004), pp. 22-23.

[71] Robert O. Freedman (2001), "Russian policy Toward the Middle East: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Putin Challenge", *Middle East Journal*, 55(1), pp.58-90.

[72] Piotr Dutkiewicz and Dmitri Trenin, *Russia: The Challenges of Transformation*, (New York, 2011), p.301.

had to follow similar political, social and economic principles like the West in order to be accepted by them. He also aimed at inducting Russia into what he called "the democratic Northern Hemisphere." Kozyrev was of the opinion that Russia's weak economy could get financial support from the West by pursuing a pro-Western policy.[73]Kozyrev continued to bring about pro-Western orientation in foreign policy and he got backing from Yeltsin. The main aim was to secure security and economic assistance from relations with the United States and also to extend its market. In 1994, Kozyrev had written an article in Foreign Affairs on Russia's partnership with the US. He made an important point that:

> Russian foreign policy inevitably has to be of an independent and assertive nature. If Russian democrats fail to achieve it, they will be swept away by a wave of aggressive nationalism, which is now exploiting the need for national and state self-assertion. Supportive action is therefore required of the West but not if 'motivated by paternalism or an assumed inequality' with a Russia which after all was 'predestined to be a great power.'

His article showed the contradictions and incoherence that was plaguing Russian foreign policy during that time. Yeltsin administration wanted an independent foreign policy as well as the support of the West[74] He also mentioned that relations with the US as "best strategic choice for Russia." He emphasised that both Russia and US shared common democratic values and therefore the responsibility rested on them to influence global issues in a positive manner through a "constructive partnership."[75]

It is also important to focus on Russia's policy towards the West Asian region during the early 1990s. Russia's main priority in the region was to forge closer ties with Turkey and Iran primarily because of their influence in the Central Asian states. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States came second in terms of foreign policy priority for Russia. Russia was in dire need of capital investments and a market for its military equipment for which the GCC proved as a perfect place for fulfilling these objectives. The need of the time was to tactfully balance Russia's relations with Iran, GCC and Iraq. The Arab-Israeli conflict and countries namely Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and the Palestinians came to occupy least importance in Russia's foreign policy. This was a major policy shift as during the Cold War these

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[73] Nizameddin , *Russia and the Middle East*, p.74.
[74] Cited in Franklyn Griffiths (1994), "From Situations of Weakness: Foreign Policy of New Russia", *International Journal*, 49(4), pp.699-724.
[75] Andrei Kozyrev (1994), "The Lagging Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, 73(3), pp.59-71.

countries were considered crucial by Soviet Union to act as an "anti-imperialist" Arab front against the West.[76]

There were some contradictions in Russian policies during the 1990s. For instance, in 1993, Yeltsin paid visits to South Korea and India to show that Russia following a policy of "looking both east and West". Russian policy during the 1990s can best be described as being incoherent and going in different directions. However, in most of the issues concerning the West Asian region Russia sided with the US. Russia seriously pursued the issue of hosting the first multilateral conference in January 1992 relating to the West Asian peace process. By hosting this conference it was evident that Yeltsin wanted to send a message to the world community to recognise Russia as a strong player. There was a psychological agenda of wanting Russia to be seen and accepted as a "legal successor to the Soviet Union, to have an independent stature and weight internationally, to be treated as an equal of the US, not as the loser of the Cold War." It was once mentioned by Yeltsin that cooperating with the US without any confrontational attitude would help reinforce Russia's image as a strong power in the international stage. It was only by cooperation, dialogue and avoiding conflicts with others, Russia could show that it was still an important player in the world.[77]

But soon opposition arose against Yeltsin's pro-US policy in the parliament and therefore, in 1996 he had to remove Kozyrov and replace him with Yevgeny Primakov, a former KGB official. Primakov was known to have in-depth knowledge about the West Asian region and was a highly respectable figure in the parliament. Gradually the Yeltsin government moved its foreign policy from a strictly pro-Western to that of a "stable and recognisable" policy.[78]

During the Iraq-Kuwait War, the Soviet Union stood in support of the US. Yevgeny Primakov tried to mediate an agreement between US-led coalition and the Iraqi government in order to prevent a ground military attack. But it was obvious that the Soviet Union's internal weakness was not allowing it to take a strong position in the affairs of the region. In September 1991, Primakov visited the region to express Russia's gratitude for the support it received during the 1991 failed coup attempt and also to ask for economic benefits for its ailing economy. In 1992 during a visit to Syria, Ramazan Abdullatipov, Chairman of the

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[76] Freedman , "Russian policy Toward the Middle East", pp.58-90.
[77] Nicholas Burns et.al, (1995), "Three Years After the Collapse of the USSR: A Panel of Former and Current Policymakers", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 11(1), pp.1-22.
[78] Nizameddin , *Russia and the Middle East*, p.88.

Russian Federation Supreme Soviet of nationalities, stated that Syria and Russia had to continue to strengthen their cooperation and friendship although he admitted that there was "coolness in relations" between both the countries. He met the Syrian Vice President 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam and Prime Minister Mahmud al-Zu'bi and discussed issues of political and economic importance. He also admitted that historic ties were much stronger and that attempts must be made to restore the previous level of relations.[79]

In May 2000, Vladimir Putin took over the presidency of Russia. Putin devised new foreign policy goals and outlined new national security concepts for Russia. Under his administration, these three regions according to their priority were considered as important in Russian foreign policy. First came the former Soviet Republics known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); second position was occupied by the US and the Europe and third rung comprised of the Asia-Pacific region. Foreign policy of Russia at this point of time was mainly based on focussing on strategically significant areas and also to act as a counterbalance to the presence of US in those areas. Most importantly, Russia's foreign policy priorities and national interests under Putin came to be based on a realist approach which can be termed as "pragmatic nationalism". Under him, the Russian government sought to completely abandon the ideological stance followed in the arena of external policy during the Soviet era.[80]

At this time, Russia-US relations were witnessing an all-time low. Putin, a staunch nationalist had declared that the aim of his government would be to restore Russia's position as a regional power and an important actor in world politics. Some of the new foreign policy objectives and their prerequisites were enunciated in the "Foreign Policy Concept" in 2000[81]. According to Putin, US's global influence and domination could in turn be harmful for other countries. Therefore, Russia should strive to offer itself as a "center of influence in a multipolar world." Various issues had plagued the relationship between Russia and US

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[79] Safwan Al-Bunni (1992), "Russian Official Admits Existence of Coolness in Relations," *Sawt al-Kuwayt al-Duwali,* FBIS-NES-92-206, 21 October 1992, p. 29.
[80] Maria Raquel Freiré (2009), "Russian Policy in Central Asia: Supporting, Balancing, Coercing, or Imposing?", *Asian Perspective*, 33(2), pp.125-149.
[81] The Foreign Policy Concept 2000 highlighted the need to bolster the international standing of the Russian Federation. Most importantly, it emphasised that Russia faced "new challenges and threats" to its national security due to the "unipolar structure of the world" dominated by the US. In the document it was pointed out that Russia would strive towards building a "multipolar system of international relations" and work towards preventing unilateral actions of the US. See Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,* 28 June 2000, [Online:web] Accessed 12 April 2016, URL:http://archive.mid.ru//Bl.nsf/arh/1EC8DC08180306614325699C003B5FF0?OpenDocument

during the 1990s. After the 11 September 2001 attacks, their relationship had little hope of improvement although Putin cooperated with the US to some extent to tackle the issue of terrorism until fundamental differences related to foreign policy remerged. While giving a speech at the parliament, Putin once stated that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."[82] Ties with Israel under Putin improved significantly. Cooperation between them in security and economic matters increased. This made the Syrian government uncomfortable and Syrian Defence Minister, Mustafa Tlass "expressed concern" about their growing closeness during a visit to Moscow in 2001.[83]

Another comment was made by Putin during a speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. Putin condemned the unilateral actions that US undertook specially pointing towards the 2003 invasion of Iraq which he mentioned as an illegitimate one. He went on to reject the unipolar model in world affairs stressing on the fact that it had no "moral foundations for modern civilization."[84]

President Dmitry Medvedev, who assumed office in 2008, tried to continue the foreign policy principles followed under Putin's presidency. He began to take more interest in the affairs of West Asian politics. He was the first Russian President after the end of the Cold War to visit Syria and had a detailed meeting with Bashar al-Assad. His visit signalled Russia's interest in re-establishing good relations with "Soviet allies." He was quoted stating "Russia's commitment to Syria was consistent despite changes in the world." Assad too had stated that Russia's support during the 1967 War would never be forgotten and that both countries had more to gain from the relationship with one another. By 2008, Syria's relations with US was experiencing a downturn as Syria was bogged down by issues such as suspicions of supporting "terrorists groups" and the stalled peace process. There were no ambassadors from US to Syria after the 2005 Hariri Assassination and Robert Ford was nominated as ambassador only after Barack Obama became president in 2009. Renewal of economic sanctions against Syria in 2010 was another hurdle that Syria-US relations had to confront; thus again brought chill to the relationship between both countries and accusations that Syria

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[82]Gulnur Aybet and Lawrence Freedman, *NATO in Search of a vision*, (Washington, D.C, 2010), pp.155-156
[83] Mark N Katz (2006), "Putin's Foreign Policy Toward Syria," *MERIA*, 10(1), pp.53-62.
[84] Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia (2007) "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy",
February 10, 2007 Munich, [Online:web] Accessed 7 December 2015, URL:http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_11812 3

was transferring missiles to Hezbollah created more problems. During Medvedev's visit, economic relations took a positive turn with the decision of Russia's gas company, Gazprom to undertake projects in Syria and to expand its existing ones. At this point, apart from other issues creating rift between Syria and the West, pressure was mounting from Western countries to comply with International Atomic Energy Agency's inquiry into whether a facility destroyed by Israel in 2007 was used for producing nuclear weapons.[85]

At a dinner banquet kept in honour of the visiting Russian president, Assad gave a speech which focused on the relationship of friendship and cooperation between both the countries. This speech summed up the Syrian perspective of Russia's stature at the regional and international level. In his speech, Assad pointed out that Russia's international standing was strong and hence capable of playing an effective role to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Assad also emphasised Syria's support for making the West Asian region free from weapons of mass destruction and that both the countries could cooperate to work together on this issue.[86]

A joint statement was also issued during Medvedev's visit. Medvedev condemned Israel's settlement activities and called for the revival of the peace process by complying with UN resolutions. His visit was also an attempt to elevate Russia's international status in general and to play an influential role in West Asia in particular.[87]

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War was a historical turning point for international politics. Politics based on East-West rivalry came to an end. Like many other countries, Syria was also banking on this bipolar world system for its survival. The dissolution of the Soviet Union affected Syria in terms of its foreign policy orientations and objectives. Syria had to make

[85] Claire Duffett (2010), "Why Russia's Dmitry Medvedev is visiting Syria", *The CS Monitor* , 11 May 2010, , [Online:web] Accessed 6 December 2015, URL:http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/0511/Why-Russia-s-Dmitry-Medvedev-is-visiting-Syria

[86] Bashar al-Assad (2010), "President Al-Assad Statements During President Medvedev Visit," 10 May 2010, [Online:web] Accessed 4 February 2017,URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=365:president-al-assad-statements-during-president-medvedev-visit-may-10-11-2010&catid=116&Itemid=496

[87]Zvi Magen (2010), "Medvedev's Visit to Syria: Restoring Russia's Influence in the Middle East," *INSS Insight No. 182*, 17May 2010, [Online:web] Accessed 7 December 2015 URL:http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=2187

certain policy changes while keeping most of the fundamental attributes of its foreign policy intact. The term "New World Order" evoked a sense of insecurity in Syria and Assad made consistent calls for Arab solidarity to face new political, economic and military challenges.

Most of the main determinants of the post-Cold War foreign policy of Syria remained same. Changes could be witnessed in its policy towards relations with the US. To portray an image of a "responsible power" in order to avoid friction with US became the main objective of Syrian policy. Therefore, relations with Russia took a backseat but not completely ignored. Cooperation with the US on issues such as the Iraq-Kuwait War, peace process showed willingness towards positive engagement which was a dramatic shift in Syria's earlier foreign policy behaviour. In reality, Syria was of the opinion that US hegemony in world affairs held no legitimacy. Assad was also aware of the fact that Syria could never occupy that special position which Israel holds in relation to US and under such circumstances it seemed better to improve relations with the US. Russia during the Yeltsin era was under a lot of pressure due to changes in its domestic politics due to which it had to delineate new regional and international foreign policy. It would not be wrong to state that Syria did not have much expectation from Russia in terms of its role in the peace process. The Arab-Israeli conflict was not among the list of foreign policy priorities for Russia but since it wanted to show to the world that it was still an influential player in world politics, it followed the US lead on all major issues relating to the region. Russia under Putin began to rebuild closer relations with Syria as existed during the Cold War. The reason behind this was worsening of Russia-US relations and Syria was looking towards Russia for support in relation to regional issues that propped up under Bashar al-Assad's rule.

Chapter III

Political Dimension

From the previous chapter it has been established that Syria became increasingly aware of the changes in foreign policy priorities of Soviet Union's successor state, Russia. As Syria was trying to adjust to the post-Cold War situation in absence of a strong international ally, it had to reassess its earlier policies. The main aim of this chapter is to examine the political aspect of Syria's policy towards Russia during the post-Cold War period against the backdrop of many changes at the regional level as well as the role of the US in these developments. Syria's role in Lebanon post-civil war, Iraq-Kuwait War and the peace process reflected new policies and stances that it took in the post-Cold War period. During the Iraq-Kuwait war and the peace process, Syria exemplified a rapprochement towards the US. While Syria was willing to cooperate with the US on the Arab-Israeli issues, the newly emergent Russia was forging closer ties with Israel. The main focus of this chapter is to understand and analyse Syria's Russia policy amidst these developments.

A: The Lebanese Crisis

Before the French Mandatory rule, historical Syria comprised Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine and Lebanon from which the present day Syria came into being. Since the 1970s, Lebanon's internal matters have been influencing Syria's foreign policy behaviour. Syria had a major concern that Lebanon should not be used by Israel or other anti-Syria elements which would threaten its national security. Syria came to play a significant role in Lebanon in the post-Cold War period. Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union had been critical of Syria's intervention in civil war of Lebanon which began in 1975. Amidst these, it is important to understand how Russia came to view Syria-Lebanon relations after 1991and how this in turn impacted Syria's policy towards Russia.

However, before attempting to understand Syria's role in Lebanon in the post-Cold War period, it is important to reflect on the 15-year long Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and how Syria and Israel got involved in it. As it has already been stated, after coming into power, Hafez al-Assad wanted to bring Syria out of regional isolation, reduce the rejectionist stance in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict followed by his predecessors and, most importantly,

decrease Syria's dependence on the Soviet Union. However, this is not to imply that Syria under Assad sought to distance itself with the Soviet Union. This meant that Syria sought to utilise its fairly amicable relationship with the Soviet Union to be militarily stronger and use its political backing wherever needed but at the same time retain enough political maneuverability to deal with affairs crucial to its national interests. The decline of Egypt's prominence in the Arab world with the signing of the Israel-Egypt Treaty of 1979 prompted Syria to adopt an "independent power position" in the region.[1] Hence, Syria's involvement in Lebanon would be looked at through this prism of Syria following an independent strategy of ensuring its own security and not relying on other factors.

It is thought that Syria has vital interests in Lebanon because of the fact that Lebanon was a part of greater historical Syria or greater Syria. As Lebanon is a well-known destination for Syrian refugees and political exiles, Syria shows a great deal of interest in Lebanon to ensure regime stability. During the 1960s, the establishment of PLO headquarters in Lebanon increased Syrian interests in Lebanon as Syria was an important player in Arab-Israeli issues. The territory of Lebanon holds huge significance for Syria if seen in the context of potential threats from Israel. Syria fears Israeli incursion into Lebanon and attacks from its western front. Therefore, it is believed that Assad brought about an offensive strategy in relation to Israel in which if Syria or troops from other Arab countries were stationed in Lebanon, then that would have helped to strengthen Syria's position in relation to Israel and lead Israel to deploy troops along its border along Lebanon by diverting concentration of troops from Israel-Syrian border. In simple terms, Assad saw Lebanon as another front from which Syria could resist Israeli influence and if need arises, fight Israel from Lebanon.[2]

From the point of view of Hafez al-Assad, peace negotiations with Israel were not to be conducted from a position of "weakness" if it could use "bargaining cards". Lebanon was in a sense used as a proxy by Syria to deal with Israel and ties to the Hezbollah gave Syria leverage in the peace negotiations to work towards an acceptable deal.[3] In simple terms, as has been already stated that Assad's policies sprang out from his rational approach to achieve foreign policy goals, Syria's involvement in Lebanon was Assad's strategy of forming a

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[1] Deirdre Collings (ed), *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Reconstruction* , (Boulder, 1994), pp.56-58.
[2] Itamar Rabinovich , "The Limits of Military Power: Syria's Role" in P. Edward Haley and Lewis W Snider (eds.) *Lebanon in Crisis: Participants and Issues*, (Syracuse, 1979), pp.56-57.
[3] Raymond Hinnebusch et.al, *Syrian Foreign Policy and the United States: From Bush to Obama,* (Fife, 2010), ,pp.6-16.

coalition of states in the Levant to challenge prevent Israeli influence and to deter separate peace treaties with Israel following the Camp David Accords. Syria by its role in Lebanon also made it clear that no peace negotiation regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict would succeed if Syria was neglected. Most importantly, the civil war in Lebanon and the presence of Palestinian groups made it vulnerable towards Israeli intervention. Assad was of the view that by controlling the "Palestinian card" present in Lebanon, it could use its position to gain bargaining leverage in the peace negotiations with Israel.[4]

In the 1970s, Lebanon was reeling under the pressure of some domestic problems. The PLO's increasing strength in and around the refugee camps in Lebanon made it "a state within a state", its plan of launching attacks against Israel from South Lebanese territory and in the societal context, the changing dynamics of Muslim-Christian demography leading to their fight for power in political institutions; all these contributed to instability inside Lebanon. Looking at these problems, Assad felt that Syria had to act accordingly and therefore, came out with a "Constitutional Document" in February 1976 to help the Lebanese Muslims and Christians to coexist in the socio-economic and political scenario. The efforts of Syria did not come to fruition as the Palestinian camp and the leftist rejected the offer. Assad did not want the Leftists and Muslims to be victorious in this conflict as some groups were getting support from rival Arab states. He also did not want the defeat of the Christians fearing that it would lead them to seek help from Israel. Eventually, in early 1976, Syria first sent its Palestinian ally, the *As Saiqa* group to pacify the situation in Lebanon after a request from the Maronite leadership to help them in their fight against the Leftists and the PLO. Then in April 1976, Syria sent its own armed forces to Lebanon.[5]

Various factors led Israel to focus its attention towards Lebanon in 1975. The Palestinian *fidayeen* attacks were causing concerns in Israel. The civil war gravely reduced the authority and control of the Suleimen Frangieh's government over the affairs in South Lebanon. The entry of the Syrian troops in Lebanon in April 1976 led Israel to demarcate an unofficial "red line" by the Litani River which is situated in South Lebanon, near which Syrian military presence was not to be allowed. By July 1976, Israel announced humanitarian relief, water supply and cross-border trade with a view to make the villages along the Israel-Lebanon

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[4] Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London, 1997), pp.71-73.
[5] Zisser Eyal, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, (London, 2001), pp.131-134.

border *anti-fidayeen* outposts. Towards the end of 1976, Israel began training and arming a group of Lebanese militia which later came to be known as the South Lebanese Army (SLA). The SLA was also formed with a view to act as an early warning system alerting Israeli troops about the presence of Palestinian fighters and also to act as a buffer between Israel and Lebanon. In 1978, the Israeli troops made a temporary incursion into the South Lebanon which eventually led to the stationing of UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to ensure Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Israel's main aim in relation to Lebanon was to terminate Palestinian operations, drive Syrian forces out and to build good relations with the Maronites[6]. To pacify the situation, the UNSC adopted the resolution 425 on 19 March 1978[7]. During Operation Peace for Galilee, Israeli troops launched its invasion into South Lebanon in 1982 and reached near Beirut. Israel's aim was to remove the PLO from Lebanon and to establish a pro-Israeli government there. Following Israel's 1982 invasion, the Syrian forces were driven out from most of the territories of Lebanon. However, this did not deter the Syrians and therefore, Syria went on to strongly condemn the Israel-Lebanon Agreement of 17 May 1983. By 1985, Israel withdrew most of its troops from Lebanon, except the so called "security zone."[8] The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the SLA formed the security zone in South Lebanon bordering Northern Israel to form a buffer between Israel and Lebanon and to escape from the threat of attacks of Katyusha missiles from Hezbollah.[9] The Hezbollah and the intricacies of Syria's relations with it have been discussed in greater details in the chapter IV.

The Taif Agreement which was negotiated in September 1989 was instrumental in bringing an end to years of internal turmoil and civil war in Lebanon. This accord was approved by the

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[6] The Maronite Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Melkite Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Assyrians, Copts and Protestants together constitute nearly less than 40 per cent of the total Christian population of Lebanon. Among them Maronites form the majority of the Christian population. During the civil war in Lebanon, the Maronites initially requested support from Syria in its fight against the Muslims but soon after they took a pro-Western stance and protested against Syria's role in Lebanon. Michel Aoun was a former Lebanese army chief who led a movement against Syrian presence in Lebanon. See *BBC News*, "Who are the Maronites?", [Online:web] Accessed 15 September 2016, URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6932786.stm

[7] UN Security Resolution 425 of 19 March 1978 called for respect for Lebanon's territorial sovereignty and integrity. It also most importantly called upon Israel to cease all military actions against Lebanon and immediately withdraw its forces. It also called for the establishment of a UN interim force in South Lebanon for the purpose of confirming withdrawal of Israeli forces and restoring peace and security. *UNSC Resolution 425* (1978) of 19 March , UN Doc S/12611, [Online:web] Accessed 11 October 2016,URL:http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/425%281978%29

[8] Collings, *Peace for Lebanon*, pp.114-119.

[9] Luft Gal (2000), "Israel's Security Zone in Lebanon - A Tragedy?," *Middle East Quarterly*, pp. 13-20 ,[Online:web] Accessed 20 April 2016, URL: http://www.meforum.org/70/israels-security-zone-in-lebanon-a-tragedy

Lebanese parliament on 4 November 1989. It was fundamental in bringing about a new political order in Lebanon. The Taif Agreement delineated Lebanon's executive set up and clearly stated that abolishing political sectarianism was considered as the main national objective. The agreement also stated that the national accord government would be entrusted to bring about a plan "to spread the sovereignty of the state of Lebanon over all Lebanese territories gradually with state's own forces". The Accord mentioned that while keeping in view the "fraternal ties" shared by Syria and Lebanon, Syrian forces would help to spread the authority of Lebanese government over all territories within a period of two years after the ratification of the charter, election of the President and strengthening the legitimacy of the political institutions, etc. The agreement called for the implementation of the UNSC Resolution 425 and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. The agreement clearly stated that Lebanon cannot be used as a base by any "force, state or organisation" which would threaten Syria's national security. Most importantly, the agreement conferred upon Syria an undisputed power to have a strong dominion over Lebanon's domestic politics.[10]

As already mentioned, Syria played an important role in Lebanon from the 1990s. In the post-Cold War scenario, Lebanon came to be viewed as a crucial element in Syria's relations with Israel. Syria under Hafez a-Assad was of the opinion that Israel would exploit the post-civil war situation in Lebanon for its own benefit and launch attacks on Syria. The primary aim of Assad was to ensure that Lebanon would not enter into a separate peace treaty with Israel and in order to prevent it, Syria went ahead to sign the 22 May 1991 "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination". This treaty led Syria to acquire an added advantage to closely monitor Lebanese politics. President Assad had delivered a speech clearly outlining Syria-Lebanon ties after signing the Treaty with Lebanon. Assad's speech outlined that Syria had "political, economic and security-related" interests in Lebanon. In order to have control over these interests, it was necessary for Syria to have control over Lebanon's internal and external affairs. Assad went on to clarify that the widely believed Syria's plan of annexing Lebanon was unachievable and unrealistic. Such an action would invite huge opposition in the region as well as at the international level. Assad stated that in order to secure Syrian interests in Lebanon, Syria envisioned the establishment of "a (relatively) centralised and stable Lebanese regime under Syrian patronage and influence". Such a regime in Lebanon would allow Syria to have predominance in Lebanese politics by avoiding direct involvement

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[10] The Taif Agreement,[Online:web] Accessed 9 May 2016,
URL:https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf

in it. [11] It was regarded that after this treaty was signed Syria had begun its "indirect rule" over the country and had attempted to make frequent interventions in its political and diplomatic matters. [12]

When the Taif Agreement was signed in 1989, the world was beginning to witness a changed political environment with the end of the Cold War. In 1991, Russia emerged as the Soviet Union's successor state. Therefore, it becomes important to briefly examine Russia's relations with Lebanon in order to understand Russia's position in Syria's policy involving Lebanon.

Lebanon recognised Russia soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the early 1990s, the most important issue at the core of Russia-Lebanon relations was to forge close economic cooperation which proved to be beneficial to both the countries. In Syria's view, Russia's relations with Lebanon was a way of making its position felt as an important power in the peace negotiations. Unlike the US role in Lebanon, Russia had less intention of getting involved in internal matters of Lebanon and remained mostly passive regarding Syria's role there. It is interesting to note that the Soviet Union along with Czechoslovakia had abstained during the voting of the UNSC resolution 425 in 19 March 1978. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia went forward to recognise the UNSC Resolution 425.

The head of the Lebanese delegation at the Madrid Peace Conference, Faris Bouez, clearly stated that the UNSC resolution 242 and 338 must be considered as separate from UNSC Resolution 425. He stated that UNSC Resolution 425 was an "independent" resolution which required separate implementation process. In contrast, Syria's head of delegation, Faruq al-Shara put forward Syria's demand that for a comprehensive peace, all the UNSC resolutions 242, 338 and 425 had to be implemented through "serious and productive talks". [13]

Russia's economic bond with Lebanon strengthened with the visit of Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev along with a Russian delegation in March 1995 which led to the signing of a trade and economic cooperation treaty. In that meeting between Russia and Lebanon, UN

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[11] Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*, pp.129-130.
[12] Taku Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon: International Relations and Diplomacy in the Middle East*, (New York, 2013), p.91.
[13] The Madrid Peace Conference (1992), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21(2), University of California Press, pp.117-149.

resolution 425 was discussed which supported Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Most importantly, during that meeting Russia acknowledged that Syrian and Lebanese peace tracks should not be dealt separately but together for the peace process to succeed. Russia also gave recognition to Syria's role in Lebanon and chose not to equate Syria's presence in Lebanon to that of Israel's military presence.[14]

Most of the events revolved around occupation of South Lebanon by Israel which began in June 1982 and ended with the withdrawal of Israeli troops from there in 2000. The attacks on South Lebanon by Israel to target Hezbollah were dealt with a long silent treatment by the Russian government only to have criticised later on calling those actions as "inappropriate to the situation." However, there were no strong objections or condemnation given by Russia against attacks committed by Israel.[15]

There were lot of appeals from many corners of Lebanese politics to bring an end to the political instability in Lebanon. Syrian Prime Minister Mahmud al-Zubi accorded Lebanon's unity and security as a priority of Syria's policy. He had stated this in an interview to the *Al-Ahram* newspaper in December 1990 where he emphasised that Syria was seriously working towards national reconciliation and to find a solution to the political problems of Lebanon.[16]

Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri who came to power in October 1992 was an important figure around whom much of the Syria-Lebanon relations revolved. In August 1993, during an interview with the *BBC,* Hariri stated that Israeli aggression had destroyed South Lebanon and that the Israelis were targeting and attacking the Hezbollah.[17] This showed that under his government Israel was viewed as a threat to Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Within Lebanon there were debates surrounding Israel's role in South Lebanon. The Arabs were urged to unite together to reach a viable solution. At the Arab Parliamentary Union Council (APUC) held in 1993, speaker of Lebanon's Parliament, Nabih Berri had pointed out

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[14] Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe?*, (Westport, 2007), pp.34-35.
[15] Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a new Foreign Policy,* (UK.,1999), p. 122.
[16] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1990), "Syrian President and the Premier Comment on Gulf Crisis; Lebanon; Ties with Egypt," ME/0944 A/6, 11 December 1990.
[17] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993), "Hariri Government Cannot Fight Hezbollah for "Domestic and National Reasons", *Radio Lebanon*, ME/1756 A/5, Beirut , 2 August 1993.

that Israel posed a threat to Lebanon and that comprehensive peace in the region could be reached only in return for all Arab territories.[18]

Hariri went to Syria on 13 September 1993 and discussions were held on reviewing relations between both the countries and particularly, the situation in South Lebanon. After Hariri's visit to Syria, Prime Minister al-Zubi had made a visit to Lebanon.[19] These diplomatic visits were reflective of the fact that both the countries were trying to come out with a solution for the political problems plaguing Lebanon for years and to limit Israel's role in the conflict. Cooperation between both the countries seemed necessary which propelled them to properly implement the clauses of the treaty signed in May 1991. This came at a time when solidarity and coordination became necessary for facing regional developments, especially at the background of the signing of the PLO-Israeli agreement."[20]

Lebanon's President Elyas Hirawi met Assad in 1994 to discuss internal, regional and international issues. Issues relating to bilateral relations were also discussed. Both the presidents emphasised the importance of cooperation and coordination between the two countries.[21] However, the chaos in South Lebanon could not be resolved in the due course of time and gradually gave way to a stalemate. It was reported that the Hezbollah Secretary General, Sheikh Nasrallah, had stated in March 1996 that "the group was not going to stop attacking Israeli targets in the south as long as Israel remained in occupation of Lebanese territories." Both Israel and Hezbollah were involved in blaming each other for the prolonged instability in South Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed that it had always been at the forefront of any struggle involving the "inalienable right of any people to resist alien occupation of its territory." There were continuous demands from Israel to Syria to refrain from arming the Hezbollah and persuade it to stop attacking Israeli positions. Israel had also placed another demand that Syria had to condemn the suicide bombings by Palestinian militants against Israel and label them as acts of "terrorism." Syria was also asked by Israel to shut down the all offices of the Palestinian opposition groups in Syria.[22]

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[18] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993), "Lebanon's Speaker Calls on Arab Parliamentarians to Support Lebanon", *Radio Lebanon*, Beirut , 31 July 1993, Me/1756 A/7, 2 August 1993.
[19] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993), "Syrian President Asad Receives Prime Minister Hariri; Syrian PM in Beirut", *Editorial Report,* ME/1796 MED/15, 17 September 1993.
[20] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993), "Syrian President Asad Receives prime Minister Hariri, Syrian PM in Beirut", *Radio Lebanon,* Beirut, ME/1796, MED/15, 17 September 1993.
[21] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1994), "President Hirawi Returns from Syria after Talks with President Asad," *Radio Lebanon,* Beirut, ME/2177 MED/13, 13 December 1994.
[22] Godfrey Jansen (1996), "Waiting for the Next Move", *Middle East International,*No.522, 29 March 1996,p.12.

At this point it seems important to understand how Russia came to view the internal political turmoil in Lebanon in the post-Cold War period. In the early 1990s, Syria felt some pressure from the US to proceed towards a separate peace treaty with Israel after peace treaties signed by PLO and Jordan with Israel. Syria's position was that Syrian and Lebanese peace tracks should not be considered separately but as one. After following an ambiguous policy in relation to Syria's role in Lebanon, in 1994, the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev felt the need for Russia's assertive role in the peace process if it wanted to prevent the US from having absolute influence over the peace negotiations. Moscow also became aware of the US persuading Syria to strike a peace deal with Israel along the lines of PLO-Israel and Jordan-Israel peace treaties. Kozyrev was of the view that Russia's relations with Syria had to be revitalised which was rather weak during the first few years after the end of the Cold War. However, under Kozyrev, Syria-Russia relations could not be placed on a very strong footing because of the Soviet era debt issue and the military relations also did not seem strong. It is important to mention that Russia was consistent in its support for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 425 by Israel. This became evident during Kozyrev's visit to Lebanon in March 1995 when he reiterated Russia's support for the UNSC resolution 425 which the Lebanese government also supported. However, Russia's support was limited to watching the situation in Lebanon closely and believed that problems in South Lebanon could be settled "on the basis of equal security for all." [23]After Primakov's take over as the Foreign Minister of Russia in January 1996, Russia began actively reactivating its bilateral relations with Syria. However, it must be mentioned here that although Primakov wanted Russia to be a strong player in the Arab-Israeli issues, he resorted to "being vague" on the Russian perspective of the Syrian role in Lebanon. He called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon which implicitly meant withdrawal of Syrian forces as well. This stance of Russia can be described as a deviation from the Syrian view because Syria wanted the world to view its role in Lebanon as a stabilising force. Both Russia and the US were of the opinion that the Lebanon's opposition in exile viewed Syrian presence in Lebanon as an "occupying force." [24]

As the US was acknowledged as the only superpower in the post-Cold War period, Syria felt that the US would play an important role in bringing stability in Lebanon. Syria was of the

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[23] Dmitriy Zlenko, (1994), "Yeltsin Envoy Posuvalyuk Visits Lebanon, Syria", *ITAR-TASS*, 21 August 1994
[24] Nizameddin , *Russia and the Middle East,* pp.160-169

belief that the Clinton administration which came into power in January 1993 would help in limiting Israel's role in Lebanon but gradually all the assumptions proved wrong as it became clear that the US was not opposing to any of Israel's attacks in South Lebanon. Moreover, the US administration had clearly mentioned after the 11 April 1996 attack which is known as the Operation Grapes of Wrath [25] by Israel that it considered the Hezbollah "entirely responsible for the outbreak of heavy fighting". The US also hesitated to condemn any of Israel's actions and also went on to block UN resolution targeted to bring about an end to those attacks by Israel. Due to such behaviour, Syria went on to view the US role in bringing about a solution to the conflict in Lebanon as a "discredited" one. This view of Syria was strengthened by the visit of Europe's officials to Damascus to discuss the situation in Lebanon and in a way to "offer a counterbalance to Washington." Top officials from Iran, France Ireland, Italy and Spain visited Syria for the same matter and finally Primakov arrived. Christopher Ross, the US ambassador had arrived in Syria on 20 April 1996 to discuss the matter of Lebanon and he was made to wait to meet until the meeting with Primakov got over.[26] While giving an interview to the *ITAR-TASS* on 19 April, Yeltsin had stated that the situation in Lebanon was "unacceptable" to the Russian government. He criticised the Israeli role in Lebanon. He had also emphasised that the shelling of Northern Israel by Hezbollah was condemnable and should come to an end. To review the situation in the region and to facilitate a process of ceasefire in Lebanon, Yeltsin had stated that Foreign Minister Primakov would be sent to the region and immediate meetings would be called with the leaders of Lebanon, Israel and Syria.[27]The aim of Primakov's visit was to achieve an immediate solution to end the conflict situation in Lebanon within a "framework of international efforts." He had come on a tour of the region on the instructions of Yeltsin.[28] Under such circumstances Primakov visited Syria, Iran and Lebanon but failed to bring about any positive outcome. The diplomacy between US and Israel following the Israeli operation "squeezed out" Russia from any further process of settlement.[29] All this while the Russian government was expressing shock and condemning the Israeli attacks in Lebanon. By

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[25] A series of air strikes was carried out by Israel as a retaliatory attack against the Hezbollah attacks from Lebanon. The operation partly was also made to send a message to the Syrians to stop arming the Hezbollah which according to Israel received Russian made arms through Syria. See Operation Grapes of Wrath, *Globalsecurity.org*, [Accessed] 5 September 2016, URL: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon-grapesofwrath.htm

[26] Donald Neff (1996), "Season of Shame", *Middle East International,*No.524, 26 April 1996, pp.5-6,

[27] ITAR-TASS World Service (1996), "Russia: Yeltsin Orders Primakov to Israel, Syria, Lebanon for Talks", 19 April 1996.

[28] Anatoliy Golovastov (1996), "Russia: Primakov in Meeting with Syria's al-Assad", *ITAR-TASS World Service,* FBIS-SOV-96-079, 22 April 1996, p.25.

[29] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, p.171.

October 1996, Russia came to acknowledge that Syria played a key role in Lebanon and that Syria was an important component of the Lebanese-Israeli peace track. The Russian government also came to dismiss Israel's idea that Israeli troops would withdraw only if Syria would follow suit. Russia was slightly irritated at US attitude of striving for a "face saving exit from the fighting" for Israel from Lebanon rather than exploring options for arriving at a durable solution for the crisis.[30]

It is important to mention that at the time of Operation Grapes of Wrath of 1996, Russia-Lebanon relations were witnessing an all-time high in terms of economic cooperation and trade. After the Israeli attacks on Lebanese territory, it was claimed by Israel that Lebanon had to undertake measures to put an end to the hostilities perpetrated by Hezbollah. Although Russia condemned Hezbollah attacks on Northern Israel, it also underlined breaching of Lebanon's sovereignty due to Israeli attacks.[31] Russia basically condemned the attacks perpetrated by Hezbollah as well as Israel. In the timeline of Russia-Israel relations in the post-Cold War period, during the Operation Grapes of Wrath, it was Primakov, the first Russian government official who came out with strong criticisms against Israeli attacks on Lebanese civilians on South Lebanon. He sent the message across that Israel could not expect Syria and the Lebanese government to keep Hezbollah in control under circumstances of attacks from Israel on Lebanese civilians. However, no matter what the Russian government did to show itself as an important player in Arab-Israeli issues during that period, the role of US was given more value than that of Russia's as a possible guarantor and mediator for bringing about a peaceful end of the hostilities in Lebanon. Russia sought to adopt a balanced approach in its policies towards Arab-Israeli issues because of which apart from condemning Israel, Russia at some points criticised both Syria and Iran for their support for the Hezbollah.[32]

It must be mentioned here that Syria was hesitant to risk its peace negotiations with Israel for the sake of the Lebanon issue. This was evident from the fact that despite Lebanon's importance to Syria's national security and acting as a strategic leverage in relation to Israel, Syria never contemplated annexation of Lebanon. Assad was also cautious enough to refer to Syria-Lebanon relations by referring to it as "one people." Moreover, the Operation Grapes

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[30] Ibid., p.169.
[31] Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*, p.35.
[32] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, pp.170-179.

of Wrath by Israel could not cause any disruption of Syria's role in Lebanon.[33] It can be said that since Syria's political grip in Lebanon was secure even after the Operation Grapes of Wrath, Russia's balanced approach towards the Lebanon issue did not bother Syria. Most importantly, as stated earlier, Russia fully supported the UNSC resolution 425 and continuance of a unified Syria-Lebanon peace track in relation to Israel. This stance of Russia was viewed by Syria as an implicit recognition of its role in Lebanon.[34]

Although the US and Israel tried to keep Russia in the periphery in the peace negotiations, Russia consistently carried out attempts to make a place for itself in the Arab-Israeli matters. Towards the end of 1990s, relations between Israel's neighbouring countries and the US began deteriorating which provided Russia with the opportunity to make a strong position for itself in key issues of the West Asian region. Diplomatic visits by Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvaliuk in December 1997 to various countries in the region and his meeting with Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah chief helped to increase Moscow's standing in the West Asian regional affairs.[35]

As Russia and Lebanon were undergoing warm relations, Prime Minister Hariri paid a visit to Moscow in 1997 to urge Russia to provide more support to the Arab-Israeli peace process, especially to the Lebanese and Syrian peace tracks. The main aim behind Hariri's visit was to give further impetus to the flourishing economic relations between Lebanon and Russia. During their meeting, Primakov made it clear to Hariri that Russia would not abandon the "land for peace principle" in UN resolution 242 and the Madrid principles[36] for the attainment of peace. In 1998, Israel's decision to abide by the UN resolution 425 was welcomed by Russia. However, Russia did not acknowledge Israeli demands for security in its northern frontier along the south Lebanon border. Even Syria and Lebanon felt that deployment of security forces along the border would aggravate the problems. Both Syria and Lebanon did not attend the multilateral peace talks held in Moscow in February 2000 based on the reason of continued violence along the Lebanon-Israel border and also because of lack of progress of the Syrian-Lebanese track of peace process with Israel. Moscow appreciated Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. Even after the withdrawal of Israeli forces

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[33] Volker Perthes (1997), "Syria's Involvement in Lebanon", *Middle East Report*, No.203, p.18.
[34] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, pp.168-169.
[35] Ibid., pp.170-179.
[36] For more details, See The Madrid Peace Conference (1992), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21(2), University of California Press, pp.117-149.

from Lebanon's "security zone", the conflict situation in Lebanon did not clam down. In 2001, Hezbollah attacks against Israel continued from the Sheba Farms and in a retaliatory attack, Israel bombed a Syrian post located in East Lebanon. Following this incident, Moscow's special envoy Andrei Vdovin made attempts to pacify the situation. However, the attacks did not come to a halt.[37]

The Clinton-Assad meeting to discuss peace at Geneva in April 2000 also ended in failure. During the meeting, views and opinions were exchanged and consultations were held regarding the situation in Lebanon along with discussions on Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli track of the peace process. Syria had insisted on adhering to the Madrid conference principles which put forth conditions of just and comprehensive peace on the basis of implementation of UN resolutions 242, 338 and 425.[38]

Even before Israeli forces decided to pull out of Lebanon, Bashar al-Assad who was then the Colonel of Syrian Republican Guards, put forth the Syrian point of view of the Israeli plan of pulling out of Lebanon. Assad emphasised on the point that Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon must not be understood as "equivalent to peace with Syria". He put forward Syrian view that Israeli withdrawal must have taken place within the framework of comprehensive peace in order to avoid instability and chaos post-withdrawal.[39]

As already mentioned, Israel had completed its troops withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000. Soon after Israeli withdrawal, Lebanon came to witness a huge opposition to the presence of Syrian forces from various sections of the society namely the Sunnis, the Druze, Christian right and the Lebanese left. With mounting internal pressure for the Syrians to withdraw, the UNSC passed resolution 1559[40] in September 2004. This resolution called for immediate withdrawal of the Syrian forces from the country. While these factors were

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[37] Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*, pp.34-36
[38] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Syrian Foreign Minister Holds Talks in Beirut with Lebanese President", 4 April 2000, Text of Report by Syrian Radio on 2 April 2000, ME/3806 MED/14.
[39] Bashar al-Assad (2000) "President Assad/First Western Media Interview", 27 April 2000, [Online:web] Accessed 1 July 2016, URL: http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=91&Itemid=468
[40] UNSC resolution 1559 was passed on 2 September 2004. It declared UN's support for free and fair presidential elections according to Lebanese constitutional rules and called upon all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon. In a related provision, the Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. See Resolution 1559 (2004) Adopted by Vote of 9 in Favour, to None Against, with 6 Abstentions, 2 September 2004, [Online:web] Accessed 2 May 2016, URL:https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm

creating a volatile political situation in Lebanon another incident occurred which had immense impact on Syrian role in Lebanon. This was the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri on 14 February 2005. Although initially he wanted to cooperate with the Syrian government to bring about stability in Lebanon gradually he emerged as an opposition figure. His death led to widespread protests against the presence of Syrian forces in Lebanon which compelled the international community to speed up the process of arriving at a solution. The response of the international community was decisive in defining Syria's further involvement in internal affairs of Lebanon. Former Russian Foreign Minister, Primakov had outlined his opinion on the issue by stating:

> First, it strikes me that Syrian *politicians* cannot have been the ones behind the assassination; they must have realised that the inevitable outpouring of anti-Syrian feeling in Lebanon would compel the international community to step up its demands for Syria to comply with Security Council resolution 1559-which is indeed what happened. Second, Hariri had enough political enemies within Lebanon who would have liked to get rid of him. And third, I do not accept that one man in Damascus-the president-has total control over everything that happens. He does, of course, wield a great deal of power; but I do not believe that any individual groups or institutions would act solely on his orders while undermining him at the same time. [41]

Bashar al-Assad's position regarding the peace process differed to some extent from that of his father and took upon a radical tone towards it. He contemplated and tried to convince other Arab countries to sever ties with Israel (as mentioned in chapter II) due to years of failed attempt to achieve peace. Bashar was also facing pressure from Lebanese opposition to withdraw Syrian forces from Lebanese territory. In order to counter such pressures he made efforts to undertake certain decisions such as redeployment of Syrian forces from Lebanon in November 2000. The increase in Hezbollah attacks against Sheba Farms[42] during the Second *Intifada* led to Syria-US tensions as Syria was held responsible for such actions.[43] Due to

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[41] Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, Translated by Paul Gould, (New York, 2009), pp.205-207.

