

GEOPOLITICS OF SHATTERBELT REGIONS: A CASE STUDY OF SYRIA

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**GEOPOLITICS OF SHATTERBELT REGIONS: A CASE STUDY OF SYRIA**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Dedicated to My Parents... ..

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Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcast Commission
EMHRN	Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
FSA	Free Syrian army
GBV	Gender based violence
<i>GBVAoR</i>	Gender- based violence Area of Responsibility
HRC	Human right council
HRW	Human right watch
IASC	Inter-agency Standing committee
ICRP	International coalition for the responsibility to protect
ILO	International Labour organizations
MoPIC	Ministry of planning and International Corporation
NYT	New York Times
ROSC	Regional office for Syrian crisis
SNC	Syrian national council
SNHR	Syrian network for human rights
SOHR	Syrian Observatory for human right
TOI	Times of India
UN	United Nations
UCHA	United nation office for the coordination of Humanitarian affair
UN DESA	United nation Department of social and Economic Affair
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFPA	UN Population fund
UNGA	UN General assembly
UNHCR	UN High commissioner for refuges
UNOCHA	UN Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
USA	United States of America
VAM	Violence again Men

VAM	Violence against Women
WRC	Women refugee commission
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II
YPG	Yekineyen Parastina Gel/ Peoples Protection Units

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Syria is a relatively small country with many decades of history and astonishing culture. Its capital city, Damascus, is one of the world oldest urban cities and also continuously inhabited by people. It has been a key player in West Asia as it had been a crossroad where three continents Asia, Africa, and Europe meet and hence has a very strategic location. Due to its location, Syria had experienced a continuous movement of material, information and very often attacks from the different countries (Phillips 2011). Agriculture is the basis of the economy, however agriculture is dented by precarious rainfall, and moreover, only 10% of Syrian land receive rainfall other region fall into the belt of uncertain periodic rain making half of Syrian into the desert. As a result less grain and which makes life vulnerable especially in rural agrarian societies (Lust 2017)

In the recent years, Syria had seen a violent conflict where, as per UN data about 11 million got displaced, 2.5 billion people died and 1 million wounded out of 22 million prewar population of Syria. These displaced people are causing trouble to neighboring nations and also to the other parts of the globe, especially Europe (UNSAID 2017). This current situation could be analyzed by using the conceptual lenses of the shatterbelt region.

This study aims to apply the concept of shatterbelt region to examine the Syrian conflict from a geopolitical perspective and how this war impacted the politics of different countries in the world. The anti-government protests of the first decade of the 21st century in Syria have escalated into a civil war situation which is impacting many regions of the world. The proposed research seeks to make a geopolitical inquiry into this conflict, especially keeping in view the involvement of extraterritorial and regional powers directly or indirectly.

Regarding the research question, the study discusses the five important questions in its five different chapters. The most prominent question is regarding the concept of shatterbelt and how this concept helps in understanding the Syrian crisis. The other

questions are related to the great powers and their involvement in Syria internal affairs. This question also examines how the external involvement influenced the mechanism of the war. The next two questions delve with the impact of the war in the WANA region and world politics. The last question is about the women's of Syria. Since the beginning of the war, many reports from international organization revealed that various factions had committed sexual violence against women with the objective of intimidating the opposite side. Women were also sexually harassed by the government forces, which led to a series of forceful detention and confinement of women for sexual fulfillment. Also, women have faced violence in hands their relatives and during their journey from home to a safer place including the exploitation done by Aid workers. Hence this research gave a special mention of the condition of the Syrian women in the second last chapter along with the examples from the other parts of the world.

I.1 Conceptual Frames

I.1.1 Shatterbelt

A shatterbelt region is composed of a country or those countries, which are located strategically inside the zone of influence of great competing countries. Territories or state that has a substantial amount of linguistic, religious and diversity had a long history of conflict between different sects or groups of the region, that results either from great power competition or due to the fragmentation of more massive political state into smaller one are characterized as a shatterbelt region. Due to continuous wars and fights, these regions also experience economic hardship and political instability. Historically we see many shatterbelt regions emerged in various parts of the world. Even if we look at various nations in Western Europe, the modern states today are emerged out of wars and conflicts between competing states for establishing the kingdom, which led to chaos and human tragedy.

A prominent example of a shatterbelt region is the Balkan region in South –Eastern Europe. This region fits into the definition of shatterbelt for nearly 500 years as the dominant states had attempted numerous times to control its territory. There are many prominent examples of places or region which has emerged in the modern era as

shatterbelt zones. One such example is Poland which had been shatterbelt during WW II as geographically it is situated between Germany and Russia and had been sandwiched in competition between two, and the other regions are Southeast Asia and Sub Saharan Africa are also some example of shatterbelts (Plitz 2004).

However, out of various examples, the most severely shattered and long-running is conflicts in West Asia. Apart from its strategic location, its massive reservoir of petroleum and natural oil has acted as a magnet for a foreign power in this region. West Asia was not always fragile or shattered as it is now. During the reign of the Ottoman empire, it emerged as one of the unified empires in the world. But this scene does not last long as the unity was hampered by attacks from European countries or kingdoms. The end of WWI formally dissolved the Ottoman Empire. This dissolution of the Ottoman empire led to the European imperial rule in the region. The European ruler in West Asia after World War II, divided the region into spheres of influence and this categorization was followed by the Cold War, during which the United States and the USSR carved the region into zones of influence and (Cohen 2003).

In the WANA region, the movement known as Arab spring began in 2010 starting from Tunisia, as a peaceful protest against the autocratic government for democracy and better democracy. After the success in Tunisia, the waves spread to the other parts of West Asia including Syria. One of the unique features of the several movements in different countries of West Asia is the involvement of extra-regional or regional power which led to a further escalation in the conflict. Since the 2011 protest in Syria against Assad's regime everything has changed in the country, and now it is a hot spot of world politics, and its impacts were visible across the world through illegal migrants or refugee and terrorism, etc.

1.1.2 Conflict-related Migration

The phenomenon of migration is indeed not a new process; it has been in concomitant with human history, civilization, and culture. The concept of migration has been defined in various ways and forms. One of the conventional definitions of Migration is given by Shaw's (1975), "the relatively permanent movement of a person over a significant distance." IOM elucidated migration as a process of "moving, either across an interna-

tional border or within a State. Encompassing any movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants” (IOM, Glossary on Migration 2004).

Since the beginning of human life, people have migrated from the country- country internally or from one country to the other country internationally. In contemporary times modern transportation and communication system has made international migration as a new reality as places have become easily accessible to people. Also in today times increasing conflict, debilitating poverty, plagued inequality and their consequences such as low employment compels people to migrate in search of a better life and future (IFRC 2012).

Migration is twin-sided, one side is boon other is the curse. In this sense Menozzi (2015), discussed that if migration is supported by appropriate policies and programs can yield or contribute to the development and growth of both host places and places of residence. According to the World Bank in 2015 alone migrants sent remittance to their developing countries (home) approximated USD 436 billion. In the host countries, another hand, it provides the labor, creates job entrepreneurs and contributes to taxes. However, on the other sides, migrants are the most vulnerable member in the host communities especially women and children as they easily become victims of human rights violations, abuse and discrimination, heinous crime and human trafficking. Migration, however, leaves very slight opportunity for a decent living as these people are first to lose a job in an economic crisis, often works for long hours and paid a trivial amount and worse than national workers (International migration report 2015).

According to UN DESA, globally there are 232 million living in host countries other than their own home in 2013 (UN DESA, 2013). The international migration reached at the height of 244 million in the year 2015, which stood at an increase of 41% as compared to 2000 when the international migrants are about 173 million (UN international migration report 2015). This figure also includes refugees from 20 million globally (World migration report 2015). In term of geographical distribution nearly two-third people live in Europe alone about 76 million or in Asia that is about 75 million. North America is in third places which are hosting around 54 million migrants, which is

followed by Africa which host 21 million migrants. In the fourth places is Latin America which has total 9 million people as migrants followed by Oceania having 8 million migrants, stood at last position.

More than one million of migrants reached Europe resulted in political instability and crisis in 2015. Most of them are from West Asia primarily from Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya because of long-running civil war in Syria and rise of ISIS in Levant region, Israel-Palestine conflict, and civil war in Yemen and addition thousands of migrants are arriving from North Africa and Sahel region of Africa.

According to Chamie (2015), in the middle half of 20th century around one million people remain uprooted from their homes and in the latest report in 2014, the number of people rose to 20 million. In addition to this data, around 5 million refugees are registered in 60 camps in different countries of West Asia which is administered by UNRWA. There are also many sets of people living in uninhabitable places as they left their homes due to conflicts¹, the number of people reached a record height of 60 million in 2015 (Chamie 2015).

1.1.3 Humanitarian crisis

A Humanitarian crisis is defined as an event or activity that is dangerous to the human being regarding their health, safety, identity and other aspects of life. It may be a result of internal conflict, may be an external attack from other nation, or caused by natural disaster. Different factors and different actors caused it. Different types of humanitarian crisis are epidemics, natural disaster, armed conflict and refugee crisis. It is often also known as a humanitarian disaster (Kitchin and Thrift 2009). The number of displaced people reached levels that not seen since WW II (Who 2016). According to UN, the world now is facing the most dangerous humanitarian crisis that covers the whole WANA region due to the constant conflicts occurring in region involving many countries especially now Syria and Yemen (UN 2017).

¹ The number of people fled from their homes due to conflict and war reached in 2015 around 20% more than of 2013, first time since World War II that the total exceeded 50 million Chamie 2015).

The major humanitarian crisis can be grouped into three major categories one is a Natural disaster, second is a human-made disaster, and the third is complex emergencies

- 1) Natural disaster includes flood, earthquake, drought, storms and volcanic eruption.
- 2) Man – Made disaster includes conflicts, biological or industrial accident, war, and so forth
- 3) Complex emergencies occur when the cumulative effect of a series of events prevent a region of the community to access their primary need.

In West Asia and Africa especially, from Syria to South Sudan, more than 125 million people lives are devastated either by conflict or disaster that also impelled countless families to move deeper into the vicious cycle of poverty or starvation that pushed millions to migrate (UN HCR 2017). According to UN humanitarian organizations, due to the wars and disasters about 20 million people in Nigeria, Yemen, South Sudan and Somalia are at the threat of starvation and famine, and approximately 1.4 million children's are starved to death (UNICEF 2016).

Syria is experiencing now day worst humanitarian crisis since its crackdown over 1.9 million have died, and 11.6 million are forced to migrate due to violence. It was started as a peaceful protest but has descended into a horrifying and violent crisis which led to the loss of infrastructure, and political instability that left millions without food, water and healthcare and most of the innocent people are harmed. Since the beginning of the war, heinous crimes against people started. Both the Syrian government and extremist organization have killed and tortured innocent people through the use of prohibited indiscriminate weapons.

1.1.4 Refugee

Refugees are those individuals who come to other nations after crossing the international boundary in search of a better life. However, the cause of the migration must be political, not socio-economic (Black 2009). Geneva convention, which was related to status of refugees, defined the a refugee as a person who “ owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social

group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UNHCR 1951). Around 22.5 million out of 66.5 million which are forcefully displaced from their homes are refugees (UNHCR 2017). Religious, ethnic and tribal wars and violence resultant into humanitarian crisis are leading cause behind refugee move out from their countries. Refugees have a well-founded fear of oppression, human trafficking, and heinous crime as they belong to a different nationality, race, community, political opinion, religion.

Globally in 2016, 55 % of refugees are from three nations only South –Sudan, Afghanistan, and Syria. About 65.6 million people around the globe have left their home among them 22.5 million are refugees, and again 22.5 million are under the age of 18. There are about 10 million people who are stateless round the world, who have been denied access to the fundamental right, Citizenship and free movement and many other necessities (UNHCR2016). According to UNHCR, in a globe around 20 people are displaced as result of war, conflict or violence in every one minute (UNHCR 2016).

Geographically, WANA region alone hosts the world largest numbers of displaced people that is about 26% (UNHCR 2017). Data by UNHRC on migration in the year 2014 also indicates that West Asian countries hosted largest number of refugee. Out of them Jordan has the highest burden of around 2.8 million refugees; the State of Palestine, consisting of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is hosting 2 million, Turkey has 1.7 million refugees in 2014, followed by Lebanon which had provided shelter to 1.6 million and at last which Iran has sheltered around 1 million(World bank 2015). In the year 2016, thing became more complex due to Syrian war and burden of more refugees shifted from Jordan to Turkey. As in 2016, Turkey was hosting more than 1.9 million people alone which was followed by Pakistan with about 1.4 million people (UNHCR 2017)

In particular in Syria, according to Amnesty International, around 5000 people, mostly women, and children migrated from their home in Syria. Today four million of Syrian

people are refugee around them its five neighbors shelter 95 %, and with no hope of concluding of war, the numbers are increasing steadily. Turkey alone is sheltering highest numbers of a refugee from Syria about 1.6 million, Lebanon host 1.2 million, Jordan has about 0. 63 million refugees, Iraq has been providing a home to 0.25 million and Egypt Around 0.14 Million

I.2 West Asia and conflict

Geographically West Asia² is located to the south of Eastern Europe and the west of inner Asia. West Asia is composed of an Arab state, the southern Caucasus state, the Levant countries and other states. The Arab states are mainly Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates. The southern Caucasus state - Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The Levant state- Iraq and Syria Arab Republic, and other state are Gaza Strip, West Bank, Yemen Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Iran (FAO 2013).

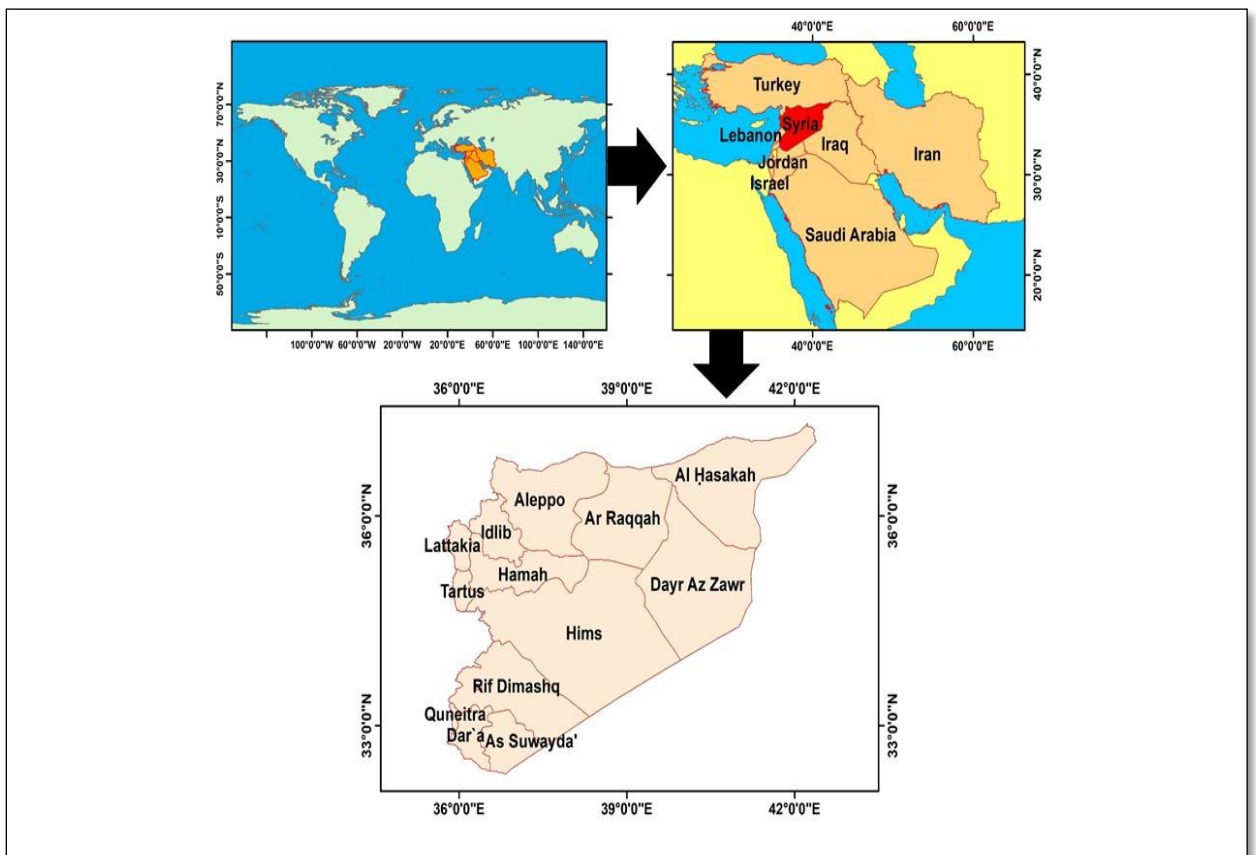
West Asia is divided from Europe by Caucasus Mountain, it is delimited from Africa through Isthmus of Suez, and the region is adjoined by central Asia in the east and the west it is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea. It has arid and semi-arid climate and experiences the frequent occurrence of drought. However Major Rivers such as the Tigris and Euphrates are the life-line of west Asia provides fertile land along with water for irrigation (UNEP 2001).