[42] It is a disputed area which lies in the Syria-Lebanon-Israel border and is a part of the Golan Heights which was captured by Israel in 1967 from Syria. Even after Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, Hezbollah launched attacks on Israeli troops in Sheba Farms claiming that the area belongs to Lebanon and therefore, withdrawal process was incomplete. Israel held on to the Shaba Farms by citing that the land belonged to Syria and Israel captured its in 1967 along with the Golan Heights. See Agence France Presse (2014) "The Shebaa Farms, a tug-of-war Mideast conflict zone," *The Times of Israel*, Beirut, 8 October 2014, [Online:web]Accessed 20 September 2016, URL:http://www.timesofisrael.com/the-shebaa-farms-a-tug-of-war-mideast-conflict-zone-2/

[43] Radwan Ziadeh, *Power and Policy in Syria: The Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East*, (New York, 2011), pp. 83-84.

Syria's attitude during the 2006 Lebanon-Israel War[44], its "moderate" allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia aligned with the US. Most importantly, EU with whom Syria was negotiating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership had become highly critical of Syria because of Hariri assassination and suspended the agreement negotiations. At this point of time, Syria and Iran along with Hezbollah aligned together to act as a deterrent against increasing US influence in the region. Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon by succumbing to the pressure from the international community, mainly the US, deprived Syria of its "bargaining cards". Syria was of the view that post-withdrawal Lebanon could be used by the US to threaten the Syrian regime.[45]

While discussing the UN resolution 1559, the representative of the Russian Federation argued that as the situation was volatile in the region, any miscalculated step would cause huge instability. Therefore, he made some amendments to the resolution draft and suggested a text "aimed at moving it towards the context of a Middle East settlement as a whole and preventing the document from being one-sided and from concentrating solely on domestic Lebanese affairs." However, his proposal was not accepted. The main aim for the amendment to the text of the resolution by Russia was to dilute the focus on Syria's involvement in Lebanese politics and rather to highlight other factors contributing to the problems in Lebanon.[46]

The most important fact that needs mentioning here is that Russia, China and Brazil had abstained from voting on the UN resolution 1559. From Russian government's perspective, the resolution failed to cover all the aspects of the conflict in Lebanon and a few issues were not included. The anti-Syria opposition was rising most prominently from the Maronites and the Druze community. Russia closely followed the anti-Syrian activities in Lebanon. Russia came to acknowledge the growing anti-Syrian opposition and hence went on to receive the

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[44] The 2006 Lebanon War, also known as the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah was a 34-day long military conflict which took place in Lebanon, Northern Israel and the Golan Heights. The main parties to the conflict were Hezbollah paramilitary forces and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).The conflict began on 12 July 2006 and continued until a United Nations-brokered ceasefire came into effect on 14 August 2006, though it formally ended on 8 September 2006 when Israel lifted its naval blockade of Lebanon. See 2006: Lebanon War, 6 May 2008, *BBC News*, [Online:web]Accessed 4 July 2016, URL:http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7381389.stm

[45] Hinnebusch et.al, *Syrian Foreign Policy and the United States*, pp.6-16.

[46] UN Meetings and Press Releases (2004), "Security Council Declares Support for Free, Fair Presidential Election in Lebanon; Calls for Withdrawal of Foreign Forces There", SC/8181, *Resolution 1559 (2004) Adopted by Vote of 9 in Favour, to None Against, with 6 Abstentions* , 2 September 2004, [Online:web]Accessed 2 May 2016, URL:https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm

Lebanese Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt in Moscow in March 2005 to discuss the instability in Lebanon and the Hariri assassination case, in which it was believed that Syria had a role. During the talks, both sides agreed that it was necessary to implement the UN resolution 1559. Russia at this point began to play a balancing act by supporting the stabilisation of Lebanon thereby accepting the fact that Syria should withdraw its troops from there and also to protect Syria from any possible troubles such as sanctions from the international community.[47]

Hariri's assassination created more problems for Syria. Hariri was to some extent vocal about Syria's presence in Lebanon and Israel too. However, friction between Hariri and the Syrian government was covertly going on but he also tried to engage Syria and its allies in Lebanon in economic reconstruction of the country. Gradually, the economy of Lebanon began showing signs of slowdown and during that time the activities of Hezbollah seemed unnecessary and destructive more so because by then Israeli troops had left the country. He also harboured fears that Syria would make its complete interference in Lebanese domestic politics which would in turn remove him from the political scene.[48] An amendment to extend the term of President Emile Lahoud who was in power since 1998, a pro-Syrian politician with support from Syria in September 2004 confirmed Hariri's doubts.[49]

In March 2005 during an interview, Bashar al-Assad made a statement that Syrian government was planning to pull out its troops.[50] Syria withdrew it troops from Lebanon on 26 April 2005 which was hailed as a "historic day." A notification was also sent to the UN by Syria stating that it withdrew "all of its troops, military assets and intelligence apparatus from Lebanon."[51] Russia also joined the international community in vaguely calling for all foreign troops to leave Lebanon.[52] The Russian government had also expressed concern of increased destabilisation post- Israeli withdrawal. It was also well emphasised by Russia that the UN

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[47] Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*, p.37.

[48] Talal Nizameddin, *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*, (London, 2013), p.170.

[49] John Kifner (2004), *"Lebanon Agrees to Extend Term of Leader Imposed by Syria," The New York Times*, Beirut, 4 September 2000, [Online:web]Accessed 9 May 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/04/world/middleeast/lebanon-agrees-to-extend-term-of-leader-imposed-by-syria.html?_r=0

[50] Agencies, (2005), "Moscow Calls for Syria to Leave Lebanon," *The Guardian,* 3 March 2005, [Online:web]Accessed 30 August 2015, URL:http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/mar/03/russia.syria

[51] United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases (2005), *SC/8372 , Syria's Withdrawal From Lebanon 'Historic Day'For Middle East, Special Envoy Terje Roed-Larsen Tells Security Council,* 29 April 2005 [Online:web]Accessed 27 April 2016, URL:http://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sc8372.doc.htm

[52] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, pp.168.

Security Council resolution 1559 must be implemented properly to reach a solution regarding the Lebanese crisis.

A United Nations report was released in October 2005 indicating the involvement of some top Syrian government officials in the assassination of Hariri. Syria was in complete denial and criticised the report but nevertheless announced its willingness to cooperate in the investigation process. This UN report led to further international pressure and the threat of sanctions being imposed on Syria. Foreign Ministry adviser of Syria, Riad Daudi gave the first "official reaction" in which he stated that Syria "rejected the report, which was biased and aimed at hurting Syria." The report had concluded that there was "converging evidence of Lebanese and Syrian involvement" in the assassination.[53]

As the international pressure on Syria kept increasing in relation to the assassination of Hariri, there were also claims from Israel that Syria was supplying the Hezbollah with Russian-made rockets. The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin had responded to such claims by stating that Russia followed a strict export control and it was made sure that such weapons would not reach any "unintended recipients."[54]

During the 2006 Lebanon-Israel War it was claimed by Israel that Syria had provided intelligence support to the Hezbollah. These intelligence data were collected from the listening posts jointly controlled by Russia and Syria. Damascus had signed an agreement with Russia on intelligence cooperation and it was believed that this helped to procure vital information which was passed on to Hezbollah during the war. There were also accusations from Israel that Russia was supplying Syria with anti-tank missiles. However such claims were denied by Russia.[55]In this context at an Arab journalists meet the then US Secretary of State Condolezza Rice took the opportunity to state that "Syria, Iran and Hezbollah are a

[53] Inigo Gilmore (2005), "Syria Hits out Against Hariri murder claims," *The Guardian*, 23 October 2005, [Online:web]Accessed 17 April 2016, URL:http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/23/syria.unitednations
[54] "Russia: Hizbullah Does Not Use Russian Rockets", 30 December 2005, *The Jerusalem Post*, [Online:web]Accessed 30 August 2015, URL:http://www.jpost.com/International/Russia-Hizbullah-does-not-use-Russian-rockets
[55] Ze'ev Schiff (2006), "Hezbollah Received Intel from Russia-Syrian listening Post During War," *Haaretz.com*, 4 October 2006, [Online:web]Accessed 30 August 2015, URL:http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/hezbollah-received-intel-from-russian-syrian-listening-post-during-war-1.200408

problem for the future course of Lebanon's development and also therefore the future course of the region."[56]

An international tribunal was set up in 2009 to investigate the murder of Hariri. Russia was of the opinion that the tribunal was in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty. Russia had abstained in the voting for the establishment of the tribunal. Russia was of the opinion that the fractured Lebanese political system would get further destabilised. This led a Russian government official to state that "establishing the tribunal by a unilateral decision of the UN Security Council damages Lebanese sovereignty."[57] However, it was reported in *RIA Novosti* on 4 April 2008 that Russia was offering to contribute an amount to the tune of $500,000 to finance the UN tribunal. It was supposed to be a voluntary fund.[58]

This was not to imply that Russia was strictly against the setting up of the tribunal but it was sceptical about the implications that it would bring about in the internal affairs of Lebanon. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Saltanov had stated after meeting with the Prime Minister of Lebanon Fuad Siniora that earlier reservations regarding the tribunal were due to the concern that whether it would bring about stability or create new problems for the country.[59]

B: The Iraq-Kuwait Crisis

The Soviet disengagement from the region led Syria to improve its relations with the US. Systemic changes at the international level evoked a sense of insecurity which led Syria to side with the US while going against Iraq during the Iraq-Kuwait War.

Iraq began its invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, much before the Soviet Union disintegrated and was the first among a series of important events to occur in the region

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[56] Nizameddin, *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*, p.166.
[57] RIA Novosti (2007), " Russia Says Planned Hariri Tribunal Affects Lebanon Sovereignty", *Sputnik News*, 31 May 2007, Russia, [Online:web] Accessed 30 August 2015, URL:http://www.sputniknews.com/russia/20070531/66382412.html
[58] RIA Novosti (2008), "Russia to contribute $500,000 to Hariri UN tribunal costs", *Sputnik News*, 4 April 2008, [Online:web] Accessed 19 April 2016,URL:http://sputniknews.com/russia/20080404/103757610.html

[59] RIA Novosti (2007), "Moscow Unopposed to intl. Tribunal on Lebanon ex-PM's Death", *Sputnik News*, 17 April 2007, Damascus, [Online:web] Accessed 30 August 2015, URL:http://sputniknews.com/russia/20070417/63830929.html

towards the end of the Cold War. Immediately after Iraq's invasion, Syria sided with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to work towards securing a complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. On 3 August 1990, at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting in Egypt, Foreign Ministers of Arab League of which Syria was also a member, went on to strongly denounce the Iraqi invasion. An emergency Arab Summit was convened to discuss the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq on 8 August 1990. The annexation of Kuwait by Iraq took place after the US deployed ground forces in Saudi Arabia. At the Summit it was agreed to send Arab forces to Saudi Arabia in order to provide security in case of foreign aggression. On 21 August 1990, Syria sent its first batch of troops to Saudi Arabia. Hafez al-Assad went on to justify Syria's stance by stating that this action was undertaken to ensure protection of sacred places and to prevent the division of Arabs. Assad also stressed on the fact that after the withdrawal of the foreign troops from the region, Arab forces would remain to ensure protection of the Gulf.[60]

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait led to the passing of numerous UNSC resolutions in August 1990. Some of the important UNSC resolutions are UNSC resolution 660 of 2 August 1990 which went on to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and demanded the "unconditional withdrawal" of Iraqi forces; UNSC resolution 661 of 6 August 1990 imposed trade sanctions on Iraq; UNSC resolution 662 of 6 August 1990 declared the Iraq's annexation of Kuwait as illegal; UNSC resolution 664 of 18 August 1990 demanded Iraq to allow and facilitate the departure of nationals of third-State and to ensure their safety; UNSC resolution 665 of 25 August 1990 called for strict implementation of UNSC resolution 661 by inspecting all cargoes and ships.[61]

The Iraq-Kuwait crisis began on 17 January 1991 after the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678 on 29 November 1990 to use "all necessary means" by the US-led coalition force of 34 nations to deter Iraq from further invasion of Kuwait. Iraq was asked to abide by the UNSC resolution 678 and withdraw its forces by midnight of 15 January 1990. Syria went on to join the US-led coalition to liberate Kuwait. Syria was clearly against any form of occupation in the region knowing well that it could affect Syria also. Therefore, President

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[60] Jawaid Iqbal (1992), "Syria: Assad's Gamble", in A.K Pasha (ed), *The Gulf in Turmoil*, New Delhi: Lancers Books, pp.168-170.
[61] United Nations Security Council Documents (1990), "United Nations Security Council, Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council in 1990", [Online:web] Accessed 27 April 2017, URL:http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/1990.shtml

Assad went on air and sent an open letter to Saddam Hussein through Damascus Radio on 12 January 1991. He stated that "any harm that befalls Iraq also affects Syria and the entire Arab World." He went on to stress that in such a crucial moment Arabs would be the "losing party" if an "international war" was declared on Iraq by western powers. Interestingly, he went on to state that if Iraq would be targeted after withdrawal from Kuwait, Syria would try to help Iraq through all possible means to overcome such a situation.[62]

Before the war was declared on Iraq, US Secretary of State James Baker made an important tour to several countries in the region in September 1990. While in Syria, he met President Assad and conveyed to him that Syria's participation in the coalition was seen by the US as indispensable. Moreover, Baker wanted Syria's active participation in the peace process without which a comprehensive solution to the conflict would not be possible. He wrote in his memoir that Syria's involvement in the US backed coalition to liberate Kuwait would enhance the "credibility of Arab coalition partners."[63]

While Iraq was adamantly continuing with its hostile activities in Kuwait, Syria urged the Iraqi government to "act responsibly" and bring an end to its destructive role in Kuwait. More than anything, Syria was gravely concerned about outbreak of a war in the region which would prove to be harmful for the region's stability. At the backdrop of such concerns, the Syrian government made an announcement on 30 November 1990 which stated:

> If war breaks out in the Gulf, this time it will be more destructive and ruinous in view of the massive military build-up and the destructive weapons involved. An observer does not have to think long before he realises that the only loser will be Iraq, the countries of the region and the Arab nation. Indeed, Iraq will be the biggest loser, because destruction will not only affect military forces, equipment and installations but, might develop to destroy vital economic installations.[64]

While the situation was escalating, Syria was observing Israel's approach towards the issue. It struck Syria that Israel was trying to hijack the issue for its own benefit and depict it as though it were a crisis between Israel and Iraq thereby undermining Kuwait's suffering. The

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[62] Bouthaina Shaaban, *Damascus Dairy: An Inside Account of Hafez Al-Assad's Peace Diplomacy, 1990-2000,* (Colorado, 2013), p.11.
[63] James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992,* (New York, 1995), p.295.
[64]BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1990) , "Syrian Radio Calls on Iraq's Rulers to Act Responsibly Before it is Too Late", ME/0937 A/7, Part 4, 3 December 1990.

Syria Arab Radio had made an announcement in December 1990 stating that Israel was "capitalising on Iraq's crime at the expense of all Arabs." [65]

It is worth mentioning that when the news of Iraq invading Kuwait spread, US Secretary of State James Baker was in Siberia attending a ministerial level meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. As the Soviet Union had a considerable presence in Iraq, Shevardnadze was both shocked and embarrassed to hear the news of the Iraqi invasion. [66]

Iraq's diplomatic relations with the USSR began in 1944 but was broken off in 1955 when Iraq joined the Baghdad Pact. From 1958 onwards Iraq began to share robust military economic relations with the Soviet Union. Iraq and the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on 9 April 1972. However, relations between the two began to turn sour in the late 1970s with Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 when Saddam Hussein stated it as "unjustifiable, erroneous behaviour that could cause anxiety for all freedom loving and independent peoples." Economic relations also witnessed a decline as Iraq turned towards the West in the 1970s with the rise in oil prices in the aftermath of the 1973 October War and increase in financial resources. Although the Soviet Union was not critical of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran War, it adopted a neutral stand by acting as a mediator to bring about both the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' also did not go well with its relations with Iraq. Hours after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the Soviet Union was quick to issue a condemnation demanding "immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwaiti Territory." [67] Despite some disagreements, relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union were fairly stable during this time. However, when the Soviet Union announced that it was speculating to send troops to the region if Russians were treated badly, Iraq was amazed at the statements made by Soviet Union's Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Iraqi Foreign Ministry spokesman responded to Soviet Union's concerns and stated that the Soviet Union was just looking for a pretext to send troops to the region. The spokesman went on to warn the Soviet Union that any such activity would jeopardise Soviet Union's relationship with the region and mainly

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[65] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1990), "Syrian Radio: Israel Capitalising on Iraq's "Crime" at the Expense of all Arabs", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio*, ME/0958 A/5, Damascus, 28 December 1990.
[66] Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for the Middle East Peace,* (New York, 2004), p.65
[67] Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrej Kreutz (2001), "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis," *Arab Studies Quarterly,* 23 (4), pp. 87-115.

Iraq.[68] Such attempts made by Soviet Union to dissuade Iraq from invading Kuwait fell into deaf ears as result of which Moscow terminated its arms deliveries to Iraq. This was a significant action taken by Soviet Union given its strong military and economic relation with Iraq and the presence of around 7,000 Soviet specialists there.[69]

On 3 August 1990, US Secretary of State James Baker met Gorbachev and was informed that Soviet Union was in dire need of financial aid and recovery of the economy was of paramount importance. Baker had arranged for $4 billion of credit from Saudi Arabia.[70] The Soviet Union had to prioritise its own needs over its relations with Iraq and therefore had to show support to US's efforts to end the crisis thereby disregarding Article 10 of the Soviet-Iraqi Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1972 which had stated that both the countries would refrain from entering into "alliance or grouping to take part in any action or undertakings directed against the other."[71] But this was met with opposition in the Soviet parliament from the hard-liners of the Communist Party and also from Soviet military who were critical of any kind of cooperation with the US against Iraq. Gorbachev could not completely turn a blind eye to the criticism from the hard-liners and therefore, the Soviet Union was working in support of the US under the auspices of the United Nations. On 3 August 1990, Baker had to convince Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who was extremely critical of pro-Western policy under Gorbachev that the US would not resort to unilateral military action against Iraq if the Soviet Union showed collaboration or stayed neutral on the issue. Only after this did Shevardnadze agree to a joint statement condemning Iraq's atrocities in Kuwait.[72] The Soviet Union and US came together to urge the international community to halt all arms transfers to Iraq in the first week of August 1990, thereby declaring Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as an illegal act.[73]

After a request from the Saudi government, the US deployed its 82nd ,101st Airborne Division as well as the 24th Infantry divisions in order to deter the Iraqi government from attacking

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[68] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1990), "Iraqi "Amazement" That USSR Says it Might Send Troops to the Gulf," ME/0937 A/9, Part 4, 2 December 1990.
[69] Bill Keller (1990), "The Iraqi Invasion; Moscow Joins US in Criticizing Iraq", *The New York Times*, Moscow 4 August 1990.
[70] Ronald E. Powaski *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union,1917-1991*, (Oxford, 1998), pp.281-281.
[71] Ismael and Kreutz , "Russia and Iraqi Relations", pp. 87-115.
[72] Powaski, *The Cold War*, pp.281-284.
[73] Bill Keller (1990), "The Iraqi Invasion; Moscow Joins US in Criticizing Iraq, *The New York Times*, Moscow, 4 August 1990.

Saudi Arabia and destroying its oil fields. The US wanted to convey to Saddam Hussein that any attack on Saudi Arabia would mean an attack on the US which in turn would call for conflict with the West and also on some of the Arab countries siding with the US. Egypt and Syria had also stationed their troops in Saudi Arabia. This build-up of forces in order to protect Saudi Arabia came to be known as Operation Desert Shield.[74]

Syria viewed the invasion of Kuwait as an aberration in the post-Cold War period. Assad, while commenting on the issue at an interview in December 1990 to the *Rose al-Yusuf* magazine, had stated, "annexation through invasion and force has no place in the modern world." He added that Syrian troops in Saudi Arabia did not imply that it sought inter-Arab conflict or that they wanted to attack Iraq.[75]

The US had assured the Soviet Union that the purpose of dispatching troops to the region was mainly due to defensive concerns and no attack would be launched against Iraq. Following this assurance, UN resolution 665 was passed on 25 August 1990 authorising the use of all measures necessary to enforce economic embargo on Iraq. However, Moscow refused an US proposal to send its troops to the region primarily because of opposition from the military. In September 1990, when Bush and Gorbachev met in Helsinki, they again issued another joint statement condemning Iraq and emphasising other necessary action for ending the crisis. At this meeting it was also decided that all the conflicts in the region would be dealt with by cooperating with each other. The Soviet military and the Politburo hard-liners were soon looking at the Soviet-US cooperation with suspicion as around 200,000 US troops were deployed in Saudi Arabia which was not too far from the Soviet border. In order to pacify the fears of the politburo members and the military, Gorbachev sent Yevgeny Primakov, an official at the Foreign Ministry to take a tour of the region and persuade Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. However, Primakov's mission ended unsuccessfully. Following this unsuccessful mission, Soviet Union voted in support of the 29 November 1990 UN Security Council resolution 678 which authorised "use of force" to drive Iraqis out of Kuwait. Military action against Iraq was authorised on 17 January 1991 after the US Congress approved a

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[74] Michael R. Gordon (1990), "Bush Sends U.S. Force to Saudi Arabia as Kingdom Agrees To Confront Iraq; Bush's Aim's: Deter Attack, Send a Signal", *The New York Times,* Washington, 8 August 1990 [Online:web] Accessed 14 September 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1990/08/08/world/bush-sends-us-force-saudi-arabia-kingdom-agrees-confront-iraq-bush-s-aim-s-deter.html?pagewanted=all
[75] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1990), "Syrian President and Premier Comment on Gulf Crisis; Lebanon and Ties With Egypt," ME/0944 A/6, Part 4, MENA in Arabic, 9 December 1990.

resolution and the US-led coalition began its ground war known as the "Operation Desert Storm" on 23 February 1991.[76]

Before launching ground operations against Iraq in February 1991, a massive air campaign was launched. Just an hour before launching a massive air campaign on Iraq on 17 January 1991, Moscow was informed by the US authorities. The Soviet Union wanted to make a last effort to persuade Saddam to order his troops to withdraw from Iraq but this proposal was rejected. Therefore, Moscow had no option but to support the US-led action against Iraq. Soviet Foreign Minister, Aleksander Bessmertnykh had stated at the presidium of the Supreme Soviet that Moscow had to avoid confrontation with the US "with the Cold War drawing to a close." The Iraq-Kuwait War and the military build-up close to Soviet Union's border was making it uncomfortable and also evoked increased alertness. Moreover, Moscow was concerned with how easily and tactfully the US was able to neutralise Soviet supplied Iraqi air defence systems. Bessmertnykh had to address the presidium and assure the members that this "was not a reflection of weakness since ultimately equipment is good when it is in good hands" and there were no Soviet specialists in the air defence network in Iraq."[77]

In February 1991, Syrian Vice-President Abdel Halim Khaddam said that by invading Kuwait the Iraqi regime had provided excuses and justifications for the foreign troops to come to the region. He pointed out that the annexation of Kuwait by force had given Israel the excuse to go on with the aggressive and expansionist designs on the Arab land. Referring to the decision to send Syrian Arab forces to the Gulf, he stated that it came in response to the appeal by the "brothers in the Gulf," who felt threatened by the risk of an Iraqi invasion of their countries.[78]

It is interesting to note that Syria constantly appealed to Saddam Hussein to withdraw the Iraqi troops from Kuwait in order to prevent from providing a pretext to the Western backed troops from coming into the region and liberating Kuwait. The Soviet Union's insistence on a peaceful solution to the Iraq-Kuwait War rather than a military solution helped to bolster Syria's stance in relation to the Iraqi invasion. However, it must also be reiterated that the joint Soviet-US statement issued immediately after the invasion condemning Iraqi action

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[76] Powaski , *The Cold War*, pp.281-284.
[77] Judith Perera (1991), "Caught by Surprise," *Middle East International,*No.392, 25 January 1991, pp. 16-17,
[78] FBIS-NES-91-030 (1991), "Khaddam Addresses Party Meeting on Gulf Crisis,", *SANA*, Damascus, 13 February 1991.

probably made Syria to realise that the changes at the international level and the cooperation between the world superpowers would pave the way for a world where issues of importance would be dealt with seriousness to find a positive solution.

It can be said that keeping this in mind, Defence Minister Mustafa Tlas visited Moscow on 6 February 1991 for talks with the Soviet Foreign Affairs Minister Bessmertnykh and about the war in the Gulf and Syria's defence requirements. Analysts said that Damascus was planning to request military assistance from the Soviet Union to balance the US and European military supplies to Israel over the past six months in the war. [79] However, there is not enough information to support the fact that the main motive behind the visit by Tlas was to procure a military deal.

The Iraq-Kuwait War helped Syria to make some diplomatic gains but there were apprehensions whether these would reap benefits in the longer run or not. Syria's decision to join the US-led coalition against Iraq clearly underlined pragmatism in its foreign policy orientation. This was in total contradiction of Ba'thist ideology which espoused pan-Arabism and hence many came to debate the relevance of the idea of "one Arab nation with eternal mission" which it nurtured ever since the Party came into power. The justification of sending troops to Saudi Arabia was that it was done to defend the Arab kingdom and "to prevent war and to save Iraq from destruction." Assad could reap a few benefits by siding with the US in the war. First and foremost was the opportunity it provided Syria to come out of international isolation and improve its relations with the US. Given the Soviet Union's absence in the international scene Syria felt it necessary to shift its international alliance. Syria's immediate reward for supporting the coalition was an American "green light" to have a considerable control over internal affairs of Lebanon.[80] This followed the visit of American Secretary of State James Baker to the Syrian capital in September 1990, which effectively ended Syria's marginalisation and isolation. Its diplomatic ties with the UK were restored, the economic sanctions imposed by the European Community were lifted, an agreement for technical, economic and trade cooperation between Syria and the UAE was signed, and a plan for economic development worth $13 bn (to be shared with Egypt) was drawn up by the GCC.[81]

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[79] Syria: In Brief, *Middle East Economic Digest*, 15 February 1991, p.20
[80] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, p.32.
[81] Fida Nasrallah (1991), "Syria's post-War Gains and Liabilities", *Middle East International* , No.396, 22 March 1991, pp. 20-21.

Syria's stance during the Iraq-Kuwait War was given justification based on the fact that Syria was against any form of occupation in the region and always stood up for Arab unity. When Iraq invaded Kuwait Syria was bound by the compulsion of liberating an Arab state (Kuwait) from the occupier (Iraq).[82]

However, it must be mentioned that at the domestic front there was slight criticism from some government officials for Syria's decision of siding with the US-led coalition against Iraq as the negotiations to start a peace process seemed unsuccessful[83]Syrian troops sent to Saudi Arabia did not play an active role in the war. The inaction of the part of Syrian soldiers was due to a veto imposed by the public opinion in Syria. At the domestic level, it faced an opposition against this decision as it placed Syria on the same side with US and Israel. During this time Syria was experiencing a dilemma of making a hard choice of being understood as a "paid-up member of the US-led coalition" or being able to "try and retain that independence of judgement which gave it its standing in the Arab world."[84]

Syria's fears regarding the war were not completely unfounded given the fact that Iraq before the War had a strong military and was experiencing a sound economic growth. Iraq was able to take up the path of rapid industrialisation despite the eight year war with Iran. Following the war, crippling UN economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq because of which its economy began to weaken. With Iraq's position as a developing and powerful Arab state completely diminished in the aftermath of the war, Israel was left as a stronger and a dominant power in the West Asian region.[85] This proved to be a major concern for many Arab states including Syria.

C: The Peace Process

There is a direct link between the coalition formed during the Iraq-Kuwait War to liberate Kuwait and the subsequent launching of a peace process in the West Asian region. As mentioned in the previous section (The Iraq-Kuwait Crisis), the US had realised the significance of building a common response against Iraq and therefore, convinced the Soviet

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[82] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, p.31.
[83] Michael Jansen (1991), "Asad Not the Stumbling Block", *Middle East International*, No.399, 17 May 1991, pp.5-6
[84] Godfrey Jansen (1991), "Keeping Options Open", *Middle East International*, no 397, 5 April 1991, pp.13-14.
[85] AK Pasha , *Iraq: Sanctions and Wars*, (New Delhi, 2003), pp.83-84.

Union to issue a joint communique to condemn Iraq's actions. To form a "credible" Arab coalition, the US sought Syria's participation in the Iraq-Kuwait War. Similarly, in order to pave the way for a comprehensive peace process for the Arab-Israeli conflict, the US came to acknowledge that Syria's involvement was necessary. This has been underlined by James Baker in his memoir *The Politics of Diplomacy*.[86] Moreover, it has been mentioned by Dennis Ross that the coalition which was formed during the Iraq-Kuwait War became a "coalition for peace."[87] This implied that the peace process that was to follow would involve close cooperation between both the US and the Soviet Union along with participation of the states involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the 1980s, Syria was not willing to get involved in a peace initiative with Israel from a position of weakness and therefore it sought "strategic parity." However, peace with Israel has long been an objective of the Syrian foreign policy. Therefore, when an opportunity to embark upon a peace process seemed possible after the Iraq-Kuwait War ended, Syria went forward with it.

In February 1991, Bush called Assad and they discussed a range of issues relating to the region including the efforts to achieve peace. Bush promised to start a peace process in collaboration with the international community. Therefore, in order to bring the Arabs and the Israelis together and to begin discussions on a peace process, Baker embarked on a "shuttle diplomacy" from March 1991 to October 1991. Baker went to Syria on 13 March 1991 and discussed a range of issues with Assad such as the Gulf security, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) region, economic situation of the region and the Arab-Israeli conflict. At this point, it must be pointed out that in February 1991 Mustafa Tlas had visited the Soviet Union to demand for some military assistance. This can be argued as another effort by Syria to match the military strength of Israel and attain "strategic parity". In April 1991, Faruq al-Shara went to the Soviet Union with similar requests for military assistance and was reassured by Gorbachev that the Soviet Union was committed to continue friendly relations with Syria and cooperate on all spheres of their relationship including in the military sphere while considering the changed international scenario and the capabilities of the Soviet economy. The point that is being made here is that Assad brought up the issue with Baker that the region would not be WMD free zone unless the US and Europe halted their

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[86] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, p.11.
[87] Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp.64-65.

"unconditional shipment of arms to Israel." This can be viewed as Assad's appeal to the US that peace process would yield positive results only if Israel's military superiority was contained. Assad made it clear to Baker that both Syria and the Soviet Union agreed that the Arab-Israeli conflict must be resolved by a "just and comprehensive" manner based on the UNSC resolutions of 242 and 338. This meant complete return of Israel to the 4 June 1967 lines, complete return of the Golan Heights and implementation of the "land for peace" principle. Assad felt it was necessary to have an opinion regarding the peace negotiations from the Soviet Union also although its power was declining. Therefore, he took notes of the minutes from a meeting between Faruq al-Shara and Soviet Charge' d'affaires in Syria which took place in March 1991. Assad wanted to show to the US that for Syria the opinion of the Soviet Union mattered and therefore, its participation in the peace process would help in bringing about a positive result.

Through Baker's diplomatic trips to the countries involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict some important points came up by April 1991. Syria came to know that Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was opposed to the role of the Soviet Union as a co-sponsor of the conference as it was believed to be strongly pro-Arab in its posture. Moreover, Shamir was against a UN hosted conference unlike the insistence of the Arab leaders.[88]

The Syrian opinion was put forward to Baker by Assad's spokesman who reaffirmed Syria's "readiness to continue cooperating with the current efforts to produce the best formula for negotiations". It was difficult to arrive at a common ground with Israel as it was "saying no to UN and European participation, no to a continuing role for the conference, no to any territorial concessions". Syria wanted assurance that the peace process would not breakdown or reach an impasse and was ready to participate in any multilateral or bilateral peace conference. Syria was under the impression that the Arabs were "dangerously weakened by the removal of the Soviet Union as a counterweight to the US in the region and by the war against Iraq." When the US was garnering support for the coalition against Iraq, Arabs were hopeful that the US would play an active role in the peace process in return for their support to the coalition. However, due to Israel's unwillingness to comply with UN resolutions for the peace process to proceed, Syria felt "let down" by US's inability to persuade Israel. At the domestic front there was slight criticism from some government officials for Syria's decision

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[88] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, pp. 16-17.

of siding with the US-led coalition against Iraq as the negotiations to start a peace process seemed unsuccessful.[89]

It was perceived that Syria was drawn into the peace process as there seemed no option but "to accept American terms that called for direct negotiations between parties." However, this was not entirely true. Peace and stability in the region seemed important at a time when Syria came to sense diminishing role of the Soviet Union in world affairs. Syria also realised that the US would be ever more willing to play an active role in the region.[90]

James Baker had made quite a few visits to the region to begin a peace process. Simultaneous efforts by the Soviet Union to pave a path towards peace in the region were evident because of Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh's tour to the region. His talks with Assad on 8 May 1991 seemed quite successful. After the talks ended, Syrian Foreign Minister had stated, that the "viewpoints of Syria and the Soviet Union are identical on the peace process, the peace conference, its structure, its continuity and the participation of the United Nations and the Europeans."[91]

Bessmertnykh's trip to the region did not have much to offer to the peace negotiations except for the fact that it was the first ever joint peace initiative between US and Soviet Union. Moscow did not have much leverage to convince Israel to comply with the UN resolutions. Moscow did not seem eager to spoil its relations with the Arab world for its ties with Israel. Its policies in the region seemed to be based on its priorities and to avoid jeopardising relations with any country in the region. [92]

Syria by then had given up its earlier idea of negotiating with Israel from a standpoint of "equal strength." The "strategic parity" idea had seemed irrelevant under the circumstances of the post-Cold War situation. After the Iraq-Kuwait War, Syria agreed to participate in the US-brokered peace process which was supposed to involve direct discussions with Israel. Some have cited a number of factors which led Assad to relinquish the "strategic parity" idea while dealing with Israel. One important reason was foreign policy shift of the USSR and its

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[89] Jansen , "Asad Not the Stumbling Block", pp.5-6
[90] Cherif Cordahi (1991), "Sticking to Its Principles", *Middle East International*, No. 398, 19 April 1991, p. 16.
[91] Donald Neff (1991), "Israeli Intransigence spells Failure for Baker", *Middle East International*, No.399, 17 May 1991, p.5
[92] Jansen , "Asad Not the Stumbling Block", pp.5-6

less active participation in West Asian affairs. This indicated that Syria could no longer be dependent on the USSR for diplomatic and military means as earlier. This pushed Syria to "recognise Washington as the principal player in the Arab-Israeli game." Another reason was Syria's weak economic situation and its isolation due to its policy towards Palestine, relations with Iran, its involvement in Lebanon and deteriorating relations with the US in the 1980s which pushed towards building improved relations with Western countries. Due to the changes at the international level and emergence of a unipolar world, Syria was "driven literally and metaphorically into the arms" of the US. It would be apt to state that Syria's relations with USSR were "seldom as good-nor those with the US as bad-as it often suited Damascus to portray them."[93] This statement has been made because of the fact that Syria did not react surprisingly to the Soviet Union's acceptance of Israel's demand to establish diplomatic relations with Israel on 18 October just before convening the Madrid Peace Conference. This also implies that Syria already knew that diplomatic relations would eventually be established between the Soviet Union and Israel given the large scale Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union to Israel which was taking pace from the late 1980s.

Before convening the Madrid Peace Conference, Letters of Assurances outlining the terms of the conference were sent to the respective states by the US who were to attend the conference. The Letter of Assurance which was sent to Syria by the US needs a brief discussion. The Letter assured that the talks would be based on the UNSC resolution 242 and 338. It went on to delineate that the talks would include a bilateral track followed by a multilateral track of negotiations. Most importantly, the Letter stated that the US would not recognise "any unilateral action on the part of Israel vis-à-vis the extension of its laws, sovereignty or administration to the territory of the Golan Heights". The Letter emphasised the point that any final settlement could be reached only on the basis of "mutual concessions during the negotiations". It was stated that the US would oppose Israeli settlement in the territories occupied in 1967, which remains an obstacle to peace". The significant point made in the Letter was that the US and the Soviet Union would be the "moving force" for the peace process to proceed and that both the countries would be in constant contact with "any of the parties at any time". The UN was to occupy the post of an observer at the conference. There was no separate Letter of Assurance from the Soviet Union. Only a jointly issued US-Soviet Union Letter of invitation for the Madrid talks was sent to all the attendees. Interestingly, the

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[93] Ivor Lucas (1991), "How Far Has Syria Changed Course?", *Middle East International,* 30 August 1991, No.407, p.15.

invitation letter was issued on 18 October 1991, the same day when the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with Israel (See Appendix II).

Syria's expectation from the Soviet Union was that it would play an equally significant role along with the US during the peace process and not play a secondary role. However, without a Letter of Assurance from the Soviet Union and establishment of ties with Israel just before the Madrid Conference, made Syria realise that the Soviet Union's position in the Conference did not hold as much significance as the US's position.

The speech of Mikhail Gorbachev given at the opening ceremony of the Madrid Conference on 30 October 1991, went on to emphasise more on the successful end of the Iraq-Kuwait War because of the US and the Soviet Union cooperation on the issue. His speech also implied that the cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union had the potential to offer substantial support to the peace talks to succeed. Rather than emphasising more on the peace process Gorbachev highlighted the "radical changes" in the Soviet Union's policies and cooperation with the US, which in turn made it possible to speak of an "entirely new period, a period of peace in world history" (See Appendix III).

The Syrian Head of Delegation to the Madrid Peace Conference, Faruq al-Shara, began his speech by stating that peace was on the agenda of Syria for a long time. He went on to emphasise that because of "Israel's rejection and stubbornness and the Cold War climate between East and West" UNSC resolution 242, 338 and 425 were not implemented. Shara's remarks pointed out that with the end of the Cold War and absence of confrontational attitude between the superpowers, cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union would pave the way for productive peace talks in the region. Shara's speech depicted Syria's disappointment with the Soviet Union's policy of allowing large scale immigration of Jews which proved to be the main factor behind Palestinians being displaced and declared refugees. Moreover, Shara stated that although Syria had some reservations regarding the conference, it went ahead to attend it with the sole aim to benefit from the opportunity that was available due to the changed international environment and willingness to "make peace process succeed". Another important point made by Shara was that the multilateral peace track which was to follow after the bilateral peace tracks shall take place only after substantial gains made in the

bilateral track, mainly the implementation of UNSC resolution 242 and 338 by Israel.[94] (See Appendix IV)

Syria's direct negotiations with Israel in relation to peace took place on 3 November 1991 in Madrid. For Syria, the first round of direct talks was a failure as both Syria and Israel could not agree upon the principle of complete "return of all Arab territories occupied in 1967" for complete peace. Another round of futile talks between Syrians and the Israelis took place from 10 December and continued till 18 December in Washington. During these direct talks between Syria and Israel, there were no representatives of the US or of Russia. Syria's chief negotiator at the peace talks, Muwaffaq al-Allaf attributed the inability to achieve a common ground with Israel for the peace process to proceed primarily to the absence of representatives from the US and Russia to preside over the meetings. Another round of talks began on 13 January 1992 in Washington and ended on 15 January 1992 without any progress.[95]

The multilateral track of the peace talks began in Moscow on 28 January 1992. Syria and Lebanon did not participate in the Moscow talks. Instead they went on to condemn the talks on the basis that as there was no success in the bilateral talks with Israel, the multilateral talks held no significance. The issues which were discussed at the conference in Moscow included water issues, economic situation of the region, arms control and refugees.[96]

As already mentioned, under Yeltsin, Arab-Israeli conflict did not evoke much attention in Russia. The peace process was relegated into the background as Moscow was burdened with economic crisis and political instability. Moreover, Russia's foreign policy was much more focussed on its former states which made up the Soviet Union. During this time Russia followed US's stance in relation the Arab-Israeli peace process. Under Yeltsin, Russia tried to improve its relations with Israel and also balance its relations with Arab states in the

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[94] The Madrid Peace Conference (1992), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21(2), University of California Press, pp.117-149.
[95] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, pp.46-64.
[96] Thomas L. Freidman (1992), "Arab-Israel on Regional Issues Start in Moscow", *The New York Times*, 29 January 1992, [Online:web] Accessed 9 April 2017, URL: http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/29/world/arab-israel-on-regional-issues-start-in-moscow.html?pagewanted=all

region.[97] The multilateral conference elicited some interesting observations. Yeltsin did not seem too eager to participate in the Arab-Israeli talks and he ultimately failed to attend the same. While dealing with issues related to the West Asian region Yeltsin seemed to "follow the US lead on virtually all issues" which to a certain extent showed that Russia's foreign policy priority was not the Arab-Israeli conflict.[98]

Syria's absence in the multilateral peace conference hosted by Moscow might also be seen as its displeasure as Russia did not seem to exert enough pressure on Israel to agree to the UNSC resolutions 242 and 338 and the "land for peace" principle. This act of Syria can be seen as a way of displaying its dissatisfaction with the bilateral peace talks in general and the inefficiency of the co-sponsors namely the US and Russia to ensure the fulfilment of Syrian demands for implementation of basic principles of peace declared at the Madrid Peace Conference before entering the multilateral track.

As the peace process went forward without any outcome, Syria felt that the international community came to show less seriousness about it.[99] Moreover, settlement activities in the occupied territories by the Israeli government was another thorny issue but the UN did not go beyond issuing condemnations and regrets which was seen by Syria as blatant disregard of the international community's appeal to Israel.[100]

When Syria was beginning to get disheartened with the progress of the peace process, Foreign Minister Shara made a visit to Moscow in September 1992. He held talks with Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev under whom foreign policy of Russia favoured cooperation with the US and had pro-Western inclinations. There was not much assurance that Moscow could offer Syria during the period when the peace process was faltering. Shara conveyed to Moscow Syria's desire for a settlement process based on compliance with the UN resolutions and implementation of the "land for peace" principle. In an interview to *ITAR-TASS* in

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[97] Robert O. Freedman (2010), "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years", *Middle East Policy Council,* 17(3), [Online:web] Accessed 21 March 2016, URL:http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/russia-israel-and-arab-israeli-conflict-putin-years

[98] Robert O. Freedman (1995), "Israeli-Russian Relations Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union"*, Middle East Journal,* 49 (2), pp. 233-247.

[99] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1992), "Role of Syria; Israel; Peace Process; Warning to Arab Leaders", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio*, Damascus, ME/1349 A/5, 4 April 1992.

[100] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts(1992), "Syrian Commentaries on Asad's Gulf Tour Warn Against Arab "Fragmentation", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio*, Damascus, ME/1362, A/1, 23 April 1992,

September 1992, Kozyrev stated that detailed discussions took place between Shara and him. He went on to emphasise the point that the peace process was a unique opportunity which "must not be missed." He also mentioned that Syria and Russia shared a relation based on the "ideology of good neighbourliness" and he reiterated Syria's willingness to cooperate with Russia on the issue of peace efforts.[101]

The special privileges which were promised to Syria from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi were not delivered due to which it faced embarrassment of supporting the US during the Iraq-Kuwait War. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had made it clear that they would only finance individual projects and not provide subventions to Syria. A number of projects such as steel mill, cement and fertilizers plants were supposed to be completed in Syria for which it had received money from Arab donors. Moreover, the US had removed Syria from its list of nations with preferential trade status.[102] Under such circumstances Syria was compelled to reassess its decision of relying on the US to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

After an unsuccessful attempt at acquiring Russia's active participation in the peace process and a feeling of not getting rewarded enough for its participation in the Iraq-Kuwait War, Syria's frustration increased. Another issue of great disappointment and shock was the establishment of diplomatic ties between Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union and Israel before the Madrid talks in October 1991. Syria found an opportunity to express its displeasure with Moscow's policy of establishing diplomatic ties with Israel when in October 1992, Petr Aven, Minister of External Economic Relations of Russia visited Syria along with many other high ranking delegates. Aven was visiting Syria with the aim of demanding the repayment of Soviet era debt amounting to $13.4 billion. Syria brushed aside such demands of Russia and went ahead to question the "very legality of holding talks on indebtedness with Russia as USSR's legal successor was called into question". Syria seized the opportunity to clarify that it wanted Russia's support to repair and upgrade Syrian defences. However, the Russian delegation did not make any commitments towards this issue. It can be argued that during this time Syria's debt issue was becoming an obstacle in the relations between Syria and Russia.[103]

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[101] Rostislav Gertsev (1992), "Al-Shar' Comments; Departs", *ITAR-TASS*, FBIS-SOV-92-178,12 September 1992, p. 18.

[102] Godfrey Jansen (1992), "Syria: Economic Revival, Political Stalemate", *Middle East International*, No. 430, 24 July 1992, p. 15.

[103] Nizameddin , *Russia and the Middle East*, pp. 162-163.

Another round of peace talks in took place in November 1992. Even during this round the "land for peace" formula was not agreed to between Syria and Israel. Syria felt "abandoned by the cosponsors" at a time when their support was of utmost importance. There were repeated requests from the Arabs for intervention of the US primarily to convince Israel to go ahead with the "land for peace" formula. Syria realised that although US was giving assurance for the talks to succeed but less initiative was taken to narrow the differences between Arab and Israeli stances regarding the peace process. The talks around this time could be termed as "dormant." The role of Russia in the peace talks was also negligible.[104]

Bill Clinton won the 1992 US Presidential election and took office from January 1993. Warren Christopher became the new Secretary of State. Clinton in his 21 February 1993 inaugural speech did not make any mention of the Arab-Israeli conflict or the peace process. Christopher was understood as having a good knowledge of the West Asian issues. While on a state visit to Syria in February 1993, he stated that the US would provide full support to the peace process and "work closely with Syria to bring positive change in the bilateral relationship between Syria and the United States."[105] In Israel, Yitzhak Rabin succeeded Yitzhak Shamir in July 1992. Rabin's approach towards peace seemed different from that of Shamir's. Rabin contemplated complete withdrawal from the Golan based on Syria's commitment to peace. Assad and Clinton met at a summit meeting in Geneva in January 1994 and during the meeting with Clinton in the presence of Secretary Christopher, Assad mentioned that the Syrian-Lebanese peace tracks had to move together in order to arrive at comprehensive peace. Secretary Christopher had put forward Rabin's proposal of four year time period for withdrawing completely from the Golan Heights. Assad also showed eagerness for the peace process to proceed and in exchange for this proposal Rabin wanted Syria to normalise relations with Israel and offer security arrangements. Much of the debate surrounding the security arrangements consisted of two issues. One issue was Rabin's insistence on retaining a ground station for early warning system on Mount Hermon after withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the other one was security arrangements along Syrian-Israeli border. The issue of security arrangements went on to occupy the Syria-Israeli track of discussions until Rabin's assassination in November 1995.[106]

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[104] Muhammad Hallaj (1992), "Talks on Hold", *Middle East International*, No.438, 20 November 1992, p. 5.
[105] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, p. 67
[106] Patrick Seale (2000), "The Syria-Israel Negotiations: Who is Telling the Truth?", *Journal of Palestine Studies,* 29(2), pp.65-77.

Rabin, Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat went on to sign the 13 September 1993 Oslo Accords. The signing of the Accords came as a shock to the Syrian government. Syria saw this event as a huge setback for Arab solidarity as Syria was opposed to any kind of separate peace deal with Israel. At the signing ceremony Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was also present. Walid al-Moallem, Syrian ambassador to the US, attended the ceremony from the Syrian side only after President Clinton urged Assad to send a representative. Shaaban had pointedly stated that had Syria known that peace negotiations would divide the Arabs, it would have never agreed for the Madrid peace process.[107] It must be stated here that from 1967 onwards, Assad's comprehensive peace encompassed the recovery of Palestinian territories also but after the signing of the Oslo Accords, Assad went on to emphasise solely on the Golan Heights and South Lebanon. The Oslo Accords which was signed in September 1993 perhaps became a factor which was a slight irritant in Syria-Russia relations. The reason behind this claim was that Russia was in support of the Oslo Accords whereas Syria was not in favour of the Accords. Syria was already aware of the fact that Russia was following the US stance in the peace process and hence was in support of the Oslo Accords. Syria's insistence on a comprehensive peace process was hugely undermined by the Oslo Accords. Syria's dislike towards Russian support for the PLO-Israel peace deal was evident as there were not any remarkable diplomatic exchanges between Syria and Russia till March 1994. Russia also understood Syria's disappointment and therefore when Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Soskovets visited Syria in April 1994, Soskovets reassured that Russia would play an active role in the peace process. After a meeting with Soskovets, Assad reiterated that a "stable, comprehensive and just peace" in the region was of utmost importance. Syria seemed to realise it could not continue to ignore Russia for a long time and was in dire need of Russia's help to upgrade its defence systems. Therefore, an initiative was undertaken by Syria to rejuvenate its relation with Russia. Soskovets was assured by Syria that the outstanding debt would be repaid by Syria. On 27 April 1994, Syria went on to sign the Military-Technical Agreement with Russia and took the opportunity to reemphasise Syria's close relations with Russia.[108]

In May 1994, Syria urged the international community to help pull the Syria-Israeli peace track from the situation of stalemate. Syria appealed the US and Russia to put "decisive pressure" on Israel. It also reiterated that it wanted the US to play the role of principal broker

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[107] Shaaban , *Damascus Diary*, pp. 71-72.
[108] Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*, pp.19-20.

in the negotiations.[109] The main problem was that although Russia wanted a more prominent role for itself in the Syrian-Israeli track of the negotiations, it was not allowed to do so. The Israeli government was willing to discuss peace with the Syrians only under "tight coordination with Washington without any outside interference." Moscow was side-lined and not kept informed about the decisions and proposals.[110] This restricted Moscow's role as a co-sponsor and disappointed Syria to a certain extent.

After a long tour of West Asia coming to an end on 4 April 1995, Kozyrev announced that that Russia intended to actively use both dialogue at the political level and "quiet diplomacy" methods to give the necessary impetus to the peace process. He visited Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Israel during his visit. "Israel should express readiness to withdraw from the occupied territories while Syria should promise full-scale peace, including the establishment of economic and diplomatic relations with Israel," Kozyrev said.[111]

Russian Foreign Minister Primakov met Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres on 22 April 1996 to give a push to the stalled Madrid Peace Process. At the meeting, Primakov made efforts to propose that all the parties to the conflict must comply with the agreements reached under their previous government. He also proposed that Russia would like to reach a solution in this regard through all possible tracks of the peace process. This initiative was well received by President Assad when Primakov visited Damascus the same year. However, Primakov's effort did not bear any fruit and it ended without any positive outcome. In his second trip to Israel, Primakov met the then newly elected Benjamin Netanyahu to the office of the Prime Minister in June 1996. Primakov reiterated Russia's stance regarding the peace process and indicated that under any circumstances they "would not budge from the insistence that there had to be a Palestinian state." At a press conference that Primakov attended in Israel, he made it clear that Russia wanted Israel to abide by the Madrid Peace Conference principle of "land in exchange for peace." To pursue the Israeli-Syrian peace track seemed difficult at this point of time due to the growing tension at the Israeli-Syrian line of ceasefire. Both parties to the conflict seemed wary of each other of carrying out attacks on the Golan Heights. To dispel such fears, Primakov engaged himself with a round of

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[109] FBIS-NES-94-105 (1994), "US, Russia Urged to 'Pressure' Tel Aviv," *Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network*, 31 May 1994, p. 64.
[110] Nizameddin , *Russia and the Middle East*, p. 123.
[111] Dmitriy Gorokhov (1995), "Kozyrev on Russia's 'Quiet Diplomacy' in the Mideast", *ITAR-TASS,* 4 April 1995, FBIS-SOV-95-064, p.9.

diplomacy between Syria and Israel and finally it was conveyed to Israel by Russian authorities that Syria "had no desire to provoke a military confrontation" with Israel.[112]The Netanyahu government did not accept the agreement with Syria for further peace talks reached under the Shimon Peres's premiership.[113]

Yevgeny Primakov was understood as having a good knowledge about the West Asian regional issues. More importantly, he was appointed as the Foreign Minister of Russia in 1996 keeping in mind the fact that Russia's foreign policy needed a more global outlook rather than a restricted one focusing only on the West. He was pragmatic in his approach and tried to diversify Russia's foreign policy interests.[114] Syria took this initiative in a positive manner. But the main issue of the Syrian-Israeli peace track was the question of the Golan Heights. As there was simmering tension between Syria and Israel because of this and an imminent threat of war seemed likely.[115]

The US had vetoed a UN resolution in May 1995 which urged Israel to reverse a decision to expropriate 131 acres of land which was mostly occupied by Palestinians. This disappointed Syria with US's stance as it was the only country who voted against the resolution. Russia tried its best to come up with another draft of the resolution which was again rejected by both the US and Israel.[116] Soon after the veto, Foreign Minister Shara commented on the talks he had with Clinton and US Secretary of State regarding the progress of peace process. He had denounced the US move and went on to add that because of "US's total bias and total commitment to the Israeli side" it could no longer be considered as an "honest broker" in the peace process.[117]

The US brokered peace negotiations seemed like a mere illusion to some extent for Syria. US had begun the process by giving the hope that it would be a fair and principal mediator but when it also assumed the role of a "diplomatic-backer" and military supplier of Israel, its

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[112] Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, pp.296-298.
[113] Michael Jansen (1998), "Russian Missiles?", *Middle East International*, No.577, 19 June 1998, p.7.
[114] Shireen T. Hunter (1996), "Yevgeni Primakov and Russian Foreign Policy", *Middle East International,* No. 521, 15 March 1996, p.18.
[115] Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, p. 299.
[116] Crossette, Barbara (1995), "U.S. Vetoes a Condemnation In U.N. of Israeli Land Seizure", *The New York Times*, 18 May 1995, [Online:web] Accessed 10 May 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/18/world/us-vetoes-a-condemnation-in-un-of-israeli-land-seizure.html
[117] Jansen, Godfrey (1995), "Syria Infuriated", *Middle East International,* No.500, 26 May 1995, p.7.

credibility as a peace process arbiter within the international framework lessened.[118] Syria witnessed US support to Israel as a policy to ensure Israeli highhandedness in the peace process.[119] Syria's expectation from Russia in relation to the peace process was also not being fulfilled.

Starting from 1996, Assad was disillusioned with the Benjamin Netanyahu government's reluctance of accepting the agreements reached with the previous government regarding the peace process. Syria also didn't have much hope from the Clinton Administration. Primakov had made a tour to the region to restore Russia's role in the peace process. His efforts yielded no significant results. Arabs had welcomed Primakov's initiative as the peace process was experiencing a deadlock and the US's apparent inability to influence or put pressure on Israel to "honour its commitments." He had also issued a 12-point declaration in Egypt delineating the basic "elements" for a durable and stable peace in the region. He had stated that "it is clear that the present deadlock is a result of the fact that Israel's government has deviated from the agreements and understandings concluded by its previous government. He had also suggested that Syrian, Palestinian and the Lebanese peace tracks must go on simultaneously. He was of the opinion that it was important to remain engaged with the Israeli government for the peace process to proceed.[120]

Assad visited Moscow in July 1999. This visit was supposed to bring about new closeness in Syria-Russia relations. Assad discussed issues of peace process, bilateral relations and arms deals. A joint communiqué issued in 1999 in Moscow stated that Russia's role in the peace process was highly valued and Russia recognised Syria's "role in Lebanon." [121] The significance of this visit was that it was the first visit of Hafez al-Assad to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Assad's visit coincided with the visit of Israel's Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon who was known for his hardline stance. This visit also signified that Assad wanted Russia's support to revive the stalled peace process.[122]

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[118] Naseer H. Aruri (1997), "The US Role in the Peace Process: From Madrid to Hebron", *Middle East International,* No. 545, 7 March 1997, p.16.
[119] "Middle East Geopolitics: Moves and Counter-moves" (1998), *Middle East International*, No.588, 27 November 1998, , pp. 22-23
[120] Michael Jansen (1997), " Primakov's Progress", *Middle East International,* No.562 , 7 November 1997, p.6.
[121] Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*, p.23.
[122] Web posted (1999), "Assad, Yeltsin begin talks", , *CNN.com*, 6 July 1999 [Online:web] Accessed 8 April 2016, URL: http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/9907/06/syria.russia/

On 12 May 1999, Ehud Barak became the Prime Minister of Israel. An initiative was undertaken by Clinton on 3 January 2000 to open a new round of peace talks based on resolution 242, 338 and on the lines of the Madrid peace conference at Shepherdstown, US. On the Syrian side the talks were represented by Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara. The US Secretary of State Medeleine Albright had rightly summed up the situation as "we are at the beginning of a process here, not at the end of it" which seemed a bit disheartening after all the attempts to achieve peace. The issues to be discussed were most importantly the Golan Heights and the dismantling of Israeli surveillance stations there.[123] In December 1999, Clinton had stated in a speech at the White House that both Syria and Israel had requested the US to take an active part in the negotiations.[124] Ehud Barak could not commit his government to the Syrian demand of full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and therefore the talks at Geneva collapsed.[125] The Assad-Clinton talks which began in March 2000 in Geneva also did not succeed and eventually reached an impasse. The main reason for disagreement between Syria and Israel during the Assad-Clinton talks was the "model of peace". What Israel offered Syria was nothing substantial and no concrete agreements regarding withdrawal from occupied Syrian territories. Barak wanted Syria to directly discuss normalisation of relations before reaching an agreement on some crucial issues of the conflict such as the withdrawal line, water rights and a disputed strip of land by the shore of Lake Kinneret. Death of Hafez al-Assad and change of leadership in Syria in June 2000 also to some extent restricted the peace process from moving ahead.[126]

Bashar al Assad's presidency began under difficult circumstances with the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2000. Hafez al-Assad's comprehensive peace comprised peace process of Syria and Lebanon with Israel. However, Bashar al-Assad's peace plan differed from that of his father's. Bashar sought a "balanced" peace process which would include Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians. Bashar urged all the Arab countries to show strong support for the second *intifada* and with that objective, Syria went on to establish the "Syrian

[123]William B Reincken (2000), "Israel and Syria Open Peace Talks in Shepherdstown, West Virginia", 3 January 2000, [Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015, URL: http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/peace/archives/2000/january/me0103c.html

[124] Statement by President Clinton on Meetings between PM Barak and FM al-Shara-16-Dec-99, 16 December 1999, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Online:web] Accessed 28 April 2016, URL:http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/1999/Pages/Statement%20by%20President%20Clinton%20on%20Meetings%20between.aspx

[125] Gary C. Gambill (2000), "Implications of the Geneva Summit", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin,* 2(4), [Online:web] Accessed 8 May 2016, URL:https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0004_me1.htm

[126] Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948,* (New York, 2005), pp.75-86.

Arab popular Committee for supporting the *intifada* and resisting the Zionist project". The uprising had garnered huge support among the Arabs. Although Syria was keeping its distance from Yasser Arafat due to political differences at the convening of the Arab interim Summit in Cairo in October 2001, Assad had suggested that Arabs should "reconsider their policy of peace as a strategic option" and as stated earlier, that they should sever relations with Israel.[127]

Another peace initiative called the Quartet[128] was formed in 2000. Following this, the "road map to peace" came to be formed to bring about a solution to the Israel-Palestine problem through three stages.[129]

After so many years of futile efforts, the peace process could not be seen reaching a positive end result. There were speculations on Syria's role in the negotiations. In February 2007 Condolezza Rice, the then US Secretary of State had stated that the US was expecting Syria to play a positive role in the peace process. Whereas Sergei Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister had argued that Syria had the potential to play a "constructive role" and that it would bring negative results if Syria was deliberately side-lined from the negotiations.[130]

Throughout the peace process negotiations pertaining to the Israeli-Syrian track, it was evident that Russia backed Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and that no agreement with Israel would be concluded without this clause. Turkey had offered to mediate between Syria and Israel in 2008. The indirect peace talks with Turkey's mediation were suspended in 2009 after Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert had resigned. Moreover, there were tensions simmering between both the countries due to Israel's attacks on Gaza in December 2009.[131]

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[127] Ziadeh, *Power and Policy in Syria*, pp. 83-85.

[128] After the Second Intifada broke out in 2000 an initiative was undertaken by United Nations, US, European Union and Russia to form a forum which would act as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This diplomatic quartet was formed in 2000 in Madrid after futile attempts to implement a ceasefire. See United Nations Information System (2002), "Quartet Joint Statement press conference (Madrid)", 10 April 2002, [Online:web] Accessed 3 March 2016, URL:https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/4808D2E68A33B35385256B970062DEAF

[129] Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, p.300.

[130]Newsline (2007) "Russian Foreign Minister Sends Mixed Messages on US"*, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Newsline*, 5 February 2007, [Online:web] Accessed 22 July 2015, URL: http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143805.html

[131] United Nations Security Council Report, June 2009 Monthly Forecast, [Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015, URL: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2009-06/lookup_c_glKWLeMTIsG_b_5184957.php

Bashar al-Assad had outlined the basic "prerequisites" for the peace talks to continue with Israel in an interview to the *al-Watan* newspaper in April 2008 after Turkey intended to mediate between the Syria and Israel. The Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had also expressed his government's willingness to return the Golan Heights in return for peace. In the interview Assad stated that in case of direct negotiations the role of the US would be highly valued but that the Bush administration showed neither any "vision nor the will for peace process." He had reiterated the fact that the "basic role in the peace process is for the US because of its relation with Israel; not because it is stronger or weaker; but because the US has strong relations with Arab sides, and further stronger with Israel." Assad knew well that the US had the capability to exert pressure on Israel and to "influence it in the peace process." Interestingly, he pointed out that Russia could not play such a role earlier and neither can it in the present circumstances. Regarding a peace conference which was to be hosted in Moscow Assad said:

> No success whatsoever is to take place in light of the Israeli intransigency. When Lavrov- the Russian Foreign Minister- visited Syria, he was not clear regarding the content of such a conference. It is not suffice to talk about the conference; what does a conference mean? Is it to meet around the table? What is important is the content. So far, we have received nothing regarding the content; we are not sure about the convening date of such a conference. The problem is not only the Israeli intransigency; but is within the US Administration, which has a big saying to this effect. So far nothing clear before us as to make us optimistic, though we have backed whatever conference to be convened in Moscow considering its credibility with Arabs as far as the cause of peace. Would Moscow be allowed to succeed? We do not trust neither Israel, nor the US."[132]

Assad's speech reflected the prevailing mood in Syria regarding Russia in relation to the peace process. It was felt that although Russia made efforts to be present in the peace talks in an active way, it was always the US which was relied upon by Syria as a credible power to influence decisions in the peace negotiations. Russia was seen as a potential Arab ally who would fulfil the need of a counterbalance against the US in the negotiations. However, in relation to the peace process, Syria knew that the US had more diplomatic leverage than Russia and therefore, could act as a strong mediator. Nevertheless, Syria wanted Russia to show support to the Arabs whenever, the peace process tilted more in favour of Israel.

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[132]Bashar al-Assad (2008), "President Bashar al-Assad / The Qatari Al-Watan Daily Interview" , 27 April 2008, [Online:web] Accessed 21 July 2015,
URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=133:president-assad-the-qatari-al-watan-daily-interview-april-27th-2008&catid=100&Itemid=468

Barack Obama was elected as the President of US in November 2008. The new government started off with a plan of dealing pro-actively with Syria to resolve various outstanding regional issues. There were two visits paid by the US officials to Syria in first few months of 2010. Hopes were renewed regarding the peace process as the Obama administration seemed eager to initiate talks and take the process forward. This also augmented Assad's calls for US's more active role and support. Assad had also hinted on direct talks with Israel if US was willing to act as a mediator. Dmitry Medvedev came on a state visit to Syria on 10 May 2010. He was on a state visit to the region in May 2010 mainly to revive the role of Russia there. It was the first visit of Russian Head of State to Damascus. Syria's relations with the US was deteriorating and therefore rebuilding close relations with Russia seemed necessary. After the joint meeting between the presidents of the two countries, Assad claimed that Medvedev had transmitted a message that Israel was willing to return the Golan Heights. This claim was not commented upon by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.[133] At the meeting with Medvedev, Assad pointed out that "Syrians will not forget Russia's support to Syria to liberate the Occupied Syrian Golan and all occupied Arab territories and its continuous pursuit to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region." Medvedev in his statement had added that international political changes in the recent past failed to affect their relations and that "on the contrary, they made it more deep and strong."[134]

The May 2010 visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev helped to clearly understand Syria's policy towards Russia within the context of the peace process. During his meeting with Medvedev, Assad went on to state that Syria viewed Russia as one of the main sponsors of the peace process which was launched in 1991. Assad pointed out the fact that Russia being a permanent member of the UN must ensure the proper implementation of the terms of references for the peace process to succeed. Most importantly, Assad emphasised that Russia must play an active role in the peace negotiations and also use its influence to bring about favourable results. [135]

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[133] United Nations Security Council Report, June 2010 Monthly Forecast,[Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015, URL: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2010-06/lookup_c_glKWLeMTIsG_b_6068453.php

[134] Bashar al-Assad (2010), "President Al-Assad Statements During President Medvedev Visit", 10-11 May 2010 [Online:web] Accessed 28 April 2016, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=365:president-al-assad-statements-during-president-medvedev-visit-may-10-11-2010&catid=116&Itemid=496

[135] Bashar al-Assad (2010), "From H.E. President Bashar Assad's Statements during President Medvedev visit", 10-11 May 2010, [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016, URL: http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=321&Itemid=471

Conclusion

Syria's role in Lebanon evolved from being a pacifying force in the country's internal problems to that of taking part in monitoring its political affairs. Both the US and the Soviet Union were closely following the Lebanese crisis from 1975. While Syria was drawn into the skirmishes in South Lebanon in the 1980s which continued much after the Cold War ended, Yeltsin's government was unable to come up with any concrete action to bring about a solution to the problem. Russia instead resorted to weak condemnations and criticisms towards both Syria and Israel. Syria was disappointed when Russia did not come out strongly against the Operation Grapes of Wrath conducted by Israel in 1996 which took the lives of many civilians in Lebanon. The political diplomacy that took place after the incident left Russia out of the process. Syria sensed this and knew that Russia was in a weak position to make its presence felt in the diplomatic initiative. The Hariri assassination in 2005 provided more fuel to its international condemnation against Syria and sped up its exit from Lebanon. Russia put across its opinion regarding this vaguely by referring to all foreign troops in Lebanon to withdraw but didn't name Syria particularly. However, as Syria was left with reduced bargaining position to deal with Israel with the withdrawal from Lebanon, Egypt-Saudi Arabia's alignment with US and suspension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with EU, all these factors combined, led Syria to look for Russia's support although thought to be weak. It would be wrong to assume that Syria was planning on a complete dependence on Russia in relation to the Lebanon crisis. As Syria realised the US was granting too much support to Israel while dealing with Arab-Israeli issues, Syria leaned towards Russia. An interesting find of the study reveals that as Russia's policy in the 1990s was shifting and ambiguous, Syria was wary of the situation and therefore, valued the role of US in the regional affairs more than that of Russia's.

The Iraq-Kuwait War depicted Syria's post-Cold War threat perceptions. It joined the US-led coalition forces against Iraq but did not miss a chance to persuade Saddam to review his decision and withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Syria understood well that Russia would be unable to provide any kind of support if the foreign forces were to make its permanent stay in West Asia under the pretext of a major regional conflict. Therefore, apart from moving along with US's decisions regarding the war, Syria continuously called for Arab unity to face new challenges.

The Peace process that began in 1991 at Madrid carried huge hopes for the Arabs but gradually descended into a stalemate due to lack of support from the international community. As Arab-Israeli conflict did not have much significance for Russia it came to show less importance to it by occasionally engaging in diplomatic initiatives relating to the peace process. But it is important to note that Russia made it a point to show more willingness and support to go ahead with the Syrian-Israeli track of the peace efforts. Syria was disappointed with the peace initiative as both the US and Russia refrained from taking any strong step to stop Israeli settlement activities and also convince Benjamin Netanyahu's government to abide by the agreements reached with former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. With no progress on tackling the issue of Golan Heights coupled with the failure of the Clinton-Assad meeting and the outbreak of the Second *Intifada* Syria under Bashar took a hard line stance towards Israel. Bashar resorted to Cold War tactics of trying to persuade the Arabs world to cut ties with Israel. Syria had long realised the fact that US was more important than Russia for the peace process to succeed because of its close relations with Israel. Both Obama and Dmitry Medvedev's administrations had shown willingness to restart the peace process. But the main underlying reason for the Russian government under Medvedev to discuss peace in the region is mainly to revive its role there and mark an influential presence. Russia's objective of reviving its position as an important power at the international level seemed to overshadow its will and enthusiasm to bring about a concrete peace in the West Asian region by rallying behind the Arabs, especially Syria. However, Syria values its relationship with Moscow given the fact that Moscow has been advocating the same principles regarding peace as advocated by the Syrian government in relation to Israel.

Chapter IV

Security and Military Aspects

Threat perceptions emanating from Israel has been a key element driving Syria to devise different policies to deal with it. As already mentioned, Syria's main concern in the post-Cold War situation has been the formation of a new regional order in the West Asian region dominated by the US-Israeli alliance. In order to act as a counter-balance and to keep in check the emergence of a regional order which would be detrimental to the Arabs, Syria made attempts to remain a major player in the Arab-Israeli issues. Hezbollah and Hamas which were considered as rejectionist groups by Israel and the US received support from Syria. By maintaining amicable relationship with Hezbollah and Hamas, Syria tried to oversee and regulate the Arab-Israeli affairs. With the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US and the declaration of the War on Terror, initially Syria found itself cooperating with the US. However, cooperation with the US on tackling the issue of terrorism was short-lived and after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, pressure and international isolation of Syria increased due to the US criticisms for supporting groups like Hezbollah, Hamas and most importantly, for adding to the insurgency problem in Iraq. Since then, Syria's relationship with the US became strained. Within this context, Syria's policy towards Russia needs to be analysed by focussing on Russia's role in relation to Hezbollah, Hamas, the War on Terror and US-led invasion of Iraq. Syria's military relation with Russia in the post-Cold War period also needs to be explored as the Soviet Union used to be a main military backer of Syria.

A: The Hezbollah Factor

It has already been stated in the previous chapter that Syria's role in Lebanon's civil war was a strategic step undertaken by the Hafez al-Assad regime to bring about stability in its neighbourhood in order to prevent any kind of Israeli interference there. Hezbollah was a key element which emerged out of the Lebanese civil war and became entangled with Syria's role in Lebanon.

The Hezbollah, also known as the "Party of God" is a Shiite political and military group in Lebanon. It was formed in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion during the course of the civil war. Its ideology was put forth in its foundational document which was published as the Open Letter in February 1985. Another document was released in 2009 in which it explained

the evolution of its political and military role and its future objective as well. It espoused an ideology which was anti-imperialist and anti-Western in nature mainly pointing towards US and its ally Israel.[1] It was hugely influenced by Iran's clergy and claims its allegiance to it. Initially the Hezbollah did not show its interest in Lebanese politics as it considered the political system to be "corrupt" and but eventually as circumstances changed, it gradually made its foray into Lebanese politics. The Open Letter of 1985 stated:

> Our primary assumption in our fight against Israel states that the Zionist entity is aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the rights of the Muslim people. Therefore our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no cease-fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated.[2]

Over the years its ideology has adjusted to the realities of Lebanese society and politics but its anti-Israel and anti-Western stance remains consistent. It was alleged that Hezbollah had committed brutal attacks during the Lebanese civil war and also in early 1990s. It was at the forefront of fighting with Israeli positions in South Lebanon and leading a "campaign of resistance" there.[3] The group has been able to generate goodwill among Lebanese people from its social service network. After the evacuation of Israeli troops in 2000 its power got strengthened in Lebanon. It came to occupy a significant number of seats in the Lebanese parliament and has since been a strong opposition force in politics.[4]

Hezbollah had expressed its stand on the government in Lebanon in early 1990s. In a radio announcement it had stated that it highly valued the "sacrifices" of the resistance fighters against Israel and its Western allies. The Lebanese government's "ignorance" of the activities of resistance and its inability to acknowledge them had prompted the Hezbollah to refrain from taking part in politics. It had also stated that it stood for peace and security of the

[1] Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, (London, 2004), p.29.

[2] Jonathan Masters and Zachary Laub (2014), "Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu'llah)," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 January 2014, [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016, URL: http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155

[3] Augustus Richard Norton (2007), "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics", *The International Spectator*, 42 (4), pp.475-491.

[4] James B. Love (2010), "Hezbollah: Social Services as a Source of Power", *JSOU Report* 10-5, [Online:web] Accessed 17 June 2016, URL:http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2010/1006_jsou-report-10-5.pdf

civilians.[5]Eventually, in 1992 the Hezbollah renounced its earlier stance and made its entry into Lebanese political platform after consulting Iran's clergy. It contested in elections and won 12 seats in the parliament out of a total of 128 seats.[6]

As Hafez al-Assad realised that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia came to occupy a secondary role to that of the US in the peace process and followed the lead of the US in various matters relating to the West Asian region, Assad made sure that Lebanese politics and Hezbollah stayed under the tight control of Syria. This was done mainly to have leverage in the Arab-Israeli affairs.

On the margins of the pre-Madrid era when Secretary James Baker was on a shuttle diplomacy from March 1991 to October 1991 in the region, Assad and Baker discussed the issue of Lebanon on 18 July 1991. Assad was told that the US was in support of disarming all the militias in Lebanon including Hezbollah. Faruq al-Shara, Syria's Foreign Minister went on to correct Baker and stated that Hezbollah did not possess weapons, not even medium ones. Assad went on to state that Hezbollah was a resistance movement, not a militia.[7]

Syria's responses towards Hezbollah were in support of the group's activities in Lebanon. According to Hafez al-Assad, "resisting Israeli occupation was a legitimate right" of the Arabs. He stated this on the occasion of 48th anniversary of the foundation of the Syrian army in 1993. He criticized Israeli forces for their attacks against civilian population of Lebanon and went on to state that Israel's claim that its security is under threat is "baseless". Western support to Israeli "aggression" against the Arabs is the main reason behind the "long suffering" of the people of the region. Assad also stated that in order to stop the resistance movement from continuing, efforts should be made to restore peace in the region by bringing an end to occupation of Arab lands.[8]

Syria has maintained its relations with Hezbollah cautiously. There are no known offices of Hezbollah or training camps inside Syrian territory. Most of the Hezbollah activities are

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[5] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1990), "Excerpts from report by pro-Hezbollah radio, Voice of the Oppressed, Lebanon: Hezbollah Explains its Refusal to Take Part in the New Government," ME/0954 A/10.,21 December 1990

[6] Harik , *Hezbollah,* p.95.

[7] Bouthaina Shaaban , *Damascus Dairy: An Inside Account of Hafez Al-Assad's Peace Diplomacy, 1990-2000,* (Colorado,2013), pp.31-32.

[8] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993), "President Asad Says Resisting Israeli Occupation is a Legitimate Right", *Syrian Arab Republic Radio,* ME/1757 A/6, Damascus, 3 August 1993.

coordinated and assisted from South Lebanon. There have been reports of transfer of weapons from Iran via Syria which then go to the Hezbollah. Syrian government has openly declared its moral support for Hezbollah and its activities. It must also be pointed out that Syria has not allowed the "resistance groups" such as Hezbollah to its own territory to be used as a base to attack Israel.[9]

From the Syrian perspective, Hezbollah acted as a 'bargaining chip' during the peace negotiations with Israel. This bargaining strategy was evident during the peace negotiations between Syria and Israel in 1994. Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had realised that Syria would not ask Hezbollah to halt its attacks against the Israeli army unless there was any progress in the peace process. So, when Syria felt that the peace negotiations were proceeding fairly in April 1994, Syrian army went on to raid areas controlled by Hezbollah in Lebanon and confiscated some weapons.[10] However, it must be mentioned here that Syria does not rule out Hezbollah's right to arm itself as it is considered as a resistance group. This is evident from the fact although the Taif Accord called for the disarmament of all Lebanese militias but because of Syria's support, Hezbollah was able to retain weapons throughout the post-civil war period.[11]

Syria and Iran have been under the radar of the US due to their support to the Hezbollah. As Hezbollah harbours anti-US and anti-Israel stance, both the US and Israel look upon the organisation with suspicion of promoting terrorism in the region. During Hezbollah's involvement in skirmishes with the South Lebanon Army*,[12] (supported by Israel) and targeting of Israeli positions, there were heightened tensions in US and Israel. Due to this reason, in 1995 US identified the Hezbollah as Specially Designated Terrorists (SDT) and declared that the group could prove to be inimical for regional peace. Hezbollah has been listed in US's Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) list in 1996. After the September 2001

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[9] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2003), "Statement of Murhaf Jouejati to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States", 9 July 2003, [Online:web] Accessed 3 July 2016, URL:http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing3/witness_jouejati.htm

[10] Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948*, (New York, 2002), pp.62-63.

[11] Joshua L. Gleis and Benedetta Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, (Baltimore, 2012), p.43.

[12] It was a militia group which comprised of Lebanese Christians and was a party to the South Lebanon conflict from 1982 to 2000. Its leaders were Saad Haddad and Antoine Haddad. It fought against the PLO and Hezbollah. From March 1978 SLA began working with Israel to keep away Palestinian guerillas from Israel's border. When Israel left Lebanon in June 1978, a buffer zone was created along the Israel-Lebanon border and Israel kept providing military training to the SLA to fight the Palestinian guerillas. See South Lebanon Army, [Online:web] Accessed 2 March 2016, URL:http://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/south-lebanon-army

attacks, US came out with another list of terrorist organization by the name of Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT). Another list was released in 2002 under the title Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and locked Persons list which also included Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.[13]

Soviet Union's relations with Lebanese Shi'ite groups took place from the 1970s. The leader of Lebanon's Amal Movement,[14] Moussa al-Sadr had visited Moscow in 1972. During that time USSR provided small amount of financial aid to the organization but did not go ahead to pursue full-fledged cooperation with the group. When the civil war was going on in Lebanon, USSR attempted to build relations with Palestinian allies and anti-Shah group in Lebanon. Moscow also went on to forge relations with radical Shi'ite groups there who were being trained at Palestinian camps. Gradually these newly formed Shi'ite groups came together to form Hezbollah. As Hezbollah draws its inspiration and spiritual motivation form Ayatollah Khomeini, their ideologies also converged with that of the Iranian cleric. Not only the US was considered as a "satan" but even the Communist countries were equally looked upon as "godless" by Hezbollah. During the 1980s, the ideology of Hezbollah took on such a radical stance that there were blatant attacks and assaults on Communist Party of Lebanon and other secular parties which were also anti-Israel in nature. Moreover, in 1985 some members of the Soviet embassy in Lebanon were held hostage by Hezbollah and released later. Relations between Moscow and Hezbollah seemed "non-existent" and began to improve only after Khomeini's death in 1989.[15]

In order to put pressure on the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah, Israel attacked Hezbollah targets in July 1993. This campaign to deter Hezbollah attacks on Israel was named Operation Accountability. The objective of this operation was also to demand evacuation of civilians from South Lebanon. Israel made the announcement that civilians who would not evacuate would not be provided immunity in case of conflict between

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[13] Jeremy M Sharp (2006), "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict", *CRS Report for Congress*, 15 September 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 27 May 2016, URL:http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/75271.pdf
[14] It was founded in 1974 in an attempt to seek equality and social justice for all the communities in Lebanon, especially the Shi'a community which was the most neglected one. It's founders were Musa al-Sadr and Hussein el-Husseini. It came into prominence during the Lebanese civil war as there was severe fighting between Amal Movement and Hezbollah. They were in confrontation with each other because of the differences in their ideologies. Hezbollah resented the Amal Movement's absence of a clerical leadership. See Norton, *Hezbollah*, pp.45-46.
[15]Talal Nizameddin, (2008), "Squaring the Middle East Triangle in Lebanon: Russia and the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Nexus," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 86(3), pp.475-500.