West Asia's strategic location fused with oil resource and other factor had converted it into the arena of armed conflict and rivalries that has severe impact on the people of West Asia and the other parts of the world also (UNEP 2016). Historically, West Asia has been highly shaped by power play and interference by the great power in this region. It is ruled by Ottoman Empire during 20th century later replaced by British after WWII. However, this Arab land is delimited into the different sphere of British and French influence

² West Asia is also known as cradle of civilization, has experienced ancient world's culture and civilization, which is comprised of two major river system Tigris- Euphrates and. These were also the site of world's earliest civilizations; this is where first time centralized political system and urban life aroused. These were also the birth place of many religions .At the beginning of 21st century.

through land mandate system under the Sykes-Picot agreement, and later these colonial powers machinations had converted region into numerous problematic nation- states.

Since the external powers created new Arab's nation-state, the regional people had little said in determining their boundaries according to cultural-linguistic-ethnic affiliations that finally created disagreement between nation and created conflict situation in West Asia. The repercussion of this conflict coupled with superpower intention for gaining control over region fueled cross-border tension, regional rivalries and security threats that are apparently still. Contemporary West Asian crisis transformed it into a fragile region, afflicted by interstate conflict, mounted with unsolved disputes both territorial and ethno-religious (Ahmadi et al. 2017)



MAP I.1

Map of the study area: Syria (Prepared by the researcher by using ArcGIS)

The current turmoil in West Asia is rooted in the Arab spring which germinated with popular discontent and unrest began in Dec 2010 in Tunisia. Which spread rapidly in the North Africa, Gulf nation and then Levant region especially Syria against the debilitating authoritarian government, slow economy and persistent lack of political freedom. Ozcan (2016) explains that the aftermath of this widespread turmoil and spiraling internal violence in Levant region along with the involvement of external power have led to the generation of the political and social uncertainty in the whole region. The political instability in led to the rise of religious extremism and related terrorism (such as ISIS, Al- Nusra, Al Qaeda, and Salafists) in Levant region and involvement of jihadi fighters in Syrian war(Ozcan 2016). These events are impacting international affairs and also led to huge migration and humanitarian loss. The Syrian crisis alone has caused a more humanitarian catastrophe that not happened since WWII (BBC 2017).

I.3 Area of study: Syria

Syria is one of the most ancient civilizations on earth (Phillips 2004) and also once has been one the most influential center of Islamic caliphates (Jones 2009) but now it becomes the world's most dangerous country in 2014 (BBC 2017). Syria was ruled by France, following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, until 1946 when it gained independence. Formally, Syria was known as the Syrian Arab Republic, and in Arabic, it is known as Al Jumhuriyah al Arabiya as Suriyah.

I.3.1 Geographical background

Syria is a part of the Fertile Crescent region and has an area of 185,189 square km including 1,295 sq. Km of Golan height region occupied by Israel. It lies between 30 to 35 degrees north latitude (Capek 2015). It is a landlocked county located in the north part of West Asia especially between Iraq and Turkey. Turkey borders it in the north, Iraq in the east, Lebanon to the west and its south-west is Israel, finally in South Jordan (C.I.A World Factbook 2011).

Syria has a land boundary of total 2253 km, and it shares most of its border with Turkey about 822km, with Iraq about 605km, Jordan (375km), Lebanon (375km) and with Israel

about 76km (Federal research division 2005). Apart from this it has a short Mediterranean border of roughly about 193km extend between Turkey and Lebanon (Jones 2009)



Map I.2

Map of Syria with its neighbor (Prepared by the researcher by using ArcGIS)

Syrian topography is divided into three parts that are mountains in the west, narrow coastal plain and semi-arid and arid plateau. The Euphrates River is the lifeline of Syria as it along with its tributaries has created a fertile alluvial plain. This plain has a superior quality soil. Apart from the Euphrates, the Orontes is the second largest rivers which have an origin in the Anti Lebanon mountains range (Federal Research Division 2002).

Topography of Syria

A major part of Syria is semi-arid occupied with desert plateaus. This portion is traversed by many rivers and also contains numerous mountains ranges. The countries two important ranges Jabal a Nusayriyah and the Anti Lebanon range play an important role

in modifying climate. These two ranges prevent much of Mediterranean winds bearing rain droplet reaching into the central part of Syria. As a result, inner Syria is arid having hot climate and coastal region having a Mediterranean climate. Here the Hawran and Al Jazeera are the two important agricultural areas (Federal Research Division 2002).

Geographically Syria is a part of Fertile Crescent, which is an arc shape that runs from the cultivated region which covers the area from Jazira Plain and Euphrates river basin passing through northern Syria and south across the coastal plain region, due to this arc shape this region is known as the Fertile Crescent³. Before the onset of civil war, Syrian population was concentrated in a few cities inside Fertile Crescent, mostly are in coastal plain, Aleppo and Damascus, and the Jazira (Federal research division 2005).

Topographically, Syria is divided into four major regions. One of them is the *Syrian Eastern Desert*; it covers most of Syrian eastern part and extends till Iraq and Jordan. This region is rocky, dry and barren although some scattered patches of scrub along with few occasional Oases (Terri Dougherty, 2004, discussed in by technological integration division 2011). Only a few flocks of nomadic tribal pastoralist, Bedouins, live here. In southwestern portion desert are few low elevated mountain ranges which extend to North West and a small portion of the lava field, Hawran, consist of some patch of fertile soil is south-west near the Jabal-al-Arab range and the Syrian- Jordanian border. Further south-west consists the Golan height, the contested region between Israel and Syria. The south-west portion of Syrian contains two important cities, the Suwayda and the Dara'a that became the epicenter of early anti-government protest in 2011.

The immediate West of Syria is occupied by *Coastal Plain* that runs from Lebanon in the south to Turkey in the north bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Due to the Mediterranean climate and fertile soil this region is the site for intensive agricultural developments and thus is high populated. The third topographical feature is *mountains* of Syria, The Jabal a

³ Fertile Crescent is the area of arable land surrounded by desert inhospitable unproductive land that extends from Nile valley to Iraq.

Nusayriyah and Anti-Lebanon range are major mountain ranges⁴ in Syria. The most imperative one is Jabal an Nusayriyah mountain range ran parallel to the coasts and located near the coastal plain. The height of the highest point of the range is 1,524 m which lie at the northern side of the range. One of the unique features of the range is a population of numerous castles and fortresses built either by Arab or Crusaders.

The Anti-Lebanon Range⁵, run northeast-southwest near Lebanon in Syria forms the boundary between Lebanon and Syria. The Mt. Hermon⁶ (2,814 m) is located on the southern end of this range. The average height of range is 2,000m. Sometimes in winter, these mountains get covered with snow (Federal Research Division 2002). This mountain range is separated from Jabal an Nusayriyah range through a gap known as Homs gap, which is a traditional trade route.

The Syrian part which lies on the western side of the mountain and near to the Mediterranean Sea experiences the Mediterranean climate. Hence, the climatic condition is mild and moderate. The country has enough precipitation but it varies with season and topography. It experiences drier summer and coastal region also experience slighter warmer temperature (Phillips 2014). Winters, however, relative to summer are much mild and moist. The main inland region has the arid desert condition which resultant into scanty vegetation with the parched land. The range in temperature inland is much wider than along the coast.

1.3.2 Administrative division in Syria

According to UNOCHA, Syria is divided into four layers or level of administration. The first level of administration is Governorate that is locally known as Mohafaza, the second level of administration is District or Mantika, the third level is sub-district or Nahya, and finally, the last level of administration is Populated places which are also known as

⁴ Additional ranges apart from above two are Jabal al Arab range, The Jabal Abu Rujmayn, the Jabal Bishriare and the Jabal al Ruwaq. Jabal al Arab is also famous as the Jabal Druze, is located near Jordanian border and is home to religious people Druze. The Jabal Abu Rujmayn, the Jabal Bishriare and the Jabal al Ruwaq have low elevation than other ranges and these extends from north east throughout the central plateau till southern desert (Federal Research Division 2002).

⁵ Why Anti-Lebanon mountain because geographically it lies opposite to the Lebanon mountain range.

⁶ The Anti-Lebanon Range, from the side of Mt. Hermon descends into Golan height region.

fourteen governorates, and these governorates are further divided into sixty- five districts. The lowest level of administration is sub-districts inside a district. In Syria, the number sub-district is 234. Each governorate has a capital named after governorates it, but there are a few exceptions such as Rif Dimashq and Markaz Rif Dimashq governorates have capital named differently. A similar pattern follows to districts and sub-district with some exceptions (Central Bureau of Statistics of Syria 2007). The major cities of Syria are serving as battlegrounds between different factions combating and operating within and outside Syria (Grunewald 2013).

Syrian people are mostly rural as from many centuries they are settled in rural areas of Syria. Many new cities emerged in Syria later such Latakia, Tadmur, Damascus, and Alep, with a slow rate of urbanization, had been traditionally influenced by Roman culture, Greeks and Islamic Empires. These particular cities also served the work of trade Centre for many centuries. Past few decades had experienced rapid urbanization which divided the population clearly into rural and urban. Most of these urban center or cities are located in the Fertile Crescent region. Unlike Fertile Crescent, the desert steppe is the minimum populated region with few severely scattered clusters Bedouins and Oasis dwellers.

The major cities of Syria are Damascus (*Dimashq*), Aleppo (*Halab*), Homs (*Hims*), Hama (*Hamah*) and Latakia (*Al- Ladhaiquiyah*) depict how Syria culture and tradition flourished or expanded and how these cities are ruined during the past seven years of conflict.

Damascus, the capital of Syria, has been Syria's center for governance, commerce, and culture. This city is one of the ancient Arab cities in the world. For a long time, it had served the purpose of intercontinental crossroad facilitating trade and exchanges within different continents (Terry et al. 2004). It is located in al- ghutah, an irrigated Oasis. It is one of the highly populated cities in Syria, as the core city has a population of around 1.7 million people and the greater metropolitan part had around 2.7 million estimated

populations. According to Holy (2008), its headquarters of a few internationally recognized terrorist outfits⁷ including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

Aleppo, situated near Turkey on the northwest side of Syria, is the capital of Aleppo province of Syria, one of the oldest cities of Syria and ancient trade Centre. Before the beginning of the conflict, it was the highly populated city (Beauchamp and Ellis 2016). Economically it was the largest economic hub of the country. It is bounded by the metropolis, and this metropolis has a central district known as New city. Being the ancient city its most surprising feature was its largest citadel erected on elevated mountains (Terry et al. 2004) which was now damaged due to ongoing war (BBC 2016). It had been one of the most remarkable battleground between the nation's government and various rebel groups (Beauchamp and Ellis 2016).

Raqqa is capital of Raqqa province of Syria; it was unknown to the world until the outbreak of Syrian war. It became the first city to be seized by rebel and later by ISIS in March 2013 (Brown 2017). However, it was liberated from ISIS by Kurdish dominated Syrian democratic Forces. During the early phase of Civil, it was under the control of a mixed bunch of militia, some moderate rebels as well as Islamist and jihadists. However, the story became more brutal when Islamic State routed the other and took control over it, that led to the brutal regime in Raqqa (Brown 2017).

Homs has been a crucial battlefield in the uprising against the Assad regime. It was used to be the third largest city in Syria with approximately 800,000 residents before the war. Sometimes it was called as "capital of the revolution" when natives stood together to the overthrown government (BBC 2015, 9 Dec). During periods of early protest it fell into the hand of a rebel as they capture it and after a long siege, the regime has regained its full control in late 2015(BBC 2017, 22 Dec). According to Azzouz (2017), more than 50% of the neighborhood had been destructed, and 22% is partially damaged, which affected badly to the leftover people. Earlier this city was known for its rich history, multicultural communities and historical architecture which is known as Ablaq architecture. The Ablaq architecture is specifically known for its brickwork that involves

⁷ These organisation are not accepted or recognised as terrorist outfits by Syrian government (Holy 2008)

the alternative arrangement of light and dark rows. Due to this reason, Homs is also known as the city of “Black and white stones.

Kobane and **Latakia** are other cities that are massively involved in the wars and hence termed as the high profile battlegrounds. Kobane, a town composed of Kurds near Turkey, was besieged by ISIS in 2014, which was recaptured by Kurdish militia with the help of US-led air strikes in early 2015. Since then, the ISIS has launched numerous series of attacks against Kurdish militia’s especially near the Turkish border and also attacked the Kurds living other places such as Kurds of Kobane (BBC 2015, 10 July).

1.3.3 Society and People of Syria

The Syrian conflict is very complex due to a high diversity of ethnic and religious groups living in Syria and rivalry among them changing the course of the war. This recent protest has led to the religious and ethnic polarity as different factions formed either different groups or they joined different factions. This anti-government protest is maintained or supported by the Sunni Muslim population⁸ (BBC, Dec 9, 2011). According to Hurd (2013), UN commission of inquiry report in Dec 2012, shows that during the second year the battle in Syria, the war is converted into overtly sectarian.

The crux of conflict revolves along the sectarian difference and identity⁹ crisis along with government indifference toward people. The clash is battled amid Sunni majority, which is polarized with the Syrian opposition and their Arabian supporter against the Alawite government and its allies mostly Shia, and their regional supporter (Potter 2014). And this war also reached to various minorities, and ethnicities of Syria including Kurds, Palestinians, Druze, Christians, Armenian, etc. (Sengupta 2012), dividing them along the fault line of Shia and Sunni war as most of the ethnicities are aligned either toward Shias or Sunnis. Apart from these two, other alliances of the Secular Syrian people (composed of up all religious groups) also emerged which are fighting against Islamic opposition (Clark 2015). The telegenic sectarian narratives, over the Syrian conflict, explains that

⁸ However, after reading extensively on Syrian war, it is evident that there are a few percent Shias who are supporting the war and a few percent of Sunnis, who are against the war.

⁹ Identity of different sect and ethnic people in Syria

war is mainly is an extension of the broader Shia –Sunni struggle for dominance in West Asia (Corstange and York 2016).

Ethnicity and Religion

Religiously, Syria is dominantly populated by Islam as about 85% people in Syria follow some form of Islam. Most of them are Sunni, and other natives are Shias. The highest number of people in Shia belong to the Alawite sect that is about 13 -15 % of the total Syrian population. About 3 % are Druzes, and more than 10% observe some form of Christianity.

Syria has a heterogeneous community with sixty-percent to 75 % Sunni, are the highest population in Syria (Holliday 2011) and the remaining population composed of Sunni, Druze, Christians (BBC 2011)¹⁰.

Sunnis are the majority Arab population and biggest religious sect making around 70 - 75% population (BBC 2011, 9 Dec and Kannike 2015). It is the largest and widespread religious sect in the world, supported mainly by Saudi Arabia. In the Syrian conflict, Sunni is the largest supporter of the rebel group against the government (Kannike 2015). *Kurds*, are the largest ethnic minority in Syria composed of more than 9 % to 15% Syrian population (Holliday 2011 and BBC 2011, 9 Dec). Mostly live in North and Northeastern part of Syria, mainly located in Hasaka and Qamishli town of Syria near Turkey border. Most of Kurds are also from Sunni ethnicity but mostly are Secular and fully recognizes the right of women's (Kannike 2015).

Since the change of Syrian nationality law of the 1960s, Kurds considered themselves as a victim of discrimination and deprived of necessities and rights (BBC 2011, 9 Dec). The Syrian Kurdish National Council formed in Oct 2011 represents the Syrian Kurds which is comprised of ten parties and Kurds are also divided in term of backing opposition, and some even appear to be supporting the regime (BBC 2011, 9 Dec).

¹⁰ Syria's official census do not covers religious and ethnic census (BBC 2011), so it is difficult to present accurate data. Multiple sources have different data on Syria's demographic population

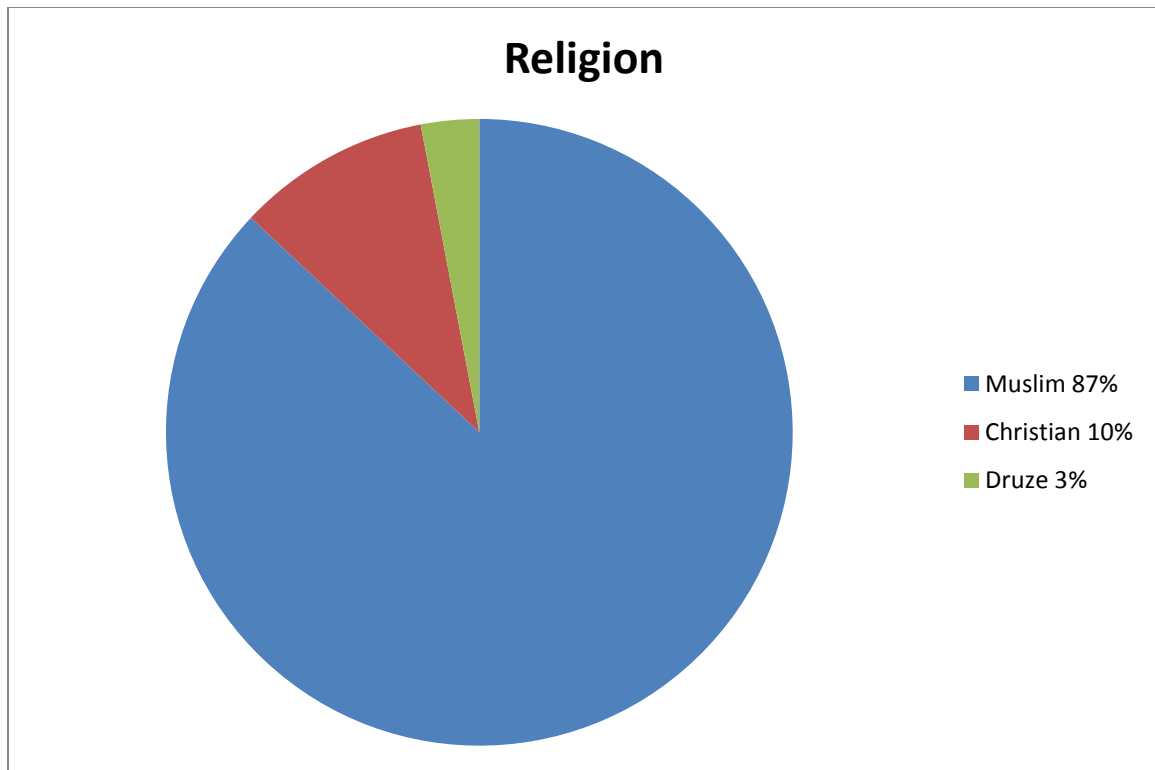


Figure I.1

Figure: Religious composition in Syria (Prepared by the scholar)

Sources: CIA World Factbook 2018

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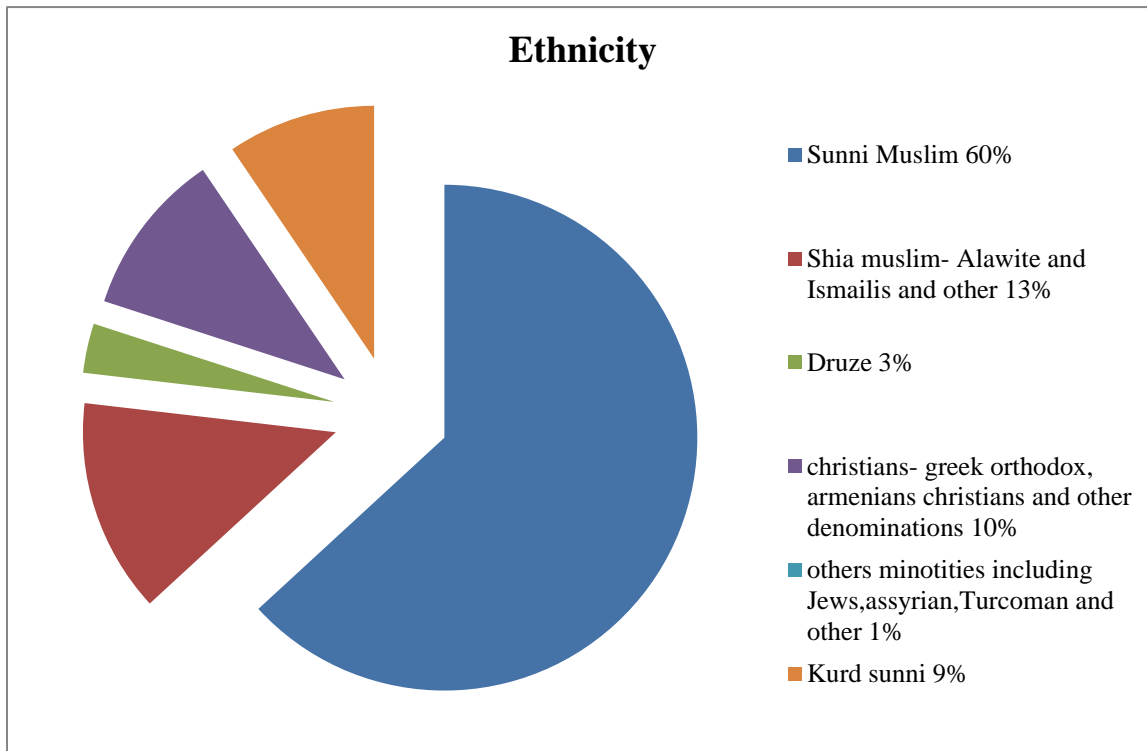


Figure I.2

Figure: Ethnic and religious demographics of Syria (Prepared by the scholar)

Source: International Religious Freedom Report 2006 and Joseph Holliday 2011¹¹.

Unlike other people, Christians are known for their great degree of religious tolerance toward other religion, and sometimes they also occupy the highest position in government. *Druze* is a second largest sect of Shia Islam after Alawite mainly concentrated in Suweida region of southern Syria and near rugged Jabal al Arab (U.S state department 2016). Druze made up around 3 % of the Syrian population that is 0.5 to 0.7 million in southern Syrian alone (BBC 2011, 9 Dec). Principally the Druze are unique in their religion as they also had adopted the many aspects of other religion into their

². The figure composed data from different source including International religious freedom report, Guide: Syria's diverse minorities; and the struggle for Syria in 2011 by Joseph Holliday 2011.

faiths and hence often they are not considered as Muslim by another sect of Muslim at all (Minin 2017). They predominantly opposed the govt from the beginning and hence they are jailed for not participating in the reelection of Assad. In summer 2015 many Druze were prosecuted by Jabhat al Nusra when they refused to convert their religion and destructed their shrines; apart from them, ISIS had gone to the violent annihilation of the Druze (Kannike 2015). *Ismailis* another hand, are Offshoot of Shia who recognizes Aga Khan as their spiritual leaders. In Syria, Ismailis are around 0.2 million, and they are concentrated mainly in the city of Salamia (BBC 2011, 9 Dec).

Language

Arabic is the mother tongue and official language of Syria. About 90 % of people speak it (CIA Factbook). Apart from Arabic, in the Kurdish area, these people speak the Kurdish language. In many regions particularly in the urban area, many speak English. Other than languages mentioned above the French are the second language most of the elites and educated people. Many Turks and Armenian people speak their native language, and also some ethnic groups also speak Aramaic (CIA Factbook 2016).

Population

Population in Syria has shown a negative growth rate in 2016 due to the ongoing crisis. In 2012, the population of Syria was as estimated at 22,530,746. However, this number was dropped in 2013 suddenly 22,457,336. In 2017, further declines have led to an estimated population of 18.27 million. Population growth, annual in %, of Syria, was reported at negative -1.6388 % in 2016 (World Bank 2017)

1.3.4 Economy of Syria

Agriculture and Petroleum are twin vital element that provides the foundation for Syrian economy especially before the outbreak of conflict. These two elements make up half of Syrian GDP (Hinnebusch 2017). Syria also had deposits of natural resources such as phosphates, iron ore, chrome, gypsum, hydropower and many other. Historically Syria was once a crossroad between Asia, Africa, and Europe; this fortunate location had

helped early Syrian in getting best Knowledge, trade and emerging technologies that had been helpful in the prospering economy (Phillips 2004).

Agriculture is more vital to Syrian's economy. However, lack of water had always afflicted agriculture along with drought and misstep by past governments. Syria produces a large variety of produces with two major grains wheat and barley. Approximately a quarter of Syria's territory (24.8%) is arable land (CIA Factbook 2017). About 42 percent of country's entire labor is engaged in agriculture. Since 1970s agriculture was replaced by petroleum and Syria also produces natural gas, but quantity is far lower than its neighbours. Amid the ongoing War that began in 2011, the Syrian economy continued to worsen and declined to almost 70 % between 2010 -2017 as the government struggled to deal with international sanctions, deteriorating domestic production and consumptions, huge infrastructure damage and many other things (CIA World Factbook 2017).

I.4 Research Methodology

This research has depended on the use of historical and analytical methods to examine the question of the shatterbelt region and the Syrian crisis. The use of the historical method is important in explaining ongoing Syrian war like the past events of Syria played a critical role in the origin of the war. For understanding the causes of the Syrian war, it is imperative to look back into the events that happened in Syria since the World War I and the era of Hafez al Assad. While inferring the conclusion form the study, the analytical method helps in giving a proper understanding of the research work.

The major primary sources of information will include the UNDP reports, UN reports, government reports, press-releases of Syria and its neighboring countries or other countries of West Asia and other Eurasian countries, World Bank reports, UNHCR reports, CIA factbook among others.

The secondary sources of information taken from the articles, books, newspaper, journals, and a research paper from various eminent think tanks and institutes. Other major secondary sources are the documents and research paper related to West Asia.

This study also includes maps prepared by the researcher by using GIS and remote

sensing technology to show and depict the conflict region and politics in the region

I.5 Rationale, Scope, and Objective of the study

The Syrian crisis is not just the result of internal discontent of people against the government instead it is a cumulative war which involves both a regional power and extra-regional powers along with its neighbors. As Farmanfarmaian said this is one of deadliest war of the 21st century as it led million to get displaced, millions are wounded, and many died (Stamm and Harness 2016; Farmanfarmaian 2012). This conflict war has many repercussions which are now impacting the whole world along west Asia and Syria. Thus this research tries to study causes, magnitude, and consequence of conflict through the concept of shatterbelt region. As there are only some emerging literature and some newspaper repository and no sustained academic work which studies the contemporary Syrian crisis through shatterbelt lenses as this crisis is impacting Syria specifically and West Asia in general.

The research will cover the time frame from the beginning of protest against the Assad regime till 2017. As the Syrian war is still going on and each day new changes occur in Syrian, so it is difficult to incorporate everything going into space. For understanding the causes of war this study moves beyond the Assad Era to the formation of Syria during the Worlds War. Temporally the study also deals with its independence, the Hafez al Assad regime and at the end of the era of Bashar al Assad.

Geographically this study looks into West Asia in general, especially the Levant region and with more focus on Syria. However, chapter IV and V of the study also take into consideration the other parts of the world especially Europe.

I.6 Chapter Outline

The dissertation consists of six chapters. The introductory chapter gives a synoptic representation on the major concept, issues and ideas discussed in work. This includes discussion on shatterbelt and geopolitics and also discusses the background on Syrian

crisis including research problem and hypothesis of the study. The second chapter titled Shatterbelt region: a conceptual framework discusses shatterbelt region and gives insight on various shatterbelts that the world has experienced. It will also study how shatterbelts region in history have affected world politics and what role shatterbelt regions are playing in contemporary time. Hence it deals with the first hypothesis which is about the concept of shatterbelt region Concept of Shatterbelt region explains the contemporary conflict in Syria.

The third chapter gives insights into Syria, in general, its history, polity, economy, and society. It studies the origin of the Syrian conflict, its history, and causes. The chapter begins with the discussion on Syria in brief about its history and culture. The chapter focusses on the causes of war, which are embedded in the historical roots (the Assad family rule and atrocities), the formation of Syria as a result of the Sykes-Picot agreement, ethnosectarian issues and environmental problems. The latter part of the chapter provides the extensive discussion on the ongoing war in line with the characteristics of the shatterbelt. This section deals with the second part of the first hypothesis that is about the explanation of the Syrian conflict through the shatterbelt concept.

The fourth chapter, titled impact of Syrian crisis: home and abroad is based on the two major research questions which are concentrated on the impact of the Syrian war. These are first “what is the impact of the Syrian conflict on the WANA region?” and secondly “What is the impact of the Syrian conflict in world politics?”. This ongoing war has impacted every aspect of life from social to economic to political and education. Hence the chapter discusses the impact of the Syrian conflict on the West Asian region, especially on the neighbouring nations of Syria and the Levant region. The impact of war is not limited to Syria and WANA region only, and it has also reached to the other parts of the world as it has a huge impact on world politics especially the political affairs of EU. Therefore this chapter also explains how the Syrian crisis had impacted the world politics, especially the politics of Europe. It also gives insights on the contemporary refugee crisis and its impact. The chapter also contains a brief section on the sexual violence experienced by men during the Syrian war against women. However, the GBV related to women is written in a separate chapter that is the fifth chapter.

The Syrian crisis has highly impacted the lives of Syrian women. Due to the war, gender-based violence has increased especially in Syria done by both Assad regime forces and also by rebel groups. Even outside the Syria, women, migrants are the highest sufferer of sexual violence. The fifth chapter deals with the last hypothesis related to women where it involves the discussion on the impact of the crisis on gender especially women in Syrian migrants in both shatterbelt regions and around the globe. The final chapter sums up the study and tries to represent significant and relevant inferences.

CHAPTER II

Shatterbelt Region: A Conceptual Framework

This chapter is dedicated to the comprehensive discussion on the geopolitics of shatterbelt region and creation of the West Asian shatterbelt. The first part of the chapter contains a discussion of the concepts of ‘geopolitical structure’ and ‘shatterbelt’. It also includes a brief study on geopolitics of modern state system and change in the scope of the geopolitics. The second part of the chapter is dedicated on the West Asia and how it is converted into the shatterbelt.

II.1 Introduction

The chronology of world history depicts that human development begins with hunting and gathering and continued with adoption of farming and settlement, this how civilization advanced. Which in later displays the contact between the different culture and societies that led to the exchange of ideas, knowledge, technology, and religions (Pointing 2000). World history is characterized by both “order and disorder” created by humans themselves and also illustrated by turbulence, conflict, continuous movement and anonymous unpredictability. These two features ‘Order and disorder’ had impacted world politics as in today also everything is volatile or tensed ranging from culture to economy to society and politics. The orders are the hierarchical structure such as developed to underdeveloped, global north-south and organizations developed by mankind to help human and disorder are dysfunctional structure emerged in the history of the world like war, regional conflict or civil strife.

Human history is made by humans and struggle between them over territories has been playing an eminent role in the making of the human history. It is visible when we look into the historical changes occurred from the ancient to the modern period, especially medieval time which shows that historical changes over time had contributed immensely to the transformation of political life.

II.2 Geopolitics and modern state system: struggles, resources, wars and territorial gains

Modern state system emerged from the amalgamation of social, cultural and economic elements and the transformation into modern state from its evolution to present have been complicated affairs. This development is the result of the numerous struggles occurred from ancient to contemporary times. The struggles that led to the change in the early phase of this system were the struggles between state and society; between Monarch and baron over administration; peasant uprising or mutiny against the excess taxation and flourishing of trade, commerce, and market relations. In the medieval period, the struggles were visible in the Renaissance culture and renewed political ideas; centralization of monarchies especially in Europe; a challenge to church and religious unrest and many other factors played a critical role in the erection of the concept of the state. From the 16th century onward the concept of the modern state became the pivotal device of the political mechanism (Held 1989).