Hezbollah and Israel and would be considered as supporting Hezbollah activities. After the Operation Accountability, a ceasefire on civilian attacks was decided upon mediated by the US between Israel and Hezbollah.[16]

The ceasefire of 1993 was not respected. Attacks broke out between Hezbollah and Israeli forces in 1996. Following the Israeli airstrikes on South Lebanon in April 1996 as a retaliatory attack on Hezbollah which fired rockets into Israeli territory, an intense diplomatic process began among US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, US's West Asia Envoy Denis Ross, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara and President Assad.[17] Russia's role in these discussions and diplomacy were non-existent and finds no major mention apart from the fact that Yevgeny Primakov visited the region in April 1996 which was viewed as an effort to bring about solution to Arab-Israeli conflicts. This visit by Primakov also helped to portray close relations between Syria-Russia and Iran-Russia. However, this diplomatic initiative ended on an unsuccessful note.

The earlier Foreign Minister of Russia, Andrei Kozyrev was facing criticism from the domestic opposition for its pro-Western policies. Yevgeny Primakov who succeeded Kozyrev in 1996 was open about his slightly critical stance towards Israel. However, due to Russia's weak position in relation to diplomatic maneuvers, it was the US who could temporarily bring an end to the fighting.[18] It is interesting to note that the Russian government broadly agreed with the international community that the airstrikes of Israel against Lebanon in April 1996 were a response to Hezbollah's provocation. Russian reaction to the attacks was an implicit recognition that both the sides to the conflict were equally responsible for the hostilities and hence condemnable. Russia at this time was pursuing a balanced approach to the conflict and hence chose not to associate too closely with Syria and Iran regarding the Lebanese aspect.[19]

Syria chose not to respond negatively towards Russia's less enthusiastic diplomatic

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[16] Virginia N. Sherry (1997), "Operation Grapes of Wrath: The Civilian Victims", *Human Rights Watch Report*, September 1997, 9(8E), [Online:web] Accessed 2 July 2017, URL: https://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/isrleb/Isrleb.htm
[17] Shaaban , *Damascus Dairy*, pp.139-147.
[18] Robert O. Freedman (2010), "Russia, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Putin Years", *Middle East Policy Council*, 17(3), [Online:web] Accessed 23 June 2016, URL:http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/russia-israel-and-arab-israeli-conflict-putin-years?print
[19] Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a New Foreign Policy*, (London,1999), pp.175-176.

engagement in the Hezbollah-Israel attacks. The main reason behind this was that Russia acknowledged Syria's important role in Lebanon. Moreover, before the Operation Grapes of Wrath took place, the US wanted Syria to use its influence in Lebanon to reduce tension. The response of Assad towards the US's request was that as Israel went against the 1993 Agreement of not attacking the Lebanese civilians, the Hezbollah were within their rights to retaliate to protect their people and homeland. By this statement of Assad, it can be inferred that as Syria's good offices in Lebanon were conferred implicit recognition, Russia's stance in relation to Hezbollah was not issue of concern for Syria.[20]

Towards the end of 1990s, Russia was willing to pursue an assertive position in the West Asian affairs so as to portray itself as a strong power at the international level. Russia's insistence on a multinational effort to bring about peace in the region was indicative of this fact.[21] In this context in 1997, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Viktor Posuvalyuk, met the Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah to conduct negotiations. This was the first visit by a Russian high ranking government official to meet Hezbollah leader. However, there were no communiques issued to support the discussions.[22]

Bashar al-Assad's first year as president in 2000 witnessed the outbreak of the second *intifada* and Hezbollah attacks on Israel's northern border. Syria had to handle the situation tactfully so as not to draw strong criticisms from the US, Israel's main supporter.[23]

Although the Hezbollah has been listed time and again by the US as terrorist organization, Russia has not taken such a stance. Russia on the other hand has shown interest to engage with Hezbollah to deal with regional problems. Earlier Russia was not sure of its responses towards Hezbollah's confrontation with Israel, but gradually it has made it clear that it does not consider the organization as a terrorist one. According to Russia, as the group has not committed any terrorist activities on Russian soil and also since Hezbollah constitutes an important opposition in Lebanese politics, they cannot be declared illegitimate forces and

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[20] Hafez al-Assad (1996), "President Hafez al-Assad and President Hosni Mubarak Interview with Media at the Conclusion of Their Talks in Damascus" 3 April 1996, [Online:web] Accessed 4 Septmber 2016, URL: http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=836:2013-02-24-12-54-03&catid=196&Itemid=475

[21] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, p.176.

[22] Bruce Maddy-Weitzman(ed) (1997), Middle East Contemporary Survey, *The Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies*, vol.21,Tel Aviv University, Westview Press, p.64

[23] Eyal Zisser (2003), "Syria and the War in Iraq", *MERIA* ,7(2), [Online:web] Accessed 10 April 2016, URL:http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2003/06/zisser.pdf

their opinion needs to be taken into consideration while discussing peace in the region.[24]

Hezbollah considered that its military arm, the Resistance Movement was instrumental in driving out the Israeli troops from Lebanon in 2000. During this time, Hezbollah's popularity increased in Lebanon. It has been claimed that Hezbollah receives its training and military support from Iran and political support from Syria.[25] From the 1980s, the US and Israel have been constantly accusing Syria and Iran of supplying weapons to Hezbollah. Although both Syria and Iran have denied the accusations, the Hezbollah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah stated in 2007 that the Hezbollah receives money, military training and weapons from Iran and that all this help comes through Syria.[26]

Therefore, it needs to be seen how Russia's relations with Syria and Iran were during this time. Syrian president was invited to pay a visit to Russia in January 2005. It was the first state visit to Russia by Bashar al-Assad after coming into power in 2000. One of the main highlights of the meeting between Putin and Assad was signing of a declaration to further deepen relations of friendship and cooperation. During the talks, many issues ranging from economic to political sphere were discussed.[27] Russia wanted to rebuild its strong relations with Syria during this time as there were some issues due to which it was facing challenges at the domestic level and also at international level. When Moscow witnessed that Syria was also going through a difficult phase with US due to various regional issues it sought to take advantage of the situation to strengthen its relations with Damascus.

Russia's own foreign policy interests in West Asia included maintaining its influence among Arab countries. Moscow's increasing Muslim population and huge international pressure

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[24] Mohammed Salem (2015) , "Russia Says Hezbollah, Hamas Aren't Terrorist Groups", *The Moscow Times*, 16 November 2015, [Online:web] Accessed 20 May 2016.URL:http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-says-hezbollah-hamas-arent-terrorist-groups/549136.html%20

[25] BBC News, *"Who are Hezbollah?",* [Online:web] Accessed 15 June 2016, URL:http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4314423.stm

[26] Human Rights Watch Report (2007), "Civilians Under Assault: Hezbollah's Rocket Attacks on Israel in the 2006 War", 28 August 2007, [Online:web] Accessed 23 September 2015,URL:https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/08/28/civilians-under-assault/hezbollahs-rocket-attacks-israel-2006-war

[27] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2005), "Press statement by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin and the President of Syria Bashar al-Assad after the conclusion of Russian-Syrian talks," Moscow, 25 January 2005, [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016, URL:http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/DC8C4BDCB7A2721AC3256F9600305171

because of the Chechen War made it necessary to upgrade its role in the West Asian affairs in which US was increasingly proving to be a hegemon after the end of the Cold War.

The dynamics of Russia-Iran relations were different from that of Syria-Russia relations. Relations with Iran from 1991 to 2010 witnessed many ups and downs. Russia at one point even went ahead to support tough UN sanctions against Iran due to its alleged nuclear activities. In the sphere of military relations, ties between both the countries seemed strong during early 1990s. One interesting fact has been that Russia has used Iran as leverage in its policy towards the US.[28]Russia provided Iran with three diesel submarines within the period 1991-1993. Anti-tank missiles, surface-to-air systems, tanks, transport helicopters were also part of military deals with Iran which were delivered successfully by Russia.[29] US warned that such upwards trend in arms sales to Iran could have negative consequences, but Russia brushed off such requests and continued with its weapons exports. Russia was not directly supporting Hezbollah but moving closer to those countries which were challenging US interests in the region. Russia never strongly denounced the activities of Hezbollah in relation to Israel.[30]

After the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon in May 2000, fighting between Hezbollah and Israel renewed. There were reports from the Israeli intelligence that Syria was passing on Russian-made antitank missiles to Hezbollah during this time. These missiles were said to have targeted Israeli vehicles precisely and also helped in firing Israeli troops stationed in buildings from a distance.[31] Israel feared that Hezbollah's fighting tactics underwent an overhaul and with the availability of modern weaponry from countries like Russia it became a serious threat to regional security.[32]

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[28] Nikolay Kozhanov (2015), "Understanding the Revitalization of Russian-Iranian Relations", The Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow, [Online:web] Accessed 17 June 2016, URL: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_Kozhanov_web_Eng.pdf
[29] SIPRI Trade Register, "Transfers of major conventional weapons: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1991 to 2010 between Russia and Iran," [Online:web] Accessed 17 June 2016, URL:http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php

[30] Talal Nizameddin, *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*, (London, 2013), pp.118-125.
[31] Steven Eelanger and Richard A. Oppel Jr. (2006) , "A Disciplined Hezbollah Surprises Israel With Its Training, Tactics and Weapons", *International New York Times*, Jerusalem ,7 August 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016,URL:http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/07/world/middleeast/07hezbollah.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
[32] John Kifner (2000), "In Long Fight With Israel, Hezbollah Tactics Evolved", *The New York Times*, Lebanon ,July 19, 2000, ,[Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/2000/07/19/world/in-long-fight-with-israel-hezbollah-tactics-evolved.html

At the backdrop of tense relationship with the US after the invasion of Iraq, Bashar put forward the Syrian view regarding Hezbollah in an interview to *The New York Time* on 1 December 2003. He reiterated the Syrian viewpoint that it considers Hezbollah as a resistence group. The main point made by Bashar was that since Hezbollah fought within Lebanon and not from outside, Syria supported the group. Bashar stated that Syria supported Hezbollah from the political viewpoint and not militarily or financially as accused by the US and Israel.[33]

After the Syrian forces left Lebanon in April 2005, Hezbollah sided with its Christian allies and entered domestic politics by securing positions in the cabinet. But this did not mean that it renounced its antagonistic attitude in relation to Israel.[34]During the July 2006 War between Hezbollah and Israel, two Israeli soldiers were kidnapped by Hezbollah to which Israel responded with a series of airstrikes on Lebanon. This led to the passing of Simple Resolution 534 by the US Senate in July 2006. This resolution called for immediate release of the soldiers allegedly held captive by Hezbollah. It also went on to condemn Syria and Iran for the support that it provided to the Hezbollah. Another resolution was passed by the House on 20 July 2006. This resolution House Resolution 921 condemned Hezbollah attacks on Israel during the war and called on the US President to issue sanctions against Syria and Iran.[35]

In July 2006, a list of terrorist groups was published by Russia where it listed al-Qaeda but did not mention Hezbollah. Federal Security Service (FSB) anti-terrorism head Yuri Sapunov had stated that since Hezbollah was not declared as a global terrorist organization it did not seem fit to mention it in the list.[36] The list of terrorist groups by Russia was released just after the outbreak of the Hezbollah-Israel War of July 2006. Syrian support for the group seemed to strengthen after the 2006 war. Syria's relations with Hezbollah could be seen as a leverage that it used against Israel.[37]

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[33] Bashar al-Assad (2003), "Asad/The New York Times Interview", [Online:web] Accessed 5 June 2017, URL: http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105:assad-new-york-times-interview-december-1-2003&catid=95&Itemid=468

[34] Niel Macfarquhar and Hassan M. Fattah (2006),"At Crossroads, Hezbollah Goes on the Attack", *The New York Times*, 16 July 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 15 May 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/16/world/middleeast/16hezbollah.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1

[35] Jeremy M Sharp (2006), "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict", *CRS Report for Congress,* [Online:web] Accessed 27 May 2016, URL:http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/75271.pdf, accessed on.

[36] *BBC News*, "Russia names 'terrorist' groups", 28 July 2006,[Onljne:web] Accessed 17 June 2016, URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5223458.stm

[37] Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchard (2011), "Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress", [Online:web] Accessed 12 April 2016, URL:https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41446.pdf

Russia did not overtly criticize Hezbollah's activities during the 2006 war. The UN resolution 1701[38] which was passed in August 2006 to bring about cessation of hostilities, demanded that peacekeeping forces be sent to South Lebanon to disarm the Hezbollah. Russia's opinion was different and it reached a separate treaty with Lebanon to send its peacekeeping forces. Russia was doubtful of the UN resolution's effectiveness to disarm the group. It sent 308 troops to Lebanon for repairing and other reconstruction related matters.[39] Putin also sent a battalion of engineers and bomb experts to Lebanon for repair works in sites which were damaged during the Hezbollah-Israel war.[40] A ban was imposed on weapons transfers to Hezbollah by the UN during the 2006 war. It was alleged that Syria and Iran were behind weapons build-up of Hezbollah. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon released a report on the resolution 1701 which called for an arms embargo on Hezbollah. The report stated details regarding smuggling of weapons through Syria-Lebanon border and their transfers to Hezbollah.[41]

During this period issues such as disarmament of Hezbollah and the trial of Rafik Hariri assassination were the highlights at the UN. The resolution 1701, which aimed at disarming the Hezbollah could not get Syria's cooperation. Weapons of Russian origin falling into the hands of Hezbollah with the help of Syria and Iran were another major concern for Israel.[42] This kind of behaviour of Syria was making Israel uncomfortable and hence it sought to take help from Russia. Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, went to Russia in October 2006 and met Putin with the hope of getting assurance that Syria would be warned of such behaviour. Such requests from Israel were swept aside by the Russian government as "false accusations" and pointed out that there was no concrete evidence to support them.[43] Syria's support for Hezbollah again came into light after the killing of a top official of the group by the CIA and

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[38] United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases (2006), "Security Council Calls for End to Hostilities Between Hizbollah, Israel, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1701 (2006)",[Online:web] Accessed 23 June 2016,URL:http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8808.doc.htm

[39] Russia: UN peacekeepers unlikely to disarm Hizbullah, 10 October 2006, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3320307,00.html, accessed on 23 May 2016.
[40] *Pravda.ru*, Russia, Putin to send Russian engineering-sapper battalion to Lebanon, 11 September 2006, , [Online:web] Accessed 24 June 2016, URL:http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/11-09-2006/84384-putin-0/
[41] C.I Bosley (2007), "Iran Allegedly Skirts Hezbollah Arms Ban", *Arms Control Today*, 37 (7), [Online:web] Accessed 16 February 2016, URL:http://www.armscontrol.org/print/2720
[42] For more information see Spencer C Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of Middle East Wars: The United States in the Persian Gulf , Afghanistan and, Iraq Conflicts (ed)*, vol I (A-D), (USA, 2010) , pp.1050.
[43] Nabi Abdullaev (2006), "Putin Skirts Iran in Olmert Meeting," *The Moscow Times*, 19 October 2006, [Online:web] Accesed 10 July 2016, URL:http://www.themoscowtimes.com/sitemap/free/2006/10/article/putin-skirts-iran-in-olmert-meeting/201561.html

Israeli intelligence in 2008. Imad Mughniyeh, operation chief of the group, was in Syria during his assassination. This act by US and Israel on Syrian soil drew criticisms as this was seen as a blatant violation of international law by carrying out assassination by "perfidy."[44]

In the same year under the Fouad Siniora government in Lebanon, fighting broke out between government forces and opposition group backed by Hezbollah and its allies. The confrontation arose due to anger over shutting down of telecom networks of Hezbollah. Members of Hezbollah carried out roadblocks in Western Beirut and Nasrallah called the situation as "declaration of war".[45] This led to further deterioration of its image at the international level and US was further antagonized with Hezbollah's behavior. Unlike the US, Russian government under Putin was aligning itself with Iran, a supporter of Hezbollah. Moscow during this time was sharing a renewed warm relationship with Syria. The Cedar Revolution of 2005 seemed a likely reason for such a move by Russia as it did not possess enough military and financial resources to challenge US's influence in the region. It therefore chose to build closer relations with countries and forces which were experiencing a troubled relationship with US.[46]

Under the Obama administration, the US continued with the same policy towards Hezbollah. In April 2010, US Homeland Security Chief, Michael Chertoff had stated at a terrorism forum in Jerusalem that Hezbollah "makes al-Qaeda look like a minor league team." He reiterated the fact that Hezbollah was procuring Russian made rockets through Iran.[47] In April 2010, the US once again accused Syria of supplying Hezbollah with Scud missiles having the potential of accurately targeting and destroying Israeli cities within its range. Although US seemed unsure of the country of origin of those missiles, it went on to claim that they were manufactured either in North Korea or in Russia. US officials told *The Wall Street Journal* there were high chances that the missiles were being handed over to Hezbollah by Syria. Such claims were denied by Syria. The allegations came at a time when Washington was

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[44] Adam Goldman and Ellen Nakashima (2015), "CIA and Mossad Killed Senior Hezbollah Figure in Car Bombing", *The Washington Post*, 30 January 2015, [Online:web] Accessed 24 May 2016, URL:https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-and-mossad-killed-senior-hezbollah-figure-in-car-bombing/2015/01/30/ebb88682-968a-11e4-8005-1924ede3e54a_story.html

[45] *BBC News*, "Hezbollah takes over west Beirut," [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016 , URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7391600.stm

[46] Nizameddin, *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*, pp.102.

[47] Ninan Reena (2008), "Chertoff: Hezbollah Makes Al-Qaeda Look 'Minor League'", *FOX News*, 29 May 2008 , Jerusalem, [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016, URL:http://www.foxnews.com/story/2008/05/29/chertoff-hezbollah-makes-al-qaeda-look-minor-league.html

trying to improve its relations with Damascus by restoring full diplomatic ties. Following the Hariri assassination, for five years Syria did not have an ambassador from the US and in 2010 the Barack Obama government was contemplating of appointing and sending a new ambassador. These allegations over transfer of missiles had made US to rethink its policy in relation to Syria.[48]

The Lebanese government took Syria's side and denounced the allegation of missiles transfer to Hezbollah. Prime Minister Saad Hariri went a step further to compare the situation with false information regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) leading to the Iraq War of 2003. The Syrian government denied the transfer of scud missile and accused Israel of disturbing peace in the region by "paving the way for another attack." Syria has been open about its support towards Hezbollah as a "resistance movement" against Israel but has never publicly displayed its military side of the relationship.[49] The Russian government has continued with its warm relations with Syria despite Israeli and US's accusations of arming the Hezbollah[50]

B: The Hamas Factor

The inclusion of the Hamas factor to look at Syria's policy towards Russia is important because this factor helps to unravel interesting points of divergence and convergence of policies of Syria and Russia.

Hamas, the acronym of *Harakat Al-Muqawwama Al-Islamia* was formed in 1987 during the outbreak of the First *intifada*. It is an Islamic organization formed primarily with the aim of liberating Palestine by means of Jihad. It has a social arm and also a military branch which

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[48] Haaretz Service (2010), "Report: US Confirms Syria gave Scuds to Hezbollah", *Haaretz.com*, 14 April 2010, [Online: web] accessed 31 August 2015, URL: http://www.haaretz.com/news/report-u-s-confirms-syria-gave-scuds-to-hezbollah-1.284243
[49] MacAskill, Ewen (2010), "Lebanon: Syria has not supplied Scud missiles to Hezbollah," *The Guardian*, 20 April 2010, [Online: web] accessed 31 August 2015, URL:
http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/20/lebanon-israel-syria-hezbollah-scud
[50] Mark N Katz (2005), "Putin's Pro-Israel Policy", *Middle East Quarterly*, 12(1), [Online:web] Accessed 21 March 2016, URL:http://www.meforum.org/690/putins-pro-israel-policy

functions in Gaza Strip and West Bank. [51] The Hamas Covenant of 1988 states its objectives and aims. It is stated in the Covenant that Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine and it regards Islam as the highest guiding principle. The covenant states that Hamas is an Islamic Resistance Movement with the aim of fighting for the rights of the Arabs against Israel. According to the charter, resistance is the only way to confront the Arab-Israeli conflict and not by means of peaceful solutions and international conferences which goes against the basic principles of the resistance movement. The organization's prime aim as given in the founding document is to establish an Islamic state by overthrowing Israeli occupation from Palestine. [52]

Hamas's military branch known as the *al-Qassam* brigades which was formed in 1991 led the resistance with violent means in order to undermine the international recognition that Fatah[53] was able to achieve. Due to its attacks and violence, Hamas was declared illegal in 1989 by Israel. The main turning point in its history came when the 1993 Oslo Accords was signed which proposed the formation of the Palestinian Authority (PA)[54] among its other aims. Hamas was opposed to being a part of the PA and sharing power with Fatah. It instead chose to side with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and with several other groups based in Syria. Through this act, Hamas projected itself as a group which was opposed to any kind of dialogue with Israel, particularly the Oslo Accords. [55]

Syria's relations with Hamas began with its inception during the first *intifada* and went on to strengthen after the peace deals between Arafat and Israel with the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords. According to Arafat, Syria did not have much to contribute towards the solution of the Palestine issue and therefore its involvement did not matter much. This attitude of Arafat

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[51] Cordesman, Anthony H., *Peace and War: The Arab-Israeli Military Balance Enters the 21st Century*, (London, 2002), pp.243-244.

[52] Hamas Covenant 1988, "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement", 18 August 1988, [Online:web] Accessed 25 June 2016, URL:http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

[53] A Palestinian movement which was founded under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf, Khalil al-Wazir and Khaled Yashruti in 1959 and became a political party in 1965. It comprises the largest faction in the multi-party Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

[54] An interim self-government set up to govern the Gaza Strip and areas in the West Bank following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. After the 2006 parliamentary elections in Palestine and the conflict that ensued between Hamas and Fatah, its authority got diminished and now covers areas in West Bank.

[55] Jonathan Schanzer (2003),"The Challenge of Hamas to Fatah", *Middle East Quarterly*, 10 (2), pp.29-38, [Online:web] Accessed 26 June 2016, URL:http://www.meforum.org/516/the-challenge-of-hamas-to-fatah

irked Hafez al-Assad to such an extent that he wanted Hamas to gain more popularity and legitimacy both at the regional and international level more than what PA could acquire. [56]

In this context it is important to point out that it was Syria which staunchly advocated and adhered to the notion of "just and comprehensive peace" to arrive at a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hafez al-Assad knew it well that only if Arabs were united in the peace process, a favourable settlement of the conflict could be found. To achieve this it was necessary for all actors to the conflict to coordinate their moves jointly in any peace negotiations with Israel. Viewed from such a perspective, the separate peace deals between PLO-Israel and Israel-Jordan left Assad disappointed and, probably weakened. From there arose Assad's mistrust towards Arafat. At this point, Hamas was given considerable importance by Syria as it continued stressing on the fact that Syria had the "natural right" to vouch for wider Arab rights and also keep alive the vision of being a guardian of Arab glory and values.[57]

Hamas established its political office in Syria in 1993 following the Oslo Accords. This office was established by Hamas by bringing together many other Palestinian leftist and Islamic movements together under the name "Alliance of Ten Palestinian Factions"[58]. Syria sought to bring about a strong alternative to the Arafat led PLO which signed the Oslo Accords to which Syria strongly opposed. The office of Hamas in Syria acquired special importance after the expulsion of Hamas's leaders from Jordan in 1999.[59] Hamas founder Khaled Mish'al was living in Jordan before being expelled from there in 1999. After that he stayed in Qatar and then he shifted to live in Syria. [60] Syria did not want the PA to become all powerful and as Hamas was acting as a challenge to it, Syria was glad to provide a base for the organization in its soil. Syria hoped to secure a powerful position in the region by mediating between the PA and other Palestinian rejectionist groups. Since most of such mediatory efforts have been carried out by Egypt, such a motive of Syria has not been

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[56] Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies*, (London, 2007), pp.142-143.
[57] Bente Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game: Syrian Foreign Policy Under the Assads*, (London, 2013),p.71.
[58] Syria became a base for "anti-Arafat opposition" from the 1990s and mainly after the signing of the Oslo Accords. This "anti-Arafat opposition" came together and formally came to be known as "Alliance of Ten Palestinian Factions". Later on the grouping was joined by Hamas. See Chehab , *Inside Hamas*, p.107.
[59] Raymond Hinnebusch and Tina Zintl, *Syria from Reform to Revolt: Political Economy and International Relations (ed),*vol.I, (Syracuse, 2015), pp.269-270.
[60] Birol Başkan *Turkey and Qatar in the Tangled Geopolitics of the Middle East*, (New York, 2016), p.68.

successful.[61] Syria's relations with Hamas helped Syria to appease the domestic Islamist opposition. In order to give justification for its relations with Hamas which traces its origins to the Muslim Brotherhood, a long time opposition to the Assad regime, both Syria and Hamas upheld the "principle of common resistance" towards Israel. By doing so, the religious angle of their relations was subtly made negligent.[62]

At a time when suicide bombings and attacks on Israel was increasing during the early 1990s, Egypt and the US decided to convene a conference in 1996. In March 1996, the Summit of the Peacemakers was convened at Sharm al-Sheikh with the intention of discussing acts of terrorism taking place across the region. The US President Bill Clinton, King Hussein of Jordan, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat attended the summit. At the summit, Israel demanded stringent action against the perpetrators of terrorist acts mainly pointing its fingers at Hamas. Syria and Lebanon did not participate in the summit. Russian President Yeltsin did not put forward any solution to the problem but he went on to denounce the acts of terrorism which killed many Israeli civilians and soldiers. Hamas was keeping itself updated with the progress of the summit and responded to the remarks of the world leaders by stating that its killings were justified given the fact that Palestinian lands were being occupied.[63]

Just like Hezbollah, Hamas was listed as a terrorist group by the US and some other Western countries. It has been listed as SDT which may threaten stability and security of the region. Any kind of financial transaction with an individual having links to the group or with the group itself has been banned by the US. Prohibition from entering the US has also been placed on persons linked to the group. Hamas has also been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation in 1996 and as a SDGT following the September attacks in 2001. The consolidated Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons list (SDN list), containing the names of major terrorist organisations which includes Hamas was released in 2002.[64]

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[61] Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game,* p.92.
[62] Hinnebusch and Zintl, *Syria from Reform to Revolt,* pp.270-271.
[63] *CNN World News,* "Peacemakers unite to defeat terrorism", 13 March 1996, [Online:web] Accessed 22 June 2016URL:http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9603/summit_sharm/13/ ; Tareq Y. Ismael et al., *Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East: Continuity and Change*, (London, 2011), p.376.
[64] Jeremy M. Sharp (2006), "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict ", *CRS Report for Congress*, [Online:web] Accessed 27 May 2016, URL:http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/75271.pdf

Hamas's historic win in the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections by securing 76 out of 132 seats brought about many new challenges for the organization. First was its ability to prove itself as a better alternative to Fatah. Another main challenge was its willingness to forgo violent means as a way of dealing with Israel and resorting to peace initiatives which would in turn mean implicit recognition of Israel's existence.[65]

If the Hamas factor is taken into consideration to explore Syria's policy towards Russia in the post-Cold War period then it has to be understood within the framework of Russia's relations with the Palestinians. As has already been discussed, both Syria and Hamas opposed the 1993 Oslo Accords because of which their interests converged. However, the case with Russia was different. It has already been discussed that in the early years of Yeltsin's presidency, Russia was espousing pro-Western policies. Russia could not contribute much to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Russia also could not provide much support to Syria in the peace talks that followed after the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. In contrast to Syria's expectations, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was present at the signing in ceremony of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Syria saw Russia's presence in the 1993 Oslo Accords as an outcome of Russia's policy of following the US lead in all issues relating to the Arab-Israeli affairs. Assad also sensed that Russia was relegated to a subservient role in relation to the peace process and Russia's presence at the signing ceremony of the Oslo was Moscow's desire to bolster its stature as a major international player. This action of Russia confirmed Syria's view that as Russia was making efforts to balance its relations with all the countries in the West Asian region, but while doing so was discrediting the Syrian aim of achieving a comprehensive peace through a united Arab front.

Following the peace agreement, Russia's support for Arafat increased. Russia under Yeltsin found it difficult to support Hamas which was pursuing violent means to achieve its objective vis-a-vis Israel. Arafat seemed to be a "democratic, secular and progressive" for Russia which itself was treading the democratic path.[66]

From Assad's point of view Arafat was not the rightful leader of the Palestinian cause. Assad and Arafat's rift began to widen during the Lebanese civil war in which Assad felt that Arafat's PLO would lead to more instability in the already divided and chaotic political

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[65] West Asia (2006) "Challenge of Hamas", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41 (5), pp.372-373.
[66] Nizameddin , *Russia and the Middle East,* pp.147-156.

scenario of Lebanon. As it has been already stated, Assad viewed the post-Cold War situation and the dissolution of the Soviet Union as beneficial to Israel. From Assad's viewpoint, his acceptance to enter into peace negotiations at the end of the Iraq-Kuwait War beginning with the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, sought to unify the Arab states and saved the Arabs from being at a disadvantageous position. Therefore, Assad was of the opinion that he himself had the capability of a potent leader who could lead a unified Arab front to attain comprehensive peace through the first direct face-to-face peace talks with Israel.[67]

It was the Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara who took a tough stance against Israel during the Madrid Peace Conference by bringing forward the issue of condition of the Palestinians and the inhumane treatment meted out to them in the occupied territories. Arafat was not even invited to the Madrid Peace Conference.[68]

It was Patrick Seale who aptly described Assad's view of the Palestine issue. Assad was of the view that the Palestine problem "was too important to be left to the Palestinians." The Palestinian question was a concern for all the Arabs and therefore, the terms of settling peace with Israel held importance. Assad viewed that a "wrong peace" would only lead to the perpetuation of Israeli hegemony over Palestinian affairs. Therefore, it was important that the Palestinian peace was to be negotiated at the background of power parity between Arabs and the Israelis and "on the model of East-West balance."[69]

According to Syria, both the US government under Clinton and Israel under Yitzhak Rabin tried to divide the Arabs and play one Arab state against another. Just before the Oslo Accords there were media reports to support the fact that the US and Israel were trying to forge a competition between Assad and Arafat as to who will first strike a peace deal with Israel. On 7 September 1993, *The New York Times* reported that "American officials have been playing off the Arafat-Assad mutual suspicion for the last few months. When Christopher went to the Middle East in August, he visited Damascus—even though he had nothing more to say—just to provoke Mr. Arafat into thinking that the Syrians and Israelis

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[67] Nick B. Williams Jr. (1991), "Rush Toward Peace Talks Has Arab Leaders Scrambling*", Los Angeles Times,* 25 July 1991, [Online:web] Accessed 12 April 2016, URL:http://articles.latimes.com/1991-07-25/news/mn-193_1_arab-leaders

[68] R W Apple Jr. (1991), "The Middle East Talks; The Mideast Foes List Demands and trade Angry Charges Across the Conference Table", *The New York Times,* 1 November 1991, [Online:web] Accessed 13 March 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/01/world/middle-east-talks-mideast-foes-list-demands-trade-angry-charges-across.html?pagewanted=all

[69] Patrick Seale *Asad of Syria: Struggle for the Middle East*, (London, 1988), p.348.

were cooking up something. It was Mr. Arafat's nervousness over just such a deal that contributed to its own lurch forward with Israelis".[70] From the Syrian perspective, Arafat's position as the leader of the Palestinian cause was greatly diminished after the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 and the fact the PLO headquarters was based in Tunisia distanced Arafat from Palestine. Moreover, the outbreak of the First *intifada* brought into the forefront some younger Palestinian activists such as Faisal al-Husseini and Haidar Abdul Shafi[71] which according to Syria was indicative of Arafat's declining relevance to the Palestinian movement.[72]

Arafat arrived in Syria on 20 September after the signing of the Oslo Accords. Arafat was in Syria to brief Assad on the Accord. From the Syrian viewpoint, the Oslo Accords would not bring long term solution to the Palestinian problem as it "fell short of achieving Palestinian rights and statehood". Assad conveyed it to Arafat that the signing of the Oslo Accord was "wrong". However, the Syrian government refrained from showing strong criticism and a statement was eventually released from the Presidential Palace following the visit of Arafat that Syria "agrees and supports everything decided upon by the Palestinian people". After the Oslo Accord, Syria did not seem to attach much importance to Arafat's actions as they were sure that the Accords will eventually lead to failure in the absence of a "collective peace".[73] Moreover, by criticising the Oslo Accords strongly Syria did not want to hamper its relations with the US as it was the main backer of the accords. Syria did not want to jeopardise its negotiations with Israel and the support that it received from the US and the international community for the willingness it showed to participate in the peace process. Assad went on to apply a different strategy to show his disapproval of the Oslo Accords. He allowed the establishment of a "new National Salvation Front" by the anti-Arafat Palestinian groups in Damascus. Assad was of the opinion that these Palestinian groups would be vocal in their

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[70] Thomas L. Friedman (1993), "The Assad Factor in the Mideast Talks", *The New York Times*, 7 September 1993, [Online:web] Accessed 11 April 2017, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/07/world/the-assad-factor-in-the-mideast-talks.html

[71] Haidar Abdul Shafi was the Head of the Palestine Delegation at the Madrid Peace Conference. He gave a speech at the opening ceremony of the Conference in which he stated that peace in West Asia was not only a requirement of the Arabs but "a test of validation for the new era in global politics. See The Madrid Peace Conference (1992), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21(2), University of California Press, pp.117-149.

[72] Shaaban , *Damascus Dairy* , pp.139-147.
[73] Ibid., pp.74-77.

criticisms regarding the Oslo Accords which in a tacit manner would imply Syria's displeasure with the accords.[74]

During an interview with Patrick Seale in 1993 before signing of the Oslo Accords, Assad voiced his opinion regarding the PLO. In the interview Assad stated that he viewed the PLO as just another "power" in the region. However, Assad went on to underline that if the PLO's actions puts Arabs rights at stake only then Syria would oppose. Assad mentioned about the meetings with Arafat to know the details of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.[75] However, these meetings could not remove the mistrust that existed between the two leaders.

Therefore, the news of Arafat being elected as the President of the Palestinian National Authority in January 1996 which was received quite positively by Russia did not evoke any negative response from Syria. The warm relationship between Russia and the PLO continued even after Primakov became the Foreign Minister who devised a pro-Arab and an independent foreign policy free from the influence of the US. However, during the impasse of the peace process from 1997 and 1998, Russia was less critical of the Netanyahu government of Israel which was blamed by many countries for the deadlock. It must be mentioned that Russia's support for Arafat was mainly because he symbolised the peace process which helped to substantiate Russia's image as a strong backer of the peace process and not because he was an "ally who could help to contain US influence in the region". Russia invited Arafat for a visit in 1997 and showered huge support for the PLO. During Arafat's visit Russia seized the opportunity to criticise the Hamas mainly because of the violent attacks perpetrated by the group thereby aligning with the US to denounce terrorist activities by Palestinian groups. Russia at this point in time pursued balanced diplomacy. When Arafat went to Russia in 1999 to advocate statehood for Palestinians, Russia displayed extreme caution so as not to estrange the US and Israel.[76]Syria viewed Russia's closeness with Arafat as stemming from the fact that Russia wanted to maintain a balanced relationship with the countries in the region and also not to antagonise the US. Syria realised it that as the Oslo Accord was an outcome of the US diplomacy, Russia also sought to confer recognition to it by warming up ties with Arafat which in turn would highlight Russia's role as an important player in the West Asian peace process.

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[74] Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game,* pp.89-90.
[75] Hafiz al-Asad and Patrick Seale (1993), "Interview with Hafiz al-Asad", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 22(4), pp.111-121.
[76] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, pp.147-156.

Amidst these, the most relevant point that must be pointed out that Syria did not want Hamas to become independent and all powerful while dealing with Arab-Israeli affairs. Therefore, throughout 1990s, Syria closely monitored Hamas's activities and wanted to have control over its matters. In this context, it can be argued that as Syria saw Russia's attitude towards Hamas as a factor which was able to exert some restraining pressure on the group's activities and condemn its violent nature, Syria did not display any displeasure. Moreover, Syria wanted to portray itself as a "protector of the Palestinian people" and also to show Arafat that only through collective efforts of all the Arabs, the Arab-Israeli conflict could reach a peaceful end.[77]

A delegation of Hamas's top officials along with its Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mish'al visited Syria in February 2000. The officials met the Syria Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara. A host of issues relating to Palestinian struggle and the growing opposition to Hamas at the international level were the top priority issues during the discussions. The Syrian government assured the Hamas delegation that they would continue to support the cause of the Palestinians which is central to the Arab-Israeli conflict.[78]

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad raised the Palestinian issue with great vigour mainly after the second *intifada* set in. As already mentioned, Bashar once again linked the Palestinian issue to the Syrian concept of comprehensive peace. The Oslo Accords signed in 1993 reached a deadlock after the Camp David Summit of 2000. Bashar was convinced with his father's vision that as Oslo Accords did not ensure a comprehensive peace strategy and hence was bound to fail.[79] Since the outbreak of the second *intifada*, Syria had to provide support to the Palestinians and while doing so, Syria tried to lessen its criticism towards the PLO and Arafat.[80]

Unlike Hafez al-Assad who sought to deal with Palestinian groups through military intelligence channel, Bashar not only continued contacts with the organisations through these

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[77] Jeniffer Jefferis, *Hamas: Terrorism, Governance, and Its Future in Middle East Politics,* (California, 2016), p.135.
[78] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Hamas Team Expresses "Great Satisfaction" at the End of Visit to Syria", *Text of Report by Jordanian Weekly 'Al-Majd'* , ME/3777 MED/9, 28 February 2000.
[79] Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game*, pp.89-93.
[80] Najib Ghadbian (2001), "The New Asad: Dynamics of Continuity and Change in Syria", *Middle East Journal*, 55(4), pp.624-641.

channels but also came out in the public to show support to these groups. Bashar displayed his support for the Hezbollah by meeting the Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah several times and Hamas leader Khaled Mish'al also. Bashar's government openly conferred its support to the second *Intifada* and to the Palestinian question. Syria under Bashar began to forge close relations with Iran and tried to form an alliance comprising Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran to pose a challenge to Israel and to increase Syria's leverage in the peace process which was in an impasse.[81]

There was a shift in policy under Putin who initially came to offer less sympathy towards the Palestinian issue and rather showed an inclination towards Israel as Russia was experiencing a wave of Islamic terrorism in the late 1990s. After the 2001 September attacks, Russia went on to build close relations with the US mainly to condemn terrorist attacks and to cooperate to curb terrorism. Against this background, both Hamas and Israel continued using violent means to attack each other from 2001 to 2005. Like the US, Russia also came to believe that violence cannot provide solution to political problems. With the establishment of the Quartet in 2002, Russia along with the US, the EU and the UN came out with the Roadmap for Peace in April 2003. However, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disregard for the peace initiative coupled with the construction of the wall along the West Bank led Russia to sympathise with the Palestinians. With the death of Arafat in November 2004 there was a shift in Russia's policy towards the Palestinian issue. Russia's relationship with the US also began changing following the invasion of Iraq. After Mahmoud Abbas took over as the leader of the Palestinian Authority, Putin visited Ramallah 2005 in order to show support for the Palestinian cause. Putin's visit took place at the background of growing challenge posed by Hamas against PLO. Russia surprised both the US and Israel when Putin went on to congratulate Hamas after it won a huge majority at the parliamentary elections in 2006. This policy of Russia came as a direct challenge to America's policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The June 2006 Gaza-Israel conflict and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict portrayed Hezbollah and Hamas as serious challengers of Israel. At this point, it must be noted that Russia began strengthening its relations with Syria and Iran who have been the strong supporters of these groups. Russia also made efforts to protect Syria and Iran from international sanctions pertaining to various issues. The US and Israel did not want to engage with Hamas even after it won at the elections as they considered it a terrorist organisation.

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[81] Radwan Ziadeh, *Power and Policy in Syria: The Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East* , (New York , 2011), p.82.