Apart from the above circumstances, many other natural factors played a significant role in changed the course of political system such as resources, climate, rivers, and landform. Terrain and boundary had profound character as they always played an imperative part in political – social development of state and affecting political behaviour and consequently conditioning the international relation. Resource, have had prominent command over relations between states as seen in the era of the slave trade, later during the colonialism and imperialism period. All of these phases of the world history are founded on resource and their endowment. Krugman (1991), has stated that resource and it control had greatly impacted trade relations and access to water routes had been a major determinant of economic development and relation. Even ascent of industrialization had led to the contest for raw materials (Bakeless, 1921 discussed in Acemoglu et al. 2011).

Many wars or conflict in West Asia fought in the 20th century are related to resources such as the six-day war (1967), the Algerian war of independence (1954–1962) (Westing, 1986 discussed in Acemoglu et al. 2011) and in this line the Chaco war in South America (1932–1935) also resulted of extensive avarice of oil between Paraguay and Bolivia

(Acemoglu et al. 2011). The geopolitical inquiry has been dealing with resource war and its impact on international arena since it was advent in the 19th century¹.

Devetak et al. (2012), explains that geopolitics deals with the study of the impact of geographical factor or element politics and eventually on the world politics. However, the concept of geopolitics was given by Kjellen in 1899, in which he assumed that it was the theory of the state that originates in geographical space. The scope of geopolitics changes with understanding the different development happens spatially that eventually changes its perspective also. At the nascent stages it was related with the state politics, as defined by Haushofer as science of state and its politics. However the incident of world wars conclusion of Cold War caused the bigger change in the syllabus of geopolitics as it started looking into the daily cross-border conflict, preventing the flow of unwanted weaponry and armed personnel, assertive ownership over land resource (Agnew 2011) and the study of warmongering (Dodds 2005).

II.3 Geopolitics and Change in the scope of geopolitics

The scenario of geopolitics changed after the 9/11 terrorist attack as it reveals the weakness of world powers. This event triggered the geopolitical shift that marked the war against terrorism and deeper penetration into affairs of West Asia that ultimately affected the balance of power and relation among nation (Cohen 2003). This led to an international situation of chaos as seen in West Asia, resultant into the most shattered region of the 21st century and that also shows the interest of powerful external players contributed to conflict on internal politics of conflicted region (Agnew 2011).

The individuals that are involved in the expression of early geopolitics as a discipline such as Kjellen, Haushofer, and Bowman had influenced world politics through their theories. These theories are regarding the geopolitical ordering of region that sought to have influenced both international and regional politics of the contemporary world. Efferink (2014) defines this discourse as a medley of world regional geography, political geography, and foreign relation.

¹ Geopolitical inquiry came in 19th century in order to highlight the geo-political transformation happening on land at that time. Especially to highlight those changes which were related with resources.

The whole world is divided into many spatial levels such as “global north and global south,” Developed, developing and underdeveloped, and these division are a consequence of intermixing of geography and politics of the global world. S.B. Cohen had given one such division in his regional model where he described it as a geopolitical structure. Cohen wrote that the geopolitical structure is the result of interaction between the geographical and political forces and processes which occurs due to the interaction of geopolitical factors that enforces the changes taking place within the geopolitical structure (Cohen 2003). Apart from geopolitical factors, these structures are composed of two dimensions one is spatial and other is power relation (Hafeznia 2012). However there are some exceptions which are situated outside of ordering of geopolitical structure which is not located within a structural framework, one of them is shatterbelt and other are compression zone, gateways, etc. (Cohen 2003).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the world had experienced the two major events one is WWI and WWII, and the other was the change in the relationships between the countries. During the course, both wars the interrelationship among nations of the world changed that eventually led to insecurity in the whole world, chaos, the conflict between states over resources, competition between major player for world domination, the appearance of a new player in the international arena. Apart from this event, there are some regions where disheartened masses were being struggled for their identity or independence that led to the increase in unwanted activity such as terrorism and extremism.

All these happenings are complementary to each other, and significantly affected the discourses of the world politics especially during the Cold war. These entire events consequently created a hierarchical world order of power, an international geopolitical system, consisting of major or regional powers. The first order consists of major power, with their geopolitical reach beyond their region, some major power as stated by Cohen are United States, China, the European Union, Russia, and Japan are major powers. Second order consists of regional powers, with the capacity to influence their region and consistently to compete with other regional powers. Many times the regional powers had impacted the regional politics when they got opportunities coupled with their ambitions either through military or by economic finlandization. Those states that had influenced

their neighbours through idiosyncratic ideologies or cultural capacities are third stage order such as Ukraine, North Korea, and Cuba. At last, there are few states that are insufficient to influence other, and also some are on other for survival is Fourth and fifth order respectively (Cohen 2003).

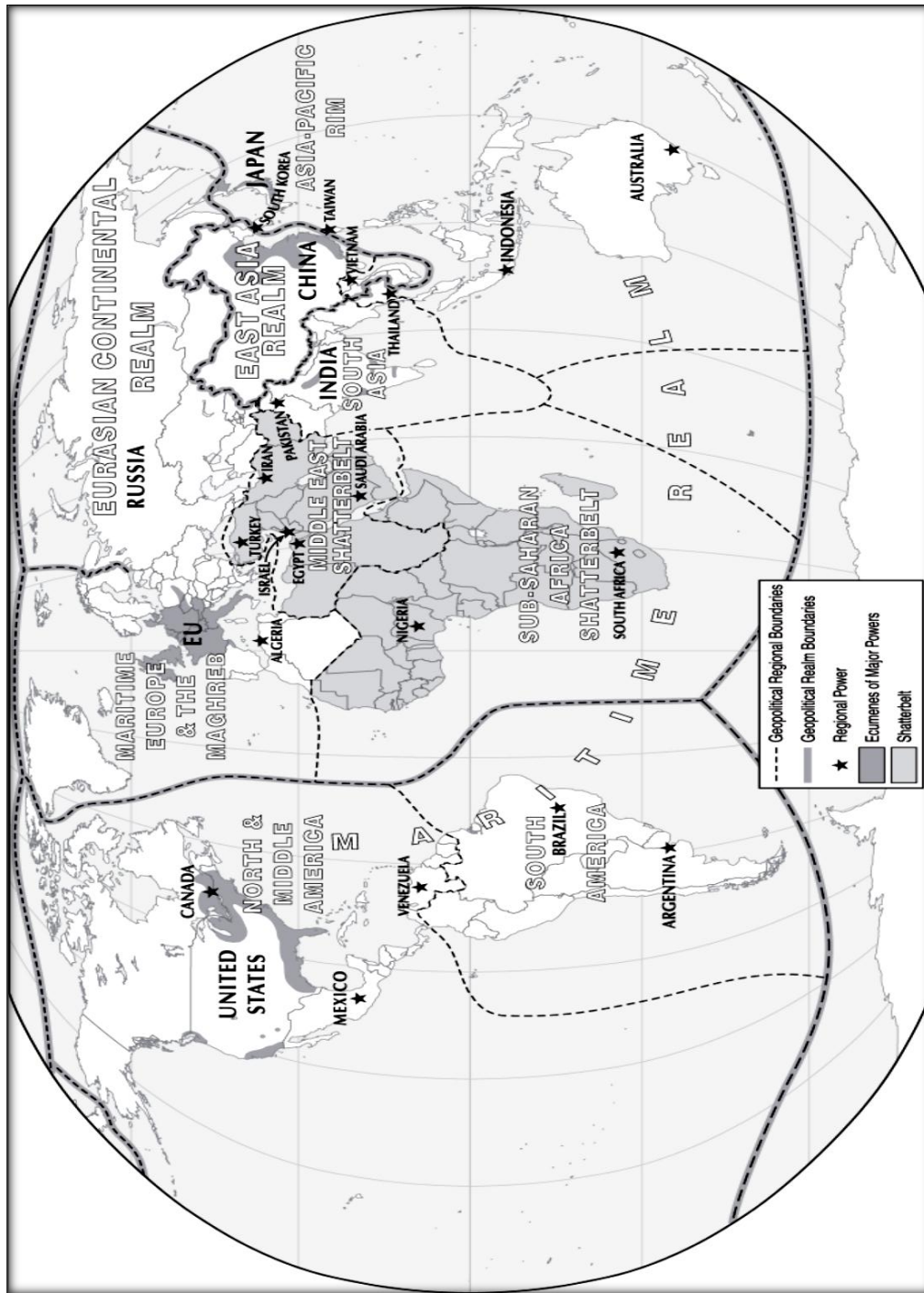
Many of power lost their significance either due to their internal conflict or loss to the other powers. However, events mentioned above and these power structure has significantly impacted all dimension: economic, social, political, security and identity in many countries (Hafeznia 2010) and had subsequently created geopolitical structure and structure that is result interconnection and the relation of politics to geographical space are geopolitical structure.

II.3.1 Geopolitical Structure

Geopolitical structure, as explained by Hafeznia (2010), is a concept, composed of both spatial and power relation that explains the power relation between great powers in a political system on geographical space which shows the system of domination, control, penetration, influence and it also contains the aspects of power system, power levels and the relation between countries. From above viewpoint in the world, multiple structures exist both at the regional, a local and global scale such as Bi-Power, Multipower, superpowers, etc. Similarly, Cohen explains in his regional model the geopolitical structure of the world

The geopolitical structure, as given by Cohen, for the most parts of world, is classified into hierarchical spatial levels, in his book named *The geography and World dividend* in 1973. In this, he discussed three major levels, as following

1. The geostrategic realm – the macro level
2. The geopolitical realm – a a division of macro-level into meso or middle level
3. National states, quasi-states autonomous region, and or subdivision territorial within the micro level. (Cohen 1973).



MAP II.1

Map: The Geopolitical World: Beginning of the Twenty-First Century

Source: S. B.Cohen - *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations* (pg.45)

Beyond these orders, there is some region consist of the groups of states that are not included or located within above-discussed realm or framework. These zones are defined according to the regional characteristics they emit. These are the shatterbelt zone, compression zone, convergence zones and the gateways (Cohen 2003). The Cohen defines the shetterbelts as the regions whose, “internal fragmentations are intensified by competing for major powers” (Cohen 2003), and they depict the symptoms such as chaos, military aggression, international terrorism, insecurity, regional disputes, competition among powers, local ethical and national identity crisis. The other region is compression zones which are defined as “severely fractured by own internal divisions and also by the interference of neighbours.” The third zones are described as the convergence zone which is caught between different realms and whose ultimate status is yet to be determined At last are Gateways², act as a link between realms, regions or state. Gateway states are those which play a “novel role in linking different parts of the world by facilitating the exchange of peoples, goods, and ideas” (Cohen 2003, 37:54).

Cohen, identified two major geostrategic realms, each dominated by some major powers, the first one is the Trade-dependent Maritime world and the second one is the Eurasian continental world. The core of the first realms is the maritime ring of US with the US as the major power in the region and the core of the second realm is the Russian industrial triangle with Russia as the nodal power. The two regions later emerged as nodal powers, the European mainland, and China in their respective geostrategic realm.

He further subdivided geostrategic realm into geopolitical regions, and these regions are linked through a shared history of nationalism and continuous geographical spaces though intermixing of people either by migration or through the military, cultural and political interaction. The Trade-dependent maritime realm is divided into North, middle and South America, the Maghreb and maritime Europe, and at last the Asia- Pacific Rim. On the other hand the Eurasian continental realm is divided into two major parts. The

² According to Cohen (2003), the Ukraine became the gateways between EU and Russia when they both come to compromise over Ukraine. Similarly this applies to the state of Palestine, which acts as a bridge between Israel and the Arab countries.

first part is the Russian- heartland, which extends to eastern Ukraine and Belarus and this region also includes both central Asia and Trans Caucasus area. The second part is East Asian Mainland; contain mainland China and Indochina (that are now Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and region extend to eastern Myanmar). Far South Asia since, standing alone apart from another realm, hence named as an independent geopolitical region, which includes, India, Pakistan and western Myanmar and also discussed two shatterbelts, West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, between the two major Geostrategic realms (Cohen 2003).

II.4 Concept of shatterbelt

Throughout the world, many regions or areas are emerged, which are described by political fragmentation and splintering. Such a region is termed as are termed as a shatterbelt region. During the 19th century, this term was used specifically used to describe the forces which acted in the devolution of the Ottoman Empire in both Near East and Balkan region. The word shatterbelt although was first times used in the 20th century by Gordon East in 1961 (Gosar 2001), which became prominent after World War II. Historically the word was used to describe the political fracture and splintering of empires.

The history of the world also depicts the numerous instances where it shows the conversion of many conflict areas into the “zone of contention” between two great powers. One such finest example was the Epidamnus region of ancient Greece which was the colony of Corinth. Around 435 BCE, Corcyra (a polis city-state in ancient Greece) intervened in Epidamnus to gain control over. This led to the struggle between the Corinth and Corcyra. This fight attracted the Athens and Spartan empires (more capable and powerful than the other two states) into the war. The involvement of four states in a tussle to win the territory of Epidamnus created it into the sphere of influence (Kelly in Agnew and Duncan 2011). Shatterbelt, are multiple times held responsible for conversion of large-scale internal conflict as bone of contention between two alliances (Kelly in Agnew and Duncan 2011), as seen in case of World Wars I and II, Vietnam, and Korean war the Korean War, as they are said to have begun in regions which emerged as

shatterbelt (Hensel and Diehl 1992). Shatterbelt is described in numerous ways by different scholars or academician but signify only to those regions which are political, culturally, economical, socially fragmented due to the intersection of local conflict with strategic rivalries.

The concept of shatterbelt always had been in the eyes of geographer from the long time, who term it in many ways such as crush zone, shatter zone³, shatter region and debatable region. Before World War I, as described by Gardener, the term crush zone and “no man’s land” was primarily applied to Balkan and North Africa during the time of Ottoman breakup. Similarly, Huntington’s “Civilizational fault lines” phrase often holds value in a modern context. Balkanization, the term is also used to designate the cause of the origin of shatterbelt, especially for Eastern Europe, which is described as the process of division and fragmentation of a broader region into the smaller. The early researches which are related to shatterbelt were focused mainly on studying rivalries between the superpower, especially the areas where these powers compete for influence (Reilly 2000). Mahan, Fairgrieve, and Hartshorne had contributed to this concept (Kelly 1997).

II.4.1 Perspective on shatterbelt

Shatterbelt is a geopolitical term used in contemporary geopolitics which signifies regions where local conflict heightened to serious dispute among major external powers (Kelly 1986). Cohen (2003) in his regional division had defined shatterbelt as “the zone of contact between realms, may be divided into separate sub-plates, such as compression zones, by such movement or subsumed within one realm”. Cohen in his book *Geopolitics: The geography of international relation* had discussed different features of shatterbelt region, and the most distinguishing feature is that it presents a playing field of more than two global powers (Cohen 2003), such as West Asia and South East Asia, where both USA and Russia had contested for their benefit.

³ Shatterzone, as pointed by Amberg (2017), is a term that is used to refer a crack or fissure in rock that form as chain of veins which are often filled with minerals. With the World War II this term took different turn when political scientist and anthropologist started using it to speak about borderland. In contemporary time the Shatterzone are used to describe places from where refugee belongs, places of resistance to external influence, capitalist economy, State making and state rule.

Shatterbelt is the catalyst that drives the escalation to the ladder of dangerous conflict (Hensel and Diehl 1994) but all shatterbelts does not confine to the violent conflict and also not every conflict region is determined as shatterbelt. The shatterbelt has its characteristics, as Cohen mentioned that South Asia, Caribbean, South America, in all of them coup, revolt, and war are common but not designated as shatter zone, especially in South Asia as India's dominance in this region is not affected by any global power (Cohen 2003).