After the elections conflict between the PLO and Hamas increased and Russia offered to act as a mediator between the two groups and also between the US and the Palestinian groups.[82]

As Hamas did not offer recognition to Israel's existence even after its win at the elections, both the US and Israel were concerned. While the US was skeptical about Hamas's win, the Russian government was planning to invite the group's leaders. The US was trying to find ways to pressurise Hamas to recognize Israel. After Hamas election victory, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution seeking to cut financial aid to the Palestinian Authority. However, this resolution was only a recommendation. With reduction of funds coming from the US, the Palestinian Authority would have experienced huge difficulty.[83]

The Russian government clarified its stand before inviting the Hamas delegation. The Russian Foreign Ministry had stated that as Hamas was legally elected to the parliament, it was important for the group to participate in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Russia also showed the intention of cooperating with the group if it was willing to be a part of the peace process. Even though Russia was criticized for inviting the Hamas leaders for talks, it did not change its stance and decided to go ahead with the meeting. Russia was also blamed by the international community for applying "double standards" in this issue as Hamas was considered a terrorist group by many countries and was not supposed to be a part of talks with world leaders. Russia was strongly criticized around this time as the Chechen rebels were denied any negotiation by the Russian government.[84]

Khaled Mish'al welcomed the initiative undertaken by the Russian government and appreciated the fact that it was not classified a terrorist organisation by Russia. The decision of Russia to invite Hamas leaders for talks went against the stance of the Quartet according to

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[82] Nizameddin, *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*, pp.214-221.
[83] Vremya Novostei (2006), "USA Cuts Funds to Palestine, Russia Prepares to Deliver arms to Hamas", *Pravda.ru*, 17 February 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 21 July 2015, URL:http://english.pravda.ru/russia/politics/17-02-2006/76118-hamas-0/

[84] "Moscow Says Upcoming Talks Aim to Bring Hamas Into Mideast Peace Process", *Voanews.com,*
, 31 October 2009, [Online:web] Accessed 21 July 2015, URL:http://www.voanews.com/content/a-13-2006-02-17-voa17/314612.html

which no negotiation could take place with groups associated with terrorist activities.[85] In March 2006 the Hamas delegation arrived in Moscow. While in Moscow they were given a warning that it was becoming important to give recognition to Israel and to abjure violence in order to avoid international condemnation and isolation. The visit caused anger and disappointment in the US and Israel whose aim was to isolate the group. In a way the visit provided credibility to the organisation's position in Palestinian political landscape. Russia's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process needed to strengthen and there could be no better opportunity than to offer to play the role of a mediator and offer to convene a peace conference in Moscow. By 2010 Hamas leaders made numerous visits to Russia much to the chagrin of US and Israel.[86]

Moscow wanted to seize the opportunity in order to counter problems it was experiencing at the international level due to the Chechnya conflict.[87] Russia was at that time widely praised in the Arab world for its invitation, which also bestowed a modicum of legitimacy on Hamas-much to the anger of Israel which saw Hamas as a terrorist enemy seeking to destroy it. Another goal for Putin was to get Hamas to downplay the Chechen issue, and the Hamas delegation complied, with Khalid Mish'al stating, after a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, that the Chechen separatists were an internal problem of Russia. The comment drew a bitter reaction from the Chechen rebels which called Hamas decision to visit Russia, which had killed so many Chechen Muslims, not only regrettable but also un-Islamic.[88]

It must be emphasised here that Russia did not have much influence over Hamas. Russia's relations with Hamas must be seen through the prism of its close relations with Syria. In June 2007, Russia once again made a slight shift in its policy and declared Abbas as the legitimate leader of the Palestinians. This announcement by the Russian government came after Hamas gained full control of the Gaza in June 2007 after a military conflict with Fatah. Russia's lack of diplomatic leverage in the Hamas-Fatah conflict again became evident during the 2008

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[85] Ali Waked and Roee Nahmias (2006), "Putin: Hamas Not a Terror Organisation", *Ynetnews.com*, 2 February 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 10 May 2015, URL:http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3213707,00.html
[86] Senussi Bsaikri (2010), "Russia's relations with Hamas: a win-win situation", *Middle East Monitor*, [Online:web] Accessed 15 July 2015, URL:https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/672-russias-relations-with-hamas-a-win-win-situation-

[88] Colin Shindler, *Israel and the World Powers: Diplomatic Alliances and International Beyond the Middle East*, (London, 2014), p.136.

Israel-Gaza conflict. It was Egypt which led the ceasefire process to bring about an agreement between the two sides to the conflict. [89]

President Dmitry Medvedev's speech at the League of Arab States in 2009 reflected Russian policy towards Hamas. During the speech, he stated that the occupation of Palestinian areas was at the root of the problems plaguing the region and its solution could be achieved by negotiations and "just agreement" which would be possible through "a united front able to put pressure on Israel to abide by international resolutions".[90] By putting forward this idea of how the "just agreement" should look like, Russia once again was making an attempt to show that it was a formidable player in world politics. While on the one hand, Hamas was asked to moderate its position in relation to Israel, on the other hand, Israel was also told to refrain from using violence and attacking Palestinians by the Russian government.[91]

In May 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev came on state visit to Syria. A meeting with Hamas leader Mish'al and Bashar was conducted. Medvedev called for the release of Gilad Shalit, a soldier held captive by Hamas and Palestinian militants during the 2006 Gaza War. The Israeli government went on to criticise this meeting by reiterating that Hamas is a terrorist organisation which was responsible for the death of civilians. Israel took the opportunity to compare this with the Chechnya militants and pointed out that "Israel has always stood by Russia in its struggle against the Chechnyan terrorism" and that same attitude was expected from Russia in relation to Hamas. Medvedev urged Hamas for a reconciliation with Fatah. Andrei Nesterenko, Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, responded to Israeli statements that Hamas cannot be considered as a terrorist organisation but a "movement based on the trust and sympathies of a significant number of Palestinians." The Russian official also said that all the members of the Quartet maintain contacts with Hamas but are reluctant to admit this.[92]

[89] Nizameddin, *Putin's New Order in the Middle East*, pp.222-223.
[90] Bsaikri, "Russia's relations with Hamas", URL:https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/672-russias-relations-with-hamas-a-win-win-situation-

[91] Steven Lee Myers and Greg Myre (2006), "Hamas Delegation Visits Moscow for a Crash Course in Diplomacy", *The New York Times,* Moscow, 4 March 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 20 May 2016, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/04/international/middleeast/04hamas.html?_r=0
[92] Kareem Khadder (2010) "Israeli 'disappointment' over Russia-Hamas Meeting", CNN News, Jerusalem, 13 May 2010 [Online:web] Accessed 9 May 2015, URL:http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/05/13/israel.russia.hamas/

C: US-led War on Terror and 2003 Iraq War

After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks the US became ever more concerned with its national security. Those countries which were considered to be espousing anti-American posture came under the watchful eyes of Washington. US brought together its allies in the region and abroad under the banner called 'War on Terror'.[93] The War on Terror campaign was launched by the US immediately after the September 2001 attacks. American news channel, *CNN* went on to state this campaign as "America's New War". The War on Terror was not to be America's war alone but became a global war for an indefinite period. This became evident after President Bush's announcement just after the attacks that every country had to make a choice whether to join the US in this campaign or be sided with the terrorists. One of the stated aims of the War on Terror was to capture Osama bin Laden, the founder of the al-Qaeda organisation and the main perpetrator of the September 2001 attacks. President Bush made a few speeches in which he emphasised on the War on Terror campaign. Bush gave a speech on 20 September 2001 at the Joint Session of the Congress in which he stated that the US would "shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans and bring terrorists to justice" by initiating a War on Terror. On 29 January 2002 during the State of the Union address which was made after the ousting of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Bush stated that America's war against terror was not nearing its end but was only beginning to get unfolded. During the speech he went on to state the US aim of dealing with a different type of terror. His speech indicated that the US was widening its scope of fighting terror when he stated that the US would "prevent terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological and nuclear weapons from threatening the US and the world". Bush gave another speech at the US Military Academy on 1 June 2002 in which he announced that the US would apply the policy of preemptive military action against countries harbouring terrorists and which develop weapons of mass destruction.[94]

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[93] It is a term used by President George Bush in his speech to the joint session of the Congress on 20 September 2001 following the terrorist attacks in US. In his speech Bush had stated that US would wage a war on al-Qaeda and all terror groups around the world. For more information see George W. Bush (2001) "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress," *United States Capitol,* Washington, D.C., 20 September 2001, [Online:web] Accessed 10 July 2016,URL:https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf

[94] Ninan Koshy, *The War on Terror: Reordering the World*, (New Delhi, 2002), pp.1-12.

Long before the War on Terror was declared after the twin towers attacks, US had included Syria in the category of states backing terrorism. Many Palestinian groups had bases in Damascus and this proved to be a point of confrontation for Syria with the US and Israel. When Bashar al-Assad came to power in 2000 he did not want confrontation with the US and the main concern was to be able to nurture Syria's image as an important regional player. But US's classification of Syria as a terror sponsoring state by the US proved as an impediment. During an interview in February 2001 to *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* in response to a question on Syria's opinion regarding US's classification of it as one of the countries backing terrorism, Assad stated that the concept itself was "confusing". This was so because there was a difference in the understanding of the concept of terrorism and resistance between the US and Syria. According to Syria, Palestinian groups that were fighting for their rights and against injustice meted out to them were offering resistance. Assad clarified Syria's stance by stating that the acts committed by the Palestinian groups and supported by it are doing so in order to achieve national and pan-Arab aims. Therefore, classifying them as terrorist groups is misleading and a misunderstanding of the basic concerns of the regional challenges on the part of the Bush administration.[95] Despite having differences with the US on these matters, Syria began cooperating with the US to fight against terrorism.

Initially, Syria had shown full cooperation with the US when it came to combating terrorism after the 11 September attacks. Syria helped extract vital information relating to al-Qaeda members. Mohammad Haydar Zammar, a key accused in the September 2001 attacks was held in Morocco and sent to Syria for further interrogation. Moreover, Syria provided information on a few key persons involved in the attacks. This helpful attitude of Syria was even complimented by a top official of the CIA when he stated that Damascus was "completely cooperative" and provided useful information on persons involved in the al-Qaeda attacks.[96]

After the 2001 terrorist bombings, Iraq came under the scrutiny of the US. Iraq was already under the observation of the US since the 1991 Iraq-Kuwait war and due to its alleged

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[95] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (2001), "President Al-Asad Discusses Regional Issues, Challenges Facing Syria", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, London, in Arabic, 8 February 2001, ME/4068 MED/8, 12 February 2001

[96] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2003), "Statement of Murhaf Jouejati to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States", 9 July 2003, [Online:web] Accessed 3 July 2016, [Online:web] Accessed 3 July 2016,URL:http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing3/witness_jouejati.htm

developing of weapons of mass destruction. After the end of the Iraq-Kuwait War, the US made consistent efforts to stifle the Iraqi economy using economic sanctions and no-fly zones. There were attempts by the US to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime by enacting the October 1998 Iraq Liberation Act. Despite best efforts Saddam's regime could not be overthrown and instead his popularity among the Iraqi people increased. While this was the stance of the US, countries such as Russia, China and France were trying to strengthen economic relations with Iraq. There were also direct flights from Syria, France, Russia and other countries to Iraq. As Saddam's popularity could not be contained, the US went ahead with another set of demands. On 17 December 1999, UNSC resolution 1248 was passed which led to the creation of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). The UNSC resolution 1248 led to increased poverty, unemployment and created economic problems.[97]

It can be rightly said that the US advocated the plan of carrying out military action against Iraq just after the September 2001 attacks took place. This plan of the US became evident after Bush explicitly mentioned Iraq as one of the states in the "axis of evil" which included Iran and North Korea also in his State of the Union address on 29 January 2002. Bush mentioned that these regimes were dangerous for international security as they possessed destructive weapons. In the meantime, Bush was persuaded by the US Secretary of State Colin Powell and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to obtain UN authorization for initiating a war against Iraq for possessing weapons of mass destruction. On 12 September 2002 at the UN General Assembly, Bush stated that Iraq was in violation of various UNSC resolutions which were imposed on Iraq after the Iraq-Kuwait War. Bush also stated that if Iraq continued violating UN resolutions then the US would pursue unilateral action against Iraq. Although Iraq cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UNMOVIC with the inspection activities in suspected sites of weapons development in accordance with the UNSC resolution 1441 passed on 2 November 2002, the US displayed dissatisfaction.[98]

It must be mentioned that before the passing of UNSC resolution 1441, the US Under-Secretary of State John Bolton on 7 May 2002 announced an expansion of the list of

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[97] Tim Trevan, *Saddam's Secrets:The Hunt for Iraq's Hidden Weapons,* (London, 1999), pp.414-418

[98] Rick Fawn (2007), "The Iraq War: Unfolding and Unfinished", in Rick Fawn and Raymond Hinnebusch (eds.) *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., pp.1-5.

countries to be included in the "axis of evil". Bolton warned Syria, Libya and Cuba that the US would take action against them as they were allegedly developing weapons of mass destruction.[99] At this background, Syria felt that US did not offer recognition to Syria's cooperation on the issue of terrorism and hence, gradually distanced itself from it.

Syria wanted to build a coalition against war on Iraq while refraining from explicitly criticising the policies of the US towards Iraq. Therefore, Syria felt that it would be appropriate to collaborate with Russia, France and Germany and other countries which were also critical of any military action against Iraq. While acting in concert with Russia, Germany and France, Syria also voted in favour of the UNSC resolution 1441 with the hope that Iraq's compliance with the resolution would help avert war. Syria's implicit criticism for military intervention in Iraq was evident through Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara's speech at the UNSC in which he stated that Iraq did not pose a threat as destruction of its weapons stockpile was being achieved through cooperation with UN inspection team.[100]

The Bush administration was increasingly becoming critical of Syria even though it was cooperating with the US to combat terrorism. For the US, Syria did not seem like a part of the solution to combat terrorism but as a problem maker. Syria's continued support for Hezbollah and Hamas provided more fuel to the worsening US-Syrian relations. In June 2003, Bush went on to state that Syria had to close all the "terrorist camps" based there and also had to expel persons associated with those organisations or to be considered as being against US's policy of War on Terror.[101]

When US sought international support for Iraq invasion in 2003[102] most of the international community spoke out against it. The declaration of War on Terror was increasingly supported by the British Prime Minister Blair. Before the war was declared on Iraq, Blair went on a tour

[99] Koshy, *The War on Terror*, p.7.
[100] Raymond Hinnebusch (2007), "Syria: Defying the Hegemon", in Rick Fawn and Raymond Hinnebusch (eds.) *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., pp.131-132.
[101]David W. Lesch (2010), "The Evolution of Bashar al-Asad", Middle East Policy Council, 17(2),[Online:web] Accessed 29 June 2016, URL:http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/evolution-bashar-al-asad?print
[102] Also known as Operation Iraqi Freedom began on 20 March to 1 May 2003 when military troops of US, UK , Australia and Poland invaded Iraq and overthrew the Saddam Hussein regime. The mission was carried out in order to dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and to halt Iraq's support for terrorism. See Walter L. Perry et al. (2015), "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Decisive War, Elusive Peace", *RAND Corporation*, [Online:web] Accessed 6 April 2015, URL:http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1214/RAND_RR1214.pdf

to the West Asian region to receive support for a joint coalition against Iraq. However, Blair's attempt to gain Bashar al-Assad's support for the war on Iraq failed. While Blair was in Syria, at a joint press conference hosted in Damascus on 31 October 2001, Bashar went on to condemn military action on Afghanistan. He then went on to highlight that from Syria's viewpoint there was a difference between terrorism and resistance movements of Hamas and Hezbollah. He stated that Syria strongly condemned all kinds of terrorist activities in all parts of the world and the condemnation shown by Syria towards the 11 September 2001 attacks was an outcome of the "principles" followed in the region. Assad emphasised on the point that Syria supported fighting terrorism but felt the need for the international community to define the term terrorism. Bashar also stated that without proper understanding of who and what constituted terrorists, the fight against terrorism would suffer.[103] Blair's aim of gaining Syria's support for war on Iraq did not succeed and was bluntly refused by Syria.

As already it has been stated, just like Syria's stance, Russia, France and Germany were also not in favour of carrying out a unilateral intervention against Iraq and went on to issue a joint declaration against this. Russia had made it clear that it would veto any resolution which would sanction war with Iraq.[104] In the meanwhile, the US began deploying troops around Iraq towards the end of 2002. The opposition against military action against war was increasing both at the regional and international level. The defiance of the US and the UK governments of international legitimacy and announcement by Blair on 13 January 2003 that no UN authorization was required to intervene in Iraq led to increased opposition against the Anglo-American plans. Finally, war was launched on Iraq on the basis of Iraq's development of WMDs and connections to al-Qaeda. On 19 March 2003, the US and UK launched missile strikes on Iraq and subsequently launched the Operation Iraqi Freedom. The "shock and awe" strategy which was applied to attack Iraq led to the destruction of Iraq's air defence and then the US ground forces made their way into Iraq.[105]

The US-led invasion of Iraq by US in March 2003 elicited interesting responses from Syria. Initially Bashar was confident that Iraq would be able to withstand the US invasion. This was

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[103] Bashar al-Assad (2001), "Press Conference: PM and President Assad of Syria", 31 October 2002, [Online:web] Accessed 2 May 2017, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=107&Itemid=496

[104] Sally Bolton (2003), "UN war doubters unite against resolution", *The Guardian*, 5 March 2003 [Online:web] Accessed 8 April 2016, URL:http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/05/iraq.politics

[105] Rick Fawn (2007), "The Iraq War: Unfolding and Unfinished", in Rick Fawn and Raymond Hinnebusch (eds.) *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., pp.6-8.

evident through his interview to *al-Safir* newspaper in March 2003 where he stated that Iraq would fight back the US army. Syria expected a huge challenge to its regime once US successfully brought about change in Iraqi regime. Syria was well aware that there would be domino effect and areas surrounding Syria would become a "chain of pro-Western states". This would leave Syria with only Lebanon to strengthen its strategic leverage. As Bashar became convinced that US invasion in Iraq would bring about regime change there, he thought that Syria would be the next target of US. According to Bashar the invasion of Iraq was an outcome of a "US-Israeli plan" to weaken Arab states in the region and bring about regime change.[106]

Being the only non-permanent Arab member at the UN Security Council at that time, Syria felt obligated to safeguard Arab interests in the region by avoiding any instability. Therefore, initially Syria cooperated with the US to fight terrorism. Syria was of the view that by acting in accordance with the UNSC resolutions, Iraq could avoid US intervention. Therefore, Syria took a middle ground and avoided explicitly criticising the US policy towards Iraq. Instead, Syria began focussing its attention on the UN inspection team and its reports on Iraq's alleged weapons development program. However, as the US vociferously began to press for use of military intervention against Iraq, Syria began capitalising on growing anti-Americanism in the region. Bashar called for Arab solidarity in the region. Bashar then gradually began publicly denouncing the US policies in the region, especially in Iraq. However, Bashar's strategy to bring together the Arabs against America's policies backfired and pro-US countries such as Egypt and Jordan witnessed a surge of anti-Syria protests. At this point, Syria's relation with the US was also strained to a certain extent.[107]

At this point in time, after Bashar's sharp criticism for the US action against Iraq, the US began to interpret that Syria was on the "wrong side" of the war on terror campaign. Syria was of the opinion that there would be strong resistance against the unilateral action of the US inside Iraq. Following the invasion of Iraq, Syria was accused by the US for facilitating arms smuggling into Iraq and providing asylum to pro-Saddam Iraqi officials. Immediately after the invasion of Iraq, in March 2003 the US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld

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[106] Fred H. Lawson (2009), *Demystifying Syria (ed),* London: The London Middle East Institute, pp.163-164.
[107] Scheller, *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game,* pp.183-188.

stated that Syria was helping Iraq to hide weapons of mass destruction and allowing foreign fighters to cross into Iraq through Syria.[108]

Another significant development was that in the aftermath of Iraq's invasion, the US went ahead to criticise Syria by announcing that Syria's "occupation" of Lebanon was an impediment for peace in the region. This threatened Syria and made it realise that the US was attempting to weaken Syria by condemning its role in Lebanon, its main arena of stronghold to deal with regional affairs. Although threats of military action against Syria gradually subsided, the US went forward to impose a sanctions regime on Syria.[109] The 108th Congress went on to pass the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA) on 12 December 2003 which showed that US was desperate to bring an end to Syria's association with organisations that were categorised as terrorist groups and which threatened Israel's security. The SALSRA Act aimed to bring about a freeze on Syrian assets in the US, halt US exports to Syria, reducing the US diplomatic presence in Syria and most importantly demanded Syria to refrain from supporting the Hamas and Hezbollah.[110]

Syria was disappointed also because of the reluctance of the US to remove Syria from its list of terror sponsoring countries. An executive order was passed by US in May 2004 which was put in force to block property of Syrians accused of being associated with terrorists and also restricting export of certain kind of goods to Syria.[111]

Russian Foreign Minister Primakov had met Saddam Hussein a few weeks before the US carried out its military operation against Iraq in March 2003. Russia was apprehensive of the US's action thinking that Saddam's toppling would cause huge domestic instability in Iraq and therefore last minute diplomacy seemed important. Primakov was instructed by Putin to

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[108] Anders Strindberg (2004), "Syria Under Pressure", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 33(4), pp.53-69.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Shirl McArthur (2003)," Is Syria Next Target in the War to Make the World Safe for Israel?", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 22(5), pp.18-19, [Online:web] Accessed 8 June 2015, URL:http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/docview/218799425/fulltext/30D077D980DB4648PQ/3?acco untid=142596
[111] Presidential Documents (2004), "Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004 Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria", *Federal Register,* 69(93), [Online:web] Accessed 3 July 2016, URL:https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/13338.pdf

deliver a message to Saddam that he could remain in his post but to allow arms inspections[112] so as to prevent catastrophic outcomes of "use of force" by US.[113]

Against this background, Syria's relations with Russia started improving. Syria's felt that it may become the next target of the US and the regime would be overthrown. In many years again the need for a counterweight to the US in world politics was increasingly felt by Syria after Iraq was subjected to unilateral invasion in 2003 in defiance of international legitimacy.[114]

Russia was one of the first countries showing solidarity with US after the September 2001 attacks and its international campaign against terror.[115]Bush's campaign on terror found prompt support from the Russian government. US's attempt to build closer ties with former Soviet countries was also welcomed positively by the Putin government. This was mainly due to the fact that Russia came to identify its Chechnya conflict with US's problems with terrorism. Fight against Islamic terrorism did not go well with Russia's domestic interests and the apprehension of disappointing the Arab world and its own Muslim population forced to restrain itself from being actively involved in War on Terror. At the Duma there were calls made by some deputies few months before the September 2001 attacks to focus attention on the fact that the Palestine issue was of major concern to all Muslims. Internationally, coordinating closely with Israel antagonized important partners such as Iran and damaged economic interests in West Asia as well as risked alienating Russian and neighbouring Muslims.[116]

During Bashar's visit to Moscow in January 2005, the situation in Iraq received considerable attention in the talks. It was decided by both the countries to work towards establishing peaceful conditions for life in Iraq. Social infrastructure and the economy of Iraq were in

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[112] Yevgeny Primakov *Russia and the Arabs,* translated by Paul Gould, (New York, 2009), pp. 320-321

[113] Ira Kaufman Burton (2006), *The Carter Years*, New York: Facts On File, Inc., p.25.
Iraq: A Chronology of UN Inspections, Arms Control Today, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_10/iraqspecialoct02, accessed on 9 July 2016.

[114] Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, (US, 2014), p.315.

[115] Simon Shuster (2011), "How the War on Terrorism Did Russia a Favor",*TIME*, Moscow: 19 September 2011, [Online:web] Accessed 7 June 2016,
URL:http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2093529,00.html
[116] Nizameddin, *Putin's New World Order in the Middle East*, p.206.

shambles after the US invasion which required major overhaul. Syria and Russia decided to work jointly in projects for reconstruction of infrastructure in Iraq.[117] A joint declaration signed by both the countries sought to "decisively denounce terrorism in all its forms and manifestations." The declaration emphasized that the aim of spreading democracy in the region must be carried out by considering their different historical and civilizational context and that efforts towards this depended upon the progress of a "just and comprehensive peace process." Most importantly, it stated that the international community must come together to decide upon a specific definition of the word terrorism.[118]

From the Syrian viewpoint as stated by Bashar during an interview with the *Russian TV* in 15 December 2005, Russia wanted stability in the West Asian region which was also Syria's objective. Bashar also emphasised the point that Russia understood the importance of Iraq's domestic stability.[119]Syria-Russia cooperation on the issue of terrorism and the deteriorating situation in Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003 increased tremendously. In December 2006, Assad visited a second time to Russia to discuss important issues such as the stalled peace process and Iraq's situation. Assad was told by the Russian president Putin that since the last visit of Assad in 2005, their bilateral relations grew considerably on all fronts.[120]

In October 2008, days before the presidential election began, US carried out an air raid over Iraq-Syria border which signified gross violation of Syrian sovereignty. This raid also showed that US was trying to portray Syria as a huge supporter of terrorist activities going on in Iraq. When Obama became president in 2009 he had planned to reduce the reliance on military power and rather depend on diplomatic maneuvers to bring about a solution to the problem in Iraq. However, Obama administration's this plan have not been implemented[121]

[117] MFA of the Russian Federation (2005), "Press statement by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin and the President of Syria Bashar al-Assad after the conclusion of Russian-Syrian talks", *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,* Moscow, 25 January 2005, [Online:web] Accessed 11 July 2016, URL:http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/DC8C4BDCB7A2721AC3256F9600305171

[118] Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend Or Foe*?, (Westport, 2006), p.30.
[119] Bashar al-Assad (2005), "President Assad Interview/ Russian TV", 12 December 2005, [Online:web] Accessed 2 July 2016, URL:http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=114:president-assad-russian-tv-interview-december-12-2005&catid=97&Itemid=468
[120] Official Internet Sources of the President of Russia (2006), "Beginning of Meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad", *en.kremlin.ru*, 19 December 2006, [Online:web] Accessed 3 June 2016, URL:http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/page/251
[121] Mir H Sadat and Daniel B. Jonesa (2009), "US Foreign Policy Toward Syria: Balancing Ideology and National Interests", *Middle East Policy Council*, [Online:web] Accessed 6 April 2016,

D: Syria-Russia Military Relations

The Soviet Union was one of the major weapons suppliers of Syria during the Cold War period. This was a cause of concern for Israel and the US but this did not deter Syria and Russia from engaging in military relations. There was a turnabout in their military aspect of relationship when the Cold War came to an end with sale of weapons to Syria dropping to a significant extent. In the year 1991 Russian weapons sales decreased due to which Syria had to procure them from countries like China and North Korea.[122]

After the Iraq-Kuwait war ended, military relations between both the countries again took off when an arms deal of $2 billion was finalised. Syria had shown eagerness in strengthening air defence systems, aircrafts etc. during early 1990s but since Russia was internally weak, robust military relations was out of question. During this period Russia had asked Syria to pay in hard currency for the weapons that were being demanded unlike the easy instalments that were followed during the Cold War.[123]

In order to pull Russia out of economic gloom, Yeltsin had ordered his administration to engage in military contracts being paid in hard currency. Moreover, procurement of lucrative military deals were being encourage by the Russian administration in order to infuse money into the dwindling economy which in turn was leading to striking arms contracts with the US "enemies." This acted as an irritant in Russia-US relations given the fact that during that time Washington was an important source of economic aid which could have stopped if tensions had escalated between them. Russia in the 1990s went on to indulge in military deals with countries such as China and Iran with whom US had problems. At this point of time, Syria was in dire need of replacement and repair of parts of its core arsenal acquired from the Soviet Union.[124] Arms contracts between Syria and Russia were limited in the early 1990s. Military dealings and contracts did take place during the 1990s but were not of a higher

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URL:http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/us-foreign-policy-toward-syria-balancing-ideology-and-national-interests

[122] Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East: Towards a New Foreign Policy*, (London, 1999), p.115.
[123] Daily Report, "Syrian arms Deal Reportedly Resumed", *Central Eurasia*, FBIS-SOV-92-010, 15 January 1992, *International Affairs, Russia*, pp.20.
[124] David Filipov (1992)"One market that's booming: Arms", *The Moscow Times,* 21 July 1992, [Online:web] Accessed 4 May 2015, URL:http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/one-market-thats-booming-arms/221194.html

value. In the mid-1990s there seemed minimal military related trade between the two countries but after 2000 the graph shows an increasing trend till 2010. (See Table 4.1).

One of the major factors for a slump in their military relations was outstanding debt that Syria owed to Russia dating back to the Soviet Union days. Around $13.4billion was supposed to be paid by Syria and to tackle the issue, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Oleg Soskovets and Foreign Economic Relations Minister Oleg Davydov paid a visit in 1994 and reached an agreement with the Syrian government. It was given in the agreement that around 80 per cent of the debt would be written off and the remaining amount could be paid in cash or by delivering goods to Russia over 10 years of time. As Syria wanted 90 per cent of the debt to be written off, the deal was cancelled. A Military-Technical Agreement of $500 million was signed during this visit which was a breakthrough in their relations.[125] Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlas had stated that the signing of the agreement showed that Syria had "powerful friends in Moscow."[126]

It was reported in the *Middle East International* that 1000 *Kornet* laser-guided anti-tank missiles were delivered to Syria from Russia in June 1998. This was a significant amount of military sales to Syria during a period which was otherwise characterised by a temporary decline in military cooperation between the two countries due to the huge Soviet-era debt.
The Russian ambassador to Damascus Victor Gogitidze had stated in 1997 that bilateral cooperation in military sphere was becoming stronger as Russia and Syria had conducted training exercises together. He had also stated that the aim behind selling of weapons to Syria was to "strengthen Syria's defensive military capabilities" in order to "help maintain military stability in the Middle East."[127]

When Hafez al-Assad visited Moscow in July 1999, there were reports that Syria was hoping to procure anti-tank missiles and advanced version of MiG-29 from Russia. Assad sensed increased positivity in Syria-Russia relations primarily because of Russia's willingness to

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[125] Daily Report (1995), "Syrian Debt Problem Remains Despite Moscow Offer", *Central Eurasia*, FBIS-SOV-95-064, 25 June 1995, *Russia International Affairs*, p.12.
[126] Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, p.164.
[127] Michael Jansen (1998), "Russian Missiles?", *Middle East International,* No.577, p.7, 19 June 1998.

defy the US law which stated against providing "lethal weapons" to states which sponsor terrorism.[128]

In 2000, after Bashar became president his government reached out to Russia for stronger military cooperation. Since Russia did not want to hurt its relations with Israel, sporadic reports such as given above were denied by Mikhail Bogdanov, Russia's ambassador to Israel by stating that the reports published in Israeli and Russian newspapers were "untrue" as no arms deals were signed with Syria. Military cooperation of Syria and Russia received a boost after Defence Minister Tlas's visit in 2001. During meetings Tlas had reiterated that Russia's role in the regional affairs was of vital importance and highlighted Syria's willingness to upgrade its military cooperation with Russia. A comment by Andrei Nikolayev, member of State Duma Defense Committee that improvement of military cooperation between both the countries lay "within the competence of the country's top political leadership" seemed to suggest that Moscow hesitated arming Syria beyond a certain extent.[129]

The *Moscow Defense Brief* put forward the some facts and figures regarding Syria-Russia military contracts from 2000. In 2000 Syria and Russia signed contract for delivery of MiG aircraft spare parts. In between 2000-2001 another contract was signed for delivery of small and light weapons such as AKS-74U, AK-74M assault rifles with ammunition, missiles 9M117M and 9M113, PG-7VL rounds for RPG-7 grenade launchers equipped with night vision sights. In 2001 during Syrian Vice-President Khaddam and Defence Minister Tlas's visit military contracts amounting up to 1 billion was signed. Syrian government wanted to upgrade Soviet-made military equipment, namely: S-200E (SA-5) SAMs, T-55 and T-72 tanks, BMP-1 AIFVs, MiG-25 (Foxbat) and MiG-29 (Fulcrum) aircraft, and purchase 8 "Iskander-E" missile systems, 30 Su-30 fighters, S-300PMU (SA-10) SAMs, "Buk-M1" (SA-11) and "Tor-M1" (SA-15) SAMs, Mi-35 (Hind E/F) and Ka-52 (Hokum B) helicopters, project 1241.8 and 1242.1 Molniya missile boats.[130]

In January 2003, there were reports that Russia was planning to build a nuclear facility in Syria. Although negotiations were supposedly going on regarding this, there were no

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[128] Web posted (1999), "Assad, Yeltsin begin talks", 6 July 1999, *CNN.com,* [Online:web] Accessed 8 April 2016, URL:http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/9907/06/syria.russia/, accessed on.
[129] Kreutz , *Russia in the Middle East*, pp.26.27.
[130] Facts & Figures, "Arms Trade Database for April-May 2001", *Moscow Defense Brief*, [Online:web] Accessed 11 July 2016, URL:http://www.mdb.cast.ru/mdb/3-2001/ff/atdam/

agreements signed. Russia was willing to go with the project even though US was completely against developing any kind of nuclear weapons in Syria. This act could have harmed Russia's relations with the US as already there were concerns in Washington because of the help Iran received from Russia to build the Bushehr nuclear plant. In an unclassified report, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) pointed out that there is a "draft co-operative programme" between Syria and Russia on civil nuclear activities. However, later such reports were denied by the Russian Foreign Ministry just days before Syrian Vice President Khaddam was scheduled to visit Moscow. Putin at this time had stated that military-technical cooperation between the two countries was key factor in their relations.[131]Bashar al-Assad's visit to Russia in January 2005 helped to strike an agreement with Russia and finally the debt issue was solved. Russia decided to forgo 73 per cent of the Syrian debt.[132]

Russia under Putin greatly valued its relations with Israel. Putin paid a visit to Israel in April 2005 with the main aim of allaying Israel's fears that missiles provided to Syria and the nuclear assistance given to Iran by Russia would not threaten Israel's security. Putin's administration felt the need to assure Israel that Russia would not arm Syria to such an extent which would in turn threaten Israel's security concerns. The desperation of Putin's administration to raise the profile of Russia at the international level was evident through its willingness to be a powerful mediator and a strong player in the West Asian affairs. During this visit to Israel, Putin went on to describe Israel as Russia's "strategic ally".[133]

At the Fourth Session of the Governmental Committee for Technical Military Cooperation in July 2006, Syria and Russia engaged in discussions involving cooperation and development of armies of both countries.[134]It was reported by *The Jerusalem Post* that in 2007 Russia began delivery of MiG-31E fighter jets to Syria under a contract amounting to US$1 billion. Regarding this deal Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Mikhail Kamynin went on to clarify that "all of Russia's deals in the sphere of military-technical cooperation comply with international law and Russia's obligations under various treaties and United Nations

[131] Glen Segell, *Axis of Evil and Rogue States: The Bush Administration,2000-2004,*(UK, 2005), p. 146.
[132] Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*, p.29
[133] Greg Myre (2005), "Putin Visits Israel and Tries to Allay Its Security Worries", *The New York Times,* 29 April 2005, Jerusalem,[Online:web] Accessed 6 January 2016, URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/29/world/middleeast/putin-visits-israel-and-tries-to-allay-its-security.html

[134] Syria Reports Defence Cooperation Talks with Russia", *Syrian News Agency SANA,*12 July 2006,[Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015, URL:http://bbcmonitoringlibrary.com.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/bbcm/a/fulltext/109116

resolutions." However, Russian defence related technologies and services trading company Rosoboronexport refused to comment on the report.[135]

Due to the gradual increase in Syria-Russia military engagement, Israel felt threatened and therefore in October 2008 Prime Minister Ehud Olmert went to Moscow to convince Medvedev against arms sales to Syria. Whether Olmert could get assurances from the Russian government or not was not clear. During this time, before Olmert's visit, Igor Belayev, Russia's Charge d'affaires in Syria had announced that Russian presence in the Mediterranean needs a boost and therefore frequent visits would be made to Syrian ports. This decision was taken at a time when war between Russia and Georgia came to an end in 2008. Syria was in support of Russia whereas the US and Israel were supporters of Georgia. Around this time Russia planned to upgrade the Tartus port, a Russian naval facility in Syria and is the only one situated abroad. Though no agreement regarding this was signed, the Russian naval presence in Tartus hugely adds to Syria's military power in the region. Even after return of gradual closeness in Syria-Russia military relations, it has always been maintained by Russia that only weapons of "defensive character" would be provided to Syria which would not in any way "interfere in with the strategic balance in the region."[136]For Russia, the Tartus port holds huge significance as it houses Russian ships which are engaged in their fight against international terrorism, illegal immigration, drugs trade etc. The naval facility in Tartus was established in 1971 and is known as 720th Logistic-Support station.[137]

The US condemned Russia's action in the Georgia conflict for using violent means. The US Vice President Dick Cheney went on to demand Russia to halt weapons transfers to Syria and Iran. These weapons according to the US fall into the hands of the Hezbollah and terrorists in Iraq. At this background, there was a souring of relations between Russia and the US. Russia was also angered because of US plans to install missile-defence systems in Eastern Europe.[138]

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[135] Russia Starts Delivery of Fighter Jets to Syria", *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 June 2007, [Online:web] Accessed 22 July 2015, URL:http://www.jpost.com/International/Russia-starts-delivery-of-fighter-jets-to-Syria

[136] Huge MacLeod (2008), "From Syrian Fishing Port to Naval Power Base: Russia Moves into the Mediterranean Military Foothold Part of Closer Ties with Damascus," *The Guardian*, 8 October 2008 [Online:web] Accessed 24 July 2015, URL:http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/oct/08/syria.russia

[137] "Russia Set on Enlarging Naval Station in Tartus", Syria, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21 July 2009, [Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015, URL:http://bbcmonitoringlibrary.com.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/bbcm/a/fulltext/819373

[138]Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (2008),"Cheney Accuses Russia Of Intimidation, 'Brute Force'" , 7 September 2008, [Online:web] Accessed 3 October 2016,URL:http://www.rferl.org/a/Cheney_Accuses_Russia_Of_Intimidation_Brute_Force/1196968.html

However, such demands from the US to Russia remained unheeded. Russia's Defence Minister announced in 2010 that delivery of three Yakhont supersonic anti-ship missiles were about to be delivered under a contract signed in 2007. He reiterated the fact that Russia was sure that the missiles would not land in the hands of terrorists.[139]

Russia's arms deliveries seemed to be increasing at a time when the Obama administration was expecting Syria to participate in the peace process once again after a number of unsuccessful attempts. Syria was also hoping to mend relations with US.[140]
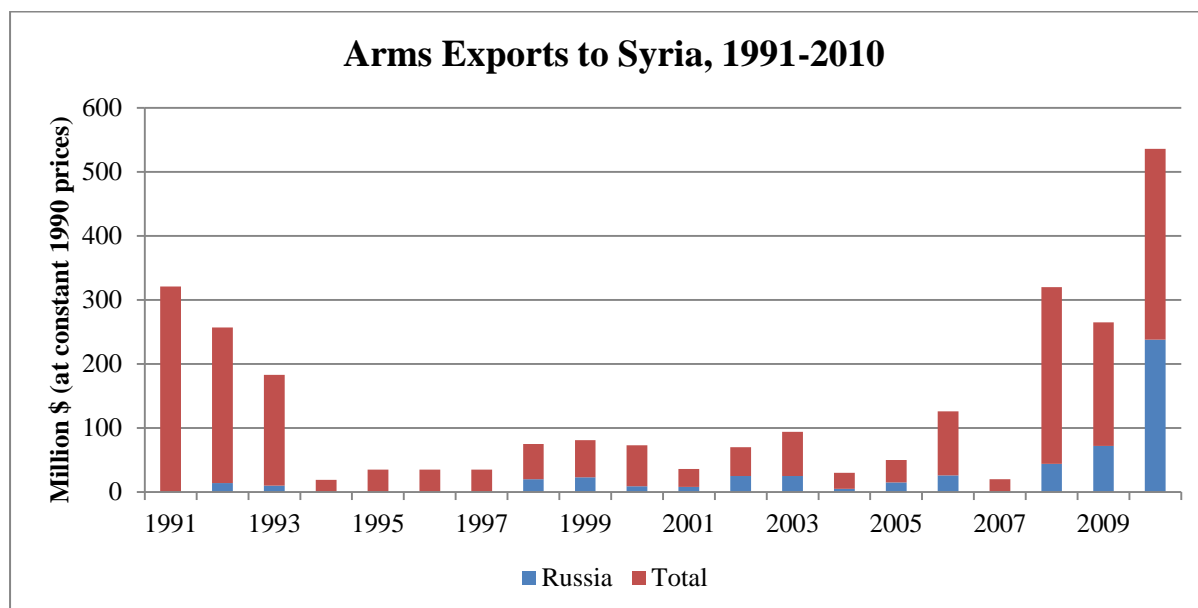
In order to understand the increasing arms trade between Syria and Russia in the 2000s, it is important to understand what were the factors driving such an aspect of their relations. The US wanted Syria to cut all its diplomatic ties with Iran with whom Washington had problems due to its nuclear weapons programme and association with Hezbollah. Another factor was Syria's alleged role in supporting the insurgents in Iraq which the US condemned. It is worth mentioning that attempts to reinvigorate relations between the US and Syria was given a chance during the Obama administration but did not become successful.[141]

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[139] Russia to Supply Yakhont Missiles to Syria, *ITAR-TASS*, 17 September 2010, [Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015,URL: http://bbcmonitoringlibrary.com.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/bbcm/a/fulltext/1025931

[140] US Talks in Syria 'Constructuve',10 March 2009, *Al Jazeera,* http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2009/03/20093713536371310.html, accessed on 30 August 2015

[141] Mark Lander (2009), "Syrian Visits Washington as a Part of Regional Détente," *The New York Times,* Washington, 3 October 2009, [Online:web] Accessed 30 August 2015, URL:http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/world/middleeast/04syria.html?_r=0

Table 4.1: Arms exports from Russia to Syria, 1991-2010

Arms Exports to Syria, 1991-2010

*Figures are SIPRI Trend Indicator Values (TIVs) expressed in US$milion at constant (1990) prices.

Source:SIPRI, " Arms Exports to Syria, 1991-2010," [Online:web] Accessed 2 January 2016, URL: http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php

The Table 4.2 indicates that Syria-Russia military transfers were at a low point during the early 1990s. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Syria had to rely on former Soviet Republics for military needs. There is less or limited data for the period 1991-1997 regarding arms transfers. The decrease in military transfers during this period can also be attributed to the unresolved debt issue that Syria owed to Russia. From 1998, Syria was delivered a number of anti-tank missiles. A significant number of anti-tanks missiles were procured between 2000 and 2005. The year 2005 witnessed a breakthrough in their military relations as Russia provided Syria with 200 portable Surface-to-Air Missiles. Other military related items provided to Syria from 2000 onwards were anti-ship missiles, coast defence system and Short Range-Air-To-Air Missiles.

Table 4.2: Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons from Russia to Syria. Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for Year Range 1991 to 2010.

	Weapon Designation	Weapon Description	Year of order/ license	Year(s) of deliveries	No. delivered/ produced	Comments
(149)	V-46	Diesel engine	1991	1992-1993	139	For 149 T-72M1 tanks from Czechslovakia and (after 1992 break-up of Czechoslovakia) from Slovakia; more delivered from USSR before break-up of USSR 1992
(1500)	9M119 Svir/AT-11	Anti-tank missile	(1998)	2000-2005	(1500)	For modernized T-72 tank
(500)	9M131 Metis-M/AT-13	Anti-tank missile	(1998)	1999-2001	(500)	
(1000)	9M133 Kornet/AT-14	Anti-tank missile	(1998)	1998-1999	(1000)	
(1000)	9M133 Kornet/AT-14	Anti-tank missile	2002	2002-2003	(1000)	
(250)	9M133 Kornet/AT-14	Anti-tank missile	2004	2005	(250)	
(250)	9M133 Kornet/AT-14	Anti-tank missile	2005	2006	(250)	
(200)	Igla/SA-18	Portable SAM	2005	2006	(200)	For use with Strelets SAM system (not with portable launchers after Israeli and US pressure)
(36)	96K9 Pantsyr-S1	Mobile AD system	(2006)	2008-2013	(36)	Part of $400-730 m deal; no. could be up to 50
(700)	9M311/SA-19	SAM	(2006)	2008-2013	(700)	Part of $400 m deal; for Pantsyr AD systems
(160)	9M317/SA-17 Grizzly	SAM	2007	2010-2013	(160)	

(8)	Buk-M2/SA-17	SAM system	2007	2010-2013	(8)	
(2)	K-300P Bastion-P	Coast defence system	2007	2010-2011	2	
(12)	MiG-29M	FGA aircraft	2007			MiG-29M2 version; delivery possibly 2016-2017
(72)	Yakhont/SS-N-26	Anti-ship missile	2007	2010-2011	(72)	Bastion (SS-C-5) coastal defence version
(200)	Igla-S/SA-24	Portable SAM	(2008)	2008-2010	(200)	For use on Strelets SAM system
(87)	Kh-31A1/AS-17	Anti-ship missile/ARM	(2009)	2009-2010	87	Incl Kh-31P anti-radar version
. .	Kh-35 Uran/SS-N-25	Anti-ship missile	(2009)			For MiG-29 combat aircraft
(100)	R-73/AA-11	SRAAM	(2010)			For MiG-29 combat aircraft

Source: SIPRI Trade Registers, "Transfers of major conventional weapons from Russia to Syria, 1991-2010," [Online:web] Accessed 3 February 2016, URL:http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

Note: The 'No. delivered/produced' and the 'Year(s) of deliveries' columns refer to all deliveries since the beginning of the contract. Deals in which the recipient was involved in the production of the weapon system are listed separately. The 'Comments' column includes publicly reported information on the value of the deal.

Conclusion

The military-security aspect of Syria-Russia relationship has been more robust than that of the political dimension. It is interesting to note that Syria has calculated its own national or regional interest before deciding its policy towards Russia. National security is the foremost concern for Syria as it borders Israel, its major adversary in the region. To add to this, Syria has been making efforts to mend its relations with the US after the Cold War ended but given the different situations it has not been successful beyond a certain extent. It is in Russia's interest also to challenge the US's increasing influence in the region. Israel's military prowess has been an issue of concern for Russia also. Therefore, the military-security

dimension of Syria's policy towards Russia reflects the kind of common interest that both the countries share regarding the region and concerns of their own national security.

Hezbollah, Syria and Iran are inextricably linked to each other due to their obvious enmity with Israel and their poor relations with the US. Syria was showing empathy to Hezbollah's ambition of resisting the occupation of Southern Lebanon during the Lebanese civil war which continued until Israeli forces left in 2000. By doing so Syria was not only in a way justifying Syria's own role and purpose in Lebanon but procured a proxy to fight Israeli threat from outside its own territory. Russia was not clear about the responses that it was supposed to show during Hezbollah's bombings and attacks on Israel and civilians. Russia has been subtle about Hezbollah's use of violent means to achieve its objectives. Syria also has been careful about its association with the group as it is Iran that heavily influences its activities. Russia had also announced that it does not consider Hezbollah a terrorist organisation and this helped substantiate Syria's claims that it is a movement for resistance.

Syria's relations with Hamas were forged mainly because Assad did not want Arafat's Palestine movement to become all powerful. The other main reason behind its support was the Oslo Accords signed by PLO and Israel which left Syria shocked. It seemed to Syria that Hamas could offer a strong challenge against Israel. During the 1990s, Russia did not associate itself with Hamas rather strongly supported Arafat and PLO. However, there was a shift in Russia's policy and Hamas's election to the Palestinian parliament in 2006 witnessed the growing eagerness of Putin administration to mediate between the two factions of the Palestinian groups. In addition to this the invitation of Hamas leaders to Moscow and legitimising their position in Palestinian politics was an attempt by Russia to put aside the criticisms it was facing by the international community at that time due to the Chechen War and to portray Russia as a credible peace broker. Sanctions on Syria were imposed by the US for its alleged role in supporting Palestinian militants and mainly Hamas. Only because Syria had close relations with Russia, Hamas got Russia's backing whenever it was needed. It must be mentioned that Russia instead of supporting Hamas it chose to display more sympathy and support towards the PLO. The trilateral meet held in 2010 fulfilled Syria's need to show to the international community that it had Russia's support to back its policy towards Hamas.

In relation to the September 2001 attacks, both Syria and Russia showed solidarity with US and condemned the terrorists. In fact Syria and Russia willingly cooperated with Bush's War

on Terror policy. But gradually Bush administration's continuous criticisms and sanctions against Syria for its alleged support for terrorist activities eroded Assad government's will to remain involved in the campaign against world terror. Syria found a close partner in Russia at a time when US's criticisms were at peak against Damascus for providing support to terrorist activities in Iraq and providing asylum to Saddam's officials. During Bashar's 2005 visit to Russia, Syria grabbed the opportunity to get back at US regarding the chaos created in Iraq after the 2003 invasion. The joint declaration signed between Syria and Russia during the visit helped to send a message in a subtle way that the word terrorism has various definitions under different contexts and that what US refers to as terrorism holds different meaning for both Syria and Russia.

Hafez al-Assad's policy of mixing diplomatic means with military strength to sustain a foreign policy for the benefit of Syria's national interests was carried forward by Bashar al-Assad. The military transfers to Syria from Russia were at a low point during the 1990s. The unavailability of data regarding arms transfers highlight that Syria was procuring arms from other countries during the early 1990s due to Russia's reluctance to provide military equipment without hard currency in return. In the 1990s, Russia chose other lucrative destinations to sell its military hardware than Syria. The outstanding military debt that Syria owed to the Soviet Union was also an obstacle to the continuance of their military relations. An interesting find is that both the countries have tried to keep a low profile about their military cooperation as the information related to this aspect of their relationship is scarce. Russia has at times clarified that weapons and military hardware provided to Syria are of defensive nature. However, after 2000 their military cooperation improved owing to the need for both the countries to show a stronger and a united front against the US and Israel because of various factors such as the War on Terror policy and the 2003 War on Iraq. It is well understood by Syria that as long as Israel remains militarily dominant and whenever US influence is on the rise, Russia will try to provide the necessary military help it can.

Chapter V

Syria's Economic Engagement with Russia

According to Volker Perthes, Syria has been exercising a fair degree of independence in its internal matters and has not let external factors affect it to a large extent. This tendency of Syria can be noticed in its economic matters too.[1] Having stated this, it remains to be examined how the disintegration of the Soviet Union, an international phenomenon of huge significance, did impact Syria's economy. Did it really have any major consequences on the Syrian economy? How was Syria's economic engagement with Russia, a country which itself was struggling to come to terms with its economic woes, in the post-Cold War period?

A: Syrian Economy in Brief

At the outset, it is important to point out that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that Syria's economic data remains weak because of less coverage and inconsistency. The IMF has also emphasised on the inaccuracy of trade related statistics of Syria. The World Bank has categorised Syria as a "lower middle-income" country.[2]

The Syrian economy during the late-Ottoman period was characterised as a "dependency" of world capitalist system. This led to the loss of the local businessman and artisans. As during this time Syria was almost wholly dependent on agriculture, its integration into the world market led to emergence of commercialisation of agriculture. Commercial agriculture led to the production of agricultural products for export and "semi-legalisation" of private land holdings. Private ownership of land led to the emergence of the new bourgeoisie class. Under the French mandate, the agrarian bourgeoisie began to imbibe some degree of modernisation in their spheres of life and another middle class arose through commercialisation of agriculture. However, under the French rule, economic dependency of Syria increased as the French did not allow much industrial development within Syria. The solidarity among modern bourgeoisie notability began to solidify and this gave rise to the nationalist movement. Among the rural population, there was lack of legitimacy towards the urban

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[1] Volker Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (New York, 1997) , p.7.
[2] Nimrod Raphaeli (2007), "Syria's Fragile Economy", *Middle East Review of International Affairs,* 11(2),
[Online: web] Accessed 22 May 2017, URL:http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2007/06/Raphaeli.pdf

agrarian bourgeoisie nobility who gained control of the nationalist movement and later on assumed power after independence.[3]

From the mid-1960s, after the 8 March 1963 Ba'thist coup, Syria's economy followed socialist pattern of economic development. Land reform policies from the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) period were retained and continued. Nationalisation of banks and other commercial institutions took place. During this time, Syria's relations with socialist countries and especially the Soviet Union became stronger. After Hafez al-Assad became President, economic liberalisation was pursued in Syria. Due to limited economic liberalisation, Syria became a consumer of Western goods.[4] The first few years under Assad's rule from 1970 to 1976, Syria's economy was experiencing increased growth. One of the main reasons of this economic growth was Assad's policy of integrating the rural Sunnis into the Syrian economy through economic liberalisation. After the 1973 October War, Syria benefited from the financial aid coming from the Arab countries with an annual average amounting to $600 million. The five year plans of Syria in the 1970s also expressed ambitious economic budgets and targets. The rise in oil prices after the 1973 October war helped to strengthen the economy further. During this period Syria planned a significant number of development projects and the living standards of the Syrians improved. In the 1970s, private businesses flourished leading to the emergence of a new affluent class of people who because of their business connection to the state went on to make significant profits. This also led to rise in corruption.[5]

In the 1980s, Syrian economic growth began to slow down. Due to Syria's intervention in Lebanon in 1976 against the Palestinians financial aid from the Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia reduced to a considerable extent. The influx of refugees from Lebanon from the mid-1970s put a burden on the Syrian economy. Inflation rate also increased and there was rampant corruption leading to economic disparity among Syrians. The weakening economy led to growing discontent among people. Around this time, the Islamic opposition against the Assad regime increased and assassinations of government officials took place.[6] In the 1980s

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[3] Raymond Hinnebusch , *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army, Party and Peasant,* (Boulder,1990), pp.26-28.

[4] Ibid., p.144.

[5] Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: Struggle for the Middle East*, (London,1988), pp.317-320.

[6] Ibid, pp.320-321.

Assad's decision to strike military parity with Israel led to higher economic expenditures.[7] According to the World Bank data, in 1988, Syria's military expenditure was 7.85 per cent of the GDP which increased to 7.97 per cent of the GDP in 1989. In 1990, Syria's military spending decreased to 6.86 per cent of the GDP.[8] There were other factors as well which were putting pressure on the already weak economy such as dwindling foreign currency reserves, high rate of inflation and decrease of basic goods in the market. But gradually the Syrian economy revived its strength by undertaking certain measures. In order to reduce the trade deficit, Syria placed priority on the oil sector. Syria made efforts to increase oil production and export towards late-1980s and also to operationalize new oil fields in the Deir ez Zor area. Production of phosphates and cotton exports were also increased. In 1988, the Syrian government encouraged private sector exports. The contribution of the private sector in total foreign trade was 10 per cent in 1980 which increased to 20 per cent in 1986. In 1988, the contribution of the private sector to foreign trade was around 30 per cent and increased to 45 per cent in 1989. The trade deficit of Syria was beginning to get reduced towards the late-1980s. In the agriculture sector, Syria brought about establishment of agro-companies jointly held by the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and the private sector.[9]

Moreover, in the after the Iraq-Kuwait War ended, Syria began receiving financial aid of around $2 billion from Gulf States. It must be mentioned that in the 1980s Syria was receiving financial aid of $1 billion from Iran due to the support it received during the Iran-Iraq War.[10]

It is important to throw light on Syria-Soviet Union economic relations since Assad came into power. It has already been stated that Assad put forward the policy of limited economic liberalisation after he assumed power in 1970. This policy of limited economic liberalisation led to increase in privatisation and called for foreign investment in Syria. After Assad's visit to the Soviet Union in February in 1971, several economic agreements were signed between both the countries pertaining to the energy sector, railways and water resources. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko offered an economic aid amounting to $2.2 million to Syria. In April 1974, Assad paid a visit to the Soviet Union. His

[7] Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, (London, 2010), p.110.
[8] World Bank , "Military Expenditure (%) of GDP", *The World Bank Data on Syria Arab Republic*, [Online: web] Accessed 12 May 2017,URL:http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=SY&year_low_desc=true
[9] Volker Perthes (1992), "The Syrian Economy in the 1980s", *Middle East Journal*, vol.46, pp.37-58.
[10] Zisser, *Commanding Syria*, p.110.

visit led to the signing of various economic and military agreements. In 1975, around fifty projects were undertaken by the Soviet Union in Syria. In the late 1970s, Syria received substantial help from the Soviet Union in the form of economic aid to develop its agricultural infrastructure in order to grow cotton, to breed cattle and improved farming projects. The Soviet Union also provided support to Syria's oil industry by helping to increase its oil storage capacity. Another significant support provided by the Soviet Union was to establish Syria's national oil drilling company.[11] Although the Syrian economy was witnessing decreasing growth in the 1980s, the Soviet Union emerged as the leading trade partner of Syria in 1986 followed by Italy and Romania. During the 1980s, Syria trade ties with the eastern Bloc and socialist countries increased. After signing the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in October 1980 between Syria and the Soviet Union, both the countries signed an agreement to provide a boost to the bilateral trade. In 1986, Syrian exports to the Soviet Union consisted around 29.7 percent of the total exports. During the 1980s, Syria-Soviet Union economic relations witnessed increased cooperation in areas such as transport, agriculture, power generation, oil sector and phosphate industry. However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union Syria's economic relations with the West improved.[12]

It needs to be mentioned that although there were favourable economic conditions in the early 1990s, the Syrian government failed to exploit those to bring about a real "structural and conceptual change in the economy." After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Syria began to face increasing domestic pressure from its citizens to provide for more political openness and economic developments. Assad learned a lesson from the collapse of the Soviet Union that if there were increasing demands for political openness it had to be curbed in order to maintain the *status quo*. The disintegration of the Soviet Union left Syria exposed to the pressures of international economy. It could not ignore the advancement that other countries were experiencing in terms of communication, technology and the economy. Long before Bashar al-Assad became president, he vociferously began pressing for developments in computer technology in Syria. For the first time, Syrian citizens could access the internet in 1999. The People's Assembly went on to include independents and dialogue with the Islamic groups was also held to offer a certain degree of political openness. Many political prisoners were also released from 1991 to 1995. In the economic sphere, the Syrian government was showing readiness for a limited economic liberalisation. Plans for limited economic

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[11] Efraim Karsh, *Soviet Policy towards Syria since 1970*, (New York,1991), pp. 53-57.
[12] Lucy Dean (ed), *The Middle East and North Africa 2004* , (Old Woking, 2004), pp.1053-1054.

liberalisation seemed possible because during that time more than half of Syria's exports was oil and the revenues collected was around $3 billion annually. The other reason for a good economic scenario was the aid coming from the Gulf countries, mainly from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. As the peace process moved on, Syria was gradually becoming an attractive destination for investments for Western Europe and Far Eastern countries. As already mentioned earlier, during this short phase of economic recovery, Syria brought about the Investment Law no.10 with a view to encourage foreign investments in water, electricity, communications and transport. However, the economic glory was short-lived and Syria's GDP began displaying signs of a declining economy. The reasons behind this were a rising population, increasing unemployment, limited revenues from oil exports and growth in imports.[13]

After assuming presidency in 2000, Bashar al-Assad announced economic reforms to liberalise the Syrian economy. Bashar wanted to attract foreign investments and to open private banks in Syria. Bashar was of the view that as a large population of Syrians were below the poverty line, political reforms would not hold value if not accompanied by economic reforms. Therefore, economic reforms seemed significant to govern the Syrians. Therefore, measures were taken to establish a robust private market by reinvigorating the banking sector. In order to do so, in April 2001, Law 8 was passed for the establishment of private banks.[14]

The Syrian economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and oil. Agriculture accounts for nearly 30 percent of the GDP which employs a considerable portion of Syria's work force. From 1991 to 1998, Syria's agricultural sector contributed immensely to the economy. From 1999, the agriculture sector of Syria began to suffer mainly due to drought. In 1999, wheat production decreased by 35 per cent as compared to 1998 and the production of barley also decreased by almost 50 percent than its production in 1998.[15] Due to bad climate, agriculture's share in the GDP decreased in 2008 to 17 percent from 20.4 percent in the previous year. The oil sector used to constitute around 25 percent to the GDP. The *Central Bureau of Statistics* data showed that due to increased consumption and decreasing

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[13] Eyal Zisser (2001), *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, pp.179-193.

[14] Raphaeli , "Syria's Fragile Economy", URL:http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/2007/06/Raphaeli.pdf

[15] Alexander Sarris (2001), *Agricultural Development Strategy for Syria: Background Reference Paper*, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and FAO/Government of Italy Cooperative Programme, [Online: web] Accessed 17 June 2016, URL:ftp://ftp.fao.org/country/syria/pdf/sarris_reference_paper.pdf

production, there has been a decline in revenues generated from the oil industry. Decrease in oil production has led the Syrian government to find other sources to generate revenues.[16]

During the 1990s, agricultural production of crops like cereals, sugar beet and cotton in Syria stagnated and did not show much increase. However, the production of olives, fruits, livestock and vegetables increased. Hence, it can be said that the real value of vegetable production showed an increasing pattern at 7.9 percent between 1993 and 2003.[17]

From the year 2001 to 2010, some of the top destinations for Syrian exports at the international level have been Italy, France, Germany and Spain. At the regional level, Syria main export destinations from 2001 to 2010 have been Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon and Oman.[18] In relation to imports, some of the top countries at the international level from where Syria imported commodities from 2001 to 2010 are Italy, European Union, Russia, Ukraine, China, South Korea, and Germany. Some of the main countries at the regional level from where Syria imported commodities from 2001 to 2010 are Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt. Russia does not constitute a major export destination for Syria but if seen from the point of view of imports, Russia does emerge as one of the topmost countries from where Syria imports commodities.[19]

The World Integrated Trade System (WITS) of the World Bank provides a list of items being imported by Syria. Among those items, most of the important items such as fuel, consumer goods, food etc, are recorded as being exported by Russia to Syria. If the total quantity of imports are being analysed, then also Russia seems to have a high rank among the top countries from which Syria imports commodities in large amounts. However, the data

[16] IBP Inc. *Syria Energy Policy*, *Laws and Regulations Handbook, Strategic Information and Basic Laws*, vol. 1(Washington DC, 2015), p.34.

[17] World Bank (2008), "Agriculture in Syria: Towards the Social Market, Sustainable Development Department," *Document of the World Bank* ,Report no: 47546, Middle East and North Africa Region, 1 June 2008 ,[Online: web] Accessed 7 October 2016,URL:http://documents.worldbank.org.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/curated/en/890301468304199912/pdf/475460WP0P11051ds0the0Social0Market.pdf

[18] World Bank , "Imports By Country and Region 1996-2010*,"* [Online:web] Accessed 19 September 2016, URL: http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/SYR/Year/2003/TradeFlow/Import/Partner/all/Product/Total

[19]World Bank, "Syrian Arab Republic Product Source: Imports By Country and Region", [Online:web] Accessed 19 September 2016, URL:http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/SYR/Year/2003/TradeFlow/Import/Partner/all/Product/Total

provided by WITS has not included years 1991-2000. So, the trade pattern in these years between Syria and Russia is difficult to establish.

According to the *UN Comtrade* data, some of the main Syrian exports from 2008 to 2010 have been crude oil, other petroleum oils, cotton products other than sewing thread, woven fabrics of synthetic filament yarn, natural calcium phosphates, birds' eggs etc. Some of the main imports of Syria from 2008 to 2010 have been refined petroleum oil, semi-finished products of iron or non-alloy steel, motor cars, others vehicles for transports, maize (corn), polymers of ethylene in primary forms, flat-rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel etc.[20]

B: Russia's Economic Policy Changes in 1991

The economic growth of the Soviet Union was slowing down in the mid-1980s, along with the economic burden emanating from East European economic crisis, weak economic and social infrastructure. There was also a widening technological gap appearing between the Soviet Union and the West. The policy of military competition with the US was also putting a dent on the fragile economy of the Soviet Union due to increased defence spending. Therefore, Mikhail Gorbachev had proposed certain reforms in the Soviet Union to deal with the internal and external problems emerging in the 1980s. It was decided by the Soviet Union under Gorbachev to carry out economic liberalisation. This led to the need for privatisation and free trade. The Soviet Union around this time was contemplating a transition from a socialist controlled economy to a market economy. [21]

In 1990, Gorbachev planned to apply the Shatalin Plan which was supposed to bring about reforms in the economy and establish a market economy within 500 days. However, Gorbachev eventually rejected the 500-day plan and in place of that he came out with a less radical economic reform plan. This economic plan of Gorbachev drew opposition from the hard-liners of the Communist party as it increased the burden on the budget of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin was critical of Gorbachev's reforms and demanded his resignation. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected as the President of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist

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[20] UN Comtrade and UN Service Trade (2013), "Syrian Arab Republic", [Online:web] Accessed 4 June 2016, URL:https://comtrade.un.org/pb/FileFetch.aspx?docID=5366&type=country%20pages
[21] Valerie Bunch (1991), "The Soviet Union under Gorbachev: Ending Stalinism and Ending the Cold War", *International Journal,* 46(2), pp.220-241.

Republic. In July 1991, Gorbachev went ahead to draft a law regarding bringing about privatisation in the Soviet economy. Since opposition against Gorbachev was building up, in August 1991 a coup was staged to oust him by the Communist party hard-liners but this coup ultimately failed.[22]

In October 1991, before the official disintegration of the Soviet Union, some radical economic measures were introduced by Yeltsin and his ministers. The plan which introduced such economic reforms or policies was called as the "shock therapy". The objectives of macroeconomic policies to control inflation and lessen government budget deficit in order to stabilise the economy were said to be highly ambitious. One of the main goals of the economic reforms was to open up the economy and to bring about trade liberalisation. A large scale privatisation process was launched between 1993 and 1994 which passed on the shares of various firms from the government to the Russian public. By the end of 1994, most of the companies and businesses had undergone privatisation. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) helped to stabilise the Russian currency, Ruble. So, during a span of a few years, the Russian economy experienced a major overhaul and moved increasingly towards liberalisation.[23]

During the phase of economic transformation, Russia had to face certain problems. Due to privatisation, prices of products rose to a high level leading to inflation during 1992. Since there was inflation in the economy, the salaries, pensions and savings of individuals became devalued. Prices of transportation and energy also rose to a great extent. At this time Russian economy was in a bad state. A large proportion of companies and businesses came to be owned by a small number of people who later on came to be known as oligarchs.[24]

Given that Russia was struggling to position itself in the post-Cold War world, the focus in this section is on the impact of internal and external factors on Russian economy and trade with other countries, particularly Syria. Apart from the mainstream political institution, the Russian Parliament (Duma) being involved, Russian foreign policy was being moulded by oil

[22] Joseph R. Blasi, *Kremlin Capitalism: Privatizing the Russian Economy*, (Ithaca, 1997), pp.20-22.

[23] Denis Aven (2013), "Russia's Economic Transition: Challenges, Results and Overhang", *Yale Economic Review*, 2 April 2013, [Online:web] Accessed 20 November 2016, URL:http://www.yaleeconomicreview.org/archives/380

[24] Marshall Poland , "Russian Economy in the Aftermath of the Collapse of the Soviet Union", [Online:web] Accessed 20 November 2016, URL:http://www2.needham.k12.ma.us/nhs/cur/Baker_00/03-04/baker%20poland%20p1/ussr.htm

and gas groupings such as Gazprom, Lukoil and Transneft.[25] Now, it needs to been seen whether business dealings of these groupings influenced Syria's policy towards Russia or no significant changes were noticed in the economic relations between the two countries.

Lukoil was formed in 1991 by the merger of three Siberian oil companies.[26] By 2010, Lukoil conducted economic activities such as exploration and marketing of oil and gas in various countries. It is interesting to note that Lukoil is engaged in economic activities in the US, countries bordering Russia and countries like Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the West Asian region.[27] It has not made its foray into Syrian soil for exploration and production of oil and gas. Transneft which was formed in 1993 is a government owned gas transporting company and it is the largest company which has oil pipelines across Russia and abroad. Some of the projects completed by Transneft are Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean Pipeline System, Baltic Pipeline System and Skovorodino.[28] As shown in the Transneft official website, the network of pipelines laid down by Transneft has not marked areas outside the borders of Russia or elsewhere.[29] Therefore, the pipelines which are built in Syria by Russia cannot be said to be built by Transneft.

Russia is known to be the second largest oil exporting country in the world after Saudi Arabia and its natural gas reserves comprise nearly one-third of the total reserves found in the world. Such huge natural resources reserves have provided the opportunity to Russia to use these for not only economic benefits but also for advancing foreign policy objectives. The Russian government is said to own a large percentage of shares in companies such as Lukoil, Gazprom, Rosneft, Transneft and Rosenergo and therefore are unable to function fully independently of the government. As these public sector companies are seen to be functioning in former Soviet Republics, European Union, China and India, this can be seen as a strategy of Russia to have a grip over the situation in its neighbourhood as well as a desire

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[25] Robert O. Freedman (2001), "Russian Policy Toward the Middle East: The Yeltsin Legacy and the Putin Challenge", *Middle East Journal*, 55(1), pp.58-90.

[26] OAO Lukoil, "Company History", [Online:web] Accessed 10 October 2016, URL:http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/oao-lukoil-history/

[27] OAO Lukoil (2010) "Lukoil Annual Report 2010", [Online:web] Accessed 1 September 2016, URL:http://www.lukoil.ru/FileSystem/PressCenter/4203.pdf

[28] Transneft , "Implemented Projects from the Recent Period," *en.transneft.ru*, [Online:web] Accessed 17 January 2017, URL:http://www.en.transneft.ru/about/projects/realized/

[29] Transneft, "Scheme Pipelines", *en.transneft.ru*, [Online:web] Accessed 17 January 2017, URL:http://www.en.transneft.ru/pipelines/

to be reckoned as a major world power.[30] In the post-Cold War period, Russia could not use military and economic capabilities to pursue its foreign policy goals. Russia could not offer economic aid or enter into huge investment deals in countries with poor economy. Russia itself had to rely heavily on foreign aid from the US, Japan and Western Europe to support the economy.[31]

Three main goals of Russian foreign policy were mentioned by the Russian ambassador to Syria in 1993. The first goal was to safeguard security of Russian interests. The second goal was to avert any serious military or political confrontation which would in turn affect and destabilise Central Asia. The third was to engage with the Arab countries to obtain economic help in order to revitalise the weak economy of Russia.[32] If the last goal is taken into consideration, one can very well understand Russia's low economic engagement with Syria. As Syria's economy was also weak to a certain extent and only gaining strength gradually, it was obvious that Russia would not be of much economic help.

In order to understand the pattern of trade Russia had with the West Asian and North African countries, export and import data is provided in Table 5.1. The data shows that Syria's trade cooperation with Russia from 1995-2010 were not of a high level as compared to that of Iran, Israel and Turkey.

Table 5.1 Russia's Trade with some West Asian and North African Countries ($million)

Exports	1995	2000	2001	2002	2004	2005	2010
Egypt	394	449	426	489	374	1049	1920
Iraq	---	90	187	367	167	--	--
Jordan	17	35	20	18	33		
Kuwait	---	6	9	82	3		
Lebanon	78	198	228	112	137		

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[30] R.G Gidadhubli (2006), "Oil and Politics in Russia: Tightening Grip on Pipelines", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(31), pp.3358-3360.
[31] Freedman , "Russian Policy Toward the Middle East", pp.58-90
[32] Richard K.Herrmann (1994), "Russian Policy in the Middle East: Strategic Change and Tactical Contradictions", *Middle East Journal*, 48(3), pp.455-474.

Saudi Arabia	28	55	66	137	208		
Syria	75	95	89	138	209	440	1116
UAE	194	178	222	386	273	69	983
Yemen	---	29	5	205	89		
Algeria	120	120	130	169	291	206	1310
Libya	78	23	11	24	54		
Morocco	66	61	134	197	111	396	558
Tunisia	59	94	55	91	99		
Total Arab	1,031	1,433	1,582	2,414	2,048		
Turkey	1632	3098	2980	3349	4754	10841	20317
Iran	249	633	894	752	1319	1922	3350
Israel	215	1045	473	507	618	1538	1763

Imports	1995	2000	2001	2002	2004	2005	2010
Egypt	4	5	12	21	39	77	271
Jordan	13	1	---	2	3		
Lebanon	6	3	5	4	2		
Saudi	---	2	1	2	---		

Arabia							
Syria	11	11	17	2	14	26	42
UAE	73	23	3	16	3	90	35
Algeria	66	7	--	---	1	2	27
Morocco	4	89	47	58	78	144	374
Tunisia	2	5	6	1	5		
Iran	27	54	34	50	61	125	272
Israel	133	146	172	221	319	332	825
Turkey	542	348	509	724	916	1732	4867

Source: Data as given in Paul Rivlin (2005), *The Russian Economy and Arms Exports to the Middle East*, The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies Memorandum no.79, [Online:web] Accessed 22 November 2016, URL:http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/(FILE)1188301974.pdf, and Russian Federation Federal State Statistics Service, *Russia in Figures*, [Online:web] Accessed 12 August 2016, URL:http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/en/figures/activities/

C: Energy Sector

One of the most promising sectors for Russia-Syrian economic cooperation is the energy sector. Russia has helped Syria in the construction of the Balikh hydroelectric station and Tishrin heat and power station. Russia has also built power transmission lines of high-voltage in Syria. Most of the delivery of power equipment to Syria takes place from Russia. Many oil and gas pipelines in Syria are built by Russia.[33]

Syria is not a major producer of oil in the region but the revenues collected from it contributes hugely to the economy.[34] The Syrian oil sector is governed by the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources and the upstream production is operated by the Syrian Petroleum Company (SPC) which comes under the Ministry. The al-Furat Petroleum Co. is the main producer of oil in Syria. It was established in 1985 and owns most of the oil fields located in the Dier ez-Zour. The oil produced at these oil fields are of high quality and the total production is around 0.350 MMBD. The first oil discovery in Syria was made in Karatchuk in the year 1956. There are many other smaller oil fields such as Sijan, Tanak and Maleh to name a few. Suwaidiyah oil field is one of the largest in Syria.[35] Oil industry was nationalised in 1964 and with Soviet Union's help, the Karatchuk and Suwaidiyah oil fields were made functional. By 1968 Syria was capable of exporting a fair amount of oil to the Tartus port which lies on the Mediterranean coast.[36]

Syrian oil production peaked in 1996 and ever since it has been steadily declining. In order to increase production of oil, efforts have been made to provide licenses to foreign companies to explore areas and then continue with oil drilling process. Some of the international companies have already been granted oil exploration licenses. It was stated by the Ministry of Oil that the level of oil production in 2009 was at about 370,000 barrels a day. Syria has two state owned refineries in Baniyas and Homs and their joint capacity of refined petroleum is about

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[33] Oleg Dmitrievich Davydov, *Inside Out: The Radical Transformation of Russian Foreign Trade, 1992-1997*, (New York, 1998), p.162.
[34] Reuters, "Factbox: Syria's Energy Sector," [Online:web] Accessed 16 July 2016, URL:http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-oil-idUSTRE77D15V20110814
[35] Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodhan, *The Changing Dynamics of Energy in the Middle East (Two volumes),* (Westport, 2006), p.308.
[36] Open Oil, "Syria Oil Almanac", [Online:web] Accessed 4 October 2016, URL:file:///C:/Users/acer%20pc/Downloads/Syria-Oil-Almanac-PDF.pdf

240,000 barrels per day. This amount is not enough to meet Syria's domestic needs due to which huge amounts of petroleum products are being imported. [37]

Soyuzneftegaz, a private oil and gas company of Russia first undertook projects in Syria in 2004. The firm signed an agreement and procured license to explore and develop oil fields. Soyuzneftegaz was able to drill a few wells but that has not been able to discover oil.[38] Soyuzneftegaz signed an agreement with and the Syrian Oil and Natural Resources Ministry in 2005 to begin a project involving construction of a factory which would produce basalt-plastic pipes. An intergovernmental agreement was signed between Syria and Russia for a joint venture in the automobile industry. Both the countries had agreed to extend protection for each other's investment related matters. In order to deepen friendship and cooperation, a joint declaration was signed between Syria and Russia.[39]

Stroytransgaz, Russia's construction company of oil and gas related infrastructure has been dealing with projects worth $1.1 billion in Syria. It also provided technical support to upgrade the Arab Gas Pipeline.[40] A deal worth $217 million was signed by the Syrian Gas Company with Stroytransgaz in April 2007 to develop natural gas fields located in the Homs region. The completion of construction of the oil fields took place in 2008. This deal was a part of a larger agreement relating to transportation and gas between both the countries. With the assistance from Stroytransgaz, an oil refinery was built in Palmyra. It was working on a gas refinery near Homs, scheduled for completion in 2008. The U.S. Energy Information Administration claims that Syria has the potential of 8.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Around three-quarters of the total amount is said to be owned by the Syrian Petroleum Company.[41] In 2008, Syria and Russia went on to sign an agreement to build a gas pipeline

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[37] IBP Inc. , *Syria Energy Policy*, p.64.

[38] Borzou Daragahi and Henry Foy (2013), "Russia tightens links to Bashar al-Assad with Syria energy deal", *The Financial Times,* 26 December 2013, [Online:web] Accessed 13 November 2016, URL:https://www.ft.com/content/9e8040e0-6e3f-11e3-8dff-00144feabdc0

[39] Official Internet Sources of the President of Russia (2005), "President Vladimir Putin and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad held Bilateral Talks", *en.kremlin.ru,* 25 January 2005, [Online:web] Accessed 16 June 2016, URL:http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/32643

[40] Amos Howard (2011), "Billions of Dollars of Russian Business Suffers Along With Syria", *The Moscow Times*, 2 September 2011, [Online:web] Accessed 26 April 2015, URL: http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/billions-of-dollars-of-russian-business-suffers-along-with-syria/443078.html

[41] United Press International (2007), "Stroytransgaz in Gas Deal", *SANA News Agency*, Damascus, 27 April 2007,[Online:web] Accessed 8 July 2016, URL:http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Industry/2007/04/27/Syria-Stroytransgaz-in-gas-deal/57441177690132/

from the town of Aleppo in northern Syria to the coast of Turkey. According to *SANA* the contract was worth $71 million which was signed by Stroytransgaz and Syrian Gas Company.[42]

Uralmash, a Russia based Company which deals with manufacturing of oil drilling plants, has been working in Syria from early 2000s. The company has managed to upgrade some drilling equipment of Syria and modernise them to match present standards. This company manufactures equipment which are durable, energy-saving and environment-friendly. In 2004, the company signed an agreement with Syrian Petroleum Company to design and manufacture land drilling rigs with a load capacity of 600-t.[43]Tatneft, a Russian private oil producer firm began to make arrangements to drill and pump oil in Syria in 2010. This venture was a joint initiative with the Syrian national Oil Company. It was announced that $12.8 million would be spent by the Russian firm to drill oil wells along Iraqi border.[44]

In 2010, Al Bou Kamal Petroleum Company, a joint initiative between General Petroleum Company and Tatneft, began drilling crude oil from the South Kishma oil field in Syria. There are other oil fields in the area named South Kishma-2 and South Kishma-101 which were undergoing the process for oil extraction. Earlier, there were no Russian companies involved in oil exploration in Syria but in 2003 Tatneft emerged as first company to win a tender and successfully concluded Production Sharing Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Agreement. Tatneft has been able to complete oil exploration and drilling projects successfully within a stipulated time period. The Russian company allocates $50,000 annually and has undertaken the task of training Syrian locals who are in the oil industry. Another contract was signed between General Petroleum Company and Tatneft in 2005 to develop, explore and produce crude oil from Block-27, located in Dier ez-Zor province. Tatneft has also carried out many seismic surveys for oil exploration in the Der ez-Zor area. In 2009, a Syrian delegation led by Minister of Petroleum Sufyan Al-Alao, visited Republic of Tatarstan. During a meeting with Prime Minister of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnikhanov,

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[42] ITAR-TASS (2008), "Russia, Syria Sign Contract to Build Gas pipeline", *ITAR-TASS*, Beirut, 14 October 2008, [Online:web] Accessed 9 June 2015, URL:
http://bbcmonitoringlibrary.com.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/bbcm/a/fulltext/670180
[43] Uralmashplant , "Uralmash Drilling Rigs" , [Online: web] Accessed 15 April 2016, URL:
https://www.uralmash.ru/en/about/history/uralmash-drilling-rigs/
[44] Amos, Howard (2011), "Billions of Dollars of Russian Business Suffers Along With Syria", *The Moscow Times*, 2 September 2011, [Online:web] Accessed 26 April 2015, URL:http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/billions-of-dollars-of-russian-business-suffers-along-with-syria/443078.html

Sufyan stated that Tatneft has been "successfully working in the oil fields of Syria and it is very well known there." Sufyan also expressed interest of the Syrian government to engage in the aircraft and automobile industries as well.[45]-

A natural gas pipeline which has the capacity to process 1.3 billion cubic metres of gas was built in Raqqa by Stroytransgaz. Russia's company Gazprom, which is involved in exploring, extracting and transporting natural gas, had taken part in a tender for oil exploration. It is however, not on record about the outcome of the bidding process on oil exploration. Gazprom is primarily involved in sales of refined hydrocarbon products in Syria.[46]

Russia had shown interest to build a nuclear power plant in Syria. In 2010, there was news regarding Russian government's Rosatom planning to build a nuclear facility there. A Russian company Tekhnopromeksport had announced to continue its services in maintaining the nuclear facilities built by Russia in Syria.[47]

In 2010 *The Oil and Gas Journal* reported that Syria had 8.5 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas reserves. Most of the Syrian gas reserves are located in the southern and eastern part of the country.[48] For details on Natural gas production see Table 5.2.

Table: 5.2.
Production, Trade and Supply of Natural Gas in 2010. Units in terajoules and megajoules

Countries	Production	Imports	Exports	Changes in stocks	Supply	
					Total	Per capita
Bahrain	487,790	---	---	0	487,790	386,730
Iran	5,615,668	351,072	331,327	---	5,635,413	75,894
Iraq	301,176	---	---	---	301,176	9,757

[45]Tatneft (2010), "Tatneft Begins Oil Production in Syria", *tatneft.ru*, 14 April 2010, [Online:web] Accessed 11 November 2016, URL:http://www.tatneft.ru/press-center/pressreleases/more/1864/?lang=en

[46] Gazprom (2014), "The Power of Growth", *OAO Annual Gazprom Report 2014,* [Online:web] Accessed 1 June 2017, URL: http://www.gazprom.com/f/posts/55/477129/gazprom-annual-report-2014-en.pdf

[47] Gorenburg, Dmitry (2012), *Why Russia Supports Repressive Regimes in Syria and the Middle East* , wordpress.com, 22 June 2012, [Online:web] Accessed 14 May 2016, URL:https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2012/06/22/why-russia-supports-repressive-regimes-in-syria-and-the-middle-east/

[48] IBP.Inc, *Syria Energy Policy*, p.50.

Israel	124,306	80,583	---	---	204,889	27,612
Jordan	6,345	100,125	---	---	106,470	16,335
Lebanon	---	9,867	---	---	9,867	2,275
Oman	1,165,597	78,660	490,826	---	753,431	255,943
Qatar	4,991,505	---	3,906,084	---	1,085,421	614,791
Syria	337,038	26,013	---	---	363,051	17,521
Turkey	26,134	1,456,993	24,846	-2,214	1,460,495	20,198
United Arab Emirates	2,001,141	1,003,261	628,695	---	2,375,707	285,218
Yemen	259,715	---	220,175	---	39,540	1,676

Source: United Nations (2013) *United Nations Energy Statistics Yearbook*, UN Statistics, [Online:web] Accessed 14 April 2016, URL: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/energy/yearbook/2013/t27.pdf
Table Notes: Production includes quantities from other sources, which would include any quantities of biogas, LPG or manufactured gas blended with natural gas.