The other thing that is a common characteristic is that these regions have a very turbulent border area. West Asia since its formation from 1922, almost all the state in this region had a border dispute with its neighbour, one the prominent example is Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was motivated by border as Iraq considered Kuwait its land, and the other examples are about Syria, and Lebanon as having disputed border. And Arab –Israeli conflicts also result in disagreements related to borders (Biger 2012). Similarly in West Asia itself again Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 was fought due control over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway. Sarto (2017) also mentioned the Algerian and Morocco border war of 1963 and the Western Sahara border dispute which remains unsolved.

Most of shatterbelt began with local conflict that drags even the farthest region into the turmoil, from local strife to strategic wars (Agnew and Duncan 2011). The condition such as the difference between political, cultural and historical conditions coupled with environmental problems in the shatterbelts regions are said to have fueled the fragmentation from local conflict to distance city that leaving countries in fragile conditions. The conflicting ideologies also said to have produced multiple fragmentations between nations abandoning them unable to solve their economic and political problem leaving the ground for further escalation (Hensel and Diehl 1994). On this note, shatterbelt is defined by Cohen as those regions whose “internal, geographical, cultural, religious and political fragmentation is compounded by pressure from major external power attracted by the regions strategic location and economic resource” (Cohen 1982).

Hensel and Diehl had defined three themes of the shatterbelt regions based on the literature available to them since WW II. The first theme is that the shatterbelt is a composition of weak nations and these countries have comparatively developing or underdeveloped economy and are fragmented due to difference in their race, language,

religion, and nationality. Secondly, most of the nations in these regions are relatively hostile and also mutually antagonist, leaving no or very less space for cooperation especially in economy, military, and politics. Hence they display conflict within and between nations. Lastly, they are spots of significant political instability, economic disparity and military presence of great external powers (Hensel and Diehl 1994).

As earlier mention, not every conflict-torn region is a shatterbelt, according to Kelly for being the shatterbelt, “it should not matter where the region is located, as long as it is the scene of competition between major powers” (Phillip Kelly, 1986 in Hensel and Diehl 1994). In this sense, Kelly defines shatterbelt as “a geographic region over whose control Great Powers seriously compete. Great Powers compete because they perceive strong interests for doing so and because opportunities are present for establishing alliance footholds with states of the region. A shatterbelt originates when rival Great Power footholds are present in an area” (Kelly, 1986: 176).

After testing empirically the proposition related to Shatterbelt that mainly based on region (regions before 1974), where propensity of interstate conflict, internal conflict was high, and intervention by foreign powers led to the escalation of the conflict, both Hensel, and Diehl, concluded four aspects related to shatterbelts. The first aspect is that the shatterbelt regions are one which is situated outside the area of great powers, but are accessible to them thus leading to the overlapping domain of influence. That means they are an area of competition among two or more external powers. The second aspect is that in these regions the external powers can be ally or foe, may have more military presence and also can show a patron-client relationship. The third aspect describes that these regions are mostly composed of underdeveloped or immature states and finally, shatterbelts composed of internally fragmented states and the fragmented relation among states, this distress due to conflicting political ideologies, varied ethnic makeup and various religion (Hensel and Diehl 1994).

II.4.2 Shatterbelt Regions in Various Times and Spaces

Gardner (2015) classified the shatterbelts temporally in his book named *Crimea, Global Rivalry and the Vengeance of history*. He divided the shatterbelts into five categories

based on the period when these regions emerged. According to him, Before WWI, the North Africa and Balkan region are primarily the shatterbelt, or crush zone or no man's land, due to fragmentation of Ottoman Empire which was intensified by pressure from Soviet, Britain, France, and Italy. Second shatterbelt region emerged before WWII, the belt of Eastern Europe between Balkan state and Finland which was a pressurized military playfield between Germany and Soviet Russia. Another shatterbelt, which is perpetual, born out of the Ottoman Empire, created by Britain and France and till yet intensified and deluged by a devastating civil war from Syria to Yemen. In the cold war period, the shatterbelt primarily was West Asia with Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran were dominant players (Gardener 2015). In this regard, Freidman said, that in Cold War system, "the most likely danger come from neighbours...that threat has not eliminated today ...just few moments it has diminished in many part of world"(Friedman in David Reilly 2007) but West Asia still has many estranged and hostile neighbors, e.g. Iran and Iraq or Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Post - Cold war, with the collapse of Soviet Russia much larger shatterbelt originated from Eastern Europe to Balkan that extended to West Asia and North Africa and Sahel region. This region is engulfed by civil wars, intrastate conflict, and identity crisis, many issues, with apparent military wars between neighbours fueled or supported by great external powers from outside the regime. Gardner further gave a list of present-day shatterbelt which includes countries from Egypt, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries (Gardner 2015).

The recognition and delineation of the shatterbelt are not possible without the understanding the historical context of that conflict-torn region. After WWII, the world moved from the colonial era to the other form of imperialism accompanied turmoil in the world in the name of identity, domination, independence, security, democracy and many another thing but region share one thing in common that is the involvement of extra-regional player and their support to alliances, and government, and rebel groups, etc. Since the beginning of the 20th century most of the war emerged in shatterbelt region (Kelly 1986). Since the 20th century, many wars occurred including the bloodletting WWI, WWII, Vietnam War, Korean War and deadliest conflict of Sub Saharan Africa, West Asia , and South Asia all arisen in the area which are designated as Shatterbelts. As the circumstance and characteristics apparently matches with the conflict-torn shatter

zones. Since 1945 most of the conflict mentioned above had occurred in third world countries (Kelly 1986) due to great power competition and which are still apparent because of their exaggerated war-torn economy and politics.

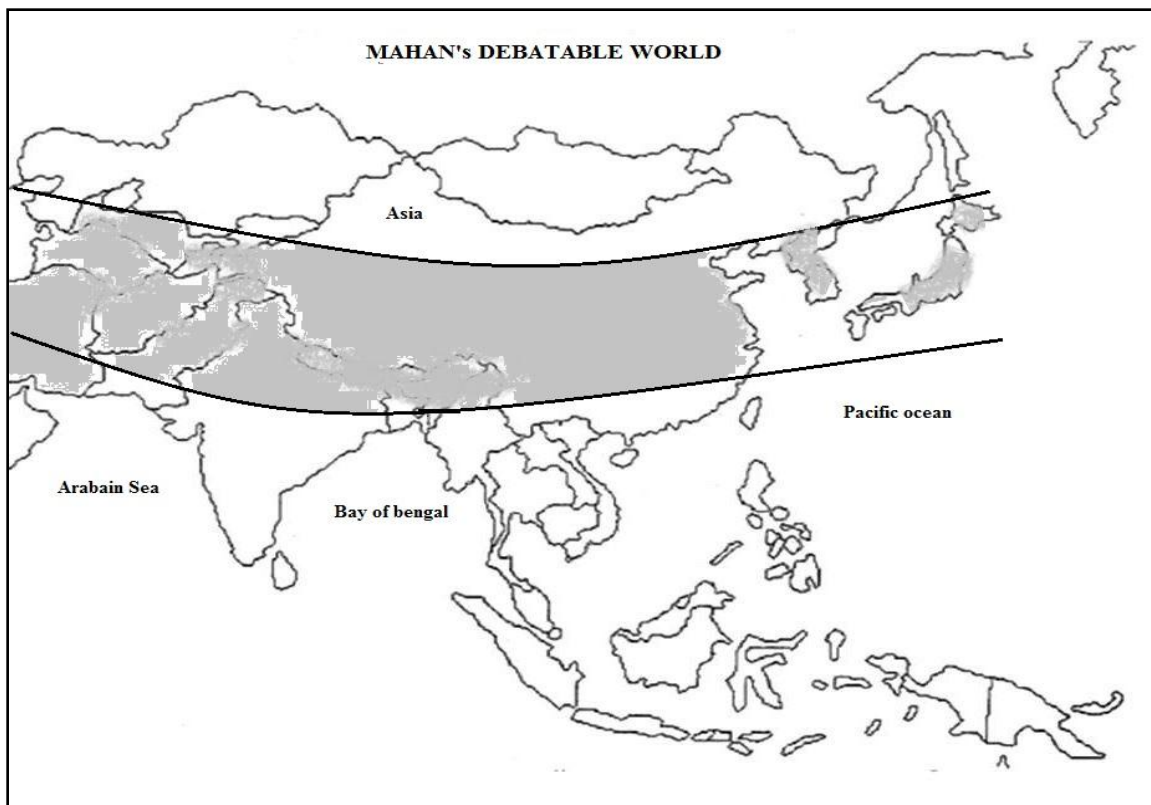
Many political geographers classified the conflict-prone regions of earth into shatterbelt such as Phillip Kelly, S.B Cohen, Hensel and Diehl notably based on their empirical experiments or on prominent geostrategic theories of Mackinder, Mahan, Fairgrieve, Spykman, and others. Bercovitch and Fetter (2004), also mentioned that about 343 international conflict emerged in between 1945 to 2003, at a record maximum of them are due to two major fault lines that originated after WWII. One is the conflict amid EAST (eastern communist bloc) – WEST (democratic west camps) groups and second is rift is a divide between industrialized developed nation (Global North) and underdeveloped/developing nation (Global South). During the cold war, two great powers emerged, each dominates their bloc –USA (West block) and Soviet (East bloc) and both vied into their intersecting zone of influence outside their regime.

Kelly had divided five major regions into shatterbelt from 1919 to 1983; these are East central Europe (also mentioned by Mackinder 1919, Fairgrieve 1944, Hoffman 1921); West Asia, East Asia, South East Asia and Sub Saharan Africa (mentioned by Cohen 2003) (Kelly 1986). Cohen (2003) had stated two major shatterbelt in this era one is West Asia and other is Sub Saharan Africa. Hensel and Diehl (1994) also classified shatterbelt, according to region and period which qualifies the definition of shatterbelt regions as the following – West Asia: 1955-1976, East Asia: 1945-1976, Eastern Europe: 1945-1955; Southeast Asia: 1960-1976; Sub-Saharan Africa: 1961-1976.

II.5 Geopolitics and shatterbelt

The word geopolitics, geostrategies, and shatterbelt are related to each other, and they express the reflection of geographical and political factors on geostrategies that are designed by policymakers of influential nations toward shatterzone. Brzezinski (1986), had defined geopolitics and geostrategy as a combination of a geographical and political factor that determine comprehensive planning to achieve vital military or central goals merging strategic consideration.

The connection between shatterbelts regions and geopolitics is long rooted back to the genesis of geopolitical theories. It is not geopolitical theories that influence great powers policies rather these theories are also result in world situation (condition- circumstance) at that time when these theories are written. Many earliest and influential geopolitical theorist such as of Mackinder, Kjellen Spykman, James Fairgrieve, Hartshorne, and others seem to be focused on newly formed states of their time (between 1900 to 1945) especially Eastern Europe that came out in the world War I (Loughlin 1999). And most (Loughlin 1999). All these theories sought for expanding influence to gain benefit from others land. According to Cohen (2003), Mahan, Fairgrieve, and Hartshorne had contributed pioneering studies of such regions (Cohen 200) and strategic literature of Mackinder and Spykman also point toward this region (especially West Asia) that later morphed the foreign policies of great powers.



MAP II.2

MAP: Mahan's Debatable Zone (Prepared by the researcher)

Source: Recreated by the researcher based on the map from <https://gammathetaupsilon.org/the-geographical-bulletin/2000s/...2/article2.pdf>

Mahan, in his Debatable zone, had discussed about the area (arc shape) that stretch from Turkey to China which Mahan claimed that was crucial for future development of the world (Walters's 2000). This area extends from 30 and 40 north latitude which includes significant natural feature and debatable grounds as a political condition from north and south this region are not stable and fixed and exhibit polarity toward East-West axis. He further argued that this region is constantly " in the process of change that was already initiated and continuing (Mahan 1990, discussed in Walters 2000). Verma(2008) , asserted that Mahan as stated that within this zone no country capable of maintaining stability and not capable of withstanding or opposing foreign intervention, where the political situation in north and south is stable, the middle tier remains unstable and debatable.

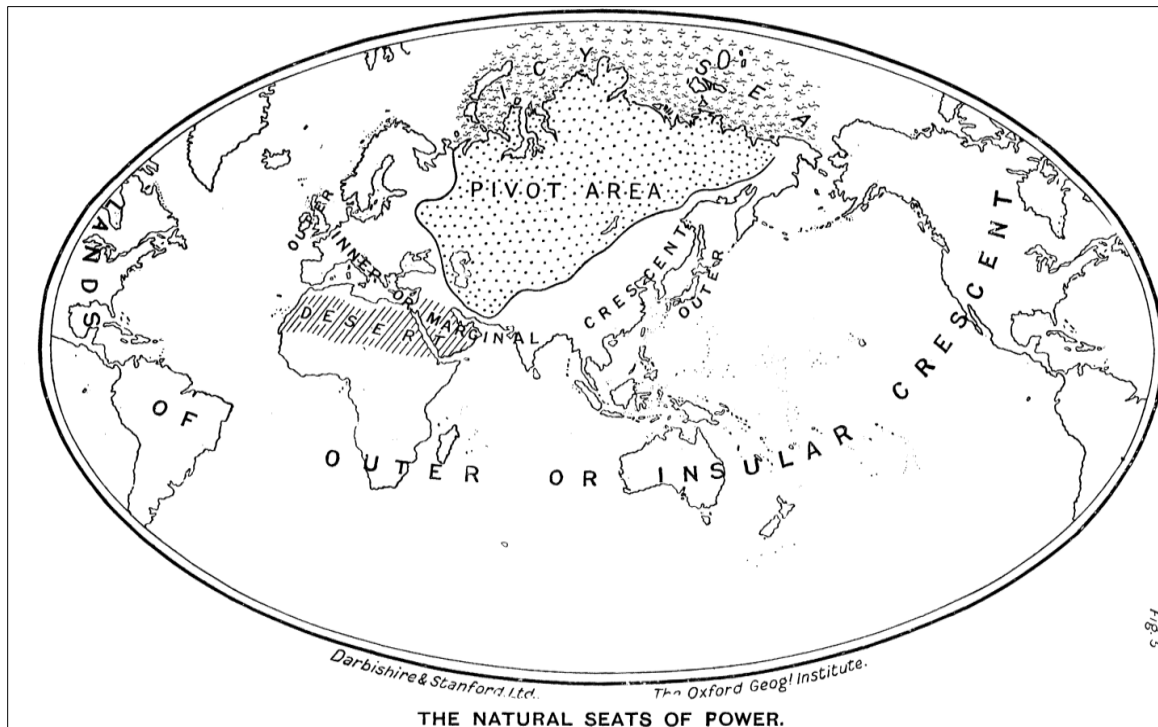
James Fairgrieve in his geopolitical map, developed the concept of Crush zone (Sempa 2015) that consist of smaller powers of Scandinavia, the Baltic state, South West Asia and Southeast Asia that located in between Ocean power (Great Britain) and Heartland (central Eurasian heartland"- Soviet Russia) (O' Sullivan 1986, described in Starr 2013). Diehl further defined this crush zone as Buffer zone, a territory to fight over (Diehl 1990, described in Starr 2013).

The basic idea about shatterbelt originated apparently from Fairgrieve idea of "crush zone" of a small state in the context of Europe and Asia that was popularized by Hartshorne, Hoffman, and Hensel and Diehl. However, Cohen who built upon this notion of "shatterbelt"⁴ developed by the previous scholar and applied it in general (Danilovic 2002).

Later Hoffman, explained the strategic important of Eastern Europe in West-East relation during cold war and described this region as zone of great in diversity and transition in Physiography ,language, religion, population, ethnicity, density, nationality, agricultural

⁴ World War I and II , attracted many geographer toward the unstable and hostile regions in the world (Hensel and Diehl 1994) especially Eastern central Europe as this region during war period became a zone of quest for control and dominance amid great powers (Loughlin **1999**). Hartshorne advance the similar picture of European shatter zone where both World Wars originated (Hartshorne 1944, described in 2002) which includes whole segment from Baltic to Adriatic (Cohen 2003).

and industrial, both accomplishment and failures, more importantly its vital location between two powerful state Germany and Russia- as they tried to dominated it , give it great importance (Hoffman1952, described in Hensel and Diehl 1994). Cohen has adopted the ideas of the previous scholars and developed a more global perspective on shatterbelts. He extensively discussed shatterbelt in his regional model of the world, the geopolitical structure (Hensel and Diehl 1994).In all these models, two most prominent theories, one by Mackinder –The Heartland and other by Spykman – the Rimland, had changed the course of world politics. Both theories had impacted the foreign policy of two Great powers – the USA and Soviet Russia.

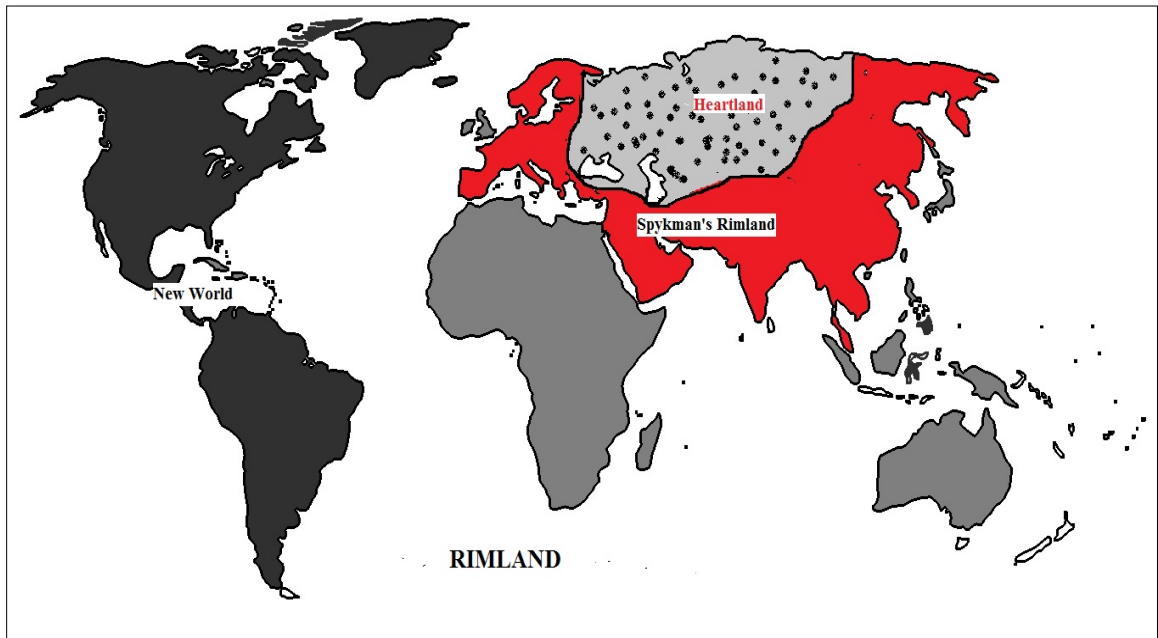


MAP II.3

Map: Mackinder pivot area

Source: Mackinder's "geographical Pivot of history, 1904 (Page 435)

Mackinder in his Geographical Pivot of history divided the whole world into three-tier structure namely the Pivot area⁵, the Inner crescent⁶ and the Outer crescent⁷. This inner crescent consists of vast population and is the birth place of most great civilizations, religion, and empires in the world. Due to its location, the inner crescent will be a zone of conflict forever (Mackinder 1919). This marginal region consists of the regions from the Eurasian littoral state extending to south-east Asia including South Asia, the Maghreb, the Middle East, and continental South(Owens 1999).



MAP II.4

Map: Heartland Rimland together

Source: Recreated by the researcher based on the map from
<http://www.oldenburger.us/gary/docs/TheColdWar.html>

⁵ The pivot region is a huge area in the inner Eurasia north Volga river surrounded by mountains on the three sides (In South, East and West) and ice bound arctic in the North. Later this region was renamed by Mackinder as the Heartland

⁶ The inner crescent consist of region beyond the pivot area, covering almost Europe including the continental portion from Scandinavian state to the region east of Russia including the India , south east much of china and almost upper half of Africa.

⁷ The outer region consists of North and South America, second half of Africa beyond the Sahara desert till the south Africa and Oceania.

Later in the year 1919, he changed Pivot region to “Heartland” (mostly Soviet Russia) and reduced some area also in it and proposed a dictum that is “*Who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island*”. *Who rules the World-Island commands the world*” through this he theorized that whoever controls Heartland region will dominate the world.

Then Spykman in the year 1938 established the concept of “Rimland.” He took the concept of Heartland but did not blindly accept Heartland as it is. Spykman saw the Eurasian periphery as key to global power, not the Eurasian core –that is the heartland region in Mackinder’s theory. Spykman designated this Eurasian periphery as Rimland and proposed a dictum counter to the Mackinder’s dictum: *who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world*” (Donald W. Meing 1956). Both Mackinder and Spykman in their theories emphasize the strategic mindset of concerned nations to win superiority over Inner crescent and Rimland; geographically both regions covered the part of West Asia (Rubinstein 2001).

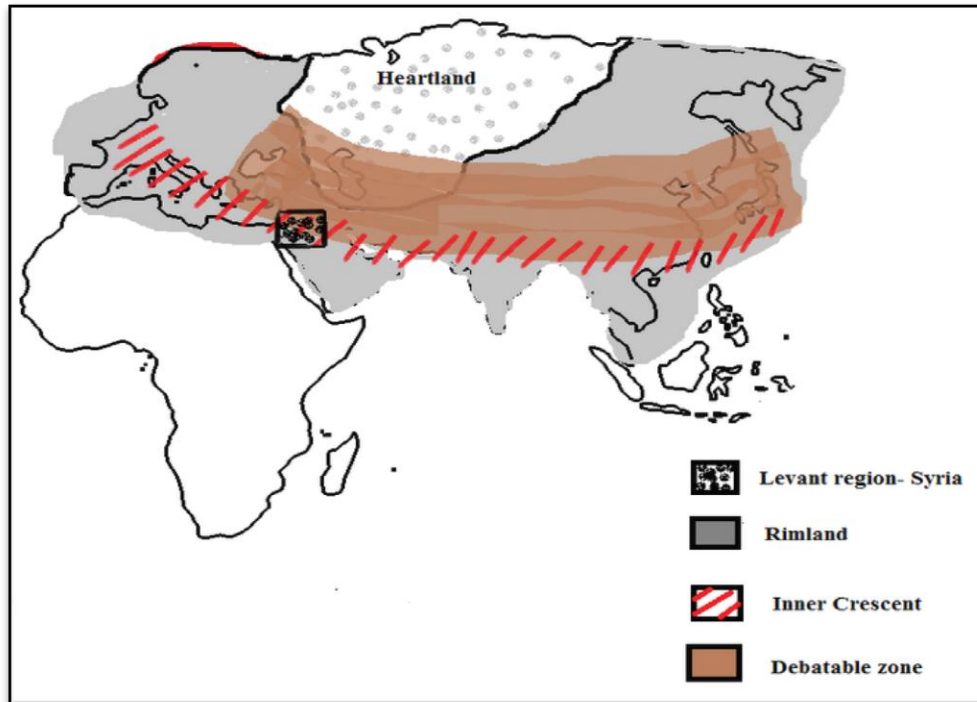
II.5.1 Superimposition of Geopolitical theories on West Asia

The *superimposition* of the ideas of Mackinder, Spykman, Fairgrieve, and Mahan on a single map depicts the similarity between the thought of the scholar mentioned above regarding the Shatterbelt regions.

This new map II.5, contains the Mackinder’s –inner crescent –the region below heartland which covers the area from western continental Europe to the eastern coast of Asia; Spykman’s Rimland, which also covers a region of the inner crescent and then the Mahan debatable region and Fairgrieve crush zone. The resultant new map includes the area from western coastal Europe to East Asia possibly the area in between 20 to 40 degree north. This region between 20-40 degree north covers the larger portion of the West Asia, which had experienced numerous war. The notable wars⁸ are the cold war, Arab war, Six-day conflict, the Suez war and many others interstate wars since their formation. At the backdrop of world wars, this region had started experiencing the turmoil which revolves around the ethnicity, economy, hegemony, and conflict for territory and

⁸ In World War the Ottoman empires was involved in the World War I aligned with Germany.

resource. Even during World War I, this region is turned into a battleground between Allies and central power and the aftermath of World War I is the Sykes-picot agreement that prepared the route for converting West Asia into shatterbelt.



MAP II.5

Map: Superimposition of theories (Prepared by the researcher)

Through their theories, these scholars had given ideas to their respective state for being a superpower they need to influence this region. That why since the end of world war II both Russia and USA started engaging in an affair of West Asia to contain other.

After the clear observation of the above literature is evident that the shatter zone has been seen shifting from middle Europe to Eastern Europe and at last to the Ottoman Empire before the cold war. During cold war and post-cold war, West Asia remained consistent shatterbelt. Till now West Asia is engulfed into Syrian and Yemen war and experiencing sectarian conflict along with failed state which is perpetuated by external involvement and regional proxy war involving military confrontation.

The story of the destabilization of West Asia began with the carving of Israel from the land of Palestine that results in the idea of partition of the country between Arab and Jews. The Arabs were against it and started fighting against the formation of Israel by attacking the Jews, (Bew 2014 and Muzaffar 2014). From the begins the involvement of great powers such as US, Great Britain and their Allies in support of Israel as it is a democracy and another hand Russia and their coalition in support of Arab state against the USA. Cohen (2003), also said that the numerous conflicts in West Asia involving different countries of the regions are inflamed by the cold war rivalry between the US and Russia.

II.6 Creation of shatterbelt in West Asia

West Asia is one of the most complex regions of the contemporary world, currently having four⁹ failing state¹⁰ and three ongoing civil wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen (Ellis 2017). This situation here set the path for expansion and mushrooming of terrorism across border and involvement of extra-regional powers which are supporting different sides or alliances thus creating it into a deep rented shattered zone.

Cohen (2003), had defined it as a large strategic region that contains a number of conflicting states and is sandwiched between the intersecting interests of great external powers. The region had experienced conflict after conflict since the dawn of a 20th century in various forms such as insurgency, civil war, and uprising. External great power has been meddling along with regional powers creating a hub of conflict in the interests of resource, ideology, religion and many other things. Hence this region continued to be a hub of shifting alliances (Cohen 2003), and it has provided fuel for internal tension also (Halliday 2005).

⁹ According to Ellis (2017), the four failing state of West Asia are Syria, Libya (in North Africa), Yemen and Iraq.

¹⁰ Failing state are those whose government is seen as weakened to such a limit that they are not able to provide basic public goods and services to its citizen such as education, healthcare, including territorial control over its sovereign territory, and economic sustainability (Wylter 2007, in Huria 2008). They are also known as fragile, weak, Quasi and crisis state. According to Huria (2008), in 2005, Condoleezza rice in a Washington Post, explained failing state are those state that facilitate the movement of criminals and terrorist, and the spreads of pandemics and also the proliferation of dangerous arm and ammunition.

The WANA region is comprised of 400 million people divided into 22 states. Majority of the states are Arab¹¹ except three countries, Iran, Turkey, and Israel respectively (Halliday 2005). In the contemporary period, this region is highly violent and unstable. These waves of turbulence seem to affect several countries of other region as well and do not remain limited to this region only (Lust 2017).

Resource and their control have been a key factor for war and colonialism. Askari views that colonialists and imperialists went after resource historically, and are lured by it also in contemporary times. For this purpose, they often even collaborate with despotic leaders or support the rebel groups to get what they want. In this context Le billon (2004) explains that the natural resources have been represented as the major cause of wars as seen in the case of Iraq invasion of Kuwait oilfield in 1990 and civil war in West Africa fueled by diamond. Billon et al. (2000) again remarked that the “scarce resources equal to more wars” and similar concern¹² were also highlighted by Neo Malthusian theory. Battles and wars have always had a significant impact on the course of history, shaping much of today's world. From the earliest battles in ancient Mesopotamia to today's conflicts in West Asia, the resources help in explaining the effect of war on history (Hickman 2017).

West Asia is wealthy in oil and natural gas that acted as a temptation for foreign powers to reach the bottom of regions and even regional powers, or neighbouring states are also lured by the richness of resources in other states of this region. Many conflicts in West Asia are related to resource such as Six-day war in the year 1967 and the invasion of the Rumaila oil field by Saddam Hussain in 1990 (Acemoglu et al. 2011). But also of its huge reservoir of petroleum and gas; this region acted as the magnet for foreign powers (Lust 2017). These competing power in their efforts to gain an advantage over the region, have reinforced the internal divisions, had converted the region into shatterbelt (Cohen 2003). Farmanfarmaian describes that West Asia is part of world largest shatterbelt as an

¹¹ Arab countries especially in West Asia are Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, UAE, Oman, and Lebanon.

¹² According Billon (2007), neo –Malthusian argument explains that at appoint of time when environmental concern will be high on international agenda, the degradation and depletion of natural resources with growing population, motivates the powerful groups or countries to capture resources of world.

area described by Cohen as a zone of contact between land powers and great sea. Before the World Wars, this region was fought over by Russia (land power) and the British Empire (naval power). However, during the course of World War II, this region became the bone of contention between US and Russia and their allies as they contested for influence and power gain in West Asia (Farmanfarmaian 2012; Cohen 2003). Similarly after World Wars and during cold war this region again became a reason for the struggle between US, Britain, France, and Russia. And also unlike in other areas, smaller states inside the shatterbelt affect the flow of conflict by changing sides affecting the balance of power (Farmanfarmaian 2012).

The story of West Asia shatterbelt is indescribable as the condition, and circumstances in West Asia are very perplexed as it contains the great powers and their strategies, regional power their alliance, rebel groups, civil wars, the annexation of land, invasion by foreign powers. The history of destabilization of West Asia can be explained through the following major events in world politics; the first one is WW I (1914–18) and World War II (1939–45) and then the Cold War (1946–91) and after 1990 especially Arab spring.

II.6.1 World war I and disintegration of Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, also known as “the sick man of Europe” in its waning days, is the longest lasting empire. During Balkan war between 1908 to 1922, the empire was thrown out of Europe and North Africa as before war at its zenith it included most of South Eastern Europe¹³. In the year October 1918, during World War I, a ceasefire was signed that saw the fall of the Ottoman Empire and gave birth to modern Turkey (Fanani 2011). During the early months of World War I, which broke out in summer 1914, the Ottoman Empire decided to remain out of war despite being strong enough as it was troubled by external and internal threats (Alkhateeb 2012). However in 1914 itself, Ottoman Empire under Enver Pasha joined central power led by Germany against Britain and France (allied powers), with a view to recover the land lost in Balkan war and before that in war with Russia and Germany, with a strategic goal to cut off Russia from hydropower carbon and the route to Caspian sea.

¹³ That included modern day Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary, Ukraine, Greece, and Romania

In this revolt, the Ottoman Empire was supported by Kurds, and various Arab tribe in one hand and Allied powers are supported by Arab nations of the WANA region. Britisher convinced various Arab leader (the revolt was anchored by Sharif Hussein, the ruler of Mecca from the side of Arab countries) to fight against Ottoman Empire in exchange for Arabs independence along with Palestine.

After this, West Asia became a theatre of conflict between central power (including the Ottoman Empire) and the Allied powers (Zand 2014). Britain observed Empire as the weakest link and tried to knock it out of war continuously, however, failed in 1915 in Gallipoli. After this failure in Gallipoli war, the British power used the arising nationalist forces of Arab, Armenian and Assyria against the Ottoman. As the war advance between 1914 and 1919, the Arab army conquered a few areas from the Ottomans Empire and on the other hand, British army also captured some region along Iraq, Palestine, Jerusalem, and Baghdad. In 1918 the Allied powers steered by Britain won the war and seized majority of Ottoman territory meanwhile Turkey managed to escape the war (Alkhateeb 2012). This war led to the carving of regions into a British and French mandate. The British Empire had three different strategic agreements between three different groups promising Arab political futures (Callahan 2005). However well before the end of the war in 1916, the two great powers France and Britain signed a secret agreement known as Sykes-Picot (David 1989), that divided the region into the sphere of influence between both great powers which was assented too by Russia.