From the data available from Table 5.2, it can be stated that Syria lags behind Iran, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar and Oman in terms of production of natural gas. In order to meet its domestic demand, natural gas needs to be imported and therefore, export of the commodity does not take place.

D: Trade

Syria's economic relations with Russia date back to 1957 during the Soviet era.[49] Syria-Soviet Union economic cooperation continued at a high level till 1991 which gradually decreased after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Trade and investment between these two countries until 1993 was governed by bi-lateral agreements of 1965. Russia and Syria granted the Most-Favoured-Nation status to each other after signing the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Technological and Scientific Cooperation in 1993. Under the framework of this agreement, around 56 projects were undertaken by Russia in various sectors in Syria. These included laying down of railway tracks, high voltage power cables, irrigation facility for

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[49] Dmitrii Trenin (2007), "Russia Redefines Itself and Its Relations with the West", *The Washington Quarterly*, 30(2), pp.95-105.

agriculture, Al-Bias and Euphrates dams for electricity production and, most importantly, new oil fields were developed in the northeastern part of Syria. Syria had incurred huge loans towards the Soviet Union. Therefore, till 1992 Syria exported commodities to Russia in order to repay the loans. This did not continue for long and the bilateral trade began to decrease. From 1994, Russia began a journey of active economic relations by trading of spare parts of Soviet era equipment, aircraft and cars. Trade between them gradually increased and totalled $166 million in 1996. Henceforth, both Syria and Russia agreed to invite business heads from each other's countries to establish dynamic economic ties. It has been noted that energy relations between Syria and Russia is the most lucrative sector.[50]

During Bashar's 2005 visit to Russia, a number of joint initiatives were undertaken which gave a boost to the economic relations between both the countries. The $13.4 billion debt that Syria owed to Russia was restructured in 2005 which came as a big relief to the Syrian economy. Since then it has been possible for Syria to maintain a low level of foreign debt. Russia wrote off about 73 percent of Syria's debt thus paving the way for a better economic relationship between both the countries. [51] According to the IMF report, Syria's public debt has been lowered since the 2005. This has been possible mainly because of rescheduling of the debt that Syria owed to Russia. Since Syria is no longer required to pay the debt to Russia, it could divert its fiscal reserves for infrastructural developments and upgrade basic services.[52] Syria's external debt in 1991 was 151.37 percent of its GDP which increased to 203.62 percent of its GDP in 1994. In 2004 the external debt decreased to 78.23 percent and in 2005 it came down to 19.99 percent of its GDP.[53] Russia agreed to send its experts to help construct the Halabiyah hydroelectric power station located on the Euphrates River after a period of fifteen years. The project was estimated to cost around $800 million. During the January 2005 talks between Assad and Putin, a number of bilateral issues were discussed. Most importantly, it was agreed to strengthen Syrian-Russian trade and economic cooperation. Although both the countries shared good economic cooperation, it was realised that it was still at a minimum level. Above all, the main areas of economic cooperation have been oil, hydro energy, gas production and construction. It was agreed upon that the Syria-

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[50] Davydov, *Inside Out*, p.162.
[51] Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend Or Foe?,* (London, 2007), p.29.

[52] International Monetary Fund (2009), "Syrian Arab Republic : 2009 Article IV Consultation-Staff Report; and Public Information Notice*", IMF Country Report No. 10/86*
[53] Syria: External Debt, *The GlobalEconomy.com*, [Online:web] Accessed 2 June 2016, URL:http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Syria/External_debt/

Russian business council established in 2004 would work towards achieving major breakthrough in bilateral relations.[54]

It must be mentioned that Syria imports many commodities from Russia but in Table 5.3 commodities which are imported in huge quantities are only given here. From the data that has been provided, it can be inferred that Syria has been importing huge amount of refined petroleum from Russia from 2000. Refined petroleum holds huge significance due to the fact that Syrian refineries are incapable of meeting the domestic needs which is mainly used for generation of electricity at thermal power plants.[55]

Table 5.3 shows that there was gradual increase in Syrian imports from Russia. In 1996, the total Syrian imports from Russia totalled $52.3 million which increased to $86.3 million in 2000. In 2005 the total imports from Russia was $639 million and in 2010 it amounted to $779 million. Some of the important commodities which Syria imported from Russia from 1996 to 2010 are nitrogenous fertilisers, refined petroleum, sawn wood, semi-finished iron, barley, wheat and , turbines.

Table 5.3 Syria's Imports from Russia (1996-2010)

Year	Commodities which are imported in high quantities	Total Import from Russia
1996	Sawn wood $6.47 million (12%), Hot rolled iron $5.67 million (11%), Other steel Bars $4.38 million (8.4%), coated flat-rolled iron $4.06 million (7.8%), Other small iron pipes $3.71 million (7.1 %) and nitrogenous fertilisers $3.94million (7.5%),	$52.3 million
1997	Sawn wood $15 million (26%), nitrogenous fertilisers $5.22 million (9%), uncoated kraft paper $5.05 million (8.7 %), semi-finished iron	$58.2 million

[54] MFA of the Russian Federation (2005), "Press statement by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin and the President of Syria Bashar al-Assad after the conclusion of Russian-Syrian talks", *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, Moscow, 25 January 2005, [Online:web] Accessed 11 July 2016, URL:http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/DC8C4BDCB7A2721AC3256F9600305171
[55] IBP Inc. (2015), *Syria Energy Policy*, ,p.70

	$3.64 million (6.3%), coated flat-rolled iron $3.46 million (5.9%) and iron blocks $3.36million (5.8%)	
1998	Brochures $13.7 million (16%), sawn wood $11.1 million(13%), uncoated craft paper $8.26 million (9.7%), LCDs $7.46 million (8.8%), Nitrogenous fertilisers $5.68 million (6.7%), coated flat rolled iron $4.42 million (5.2%)	$84.9 million.
1999	Explosive ammunition (munitions of war, projectiles, parts) $71.3 million (55%), sawn wood $14.2 million (11%), LCDs $7.65 million (5.9%) , uncoated craft paper $5.46 million (4.2%), coated flat rolled iron $3.98 million (3.1%), semi-finished iron $2.96million (2.3%),	$130 million
2000	Sawn wood $10.8million (13%), nitrogenous fertilisers $10.5million (12%), refined petroleum $9.72 million (11%), Barley $7.92 million (9.2%), Hot rolled iron $4.64 million (5.4%), wood fiberboard $2.94 million (3.4%)	$86.3 million.
2001	Sawn wood $31.3 million (22%), refined petroleum $17.5 million (12 %), nitrogenous fertilisers $9.81 million (6.9%), wood fiberboard $8.77 million (6.2%), cars $8.5 million (6.0%0, uncoated paper $7.4 million (5.2 %).	$142 million

2002	Sawn wood $46.4 million (25%), Wheat $30.5 million (17%), Gas Turbines $15.3 million (8.3%), Cars $13.5 million (7.3 %), Iron Pipes $6.45 million (3.5%), Barley $7.1 million (3.9 %)	$184 million
2003	Sawn wood $55.9million (26%), refined petroleum $31.7million (15%), wheat $20.3million (9.3%), other small iron pipes $14.1million (6.5%), iron pipes $11million (5.0%), cars $7.22million (3.3%)	$218million
2004	Refined petroleum $85million (22%), sawn wood $61.9million (16%), other construction vehicles $52.5 million (13%), other small iron pipes ($20.7 million), iron pipes 4.6%	$391 million
2005	Refined petroleum $142 million(39%), Sawn wood $41.9 million (9.1%), Construction vehicles $35.7 million (7.7%), Semi-finished iron $31.8 million (6.9%), Barley $ 19.3 million (4.2%), Wheat $18.3 million (4.0%)	$639 million
2006	Refined petroleum $352 million (52%), Semi-finished iron $46.8million (7.3 %), Sawn wood $36.8million (5.8%), Hot rolled iron $18.5 million (2.9%), Iron pipes $15.6 million (2.4%)	$639million
2007	Refined petroleum $684million (64 %) , Semi finished iron $105 million (9.8%), Sawn wood $55.5million	$1.07 billion

	(5.2%), delivery trucks $20.2 million (1.9%), nitrogenous fertilisers $18.6 million (1.7%), wheat $11.8 million (1.1%)	
2008	Refined petroleum $1.12billion 60%), Semi-finished iron $109million (5.8%), wheat $92.5million (5%), sawn wood $91 million (4.9%), Barley $85.6 million (4.6%)	$1.86 billion
2009	Wheat $223million (24%), Refined petroleum $175 million (19%), Semi-finished iron $105million (11%), sawn wood $78.2million (8.4%), seed oil $36.1 million (3.9%) and nitrogenous fertilisers $34.1 million(3.7%)	$926 million
2010	Refined petroleum $284 million (37%) Sawn wood $108 million (14%), Wheat $57.6 million (7.4 %), semi-finished iron $57.2 million (7.3%) and petroleum gas $35.6 million (4.6%)	$779 million

Table 5.4 indicates that Syria exports commodities such as textiles, vegetale products, paper goods, chemical products, animal products, footwear etc. There was a gradual increase in Syrian exports to Russia from 1996 to 2010. In 1996, Syrian exports to Russia amounted $10 million which increased to $11 million in 2000. In 2010, Syrian exports to Russia totalled $49.5million. It can be said that Syria's imports from Russia exceeds by a huge margin than its exportsto Russia.

Table 5.4 Syria's Exports to Russia (1996-2010)

Year	Commodities exported in high quantities	Total Export to Russia
1996	Textiles $6.82 million (68%), Chemical products $856 thousand (8.5%), Foodstuffs $762 thousand (7.6 %), Paper goods $ 520 thousand (5.2%), vegetable products $449 thousand (4.5%)	$10 million
1997	Textiles $7.04 million (63%), Paper goods $921 thousand (8.3%), Foodstuffs $849 thousand (7.6%), Chemical products $823 thousand (7.4%), Transportation $406 thousand (3.7%)	$11.1million
1998	Textiles $5.92 million (61%), Vegetable $1.52 million (16%), Transportation $715 thousand (7.4%), Chemical Products $ 658 thousand (6.8%), Paper goods $331 thousand (3.4%)	$9.73 million
1999	Textiles $2.72 million (43%), Vegetable products $2.18 million (36%), Chemical products $419 thousand (6.9%), Paper goods $247 thousand (4.1%), Metals $219 thousand (3.6%)	$6.04 million
2000	Textiles $6.49 million (59%), Vegetable products (15%), Chemical products (4.3%), Machines (3.2%), Plastic and Rubbers (2.7%)	$11 million

2001	Textiles $9.23 million (44%), Machines $ 6.11 million (29%), Vegetable Products $1.62 million (7.7%), footwear $629 thousand (3.0%), Chemical products $563 thousand (2.7%), Plastics and Rubbers $544 thousand (2.6%)	$21 million
2002	Textiles $12.3 million (65%), Vegetable products $2.67 million (14%), Machines $926 thousand (4.9%), footwear $887 thousand (4.7%), Metals $ 448 thousand (2.4%)	$18.9 million
2003	Textiles $11 million (60%), Vegetable products $3.29 million (18%), Foodstuffs $801 thousand (4.4%), Plastics and Rubbers $591 thousand (3.2%), Footwear $533 thousand (2.9%)	$18.4 million
2004	Textiles $12.3 million (58%), Vegetable products $5.27million (25%), Footwear $560 thousand (2.6%), Paper goods $463 thousand (2.2%), Animal products $379 thousand (1.8%)	$21.2 million
2005	Textiles $10.5 million (37%), Vegetable products $10.2 million (36%), Machines $2.79 million (10%), paper goods $612 thousand (2.2%), Instruments $484	$28 million

	thousand (1.7%)	
2006	Machines $23.3 million (44%), Vegetables $13.4 million (25%), Textiles $8.76 million (17%), Paper goods $2.45 million (4.6%), Plastics and Rubbers $1.5 million(2.8%)	$53.1 million
2007	Vegetable products $32.4 million (58%), Textiles (19%), Plastics and Rubbers (5.5%), Footwear (3.0%), Metals (2.4%)	$56 million
2008	Textiles $18.4 million (42%), Vegetable products $12.3 million (28%), Plastics and Rubbers $4.1 million (9.3%), Foodstuffs $3.01 million (6.8%), Wood products $1.91 million (4.3%)	$44.3 million
2009	Textiles $18million (43%), Vegetable products $10.9million (26%), Plastics and Rubbers $5.58million (13%), Foodstuffs $1.53 million (3.7%), Chemical products $1.24million (3.0%)	$41.8 million
2010	Textiles $21.4 million (43%), Vegetable products $14 million (28%), Plastics and Rubbers $5.88million (12%), Chemical products $1.77 million (3.6%), Machines $1.37 million (2.6%)	$49.5million

Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity OEC (2010) "What Does Syria Export to Russia?", [Online:web] Accessed 2 June 2017, URL: http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/syr/rus/show/2010/

Syria was inducted into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as a member in 2010. This will offer Syria the opportunity to strengthen its trade related policies and its trade regime. Being a member of the trade organisation would help to attract more export related foreign investment. In 1997, Syria signed an agreement on Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) to forge closer economic relations with the Arab countries and also improve the group's competitiveness and also ensure better competitiveness at the international level. Another such free agreement was signed with Turkey in 2007. An Association Agreement (AA) related to trade was negotiated with European Union in 2008 based on which Syria is likely to lower its tariffs over a period of 12 years. However, the agreement has not been ratified by the Syrian parliament. A free trade zone agreement was signed with Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon and a travel without visas for their citizens. Another initiative was undertaken to sign a free trade agreement between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus.[56] This plan was mentioned by Assad in 2010 after Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus signed a customs union which came into effect in January 2010. Assad expressed Syria's desire to develop and strengthen economic ties with all three countries.[57]

E: Infrastructure

Main infrastructural priorities of Syria are telecommunication, energy, drinking water, roads, transportation and sanitation. A strong infrastructure helps in economic development. Therefore, in the past few decades Syria has been stressing on the improvement of infrastructural facilities. A new idea of developing industrial cities have been put in place for some years now to enhance economic growth which has called for more foreign investments.[58]

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[56]World Bank (2010), "Deepening Trade Reforms in Syria for Improving Competitiveness and Promoting Non-Oil Exports", *World Bank Report No. 69119*, September 2010 [Online:web] Accessed 7 October 2016, URL:http://documents.worldbank.org.ezproxy.jnu.ac.in/curated/en/232151468120844268/pdf/691190ESW0P1170de0Summary0Report02.pdf

[57] RIA Novosti (2010), "Syria looks to join Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan free trade zone", *Sputnik News*, Minsk, 26 July2010, , [Online:web] Accessed 24 January 2017, URL:https://sputniknews.com/amp/world/20100726159965838/

[58] Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (2007), "Syrian Arab Republic, Infrastructure Development and Future Horizons in Syria,"*Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform*, *National Agricultural Policy Centre*, Policy Brief No.23, February 2007, [Online:web] Accessed 5 December 2016,

Most of the infrastructure such as roads and transportation facilities are owned by the state. The major cities of Syria are connected through railway lines that run nearly 2,750 kilometres across the country. The highways in Syria are about 36,377 kilometres. The total number of airports in Syria is 104, including military ones. International airports are in Damascus and Aleppo. Syria has a coastline which stretches 193 kilometres and along this coastline lies 4 major ports which are Tartous, Jablah, Baniyas and Latakia. These ports harbour around 137 ships.

The electricity generation in Syria has been handled by the Ministry of Electricity. Two main sources of electrical power is generated by thermal and hydro power. Syria used to face severe power shortages in 1980s and early 1990s as demand surpassed way more than supply. Around 42 percent of the power supply is generated by fossil fuel and 57 percent is done by using hydroelectric plants.[59]

Russian economy has increased and expanded its outward direct investment (ODI). Russian multinational companies were trying to reach out to new markets and secure lucrative deals with other countries. Earlier Russia's investments were limited to oil, gas and metallurgy sectors but gradually from the 2000s onwards investment in other sectors are undertaken. Through the ODI process Russia seeks to gain access to wider market for raw materials, new technologies and to acquire new financing options.[60]

Most of the agricultural area in Syria does not have irrigation facilities. Only less than 20 percent of the agricultural land is irrigated and the rest is dependent upon rain.[61] There have been efforts made towards utilisation of the Euphrates River for irrigation. The Tabqa dam, the largest in Syria was built by the Soviet Union after signing of an agreement in 1966. According to the agreement, Russia was to build a thermal power station and a dam for

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URL:http://www.agriportal.gov.sy/napcsyr/dwnld-files/divisions/rdd/pubs/pol_brf/en/23_infra_future_syr_fy_en.pdf

[59] Nations Encyclopedia, *Syria - Infrastructure, power, and communications, Nations Encyclopedia*, [Online:web] Accessed 6 December 2016, URL: http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Syria-INFRASTRUCTURE-POWER-AND-COMMUNICATIONS.html

[60] Deutsche Bank Research (2008), "Russia's Outward Investment", *Current Issues,* 30 April 2008,[Online:web] Accessed on 20 December 2016, URL: https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD0000000000224964/Russia's+outward+investment.pdf

[61] Paul Rivlin, *Economic Policy and Performance in the Arab World*, (London,2001), p.151.

irrigation. Along with the dam, an artificial reservoir, Lake Assad was made. Apart from water storage utility, it also provides for recreational activities and also fishing. The lake has been able to attract many foreign tourists annually. [62]

In the field of agricultural infrastructure also Russia has extended support to Syria. This includes irrigation projects and a Syria-Russia joint venture for the building of agricultural equipment. Russian agro-based companies which are involved in economic activities with Syria are Sovintervod, Traktornye Zavody and Rusgidro. A Russian company which deals with investment in various fields such as development of property, finance and transportation called the Sinara Group began building hotel complexes in the Latakia region.[63]

In 2008, a Russia based microelectronics company called Sitronics founded in 1997 signed a contract to set up wireless network in Syria. Finally, Russian Navigation Technologies, which is the largest manufacturer of Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) signed a contract to set up navigation systems in Syrian vehicles. [64]

F: Tourism

After Hafez al-Assad's government came into power in 1970, efforts were made to improve the tourism sector in Syria. Earlier, the tourism industry was not given due attention and hardly had any existence. This industry remains small and is not as vibrant as in other Arab States of the region but there has been a gradual increase in influx of tourists since the 1990s. Syria's tourism has been able to reap profits from foreign tourists mainly the ones coming from Gulf and European countries. It became a profitable sector for the Syrian economy and has been able to attract wealthy tourists. Bashar al-Assad's government had charted out an

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[62] Monib El-Khatib (1980), "The Syrian Tabqa Dam: Its Development and Impact", *The Geographical Bulletin*, vol. 26, [Online:web] Accessed 30 September 2016, URL:http://www.gammathetaupsilon.org/the-geographical-bulletin/1980s/volume26/article2.pdf

[63] Dmitry Gorenburg (2012), "Why Russia Supports Repressive Regimes in Syria and the Middle East", *Wordpress.com*, 22 June 2012, [Online:web] Accessed 14 May 2016,URL: https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2012/06/22/why-russia-supports-repressive-regimes-in-syria-and-the-middle-east/

[64] Dmitry Gorenburg (2012), "Why Russia Supports Repressive Regimes in Syria and the Middle East ," *Wordpress.com*, 22 June 2012, [Online:web] Accessed 14 May 2016,URL:https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2012/06/22/why-russia-supports-repressive-regimes-in-syria-and-the-middle-east/

ambitious programme of expanding the tourism sector and creation of around 1,20,000 new jobs by 2000 with the aim of attracting 5 million tourists by 2010.[65]

In order to improve the tourism sector and to gain more revenue from it, the Syrian government increased the state budget and opened up the economy for foreign investments during the 2000s. A report released by the World Tourism Organisation stated that Syria had received around 3.1 million tourists in 2007, its best record till then. According to the report of the WTO, in 2007 Syria emerged as the most sought after tourist destination in the West Asian region by attracting 31 percent more overseas tourists than its annual average in the earlier years. In order to attract more tourists, the Syrian tourism ministry had allocated around $5.5 million in the year 2008 and reduced or waived taxes for the companies which participating in exhibitions abroad. Syria planned to host various events which were meant to exhibit cultural and historical heritage in 2008 in order to attract more tourists and bring in more revenue. The year 2008 seemed appropriate for such plans as Syria was declared UNESCO Arab Capital of Culture. According to a report issued by the Syrian Ministry of Tourism in 2010 around $3.5 billion was invested in the tourism sector. However, it is important to mention that bulk of the foreign investment in Syrian tourism sector comes from the Gulf countries. The Kharafi Group of Kuwait began work on a $271 million project related to building of five-star hotels in Damascus in 2010. Even earlier also the Kharafi Group has built hotels in many places in Syria including recreational, leisure and shopping facilities.[66]

As regards Russia, Syria had signed an agreement for cooperation in tourism between the two countries in 1998. Another agreement for joint cooperation in the tourism sector was signed between them in Damascus in 2010. [67]

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[65] Matthew Gray (1997), "The Political Economy of Tourism in Syria: State, Society, and Economic Liberalization", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 19(2) ,pp. 57-73.
[66] US Embassy in Syria, "Syria: Capital investment in Tourism", *Oxford Business Group* [Online:web] Accessed 22 September 2016, URL: https://damascus.usembassy.gov/media/pdf/econcommercial-pdf/syria-_capital_investment_in_tourism.pdf
[67] Ministry of Tourism (1998), " The cooperation in the field of tourism between the Government of the Federal Republic of Russia and the Syrian Arab Republic on 23February, 1998 agreement was signed and ratified by Federal Republic of Russia ",*Syrian Ministry of Tourism*, Decree No. 534 of 2000, [Online:web] Accessed 23 January 2017,
URL:http://www.syriatourism.org/ar/page450/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9

In 2010, apart from encouraging more foreign investment in tourism industry, the Syrian government went on to scrape the visa requirements for Iranian and Turkish nationals. This had a positive outcome in the sense that Iranians visiting Shiite pilgrimage shrines increased exponentially in 2010 which was about 85 percent higher than 2009. The flow of tourists from Turkey also increased. In 2010, Syria witnessed a huge influx of tourists than seen earlier. For a long time it has been recorded that Saudi nationals arriving in Syria spend more than any other tourist due to which they prove to be more lucrative for the economy. The number of European visitors also increased in 2010, but they are found to be spending less than the tourists from Saudi Arabia.[68]

The Syrian government increased the number of tourist beds from a mere 40,000 to 100,000 over a period of time. New investment laws were passed in the parliament keeping in mind to bring in investment into the tourism industry. Various foreign companies were also contacted and deals were signed to build hotels and other tourism related infrastructure. According to the law on tourism related matters, the first seven years all tourism related projects are tax free and for the next seven years 50 percent of the total profits earned would be taxed. Recently, most of the investment in this sector has come from the Arab countries and most notably from Russia. Almost 75 percent of the foreign visitors to Syria are mainly from Arab countries mainly from Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The Arab tourists generally spend more money than other tourists as they stay for a longer period of time. In 2008, 6 million tourists both Arab and others visited Syria. Prior to 11 September 2001 attacks, American tourists were flocking to Syria in large numbers but after the incident, their numbers decreased. Out of total number of tourists visiting Syria, around 15 percent comprised European tourists. Russians and Germans comprised a large percentage of tourists visiting Syria. Many British, French and Italians tourists also came to Syria each year. The Syrian Ministry of Tourism has been planning to promote and upgrade religious tourism and pilgrimage. There are efforts being made by the ministry to build better hotels and artificial tourist projects. [69]

An agreement for cultural cooperation between Syria and Russia was signed in 2010 by Syrian Culture Minister Riyad Naasan Agha and his Russian counterpart Alexander Avdeyev. The agreement was based on an earlier inter-governmental agreement which took place in

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[68] Phil Sands (2011) "Syria sees tourist numbers leap 40%", *The National*, 25 January 2011, [Online:web] Accessed 17 December 2016, URL: http://www.thenational.ae/business/travel-tourism/syria-sees-tourist-numbers-leap-40

[69] Diana Darke , *Syria*, (Guilford: 2010), pp.17-18.

1995. Under this agreement, both the countries vowed to increase cultural exchanges and strengthen friendly relations. Another highlight of this agreement was that Russia would host Syrian cultural programs and vice versa. At the cultural programs it was agreed that they would screen cinema, exhibit paintings and artefacts and showcase folk bands. At the signing of the agreement, Adyedev also mentioned that Russia would accept more Syrian students to study in Russian educational institutions.[70]

A report released by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in 2008 highlighted that the tourism sector in Syria was set to flourish and the revenue coming to into the economy would double in the coming years. The report stated that the tourism industry was expected to contribute nearly 16.8 percentto Syria's GDP which would amount to about US$9.6 billion. According to the report, in 2008 the tourism sector contributed US$4.9 billion to the economy. The report mentioned that since Bashar al-Assad came to power, the earlier socialist rules governing the economy have taken a back seat and there have been a growth of privatisation and increased foreign investment in Syrian infrastructure and tourism. Due to this, new luxury hotels like the Four Seasons have been built on land owned by Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's Company called Kingdom Hotel Investments. According to the Syrian Ministry of Tourism, there has been a huge surge of foreign tourists coming to Syria from 2001 and since then Syrian hotels have been recording an increase in occupancy rates. It was reported by the Ministry that there was a chance of a more increase in tourists coming to Syria as around 367 tourism related projects were due for completion in 2010.

The average number of foreign tourists visiting the country in between 2000 and 2010 had also increased by 15 per cent, lifting the country from a ranking of 61st to 48th out of 176 world tourism destinations, the WTTC reported. The ranking was boosted by both Western and Arab visitors. Most of the tourists to Syria are from Gulf countries. There are comparatively vey less foreign tourists from US primarily due to the 2006 attack on US embassy in Damascus.[71]

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[70] RIA Novosti (2010), "Syria, Russia sign Cultural Cooperation Program", *Sputnik News,* Damascus, 21 March 2010, [Online:web] Accessed 17 December 2016, URL: https://sputniknews.com/russia/20100321158268067/
[71] Amena Bakr (2008), " Syrian Tourism Investment Helps Sector to Grow", *The National*, 8 July 2008,

[Online:web] Accessed 3 August 2016, URL:http://www.thenational.ae/business/travel-tourism/syrian-tourism-investment-helps-sector-to-grow

The WTTC listed some indicators to determine the travel and tourism competitiveness of a particular country. Some of the indicators are airport infrastructure, environmental sustainability, health and hygiene, ground transport infrastructure and tourism infrastructure. Syria ranked 94 and 85 on the travel and tourism index in the year 2008 and 2009 respectively out of 133 countries while taking into consideration all these indicators.[72]

Russia has made investments in Syrian infrastructure and tourism industries. In 2009, Russia's investment in the tourism industry in Syria was valued around $19.4 billion.[73] Although Syrian law permits foreign investment in any economic sector, the Supreme Investment Council is more likely to issue an investment license if a proposed project employs local workers, creates jobs and produces export-oriented commodities.[74]

In 2010, Russian companies signed agreements to make investment in beaches of Latakia province and also in the areas of Kasab, Kerdaha and Jableh. The investment process would include development of hotels and tourism related infrastructure. [75]

The arrival of tourists in Syria increased manifold in 2010 in comparison to 2009. During the first few months arrival of tourists touched 6.5 million as compared to 4.4 million during the same period in 2009.Syria welcomes a significant number of Russian tourists every year. The data of *Central Bureau of Statistics* shows that from 1998 to 2010 there has been a gradual increase in tourists from Russia. The number of Syrians visiting Russia from 1998-2001 witnessed a sudden increase. In 1998, 5,086 Syrians tourists visited Russia and in 2001 the number increased to 55,700.[76]

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[72] World Economic Forum (2009), "The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009," [Online:web] Accessed 17 November 2016, URL:http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GCR_TravelTourism_Report_2009.pdf

[73] Amos Howard (2011), "Billions of Dollars of Russian Business Suffers Along With Syria", *The Moscow Times*, 2 September 2011, [Online:web] Accessed 26 April 2015, URL: http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/billions-of-dollars-of-russian-business-suffers-along-with-syria/443078.html

[74] Davydov, *Inside Out*, p.162.

[75] Tareq Hajbakri (2016), "Russia to Control Electricity Sector, Tourism in Syrian Coast ", *Zamal Alwsl* , 15 September 2016, [Online:web] Accessed on 2 November 2016, URL:https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/18173.html

[76] Central Bureau of Statistics of Syrian Arab Republic, "Syrian Departures to Foreign Countries 1998 – 2002", Table 7/8, [Online:web] Accessed 8 July 2016, URL:http://www.cbssyr.sy/yearbook/2003/chapter8/tab%207-8.htm

Table 5.5 Arrival of Russian tourists to Syria, 1998-2010

Year	Number of tourists
1995	58995
1996	58151
1997	56889
1998	30737
1999	18144
2000	18871
2001	18933
2002	21606
2003	28696
2004	35188
2005	38212
2006	38936
2007	43919
2008	53469
2009	62398
2010	64072

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of Syrian Arab Republic, "Arrival of Russian Tourists to Syria, 1998-2010," [Online:web] Accessed 1 May 2016, URL:www.cbssyr.sy/index-EN.htm

Conclusion

In the early 1990s Syria's economic relations with Russia was at a very low level. This was mainly because of Russia's own economic problems and its efforts to look for better economic avenues. Since Russian currency was devalued and the economy was in a bad state, Russia could not afford to import Syrian goods. This can be seen a significant setback to

economic relations between them. All these were happening most importantly within the overall framework of Russia's foreign policy reorientation. The most important foreign policy goals of establishing Russia as an important power in the post-Cold War situation seemed impossible without foreign aid and lucrative business deals with leading economies of the world. In case of Syria, the economic data showed only gradual and minimal positive signs of economic recovery after a few years of economic gloom. Therefore, by analysing the available data, it can be said that Russia chose to strengthen its economic ties with Turkey, Israel and Iran in the West Asian region and not with the struggling economies such as Syria's during the 1990s. Syria's economic relations with Russia witnessed an increase during the 2000s, most importantly owing to the solving of the debt issue. Another reason of increased economic activities between the two countries can cited as a result of Bashar al-Assad's visit to Russia in 2005.

In this section, it was noted that Syria's imports exceeds way more than commodities being exported to Russia and this analysis also reveals that the trade statistics show an increasing trend during the 2000s. Out of the total amount of imported commodities from Russia, refined petroleum holds a great share. Apart from refined petroleum, food grains such as wheat and barley in smaller quantities are also imported from Russia.

Syria-Russia cooperation in the energy sector is high. Russian companies both government and private are involved in exploration of oil reserves and oil drilling in Syria for a long time. Russian companies which are involved in extraction of natural gas have also been functioning in Syria. Some of the main Russian oil and gas companies which have been working inside Syria are Gazprom, Stroytransgaz, Soyuzneftegaz, Uralmash etc.

In the Syrian infrastructure and tourism sectors Russian companies are not yet actively involved. Russian tourists coming to Syria are outnumbered by the large number of tourists coming from the Gulf countries. Syria also benefits economically more from the Gulf tourists rather than tourists from other countries. There is scope for exploring new avenues to improve the Syrian tourism industry with the help from Russia. The Cultural Agreement signed in 2010 between Syria and Russia is a step in the right direction for improving the exchange of tourists and students.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Syria achieved its independence from the French mandate on 17 April 1946. Its independence was achieved during a crucial point in world history while the Cold War was gradually gaining ground. The West Asian region was a major battleground where the superpowers were carrying out their East-West rivalry activities. Syrian leaders who led the nationalist struggle against the French came to rule Syria after independence by setting up a parliamentary form of government. However, these leaders proved inefficient to govern Syria and most importantly, were falling prey to the unity experiments during the Cold War period. From 1949, Syria faced many political coups and countercoups which pushed Syrian political scenario into grave instability. Weak domestic political situation and various pan-Arab unity experiments provided a conducive environment to the other states to meddle in Syrian political affairs. The pan-Arab unity projects were attempted by the Syrian leaders in order to deal with the Cold War situation and to exercise neutrality in the rivalry between the superpowers. The establishment of Israel in 1948 brought havoc in the region and exposed the region to Arab-Israeli conflicts. Syria being an important state in the region got involved in the Arab-Israeli Wars. These wars exposed Syria's weak internal situation and brought forth the need for a coherent foreign policy. At the background of all these, the nascent Ba'th Party which came into being in 1947, was brought into power in 1963. Initially the Ba'th Party made a mark in Syrian politics when it secured 22 seats out of 142 in the 1954 parliamentary elections. In 1966, the neo-Ba'thist seized power in Syria following an intra-party struggle with the traditional Ba'th Party founders.

Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Hafez al-Assad, who was the Defense Minister and the Commander of Syrian Air Force during the War, was at loggerheads with Salah Jadid because of policy differences. Eventually, Assad successfully removed Jadid from power and assumed power in 1970. Assad's first task after coming into power was to build a strong foundation for his regime and to bring about foreign policy based on pragmatism as he was known to be a realist in his approach.

Taking the broad determinants of Syrian foreign policy, Assad set out to delineate Syrian foreign policy. The broad determinants of Syrian foreign policy are geography, historical background, ideology and economy. In the geographical sense, Syria has constituted different

areas from time to time. It was known as *Bilad al-Sham* in the seventh century A.D which included present day Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. The idea of "Greater Syria" arose from this after historical Syria was divided into different areas by the Western powers after the Second World War. Syrian foreign policy therefore is based on the idea of historical greater Syria. The pan-Arab ideology impacts Syria's foreign policy. Right from independence all the Syrian leaders have projected Syria as a member of wider Arab community and therefore, Syria has played a vital role in the Arab causes. Over a period of time the role of ideology has waned and under Assad, the ideology factor has been given less weightage than pragmatism in the foreign policy arena.

Historically, Syria held great significance in the West Asian region as it was the birthplace of ancient civilizations and was a point connecting vital trade routes. Syria shares boundaries with Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and most importantly, Israel. Since the establishment of Israel, the region has come to witness Arab-Israeli conflicts. As Syria shares its borders with Israel, there is a constant security concern. Foreign policy before Assad was characterised by radical revisionism which denied Israel's existence and proposed military means to deal with Ara-Israeli conflict. After Assad came into power, he reduced the radicalism component in Syrian foreign policy.

As regards economy, Syria does not have much natural resource reserve. Syria's oil reserves are depleting at a fast pace and is a small producer of natural gas. Syria has depended on foreign aid, trade, investment, etc to run its economy. Syria has tried not to become over dependent on foreign aid providers. Assad tried to diversify external aid providers to avoid foreign policy constraints.

Assad's ascendancy to power took place at a crucial point in Syrian history after the 1967 War. This led Assad to devise a balanced foreign policy to achieve realistic and limited foreign policy goals. Syria under Assad went on to accept the UNSC resolutions 242 and 338 which advocated 'land for peace" principle to recover lost territories from Israel in 1974, initially which were unacceptable to Syria. Then Syria began to forge positive relations with pro-Western Arab states. Assad believed that Syria had to achieve balance of power or strategic parity in relation to Israel so as to achieve a 'just and comprehensive' peace. Assad proposed alignment with Egypt and close alliance with the Soviet Union to avail military needs. Assad also felt the need to cultivate improved relations with the US as and when

situation dictated. Assad made efforts to acquire "tactical flexibility" through foreign policy to deal with the arising threats and opportunities during the Cold War period. Assad's policies during the Cold War period can be summed up as a set of strategies which included a mixture of limited war, alliance formation and negotiations beneficial for Syrian interests.

Syria-Soviet Union relations received a major boost after Assad decided to base the relations of both the countries on a more strong footing. Relations between both the countries began when the Soviet Union expressed support for Syrian struggle for independence against French rule. In the 1950s, both the countries moved closer to each other militarily, politically and economically. The Arab-Israeli wars witnessed the involvement of both the superpowers during the Cold War. Although the Soviet Union provided military support to the Arabs during the wars, its policy of 'no war, no peace' evoked disappointment within the Arabs and especially in Syria. The defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war put a question on the efficiency of the Soviet weaponry in Syria. However, Assad sought to put aside such uneasiness prevailing in the relationship between both the countries. He went on to place the relations between both the countries on a "businesslike basis" within a framework of "trust and consultation". The important point to be emphasised here is that although Assad knew that close relations with the Soviet Union was an important element in Syria's policy, he wanted to avoid complete dependence on it. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 1976 and the Iran-Iraq war brought forth the areas of differences in policies between Syria and the Soviet Union. Despite these policy differences, both Syria and the Soviet Union refrained from reacting strongly against each other. As Assad believed that the Soviet Union could act as a "viable deterrent" to the Israeli threat and Syria, albeit reluctantly, went on to sign the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on 8 October 1980.

By the mid-1980s, Syria's disenchantment with the Soviet Union began to evolve after President Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. Gorbachev's main agenda was to remove the ideological element from Soviet Union's foreign policy. Moreover, Gorbachev declared that the Soviet Union would do away with the confrontational attitude with the US and would cooperate on major issues of international concern. Most importantly, the Soviet Union denied Syria support to achieve strategic parity with Israel. The Soviet Union clearly announced that it would provide weapons to Syria only for defensive purposes and not to achieve military parity with Israel. Syria was also disappointed with Soviet Union's policy of allowing large scale migration of Soviet Jews to Israel. Syria cautiously watched the Soviet

Union's move of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel on 18 October 1991. Due to these policy shifts taking place in the Soviet Union in the late-1980s and with the Cold War drawing to a close, Assad was convinced that Syria had to explore other alternatives in order to fill the void created by the absence a strong ally such as the Soviet Union in Syrian foreign policy. Assad realised the need for making certain policy shifts in the foreign policy arena to meet the challenges of a post-Cold War world.

The first hypothesis of the study is that in the post-1991 phase, Syria's policy towards Russia was guided more by pragmatism than by ideology because of systemic changes at the international level. The broad determinants of Syrian foreign policy remaining the same, Syria had to revise some of its policies to survive in the post-Cold War scenario. Gorbachev's 1990 speech confirmed that the Soviet Union would henceforth cooperate with the US and drop the confrontational stance towards the US. Another main development in the post-Cold War situation was that the US emerged as the only remaining superpower. Syria was apprehensive of unchallenged hegemony of the US in world affairs in the absence of a counterweight, previously played by the Soviet Union. Moreover, Syria was concerned that the US-Israel alliance would strengthen and this would bring about negative repercussions for the Arabs. Major cause of concern for Syria was change of policies within the Soviet Union and its diminished position at the international level towards the end of the 1980s. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of its successor state, Russia had a significant impact on Syrian policies. Russia being a new state had new foreign policy priorities than that of the Soviet Union. Internally too, Russia was struggling with a weak economy and was absorbed in its internal affairs. Most importantly, Russia in the early phase began passively following the events in the West Asian region which portrayed its image as a "junior partner" of the US. Moreover, Russia's weak economic position made it dependent on the financial support from the West. Russia's diplomatic leverage at the international level was at a minimal level.

Syria's post-Cold War policies were put to test when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. Syria's initial response towards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was to rally for Arab solidarity and make other Arab countries in the region help realise that war amongst themselves would provide a pretext for the foreign forces to enter the region and remain there which would in turn be harmful for the Arabs in the long term. Syria's decision to join the US-led coalition was a marked shift from its earlier stance towards the US. It was in the interest of Syria to

cultivate improved ties with the US and portray itself as a 'responsible power' in the post-Cold War situation after a long period of cold relations between both the countries throughout the 1980s. It must be pointed out that although Syria was attempting to forge positive relations with the US during the early 1990s, it was clearly understood that this relation could not bring about the similar bonding which was there between Syria and the Soviet Union. However, Syria was unclear about Russia's outlook towards the West Asian issues in general and Syria in particular in the 1990s.

After the death of Hafez a-Assad, his youngest son, Bashar al-Assad who was being educated in London to become an ophthalmologist, became the president of Syria in July 2000. Both father and son had different personalities. Senior Assad's views came to be shaped by Arab nationalism, Arab-Israeli wars, Cold War rivalry and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Bashar was exposed to the Western world which moulded his reformist and liberal outlook. Most of the policies followed under senior Assad were continued under Bashar's rule. The prime objective of Bashar was to gather support to weaken the US-Israeli bond by forging multiple alliances at the regional level. In order to ensure smooth transition of power from his father Bashar introduced limited political reforms and controlled opening to the world economy. Bashar put forward an "ambiguous" foreign policy. It was ambiguous in the sense that Syria was seeking to forge multiple alliances both in the regional and international arena with the aim of dealing with threats and exploiting the alliances for its benefit. Bashar went on to announce that the Palestine question formed an integral part of Syria's peace plan with Israel. Political dialogue was conducted with Western Europe, Arab countries and most importantly the US. Bashar wanted to bring about improved relations with its neighbours especially with Turkey, Jordan and Iraq to some extent.