Later after the formation of League of the nation, the region was formally divided between Britain and France in 1922 (Osman 2013). However, France and Britain had fully intended to control these regions for indefinite future. Under this mandate division, Syria and Lebanon were given to France, and Britain took over Palestine and Mesopotamia (the modern day Iraq). Since this division on paper did not consider the ethnic and religious difference and topographic and demographic aspects were also ignored, led to regional conflict. As Britain betrayed the Arab nation, immediately after the war, Arab stated their resistance movement to coup the European dominance (Shutter 2004). Hence, the European geopolitics in the second decade of the 20th century contributed to a lot of uncertainty and volatility in newly formed West Asia (Shah 2006).

This division also ignored the tribal lines, as they draw straight lines hence newly formed lines do not resemble the tribal or ethnic lines, as they divided the Levant region on sectarian basis. In that sectarian division, Lebanon was dreamed as Haven for Christians (Maronite's) and Druze, and Palestine had with a sizable Jewish community, and the Beqaa valley¹⁴ are effectively contains the Shia Muslims. And at Syria was left with the Sunni population in majority along with Shias, Druze, and other communities in minorities (Osman 2013).

II.6.2 Attempts at Unification

From 1950 to 1970s, West Asia had experienced Arab Nationalism which produced the idea of United Arab World that will lessen the difference between people in the region (Osman 2013). From the 1980s to the 1990s, the strong personality in the Arab region such as Saddam Hussain (Iraq) and Colonel Gaddafi (Libya) tried to suppress differences sometimes with brutality. But the unification did not happen, as western powers suppress the leaders or either killed by people. According to Osman (2013), later the Arab spring in 2011 further increased the escalation in the region. Islamic Fundamentalism and its reassertion also emerge as another cause of violence and frustration in people. This fundamentalism root lie back to the historical root of Sunni and Shiite Islam (Mamouri 2013).

Identity¹⁵ also played a critical role in the fracturing of West Asia, both countries and ethnic people. Kurds are the most prosecuted ethnic people in the Levant region, live basically in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran (Bercovitch and Fetter). In spite of the large number, they have been denied of their right of state and are the largest stateless minority in the world, and from the beginning of land mandate, they are fighting for their identity and state (BBC 2017, Oct. 31). Under Hussein's regime in Iraq, they suffered from "ethnic cleansing," in which an estimated 200,000 were slaughtered toward the end of the Iran-Iraq war(Bercovitch and fetter 2004). Not only Kurdish, but an identity crisis is also

¹⁴ Bekka valley is situated on the border of Lebanon and Syria.

¹⁵ Here identity refers to the identity of ethnic, tribal people and more imperatively the identity of different countries of west Asia who were under Britain and Frances they are struggling for independence.

the big issue for both Palestinians and Israeli's since the formation of Israel on Palestinians land.

II.6.3 Territorial dispute¹⁶

The land is another source of conflict in the West Asia that leads to many border disputes that began since the breakup of the Ottoman Empire (Shabaan 2014). The territorial dispute of both West Bank and Gaza strip is still pertinent, in which Palestinian resistant to the illegal occupation of Gaza strip and west bank by Israel. Golan height and Lake Tiberius, both are bone of contention between Israel and Syria. The dispute of Lake Tiberius was over the use of resources that involved the military confrontation by both side from April to May in 1951 and again in both are caught in Mt. Scopus conflict that lasted for two years from July 1956- January 1958. Then in 1953 to 1954 Jordan and Israel¹⁷ confronted each other when Jordan annexed Palestinian village on West Bank. This conflict escalated seriously from October 1953 to November 1954 that killed around 125 people (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004). The Turkish and Syria border incident that also involves both US and former Soviet Russia occurred in 1955 to 1957 at the backdrop of cold war. Almost every country in West Asia has some territorial or border dispute with one or other country in West Asia (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004).

II.6.4 After the World War II: The formation of Israel and conflict between Jews and Arabs

Since the end of WWII in 1945, West Asia has been experiencing chaos and violence either from internal, interstate, and regional conflict or conflict due to the involvement of former colonial powers, US and Russia. Since the Land settlement in 1917 by League of the nation, this region went into numerous conflicts. The example Syria best suited to this context, as since it division Syrian proclaimed independence under King Faisal. However, they were brutally suppressed by their colonial power France. Syria sought the

¹⁶ This paragraph on territorial dispute does not include each and every conflict related to territory occurs in West Asia rather focused on a few imperative to the study.

¹⁷ This land dispute happened near the in West Bank near Jordan river where Palestinian refugees were living.

help seek US assistance after the proclamation of Sykes-picot agreement for getting independence and removing foreign power in their country. However, all effort went in vain when France signed an Anglo-French treaty that marked the withdrawal of British troop from Syria and France became the sole leader of Syria. However, in 1920 Syrian nationalist attacked France rule in Syria with the goal of making Syria an independent Arab kingdom that begins the war between Syria and France. At the final stage of the war in 1920, France won the war abolished the Arab kingdom of Syria, and French rule is installed (Tauber 1995).

In the mean time in 1922 to 1946, the problem of Jews and Arab escalated as due to mass ethnic cleansing by Nazi, Jews migrated into Arab territory, led to frequent clashes Jews and Arb people. One such clash was them is a confrontation of Jews and Muslim in 1929 over Western Wall access. That killed about more than 150 people from both side and wounded many. Then again in 1929 August about 67 Jews were killed by Arabian, the Hebron massacre, here the remaining Jews were evacuated by British (Aljazeera 2008, Jan 21). Till 1947 many similar incidents occurred the reveals the conflict between both people.

However, in 1947, the newly formed UN General Assembly passed a resolution regarding the division of Palestine, the British mandate, into two states, that was accepted by Jews community but which angered the Arab nation and they rejected it. Between 1947 to 1949, about 9 lakh Palestinians fled to neighbouring countries, as their home became the State of Israel on May 15, 1948. That led to Arab Israeli war. Where Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia declared war against Israel and got defeated by the Israeli army (Shah 2006). The Arab- Israeli conflict is one the most striking feature of West Asia. Primarily, it is a war between two different people for one Holy land (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004).

II.6.5 Identity crisis

The problem of West Asia is not just about Jews, and Arab conflict as the land settlement mandate occurred without considering the actual condition, given more space to conflict and struggle. This region since the Second World War suffered from the many problems

one of them is the problem of identity. Here in West Asia, many countries suffered from the issues of identity, acceptance as an independent state and hence they had suffered a long struggle to get freedom from their colonial ruler. Apart from this many ethnic people such as Kurds suffered from an identity crisis as they became stateless since the Sykes-Picot agreement. The most astonishing feature is the struggle between Palestine and Israel and their struggle for identity.

II.6.6 Natural and Water resources

As explained by Bercovitch and Fetter, in West Asia many times water-borne conflicts occurred. One of the finest examples is confrontation and agitation for Euphrates water started when Turkey and Syria built a dam that nearly stops water flow to Iraq. Similarly, between 1950 and 1994, West Asian population tripled that made access to water a source of conflict. In Israel also, the Israeli government permitted their people to drill a new well in the west bank, the conflicted region and denied this right to Palestinian (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004).

The Suez Canal crisis was termed as second Arab - Israeli war broke out in the year 1956(Al Jazeera 2008) war broke out on October 29, 1956, and ended with Soviet nuclear threat toward Israel, Britain, and France (Peck 2017). It was Israelis who first struck on Egypt, and after two days of this strike, Britain and France joined the war. This is another event that interested foreign player in power politics of West Asia. This conflict began when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, a vital sea lane for connecting United kingdom with Asia. Hence this event alarmed United kingdom. This decision by Nasser came, when American stopped funding for Aswan Dam, and another reason that led the origin of tension is the arms deal of Egypt with Russia (Peck 2017). That appeared to Britain that Russian trying to heighten its influence in the region. Israel invasion of Sinai came when, the plan between three cooked between three in France (Lahav 2015).In the same year the US under President Eisenhower reacted furiously and threatened the three nations with an economic sanction if did not withdraw war, that worked and the three countries agreed to a ceasefire (Al Jazeera 2008).

The next big war that is also known as an extension of Arab- Israeli conflict was a six-day war of 1967. The war extended for six days only between Israel one hand and combined forces of Egypt, Jordan and Syria one other hand (The Hindu 2017). In this war, Israel gained some territories of the Gaza strips and old city of Jerusalem, and later in the war,, it captured Golan height from Syrian territory (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004). This war could have been avoided if America had not remained passive when Egypt unilaterally demanded the removal of the UN army from Sanai peninsula so that it can move his army near the Israeli border. Later Egypt blocked the strait of Tiran that stopped Israeli shipping from port Eilat. Israel was forced to fight the unavoidable conflict (Neuwirth 2007). In the meantime, Israel asked US for help, but it refuses to act. Another side Egypt and Syria are backed by Russia in the fight against Israel and Jordan also had American arms and support from America. Israel had some British tank and French planes, but no backing. However Israel won the war at the end, but its economy almost paralyzed (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004). At the end of the war, Israel captured territories and threatened to move further into territories of its foes. After the proclamation by Israel, the Soviet Union threatened an armed attack on Israel if it did what it says. With this move of Soviet the US president Johnson puts the U.S. Navy's Mediterranean Sixth Fleet on alert. However on the other side to avoid further war the US also compelled Israel to a cease-fire on June 10, 1967 (Neuwirth 2007). The Suez Canal crisis marked the end of British dominance in the region and began a new playing field for Us and Russia, which was more evident in Iraq and Iran war of 1980-1989 and October war of 1973.

Apart from these major conflicts, this zone is more splintered along the border and also fractured from the inside. The Israel –Palestinian conflict is long lasting since 1948. Last four decades in West Asia had hosted war with more international participants (especially for the resource), the Iraq war of 1990 and 2003 and Iraq - Iran war. Interstate and regional instabilities, along with intervention from arm producing countries converted West Asia into the most militarized region of the world (Sorli et al. 2005).

II.6.7 Civil wars

Lebanon's internal strife of 1958 was a first civil war of West Asia. It was given to France by League of the nation following the breakup of Ottoman Empire. The French divided the territory into Syria and Lebanon in 1947. Lebanon was composed of Maronite Christian largely and three sects of Muslim, Druze, Sunni, and Shiite and also Palestinian who came after formation of Israel. This civil war started when President Camille Chamoun, Maronite Christian, tries to preserve his position by manipulating the election. This situation along with dissent toward government demonstration by opponent began which with time converted into a full-fledged war. This full-fledged civil war started in 1958 among religious fraction and government army which was subsided when US navy intervened on the call of the president only (Bercovitch and Fetter 2004). All these wars related to religion had created a wide cleavage in West Asia that had its impact until now.

II.6.8 Proxy war in West Asia

West Asia is ground of two major proxy war involving both US- Russia and Saudi Arabia - Iran. The cleavage between both Iran and Saudi Arabia is based on Islamic fundamentalism, as Iran is a Shia country and Saudi Arabia has Sunni in the majority. And the disputes between these two have also enforced the sectarian divide in west Asia that led to many conflicts; the present Syrian war also involves sectarian aspect in deep.

Somehow the rise of ISIS is also based on this division also, and many rebel groups in the Syrian war also divided according to Shia and Sunni. The emergence of ISIS from – as small al-Qaeda of Iraq had many reasons but one of the most prominent is Iran –Saudi antagonism and their conflict for power and hegemony in the region (Johnny 2015). Saudi and Iran never declared war with each other, but they support the feud among Shia and Sunnis that became the key for the involvement of external powers in the politics of West Asia. These two regional powers fight indirectly by supporting opposite's sides that had devastating effect on region. In the case of Syria, Yemen and Iraq, both sides favoring opposite sides involving the Sunni –Shia divides and also own backed terrorist organization to either help regime of to overthrow regime. Both Iranian revolution and

Iraq- Iran war are based on sectarian issues and rivalry amid above nations is mostly for hegemony and power in the region.

Other two major events that led to more influence of external power in here are Iraq invasion of Kuwait and Arab spring. The invasion of Kuwait was two day operation 1990 carried by Iraq, when it accused Kuwait of stealing petroleum through slant drilling form Iraq that resultant into seven-month long occupation of Kuwait by military forces of Iraq (UNSC resolution 1990). The subsequent refusal of Iraq to with draw from Kuwait led the military intervention by UN forces led by the USA, which came to know as Gulf war (Al Jazeera 2010, 1 Aug).

The 9/11 terrorist attack on America, had changed the whole world politics with US announcement of war against Terrorism. In the name of eliminating terrorism and promoting democracy with the view to contain Russian, US further got involved in the internal politics of West Asia (Khouri 2016). As seen the case of Iraq war (2003), that led to the coup of Saddam Hussain¹⁸ government, the US aggressively got involved in Iraq after 2001 with the aim to liberate Iraq from Hussain. After this conflict, insurgency emerged in opposition to the coup and death of Saddam Hussain prevailed till the next decades. This insurgency arose to oppose the external forces and the post-Iraqi government (Bazzi 2016). From above test, it is visible that West Asia is converted into a shatterbelt due to the exaggeration of internal fragmentation by the involvement of extra-regional power and due to the heightening of a rift between different countries of West Asia

II.6. 9 Arab Spring

From 2010 December, West Asia is experiencing most precarious form of geopolitics that it has not experienced since World War II and cold war, named as the Arab Spring¹⁹,

¹⁸ He was captured by US and its coalition army under 'Operation red Dawn' n December 2003 and later he was executed in year 2006 by Iraqi special military tribunal (Freeman and Chamberlain 2003)

¹⁹ According to Keating (2011), UN's Alliance of civilization stated that the term Arab Spring was first used by Foreign Policy magazine and later was adopted by media, activist and journalist in US to designate the revolutions going on in WANA region.

that has afflicted the region with series of Civil wars (Manfreda 2018). The story began from Tunisia in 2010 in North Africa when a 26-year-old man set himself alight²⁰ in the morning December 17, 2010 (NPR staff 2011), that fomented the young generation against the atrocities of government and for the demand of democracy, better economy and prosperity in future(Schwartz 2011). In the subsequent year with the commercialization and awareness, the wave indulges whole of WANA region, in the wake of hope of better political system from Egypt to Bahrain, Yemen²¹, and Libya and significantly to a smaller nation such as Morocco (NYT 2010). Arab spring is more often seen as the reincarnation of the cold war, sometimes termed as new Arab cold war (Farmanfarmaian 2012). According to Addala, when the whole world marked the Tunisian revolution, the Syria and Iraq were already in fires, Libya is already blown by revolution, and the region is engulfed with the tactics of self-immolation that became a common act in protest against the regime (Addala 2015, in Bouzied and Spencer 2015).

In Syria, similar to countries mentioned above, the protest started with aim for seeking reform in government policies no to toppled government. But with the brutal reply and killing of innocent people by the government forces converted the peaceful protest into heavy demonstrations. Later with the involvement of extra-regional and regional power in Syrian conflict backing either the Assad regime or different rebel groups transforming the atmosphere into the civil war. The chapter gives extensive details on the Syrian conflict.

²⁰ In 2010, December 17, a Tunisian street vendor named Muhammad Bouazizi, following an altercation with Tunisian officer and dejected by government officials and regime policies, he set himself on fire. He did not die immediately but suffered in hospital till Jan 4 2011. Following his dead, Tunisian people came out to street to protest against the Policies of President zine el-Abedien Ben Ali . The continuous protest led to the end of Ben Ali's 233- year rule in Tunisia (Abouzeid 2011).

²¹ Inspired by mass protest in Tunisia and Egypt against regime that had fruitful result of ousting longtime leaders from thrones leading to regime change, Yemenis people began demonstrations in Sanaa in January 2011, calling president to step down (BBC 2013, Dec16). President Ali Abdullah Saleh, due to high protest, promised not to re run election and also he would not pass powers to his son (Kasinof and Bakri 2011). . But protest spread that compelled Yemenis forces to responded brutally leaving 200 to 2000 people dead (BBC 2013, Dec16). This incident of slaughter of peaceful demonstrators led to climate of political instability with series of political change in Yemenis government and finally led to end of Saleh rule (Cornell university Library 2017). Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh was the fourth Arab leader to be forced from power.

Chapter III

Syria: Socio-political history and contemporary crisis

This chapter is devoted to the study of the Syrian conflict. The major portion of the chapter dedicated to the discussion on Syria and its general characteristics. While taking into the consideration the general characteristics, it gives a detail discussion on the causes of the ongoing war. The other part of the chapter dedicated to the Syrian conflict which involves the discussion from early conflict to the external and regional intervention in the War.