Hence, the main argument put forth in this hypothesis that Syria followed pragmatism in its Russia policy has been established. The main relevant point which needs to be made here is that although Syria realised Russia's weak international position as compared to the US's, Syria has time and again emphasised reviving ties between both the countries as was during the Cold War period. If seen through the ideological lens, Syria should not have sided with the US-led coalition against Iraq, another Arab state. This action of Syria was an outcome of Assad's visionary policy of avoiding confrontation with the US, the only remaining world power in the post-Cold War scenario. Syria realised from the late 1980s that there were

chances of the Arabs becoming victims of regional conflicts at a time when the hegemonic prowess of the US would become unchallenged in the absence of a counterbalance.

The second hypothesis of this study is that the US and Israel were the major factors which decisively influenced Syria's policy towards Russia. This hypothesis has been proved by taking into account the role of Syria in post-civil war Lebanon, the Iraq-Kuwait War and the peace process. In April 1976, Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war with the main aim of not providing an excuse to Israel to enter Lebanon because of the domestic crisis. With the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989 with the mediation of the US, Syria made sure to exploit the opportunity to strengthen its hold over Lebanon's internal affairs with the objective of gaining strategic leverage over Israel. Moreover, with the changes occurring at the international level at the end of the Cold War, Lebanon came to be increasingly valued in Syria's external policy. Most importantly, Lebanon was for Syria a "bargaining card" while dealing with Arab-Israeli affairs at a time when Russia was unable to provide political support to the Arabs in general and Syria in particular. Although Russia's diplomatic leverage was weak in the 1990s, it went on to support the UNSC resolution 425 which called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, substantiating Syrian demand. It can be argued that Russia's passivity regarding Syrian role in Lebanon was evident when Russia chose to remain a balanced spectator of the conflict situation in South Lebanon. Especially after the 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath, Syria became much more aware of Russia's lessened diplomatic ability when Russia was left out of the diplomacy concerning Lebanon in which Israel showed willingness to tightly cooperate only with the US. As there was ensuing ambiguity in Russian foreign policy towards the Arab-Israeli issues, Syria was exercising cautiousness and Syria stayed away from being over dependent on Russia for the support it needed for its role in Lebanon. Moreover, Russia announced that the Syrian and the Lebanese peace tracks had to move simultaneously as was put forth by Syria at the beginning of the Madrid Peace Conference. Syria became aware of Russia's balanced policy towards Lebanon when Russia resorted to criticising both Israel on one hand and Syria, Iran and Hezbollah on the other hand. In 1998, Israel put forth its plan of accepting the UNSC resolution 425 and withdrawing from Lebanon. In 1998, Bashar al-Assad was entrusted with the task of monitoring Syria's role in Lebanon. He made it clear that Syria wanted that withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon was to be conducted within the framework of a comprehensive peace. Russia appreciated Israel's decision of withdrawing its forces from Lebanon. After Israel withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000, anti-Syria protests gradually grew and the UNSC resolution 1559 was passed in September 2004 which called for the withdrawal of Syrian

forces. The assassination of Rafiq Hariri, Lebanon's former Prime Minister, who was against the extension of pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud, evoked more protests against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Russia was closely watching these developments in Lebanon and felt that the acceptance of the UNSC resolution 1559 was becoming necessary for Syria to avoid possible international sanctions. Around this point of time, Syria was facing problems at various fronts. The Peace process was at a deadlock, relations with the US was deteriorating because of opposition against the Iraq War, there were accusations on Syria of supplying Hezbollah with Russian-made rockets and in addition to these, the anti-Syrian fervour was on the rise in Lebanon. Syria finally withdrew its forces from Lebanon in April 2005. At the backdrop of such isolation of Syria at the international level, relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia were also deteriorating. The negotiations pertaining to the EU-Mediterranean Partnership was also suspended after Hariri's assassination. The withdrawal from Lebanon was a major drawback as Syria was at a loss for strategic leverage in relation to Israel. Around this point in time, Syria-Russia relations began to reinvigorate mainly after Bashar's visit to Moscow, first visit of Syria's president after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It would be apt to state that Syria was aware of Russia's policy reorientation in the post-Cold War period and hence, was not planning on a complete dependence on Russia in relation to the Lebanon crisis. As Syria witnessed that the US was granting too much support to Israel while dealing with Arab-Israeli issues, Syria leaned towards Russia. Moreover, Syria valued the role of US in the regional affairs more than that of Russia's.

Another premise on which the both the hypotheses can be proved was the Iraq-Kuwait war. Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990. Initially Syria was apprehensive of the Cold War coming to an end and therefore, did not want any conflict to take shape in the region which would lead to instability. Hafez al-Assad made efforts to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait explaining that such a situation would provide reason for foreign forces to enter the region and exert control over Arab affairs. Syria was also concerned that such a volatile situation in the region would lead Israel to portray the issue as one of Arab-Israel conflict which would in turn undermine Kuwait's problems inflicted by Iraqi invasion. Syria's pragmatism in the field of foreign policy was evident when eventually Syria went ahead to join the US-led coalition to liberate Kuwait after the passing of the UNSC resolution 678. One of the main reasons which can be pointed out to show Syria's decision was one driven practicality was that both the US and the Soviet Union together went ahead to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as an illegal act of aggression. The Soviet

Union also immediately halted arms transfers to Iraq after the invasion in August 1990. Just like Syria's response towards the Iraqi invasion, the Soviet Union also insisted on relying on peaceful methods to end the crisis which can be seen as bolstering Syria's stance. As the Iraq-Kuwait crisis was going on, Syria noticed that as the Soviet Union was facing domestic turmoil in politics and could not display much diplomatic capability to negotiate with Saddam Hussein so as to persuade the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops. Therefore, when the US and the Soviet Union began acting in unison to deter and warn Iraq by supporting the various UNSC resolutions, Syria realised that a significant shift in policies had to be undertaken to adapt to the situation.

Syria was convinced with the idea that the coalition of states formed to bring about an end to the Iraq-Kuwait war would be able to offer a viable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict by engaging in negotiations to launch a peace process. The numerous visits made by James Baker, the US Secretary of State to the region helped to arouse hopes in the minds of the Arabs, especially Syria of the US's motives to initiate a peace process. The decision of both the US and the Soviet Union to be cosponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference generated goodwill among the Arabs and the fact that a new era of cooperation between the superpowers would prove helpful. However, it must be pointed out that as the proceedings took place leading to the conference, Syria noticed that the Soviet Union could not commit itself fully towards the peace initiative. Syria realised that the role of a diplomatic backer of the peace process played by the Soviet Union was lagging behind since there was no Letter of Assurance issued by the Soviet Union regarding the terms of the peace process to the various parties of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although Assad knew that the Soviet Union was becoming weak towards the end of the Cold War, he felt that it was necessary to consult the Soviet Union for important inputs regarding the peace initiative. However, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel on 18 October 1991, on the same day when Israel accepted its invitation to the peace conference sent a clear signal to Syria regarding the Soviet Union's weak position at the international level and change of foreign policy priorities while nearing its eventual disintegration. The most relevant point that must be mentioned here is that Syria understood that Israel was concerned about Soviet Union's participation in the peace process as it was thought to be pro-Arab in its stance. After the Madrid Peace Conference, Syria engaged in first ever direct face-to-face negotiations with Israel. This was a major shift from the previously held stance of Syria regarding the peace process. As Syria was displeased with the outcome of the direct negotiations, Syrian and the

Lebanese delegation did not attend the multilateral peace talks held in Russia in January 1992. Israel wanted active participation of the US in the peace talks and hence Russia's role as a mediator was undermined. Realising this, Syria insisted Russia to show active engagement in the peace process. However, as Russia's efforts to portray itself as a cosponsor of the peace process did not show much improvement. Syria's participation in the peace process with Israel came to a halt in 1996. In July 1999, Assad made his first visit to Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Around this time, there were chances of revival of the peace talks. However, the peace negotiations which took place in Shepherdstown in December 1999 descended into a stalemate and the Assad-Clinton talks of March 2000 also failed to bring about any positive outcome. The Bashar al-Assad's presidency coincided with Vladimir Putin's beginning of term as Russian President. After Bashar's term began, the second *intifada* set in which led to a change in Syrian viewpoint of Arab-Israeli affairs. Bashar put forth the idea of a "balanced peace" with Israel which would include the involvement of the Palestinian question and Lebanon. This was a significant change in the light of the fact that after the signing of the September 1993 Oslo Accords between PLO and Israel, Syria abandoned the Palestine question from its comprehensive peace idea. Although Putin sought to bring about a positive change in Russia's international position and to portray it as a strong player in world affairs, Russia could not make itself a powerful party to the peace negotiations. Syria had long realised the potential of the US as a major broker of peace because of its close relations with Israel and its ability to influence Israel's decisions during the peace process. Syria expected Russia to be equally influential like the US in the peace process. Nevertheless, Russia could not exert its influence in the peace negotiations in favour of the Arabs as expected by Syria. However, Syria values Russia's position in the peace process as both the countries uphold and support the same principles in relation to the peace process.

With the emergence of Russia which was ambiguous in its policies towards the West Asian region, Syria saw it imperative to create a strong position for itself in the Arab-Israeli matters. Although the Lebanese civil war came to an end, Syria went on to involve itself deeply in Lebanon's internal affairs. Although the Taif Accord urged disarming of all Lebanese militias, Hezbollah could retain its arms mainly because of the support it received from Syria. Hafez al-Assad considered Hezbollah as a "resistance" group fighting foreign occupation. Moreover, by having a hold on Hezbollah Syria sought to have leverage in the peace process which would otherwise go in favour of the Israel without a strong backer of the Arab side.

Syria's insistence to Russia to play an active role in the peace process reflected that Syria took Russia to be more emphatic towards the Arabs. However, Russia went on to show less importance to the Hezbollah-Israel conflict in the post-civil war period in Lebanon. Russia also did not overtly obstruct or criticise Syria's role in supporting Hezbollah. But in the 1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath, when Israel hit Hezbollah through airstrikes in South Lebanon, Russia broadly agreed with the international community that Israel's response was due to Hezbollah's provocation. Russia's stance in relation to Hezbollah activities did not affect Syria-Russia relations as both Russia and the US implicitly recognised important role played by Syria in Lebanon. It must be mentioned that although the US went ahead to declare Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation in 1995, Russia did not do so. Syria positively viewed the meeting between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Viktor Posuvalyuk, and Hezbollah chief Hasan Nasrallah in 1997. It must be noted that it was first such initiative undertaken by Russia which exemplified its interest in to initiate dialogue for peace negotiations in relation to Hezbollah. Russia went on to state that as Hezbollah acquired an important position as significant opposition in Lebanese politics, it should not be considered as "illegitimate" and that the group's opinion must be taken in account to bring about peace. Israeli forces pulled out of South Lebanon in May 2000 and after Bashar al-Assad assumed power there were anti-Syrian protests growing in Lebanon. Around this time Russia under Putin began to explicitly show its support for Syria's presence in Lebanon. There were accusations from Israeli authorities on Syria of providing Russian-made antitank missiles to Hezbollah. After the Rafik Hariri assassination in February 2004, the protests grew louder. Bashar visited Russia in January 2005 and this trip boosted the bilateral relationship of Syria and Russia. It must be mentioned that Bashar's visit to Moscow came at a crucial time when Russia's support seemed important for Syria as it was facing various problems such as a stalled peace process, reduced influence over Lebanon post-withdrawal, a chill in relationship with the US etc. Eventually, Syrian forces withdrew from Lebanon in April 2005. Hezbollah-Israel conflict in July 2006 invited criticisms from the US on Syria, Iran and Hezbollah. Russia issued a list of terrorist outfits in July 2006 but did not name Hezbollah. In August 2006, UNSC resolution 1701 was passed which called for a ceasefire to be imposed and to disarm Hezbollah by installing peacekeeping force in Lebanon. Russia's response was different to this resolution in the sense that Moscow signed a separate treaty with Lebanon to send Russian peacekeeping forces. Syria did not show its cooperation to help implement the UNSC resolution. Syria witnessed Russia's increasing support towards Hezbollah when Israeli Prime Minister went to Moscow to request Putin for an assurance regarding passing of

Russian-made weapons to Hezbollah through Syria. However, Putin did not provide any assurance regarding this issue which was viewed by Syria as a positive gesture.

Syria has been cautious about its association with Hezbollah because of which there are no known offices of the organisation inside Syria. Russia's initial stance towards Hezbollah-Israel conflict was a balanced one which later on shifted slightly although not explicitly towards Hezbollah. As Russia implicitly began showing support for Hezbollah from 2000s, Syria began to view Russia as reviving its role in the West Asian affairs. Syria's Arab nationalist credentials received a significant boost from the 2000s as an important power like Russia showed interest in Syria-related issues such as Hezbollah at a time when condemnation against Syria mainly from the US and Israel was on the rise.

The idea of "just and comprehensive" peace was the main motive of Syria's peace negotiations with Israel. With the signing of the Oslo Accords, Syria separated the Palestine question from the "comprehensive" peace. Syria's bargaining leverage in relation to the peace process was reduced after the signing of the Oslo Accords between the PLO and Israel which involved the mediation of the US. As Syria was unable to have an influence over the Palestine question, Syria sought to get closer to the groups which were in opposition to Yasser Arafat and the PLO. Personal mistrust between Assad and Arafat was a significant reason for Syria to seek more control over Israel-Palestine affairs. Assad was of the opinion that the Palestine question was of a greater significance which was not handled in a proper manner by Arafat. Syria did not provide any strong criticism towards the Oslo Accords mainly as it was mediated by the US which was considered to have more influence in the peace negotiations than Russia. Moreover, Syria did not want to hamper its relations with the US. Syria instead sought to provide a base for the anti-Arafat Palestinian groups in order to subtly display its criticism against the Oslo Accords. As Russia emphasised cooperation with the US on major issues of international concern throughout 1990s, Syria did not object to Russian support for Arafat and the Oslo Accords. As Hamas mostly pursued violent means in relation to Israel, Russia sought to distance itself from the group. However, Russia did not consider Hamas as a terrorist outfit. Amidst second *Intifada*, Bashar went on to show stronger support to the Palestinian question which had receded to the background following the Oslo Accords and therefore, the issue of Hamas was also taken up ever more seriously. At this time, Syria reduced its critical stance towards Arafat and the PLO. Syria witnessed a gradual shift in Russia's policy towards Hamas after the 2006 parliamentary elections. After Hamas was elected to the Palestinian parliament, Russia began displaying efforts to conduct talks

with the group and this was seen by Syria as conferring some credibility to Hamas as a legitimate entity. When the US was trying to isolate Syria by threatening to impose sanctions for its ties to Hamas, at this background Bashar's visit to Russia in 2005 helped to bring Syria-Russia relations closer based on common interest of checking the dominance of the US influence in the West Asia region and over Arab-Israeli affairs. The main relevant point here is that despite making efforts to act as a conciliatory force between the Fatah and Hamas, the results for Russia were unsuccessful as most of the mediatory efforts were carried on by Egypt. In this context, Syria saw fit to insist Russia to show more involvement in the Arab-Israeli issues as Russia itself was also trying to upgrade its position in the international level. A trilateral meeting which took place between Hamas chief Khaled Mish'al, Bashar and Medvedev in May 2010 helped Syria to portray the fact that it had the support of Russia in relation to Hamas.

The 11 September 2001 attacks led the US to announce its policy on "War on Terror". As Syria was already put on the US list of terror sponsoring states in 1979, Bashar did not want to further spoil Syria's relations with the US when he initially assumed power in 2000. Therefore, when the war on terror campaign was declared, Syria promptly showed its support and announced its cooperation with the US to fight terrorism. However, before doing so, Syria made it clear that the term "terrorism" carried different connotation in different contexts and hence a proper definition based on an international understanding was important. Bashar reiterated the fact the Syria did not consider groups like Hezbollah and Hamas as terrorist groups as according to the Arabs they were "resistance groups" fighting Israeli attacks and occupation of their homeland. It must be pointed out that both Syria and Russia welcomed the US policy of fighting terrorism. Syria went ahead to provide vital information of persons involved in the September 2001 attacks and conducted interrogations of accused persons also which was acknowledged by the US. However, after the declaration of Iraq as an "axis of evil" by President George Bush in January 2002, Syria became increasingly concerned. Gradually as Syria witnessed maneuvering tactics of the US and UK governments to gather support to wage a unilateral military intervention against Iraq based on the false accusation of developing and stockpiling Weapons of Mass Destruction without any international legitimacy, Syria grew disillusioned regarding the US campaign of "War on Terror". Syria's concerns were fuelled further after there were discussions within the US government in May 2002 of expanding the "axis of evil" to include Syria, Libya and Cuba. Against this background, Syria planned on building a coalition of states which were against

military intervention in Iraq. Russia, Germany and France were vocal about their disagreement on a unilateral military action against Iraq and therefore, Syria began acting in tandem with these countries to avert possible attack on Iraq. As Syria was desperately trying to avert war on Iraq, it went ahead to support the UNSC resolution 1441 which called for Iraq's compliance with disarmament obligations. Initially, Syria was of the opinion that being a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council it felt obligated to act responsibly to avoid war by cooperating with the US and demanding Iraq to comply with the UN resolutions calling for disarmament. However, as Syria began witnessing the US's increasing threats of undertaking a unilateral preemptive military action on Iraq in violation of international legitimacy, then it began capitalising on increasing anti-Americanism in the region. Bashar began publicly denouncing the activities of the US and planned to strengthen Arab solidarity. However, Bashar policy backfired and pro-US states such as Egypt and Jordan distanced themselves from Syria as they were facing a surge of anti-Syrian protests domestically. After the launching of Operation Iraqi Freedom, led by the US in March 2003, the US began to turn its attention on Syria. The US began demanding Syria to sever its ties with Hezbollah and Hamas. The US also began criticising Syria's presence in Lebanon. The SALSRA Act which was passed by the US Congress in December 2003 called for an end to Syrian presence in Lebanon and to stop supporting Hamas and Hezbollah. Most importantly, Syria was accused by the US of facilitating arms smuggling into Iraq, providing asylum to pro-Saddam Iraqi officials, and for allowing foreign fighters to enter Iraq through Syria. Against this background, Syria began looking forward to forging stronger ties with Russia as regional situation seemed highly volatile and against Syrian interests. As according to Syria it was in the interest of Russia to have stability in the West Asian region, Bashar's January 2005 visit to Moscow received considerable attention regarding the Iraq's situation. A joint declaration was signed between Syria and Russia during Bashar's visit which denounced all forms of terrorism while emphasising that democracy in the West Asian region must be brought about by considering the region's historical and civilizational contexts. Since this visit, Syria-Russia relations have become stronger in terms of cooperation to fight terrorism and both the countries have put forward the idea that the term terrorism needs an internationally agreed definition.

Hafez al-Assad sought to do away with Syria's complete dependency on military means to deal with Israel. He began to give importance to diplomatic means rather than military ones in the field of external relations. Policy of mixing diplomatic means with military strength to

sustain a foreign policy for the benefit of Syria's national interests was carried forward by Bashar al-Assad. Syria-Soviet Union shared robust military relations. However, during the 1990s Syria came to witness less engagement with Russia in terms of military needs. Syria during the 1990s was procuring arms from and was forging closer military relations with countries such as China and North Korea. There is a shortage of data regarding Syria-Russia military deals and arms procurement, specially accounting for the period 1991-2000. Moreover, as Russia was looking for more lucrative markets to sell its military products, Syria was sidelined mainly because of its inability to pay in hard currency. The outstanding military debt that Syria owed to the Soviet Union was also an impediment in Syria-Russia military relations. An interesting finding of the present study is that both the countries have tried to keep a low profile about their military cooperation as the information related to this aspect of their relationship is scarce although it is an issue of concern for the US and Israel. To pacify US and Israeli concerns for weapons of Russian origin falling into the hands of terrorists, Russia has many times clarified that weapons and military hardware provided to Syria are of defensive nature. Starting from 2000, as there were improvement along the political lines, military relations between both the countries also witnessed major overhaul. Data from the study reveals that Syria has procured MiG aircraft spare parts, between 2000 and 2001 contracts were signed for the procurement of small and light weapons such as AKS-74U, AK-74M assault rifles with ammunition, missiles 9M117M and 9M113, PG-7VL rounds for RPG-7 grenade launchers equipped with night vision sights. Syria signed military contracts worth $1 billion with Russia in 2001. Syrian government also requested Russia to help in upgrading Soviet era military equipment such as S-200E (SA-5) Surface-to-Air Missiles, T-55, T-72 tanks, BMP-1 AIFVs, MiG-25 (Foxbat) and MiG-29 (Fulcrum) aircraft. Syria has also signed deals to purchase 8 "Iskander-E " missile systems, 30 Su-30 fighters, S-300PMU (SA-10) SAMs, "Buk-M1" (SA-11) and "Tor-M1" (SA-15) SAMs, Mi-35 (Hind E/F) and Ka-52 (Hokum B) helicopters, project 1241.8 and 1242.1 Molniya missile boats. Post-2000 their military cooperation improved owing to the need for both the countries to show a stronger and a united front against the US and Israel because of various factors such as the War on Terror campaign and the 2003 War on Iraq. It is well understood by Syria that as long as Israel remains militarily dominant and whenever US dominance in the West Asian region is on the rise, Russia is one of the reliable allies who will provide military support.

In the economic realm, it has been stated by the IMF that Syrian economic data lacks consistency and does not cover most areas of concern. Syria's economic relations with Russia

were at a low level during the 1990s. The reason behind this was Russia's weak economy because of which it was looking for better economic avenues. This can be seen a significant setback to economic relations between them. Russia as a new state needed was in need of foreign aid and lucrative business deals with leading economies of the world. In case of Syria, the economy was showing minimal positive signs after many years of economic gloom during the 1980s. By analysing the available data, it has been concluded that in the West Asian region, Russia chose to strengthen its economic ties with Turkey, Israel and Iran. However, it must be mentioned that despite low level of economic engagement, as both the countries wanted to deepen their economic relations, they granted the Most-Favoured-Nation status to each other after signing the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Technological and Scientific Cooperation in 1993. Syria's economic relations with Russia increased during the 2000s. The main reason behind this was the Soviet era debt owed by Syria was repaid to Russia. Another reason of increased economic activities between the two countries was Bashar al-Assad's visit to Russia in 2005.

The most vibrant sector of economic cooperation between Syria and Russia is the energy sector. Russia has helped Syria in the construction of the Balikh hydroelectric station and Tishrin heat and power station. Many oil and gas pipelines in Syria are built by Russia. Soyuzneftegaz, a private oil and gas company of Russia began its work in Syria in 2004 to explore and develop oil fields. Stroytransgaz, Russia's construction company of oil and gas related infrastructure has been dealing with projects worth $1.1 billion in Syria. With the assistance from Stroytransgaz, an oil refinery was built in Palmyra. Uralmash, a Russia based Company which deals with manufacturing of oil drilling plants, has been working in Syria from early 2000s. Tatneft, a Russian private oil producer firm began to make arrangements to drill and pump oil in Syria in 2010. Russia's company Gazprom is involved in exploring, extracting and transporting natural gas in Syria.

In this section, it was noted that Syria's imports exceeds way more than commodities being exported to Russia. Out of the total amount of imported commodities from Russia, refined petroleum holds a great share. Apart from refined petroleum, food grains such as wheat and barley in smaller quantities are also imported from Russia. Syria exports commodities such as vegetables, textiles, cotton, footwear, chemical products etc to Russia.

In the Syrian infrastructure and tourism sectors Russian companies are not yet actively involved. Russian tourists coming to Syria are outnumbered by the large number of tourists coming from the Gulf countries. Syria also benefits economically more from the Gulf tourists rather than tourists from other countries. There is scope for exploring new avenues to improve the Syrian tourism industry with the help from Russia.

On the whole, Syria's policy towards Russia during the period under study strengthened over the years. During the early 1990s, due to the Soviet Unions' disengagement from the West Asian region and due to its weak position at the international level, Syria sought to confer more importance to the role played by the US in the Arab-Israeli affairs. However, as situation dictated, Syria sought Russia's support to bolster the position of the Arabs in Arab-Israeli matters. It can be argued that during the early 1990s, although Syria viewed Russia as a potential Arab ally, Syria explored alternatives by forging alliances at the regional level, seeking improved relations with the US and planning to reach a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the time when Bashar took over power from his father, the situation in the West Asian region grew volatile and seemed hostile to Arab interests. At this point, Syria increasingly began taking measures to cultivate stronger relations with Russia such as the swift repayment of the Soviet era debt which had remained unresolved throughout 1990s and exchanges of high ranking diplomatic visits. Moreover, as Syria witnessed Putin's policy of reviving Russia's international position from the 2000s, Syria seized the opportunity and increasingly moved closer to Russia. From the mid-2000s till 2010, Syria's relations with Russia based on political, military and economic aspects began reaching new heights.

Appendices

Appendix I

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Syrian Arab Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 8 October 1980.

The Syrian Arab Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, inspired by the wish to develop and strengthen relations of friendship and all-round cooperation that have formed between them, in the interests of both states, of the cause of security over the world, of consolidation of international détente, and development of peaceful cooperation among states.

Determined to give a firm rebuff to the policy of aggression conducted by imperialism and its accomplices, to continue the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism and racism in all their forms and manifestations, including Zionism, to come out for national independence and social progress,

Attaching great significance to the continuation of cooperation of both countries in establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East,

Confirming allegiance to the goals and principles of the charter of the United Nations organization, including the principles of respect for sovereignty, national independence, territorial and noninterference in internal affairs,

Decided to conclude the present treaty and agreed on the following:

Article 1

The high contracting parties proclaim their resolve to develop steadily and strengthen friendship and cooperation between both states and people in the political, economic, military, scientific, technological, cultural and other spheres on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual advantage, respect for sovereignty, national independence and territorial integrity, and noninterference in each other's internal affairs.

Article 2

The high contracting parties shall promote in every way the strengthening of universal peace and security of peoples, the relaxation of international tensions and their implementation in concrete forms of cooperation among states, the settlement of disputable questions by peaceful means, removing any manifestations of the policy of hegemonism and aggression from the practice of international relations.

The sides shall be cooperating intensively with each other in solving the tasks of ending the arms race, of achieving general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament under effective international control.

Article 3

The high contracting parties, guided by their belief in the equality of all peoples and states, regardless of race and religious beliefs, condemn colonialism, racism and Zionism as one of the forms and manifestations of racism, and reaffirm their resolve to wage tireless struggle against them. The sides will be cooperating with other states in supporting just aspirations of peoples in their struggle against imperialism for ultimate and complete elimination of colonialism and racial domination, for freedom and social progress.

Article 4

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics shall respect the policy of nonalignment pursued by the Syrian Arab Republic, which constitutes a major factor contributing to the preservation and consolidation of the international tensions.

The Syrian Arab Republic shall respect the peaceful foreign policy pursued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, aimed at consolidating friendship and cooperation with all the countries and peoples.

Article 5

The high contracting parties shall develop and broaden the practice of mutual exchange of opinions and regular consultations on questions of bilateral relations and international problems of interest to both sides, and above all on the problems of the Middle East. Consultations and exchanges of opinion shall be held at different levels, above all through meetings of the leading state figures of both sides.

Article 6

In cases of emergence of situations jeopardizing peace or security of one of the parties or posing threat to peace or violating peace and security in the whole world, the high contracting parties shall enter without delay into contract with each other with a view to coordinating their positions and to cooperation in order to remove the threat that has arisen and to restore the peace.

Article 7

The high contracting parties shall carry out close and comprehensive cooperation in assuring conditions for the preservation and development of the social and economic accomplishments of their peoples, for respecting the sovereignty of each of the two parties over their natural resources.

Article 8

The high contracting parties shall continue to develop their cooperation and exchange of experience in the fields of science, art, literature, education, health, information, cinematography, tourism, sports and other fields.

The sides undertake to contribute to the expansion of contracts and cooperation between the organs of state power and mass-affiliation organizations, including the trade union and other

public organizations, enterprises and cultural and scientific establishments with a view to an increasingly more profound familiarization of the people of both countries with the life, work, experience and achievements of each other.

Article 10

The high contracting parties shall continue to develop cooperation in the military field on the basis of appropriate agreements concluded between them in the interests of strengthening of their defense capacity.

Article 11

Each of the high contracting parties states that it shall not enter into alliances or participate in any groupings of states as well as in activities directed against the other high contracting party.

Article 12

Each of the high contracting parties states that its obligations under the current international agreements do not contradict the provisions of this treaty, and undertakes not to conclude any international agreements which are incompatible with it.

Article 13

Any differences that may arise between the high contracting parties in the interpretation or application of any provision of this treaty shall be resolved on the basis, in the spirit of friendship, mutual understanding and respect.

Article 14

This treaty shall be effective for twenty years as of the day it enters into force. If neither of the high contracting parties states six months prior to the expiry of the above mentioned period its desire to terminate the treaty, it shall remain effective for the next five years until one of the contracting parties notifies in writing six months prior to the expiry of the current five year period its intention to terminate it.

Article 15

This treaty is subject to ratification and shall enter into force on the day of the exchange of ratification instruments, which shall be done in Damascus.

Appendix II

US-Soviet Letter of Invitation to Peace Talks in Madrid, 18 October 1991.

[*The following is the full text of the invitation to the Madrid peace conference jointly issued by US Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin to Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians. A text of the invitation was made available by al-Hayat to the Mideast Mirror, which published it on 21 October 1991.*]

Your Excellency:

On behalf of President Gorbachev and President Bush, we are very pleased to convey the attached invitation. After extensive consultations with Israel, Arab states, and the Palestinians, we have concluded that an historic opportunity exists to advance the prospects for genuine peace throughout the region. The United States and the Soviet Union are deeply committed to helping the parties realize this opportunity.

We look forward to working with you closely in this historic endeavor, and count on your continuing support and active participation.

To facilitate preparations for the conference and ensuring negotiations, we urgently request your positive response as soon as possible, but no later than 6.00 p.m. Washington time, 23 October.

Sincerely,

James A. Baker,III

Boris Dmitriyevich Pankin

Invitation

After extensive consultations with Arab states, Israel, and the Palestinians, the United States and the Soviet Union believe that an historic opportunity exists to advance the prospects for genuine peace throughout the region. The United States and the Soviet Union are prepared to assist the parties to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, through direct negotiations along two tracks, between Israel and the Arab states, and between Israel and the Palestinians, based on United Nations Security Council 242 and 338. The objective of this process is real peace.

Toward that end, the president of the US and the president of the USSR invite you to a peace conference, which their countries will co-sponsor, followed immediately by direct negotiations. The conference will be convened in Madrid on 30 October 1991.

President Bush and President Gorbachev request your acceptance of this invitation no later than 6 p.m Washington time, 23 October 1991, in order to ensure proper organization and preparation of the conference.

Direct bilateral negotiations will begin four days after the opening of the conference. Those parties who wish to attend multilateral negotiations will convene two weeks after the opening of the conference to organize those negotiations. The co-sponsors believe that those negotiations should focus on region-wide issues such as arms control and regional security, water, refugee issues, environment, economic development, and other subjects of mutual interest.

The co-sponsors will chair the conference which will be held at ministerial level. Governments to be invited include Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Palestinians will be invited and attend as part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Egypt will be invited to the conference as participant. The European Community will be a participant in the conference, alongside the United States and the Soviet Union and will be represented by its presidency. The gulf Cooperation Council will be invited to send its secretary-general to the conference as an observer, and GCC member states will be invited to participate in organizing the negotiations on multilateral issues. The United Nations will be invited to send an observer, representing the secretary-general.

The conference will have no power to impose solutions on the parties or veto agreements reached by them. It will have no authority to m decisions for the parties and no ability to vote on issues or results. The conference can reconvene only with the consent of all the parties.

With respect to negotiations between Israel and Palestinians who are part of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, negotiations will be conducted in phases, beginning with talks on interim self-government arrangements. These talks will be conducted with the objective of reaching agreement within one year. Once agreed the interim self-government arrangements will last for a period of five years. Beginning the third year of the period of interim self –arrangements, negotiations will take place on permanent status. These permanent status negotiations, and the negotiations, and the negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, will take place on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338.

It is understood that the co-sponsors are committed to making this process succeed. It is their intention to convene the conference and negotiations with those parties who agree to attend.

The co-sponsors believe that this process offers the promise of ending decades of confrontation and conflict and the hope of a lasting peace. Thus, the co-sponsors hope that the parties will approach these negotiations in a spirit of good will and mutual respect. In this way, the peace process can begin to break down the mutual suspicions and mistrust that perpetuate the conflict and allow the parties to begin to resolve their differences. Indeed, only through such a process can a real peace and reconciliation among the Arab states, Israel and the Palestinians be achieved. And only through this process can the peoples of the Middle East attain the peace and security they richly deserve.

Appendix III

Excerpts from the Opening Speech of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at Madrid Peace Conference, 30 October 1991.

[*The following excerpts, taken from the full text of President Gorbachev's speech translated in FBIS on 30 October, relate to the Middle East. The bulk of the address was taken up with the situation of the Soviet Union*]

…Let me say a few words about the role of the two powers whose presidents are now before you as cochairman of the conference. It was the will of history that unless there had been an improvement and then a radical change in Soviet relations we would not have witnessed the profound qualitative transformations in the world that now make it possible to speak of an entirely new period, a period of peace in world history. Movement in that direction has begun.

The fact that a realistic hope has emerged for an Arab-Israeli settlement can only be understood in this context.

Cooperation between the two powers and other members of the UN Security Council was indispensable to stop the aggression against Kuwait and to reaffirm the effective- ness of the new criteria in international relations. Right after that, just as was agreed between President Bush and me early in September 1990 at our Helsinki meeting on the subject of the Gulf war, vigorous joint efforts began, aimed at achieving a Middle East settlement.

All that we and the Americans have done to that end signifies that proper conclusions have been drawn from the Gulf war. Our joint participation in the process of settlement was prompted by a desire to offer our good offices, not to impose solutions from outside that would run counter to the national interests of states in the region.

Thus, as a result of major bilateral and multilateral efforts, a signal was sent to the parties involved in the conflict that they need to negotiate, to work together toward finding a realistic balance of interests which alone may form the foundation of a durable peace.

Today we have a unique chance. It would be unforgivable to miss this opportunity. Success is in everybody's interest not only because the rights of the peoples and nations and of individuals are increasingly recognized today as a universal foundation of the world order, but also for another reason of particular urgency and gravity. The Middle East has become one of the most heavily armed regions of the world, where lethal weapons and nuclear technologies are spreading and where other weapons of mass destruction are also present.

This is a justified cause for alarm. The international community is entitled to expect that this conference will come up with decisions that will put to rest this concern. In my view, the conference can only succeed if no one seeks a victory over the other side but all seek a common victory over the cruel past. I am speaking of peace, rather than a cessation of the state of war. A durable peace implies the realization of and respect for the rights of the Palestinian people.

Appendix IV

Excerpts from Head of the Syrian Delegation, Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara's Opening Speech at the Madrid Peace Conference, 31 October 1991.

[*Mr. Shara's address was recorded from Amman Jordan Television and translated from the Arabic by FBIS on 1 November 1991*]

... Mr. President: We have never been warmongers and advocates of destruction. Syria has always called for the attainment of a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of UN resolutions, and it has stressed a true intention and serious desire for peace. At the height of the October war, His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad said: We have no fondness for killing or destruction; we are only defending ourselves against killing and destruction. We are not and have never been aggressors. We have been and still are defending ourselves against aggression. We want death for no one; we are protecting our people against death. We cherish freedom and want it for ourselves and others. Peace and the theft of others' territory do not go together. For peace to be permanent and stable, it must encompass all the parties to the conflict on all fronts. Developments in our region have borne out the validity of this truth. Israel used its peace treaty with Egypt to annex Jerusalem in 1980 and the Golan Heights in 1981, and to invade Lebanon in 1982. Obviously, Israel committed this series of aggressive acts at a quicker pace than its withdrawal from Egyptian Sinai. Following each aggression, the UN Security Council convened and issued unanimous resolutions: Resolution 476, which declared the annexation of Jerusalem to be null and void; resolution 497, which declared the imposition of Israeli laws in the Golan Heights to be null and void and without any basis in international legal authority; and resolution 425, which demanded an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. But, like resolutions 242 and 338, these resolutions have failed to be implemented thanks to Israel's rejection and stubbornness and the cold war climate between East and West. As for now, with the cold war over and confrontation and competition between the United States and the USSR giving way to a new era of detente and cooperation, and with the peace conference getting underway, the peoples of the region and the world are waiting for these resolutions to be enforced as soon as possible through serious and productive talks. In this context, it is worth noting that Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which form the foundations of the peace conference, were passed as a compromise among the permanent Security Council members, majority of which, as is known, have been sympathetic to Israel since its inception. Hence, the implementation of these two resolutions must not be subject to fresh compromises at the bilateral talks. They must be implemented fully and on all fronts. The preamble to resolution 242 clearly states the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. This means that every inch of Arab territory occupied by the Israelis through war and force-the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip-must revert to their rightful owners in full. World public opinion now realizes more than ever before, especially in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, that double standards are

no longer acceptable in this age; that the principles of international law, not the law of the jungle, must be respected; and that the UN resolutions, not brute force, must be put in force. The world states have also recently realized that only Israel resists the peace efforts with all the power at its disposal and continues its occupation of others' territory by force. Today, all states realize that Israel adopts a sterile and worn-out ideology based on expansion, the building of settlements, and the displacement of Arabs from their territories, on which they have lived for centuries, to replace them with new immigrants who have never lived in our region at any time in history. In this regard, Syria would like to remind the cosponsors of the conference, and through them the international community, that the Israeli occupation of the Syrian and Palestinian territories has led to the displacement of approximately half a million Syrian citizens from the Golan Heights. Those citizens, to date, have not been able to return to their homes. Moreover, there are over a quarter of a million Palestinian refugees in Syria who are deprived of their right to the homeland of their fathers and forefathers in Palestine. Israel's allegations for bringing world Jewry to it at the expense of the indigenous Arab inhabitants are supported neither by legal nor humanitarian principles. Had the world adopted these allegations, all Christians should have been urged to emigrate to the Vatican and all Muslims to holy Mecca. It is an amazing paradox that Israel rejects the implementation of UN Resolution 194 issued in 1948 stipulating the repatriation of Palestinian refugees and compensating those unwilling to return, on the pretext that there is not enough territory, at a time Israel continues to urge hundreds of thousands of new Jewish immigrants to settle in the same territory and to abandon their original homelands, such as the Soviet Union, which has an area estimated at one-sixth of the world. We believe that the time of fallacies and meaningless pretexts that are only aimed to justify the continued occupation and annexation is over. All parties, aggressors and victims alike, are now before an historic opportunity, which may not recur, to end long decades of destructive conflict, and to establish a just, comprehensive, and durable peace which would extricate the region from the whirlpool of wars, and signal the beginning of a new epoch in which peoples of the region would devote their efforts to achieve prosperity and development. A just peace necessitates that no Arab territories remain under Israeli occupation and that the Palestinian people must not remain deprived of their right to self-determination. If the objective, indeed, is for the peoples and states of the region to coexist and to enjoy security, peace, and prosperity, and to place their potential and abundant resources in the service of their economies and development, would it be feasible to achieve this aspired objective without the termination of the occupation and return of rights? The Arabs have offered much for the sake of peace. They have explicitly announced that they aspire for peace, asking only to enjoy the basic rights that the UN Charter guarantees to all peoples and which the international community and the world at large have acknowledged for any people. As for Israel, it alone of all world states insists on keeping the Arab territories that it occupied by force under the pretext of security, as if geographic expansion can guarantee security in the age of scientific and technological progress. If the world adopts this Israeli logic, how many wars and conflicts would erupt among neighbor countries under this pretext? ... The Syrian Arab delegation has come to this conference in spite of Syria's many reservations on its form and prerogatives to seek a just and honorable peace that comprehensively covers all the aspects and fronts of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Our delegation has come equipped with an inexhaustible reserve of goodwill

and a real and serious desire for a just peace, and with a determination to contribute in rendering the peace process a success and having it attain its noble objective. This is balanced by a determination to reject any exploitation of the current peace process to legalize what is not legitimate and what is unacceptable in the eyes of the United Nations, its charter, and its resolutions, or to achieve any gains, no matter how minimal, that will reflect the weight of the aggression or be a reward to the aggressor. This is Syria's firm stand based on the principles of international legitimacy and the UN resolutions. This stand mandates Israel's withdrawal from every inch of the occupied Syrian Golan, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and southern Lebanon. It also mandates securing the Palestinian people's legitimate national and political rights, foremost being their right to self-determination. The establishment of settlements in the occupied Arab territories is an illegal act and is considered null and void. It is a major obstacle on the road to peace. This dictates their elimination. The continued settlement activity in the occupied Arab territories after the peace process has started is tangible proof that Israel does not want to attain real peace.... Our eagerness to make the peace process succeed, however, requires that multilateral talks-which are not in the context of resolution 242-not begin except after gaining a substantial, concrete achievement in bilateral talks that confirms the removal of the major obstacles to peace. This is because Israel, as everyone knows, is not concerned with implementing resolutions 242 and 338 on the basis of land for peace, but is concerned only with engaging itself, along with the region's states, in negotiations on regional cooperation while continuing to consolidate its occupation of Arab territories. This contradicts the objective on whose basis this conference has been convened. Mr. President: We have come for a just and honorable peace that rests on right and international legitimacy, not for a fake peace that reflects the conditions of the aggressor and the weight of the occupation. We have come for a real peace that includes all the fronts of the Arab-Israeli conflict, not for a peace that deals with one aspect of the conflict and creates new conflicts and tensions in the region…..

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