III.1 Introduction

Modern Syria is situated on the east side of the Mediterranean Sea in West Asia. It is one of the world's oldest inhabited¹ regions (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003). It is also home to one of the world's oldest civilization with a rich cultural and artistic heritage. Many empires ruled Syria in the course of its history, but it emerged as the unified Syrian Arab Republic, first time around 10th BCE under the Neo Assyrian rule. Then this region was captured, and conquered by various leaders. In the same time, the region also had experienced the influx of ethnic people from other regions. Historically, Ottoman Empire was the last and most critical empire which ruled Syria and following its gradual breakup which completed after the First World War; the empire was partitioned into the major countries of modern West Asia. These countries are Lebanon, Modern Syria, Israel, Jordan, Palestina, the Gaza Strip and parts of Turkey and Iraq. This fragmentation led to the creation of modern Arab West Asia and also marked the beginning of the era of European control over the region.

The winter of 2010 brought significant changes to the history of West Asia that began from Tunisia. This began with the public self-immolation by Mohd. Bouazizi, a street vendor, who showed his frustration toward the authorities though this act. This incident sparked popular revolts against the authoritarian government under Ben Ali. It also led to

¹ As world oldest hominid remain was found, dated back to 7,00,000 year, in syria (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003)

a series of similar protests against their government regimes in neighbouring countries of Tunisia. This development, which came to be known as the Arab spring, had turned West Asia into a new playhouse of life-threatening conflicts. Syria caught up with massive protest after March 2011.

After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, Syria was under French mandate until 1946, when it got independence from it after a long struggle (Polk 2013). Syria, since its independence, has been facing numerous problems, most significant of which is political instability that penetrated into the cultural, societal and economic sphere. A new era in the politics of Syria began when Hafez al Assad took charge of the office in 1971 which brought numerous changes into Syrian politics and society. With the death of Hafez, the office was replaced by his son Bashar Al Assad in 2000.

The Arab Spring began in Syria on 15 March 2011 with peaceful protests against the Assad government demanding democratic reforms, freedom, and end to corruption. Halliday (2011) explains that it was due to the government's despotic and harsh reply to the protests that the peaceful rallies changed into the massive demonstrations with slogans of overthrowing the Assad government. The conflict between various factions and the regime had drawn multiple external powers into the Syrian affairs eventually heightening the conflict into a full-fledged war. These external powers though claimed to have got involved for the best interest of Syrian people but also have own motives in their minds. Such interference subsequently led to the redrawing of the Syrian maps of the conflict, and it also spilled across the borders of Syria into the larger West Asian region.

Syrian conflict and its consequences have a remarkable effect on the world. Syria especially has been suffering a lot since the outbreak in March 2011. Two different sides are fighting with each other in Syria. One is the Bashar al- Assad government including its forces (supported or backed by Russia, Iran, and its pro-government militias) and other side are the oppositional rebel factions and numerous extremist groups with an aim to overthrow Assad out of power (supported either by the USA or Saudi Arabi and their coalitions). Apart from numerous rebel faction, many jihadist and Islamist groups (such as ISIS, Ahrsr al-Sham and Jabhat al –Nusra) are also playing an extensive role in the fight. The most perplexing aspect of the war is that the different rebel groups or Islamist

groups are also in a continuous fight with each other apart from their fight with the Assad government. Arousing of ISIS and terrorist attack carried by them in Europe has dragged the foreign the European countries directly into the War.

When Arab spring emerged in its full ferocity in the early months of 2011, there were already symptoms of insecurity, instability, and chaos in Syria. As a result in the first half months 2011, the violence kept on escalating over Syria. As the conflict aggravated the conflict's complexity deepens as many actors (regional and extra-regional) emerge in the battleground thus converting the conflict into a mature war.

As discussed earlier there are numerous players in war because of which this ongoing battle has three level of confrontation (Berzins 2013). The first one is the internal battle between the Assad regime and opposition rebels (moderates, rebel groups, ISIS and al-Nusra and any organization). The second level, it has become a regional proxy battlefield, in which Iran (including Hezbollah and other political forces) regularly confronted with a group of countries led by Saudi Arabia. The third level is the level of global confrontation between Russia versus the United States its supporter. Somehow the third level of confrontation looks like a revival of the Cold War, resulting in competition for global hegemony (Berzins 2013).

According to Berzins (2013), even though these levels in the Syrian war are superimposed but it is the local players that are determining the intensity and violence of conflict. These major confrontation depicts the significant dimension such as the Iranian and Arab war, and war amid Arab and Israelis. Here both Saudis and Iran are trying to drive each other out of the war as a result made fruitful ground for numerous actor either supporting Assad or opposing him. At last this war is also showing the struggle amid the Islamist and Jihadist fundamentalist (Salafi terrorist groups, fundamentalist Sunni groups, al-Qaeda faction, and Muslim Brotherhood).

III.2. Cause of war

The causes of the Syrian crisis are as complex as the players in it with multiple narratives from ideological, ethnic, religious to sectarian (Fearon and Laitin 2011, in Christia 2013). The most important narratives it that the government irresponsibility toward its people

especially Sunni have bred discontent especially in the Sunni majority. Especially in those Sunnis who held high government posts as they are considered secondary to elite Alawite minority (Mariwala 2016). The pivotal issues that dragged Syrian into crisis zone go beyond the event of Dara'a March 2011, which was the first strike of ongoing civil war.

Different narratives came out to describe the real causes of the war, and the magnitude of its impact but to understand its causes it is important to look back into the history and geography of Syria, as both are pivotal determinants of war strategy and war outcome, either today or yesterday. In this context, Atwood (1919) had remarked that Geography is considered as the one of the pivotal cause of the wars when it comes to studying majors wars of the world. According to Peter et al. (2007), geography had greatly influenced the course of World War I as the weather pattern topographical barriers such as mountains and rivers have been favorable towards the Allies that helped them in leading the victory.

Both physical factors and human factors are involved in defining the course of the Syrian conflict such as climate change, and its consequence had rooted the civil strife in Syria. According to Baltes (2016), for understanding the causes, it is essential to look into the historical formation of Syria including French- Britain colonial rule, Sykes-Picot agreement, and Syrian unification.

The sectarian and ethnic composition and the relation between them also played a critical role in fueling the war. All of these factors together created an environment of political distrust, instability, turmoil and eventually protest and war (Baltes 2016). In this position, Phillips has supported the short-term structural socio-economic, cultural and political factors as the reason behind the ongoing war (Phillips 2015) and some experts had asserted to the drought occurred in 2006 to 2010 in Syria that is trigger by climate change (Bisaria 2015, discussed in Musarurwa and Kaye 2016). According to Baltes(2016), all of the factors mentioned above helped in triggering the atmosphere of the political instability, chaos, and distrust that helped in sowing of the war.

III.2.1 Climate and Environmental aspects of war

Mountain system on the Western side of the country shapes the climate of Syria specifically the mountain ranges of Anti Lebanon and the Jabal a Nusayriyah. These to

mountain ranges stand as a barrier that hinders the upcoming wind from the Mediterranean Sea to enter the interior of Syria. Thus climate of the western slope and coastal plain region tends to be a damper, moist and wet than drier and extreme temperature of that eastern slope and plateau. This adversity due to climate result in drought and wind storm which have been affecting Syrian since centuries Syria (BBC weather 2008). Apart from climatic adversities, many other environmental problems emerged due to the misuse and mismanagement of the nation's limited resources.

Agriculture, since ancient times, has been a significant component of Syrian economy and society but extensive monopolization of resource and extensive agriculture practices has created some unfavorable outcomes including the nonavailability of water for irrigation² (UNDP 2005). Thus in some region agricultural activity ceases leading people to relocate. Further elevating the pollution level of both groundwater and Surface River due to the accumulation of the raw sewage, industrial effluent and agricultural chemical or additives had crippled the country's water capabilities.

Apart from the strain on resources, the land of Syria also degraded due to extensive overgrazing and deforestation that has led to severe degradation and desertification (UNDP 2005). The government came with few programs which did not yield much results rather created agony and hopelessness in the population that further aggravated resentment against the administration. In addition to the above, a severe drying drought occurred between the period 2006-2011³ (UNHRC 2013), had destroyed agriculture and created water shortage led to livestock death and elevated food prices, sickened people and children that drove Syrian villager to abandon their homes and cattle and migrate to cities and neighbouring countries. This influx led to social tensions in cities of Syria and also in its neighbouring nations. This condition helped in triggering the ongoing civil war that had killed thousands of people and destroyed the life in Syria (Fischetti 2015).

² Due to depletion of natural and regional water source along with groundwater (UNDP 2005).

³ was the worst on record of human history (UNHRC 2013)

III.2.2 Historical roots of the war

Many scholars claim that the history of modern Syria is one of the major reasons behind the Syrian war. The Sykes-Picot agreement separated the dying Ottoman Empire in too many spheres of influence under France and Britain. In this secretive division, Syria was too handed to France for the administration (Visalli 2016). This agreement was refused by Syrian people as were not in favour of division and also French administration over them. Syrian sought for independence and every time they rebelled for independence their voices were suppressed by the French military. After a long battle of independence that began in 1941, Syria finally got independence after five years of long struggle in 1946 (Visalli 2016).

Even after independence Syria had been in chaos and instability for almost 20 years⁴ as no ruler was able to provide stable government. Amid instability Syria got involved in numerous wars with its neighbours. From 1961 to 1976, Syria had experienced two coups (Bard 2008), and from one such coup of 1963, Hafez al Assad and his allies got into power and started ruling under emergency⁵.

This period of the emergency rule provided immense power to the regime as they can arrest, detain and interrogate and punish when deemed useful at any time to anyone (Farer 2013). Hafez became president in 1971, after a bloodless coup, when the military took over the Ba'ath party. This event led to the birth of the autocratic one-party system in Syria. Later after attaining seat the President divided the state apparatus between different ethnicities and consolidated the central power in his and his families hands (Mariwala 2017). He also favored his Alawite sect by giving them high government post and also the authority to control the state military and intelligence (Mariwala 2017) that had antagonized other communities especially Sunnis.

In Syria, the ethnic or sectarian tension is due to favouring of the central government to their ethnicities and neglecting others. Hence Sunni and Kurds came together into a community against the alliance of Hafez al Assad's Alawite sect and other minority in

⁴ Between 1946 to 1963.

⁵ which was lifted by Bashar al Assad in 2011 from 48 years

Syria. The Opposition against the Ba'ath party heightened in Hama⁶ which was mercilessly crushed by Hafez Al Assad in which President's military killed 20,000 rebellions were killed⁷ (Rodrigues 2011). Kurds also like Sunni, demanded multiple time for self-rule, but the regime responded similarly (Mozes 2012).

In 2000, the after the death of Hafez, Bashar al Assad replaced the office, like father like son. He applied the tactic and strategies similar to his father. Socio economic inequality increased after Bashar continues his father's free-market policies. As these policies are focused on service sector only hence benefitting minorities, especially Alawite people and those had a connection with government. According to Laub (2016), the Assad rule is not just autocratic but also kleptocratic, as government benefitted selected people for getting support hence as the war started most of the minorities closed to regime remained loyal.

Before the beginning of the war, the country was facing a particularly high rate of unemployment. Hence the discontent was high in youth and poor especially in rural areas of Dara'a, Raqqa, and Homs. The drought of 2006 to 2011 had lasted for years further exacerbated the crippled socio-economic condition of the country. Due to the drought, the agricultural land turned into fallow and farmers turned unemployed led to migrates to cities in larger number in search of better living conditions. That causes a surge⁸ in the unemployment rate in Syria. A record-setting drought from 2006 to 2010 exacerbated socioeconomic problems (Laub 2016).

In the beginning of the early protest during the March 2011, the brutal tactics used by the regime to suppress protest had turned the peaceful uprising into an armed struggle involving multiple factions and also opened a channel for Al-Qaeda and ISIS into Syrian

⁶ Muslim brotherhood challenged secular character of Alliance as it marginalized the Sunni (majority of population) in favour of minority (Mozes 2012) as they think that Alawite enjoyed most of government highest jobs and post (Manfreda 2017).

⁷ This was known as Hama massacre of 1982.

⁸ The apart from drought and migration of people to the cites , the earlier high rate of unemployment, income inequality, the decline in oil resource all of them contributed profoundly in the breeding discontent in the people that helped in the opposition movements (Cornish 2013).

war, the aggregating resistance of natives into full civil war. While trying to crush resistance by a protestor, the Assad directed to use force⁹, and then the forces of Assad started using heavy artillery over demonstration sites including religious sites (Human right watch 2013). And sometimes air bombardment over the residential area covered with rebels along with the incarceration and torture, and even massacres became a common scene that provoked and prompted people to take arm against the regime (Hof and Simon 2013). These brutal replies became the major sources for the turning to of the protest into heavy demonstrations as a result of this the opposition forces demanded the lifting of emergency, freedom of media, release of political leaders and also some demands were also related to the socio-economic problem of the country (ICRP 2013).

This violence in Syria also emerged along the different sectarian lines, for instance, Sunni majority are fighting against the Alawite dominant minority (Peterson 2002, discussed in Christia 2013) and violence was also created by the rebels who were not controlled by the warring parties, as these foot soldiers were targeting civilians. Most of the violence occurred in Syria was not carefully planned out, and a result innocent suffered most (Christia 2013).

III. 2. 3 Ethno-Sectarian Causes

Some scholar or author believes that the Syrian war is primarily based on sectarian cleavage amid Syrian community (Malatowicz 2013). Nasr (2016), stated that after the Iraq war, the rift between Sunni – Shia has emerged as a crack in West Asia- acted as fueling agent in conflict around the Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen and that also led to the emergence of an extremist group such as ISIS.

From the beginning, only political and ideological agendas were attached to the conflict as it started with a local uprising in Dara'a where people stood for the local demands. However, as the conflict spread to other parts of the Syria including capital Damascus and Aleppo city, numerous coalitions of opposition forces emerged to fight with regime forces with the aim to fulfill their own agendas and limiting Assad's forces (Malatowicz

⁹ The forceful response by Assad regime military was also sectarian in nature (ICRP 2013), as they were targeting the Sunnis and other minorities as opposition was mostly composed of ethnicities other than Shia.

2013). Apart from their agendas the aim of these nascent coalitions was to gain international support for fulfilling the objective of political transition from the autocratic Assad rule to a democratic state (Malatowicz 2013). Most of these coalitions emerged from the different religious sects (either supporting one particular sect or opposing it) as a result gave enough space for Iran and Saudi Arabia to play their sectarian card. Here Iran is backing¹⁰ the Alawite Shia minority, and Saudi Arabia is supporting the majority Sunni, mostly rebel groups (Gerges 2013).

Iran and Saudi Arabia are using the ancient hatred among Shia and Sunni for their own geopolitical objectives (Perthes 2014, discussed in Hamrah 2014), that had converted the conflict in to a sectarian overtone as country's majority Sunnis are against president, who belong to the Shia's Alawite sect (BBC 2016, 11 March). Phillips (2015) had discussed about who is supporting whom, Sunni are in the majority but are sidelined in Assad regime that dejected them hence mostly supporting Sunni rebel and jihadist groups, and the Alawite sect is supporting president, himself an Alawi, and the Syrian non Sunni Arab such as Christians, Druze, and Shia are backing the regime in fearing discrimination under Sunni rule. Other than all these the Kurds had remained neutrality struggling (and fighting for own security and region with the help of USA (Challands 2018).

This sectarian cleavages and struggle against each other had a paved route for sectarian-based murder, sexual violence, ethnic cleansing, kidnapping and use of seditious (Phillips 2015). The emergence of Islamist Jihadist groups ISIS which are mostly Sunni Muslims had added in 2014 a new dimension to the Syrian war (BBC 2016, 11 March), which had drawn foreign power directly in the Syrian conflict.

This sectarian hatred has been the reason for both population displacement and escalation of radicalized violence. Population displacement as seen in the Syrian war is due to massacres done by the pro-regime militia of women, men, and children in Sunni villages and their neighborhood. In May 2011 pro-regime militia namely Shabiha, executed about 108 resident of Sunni village at Taldou in Houla region of Homs province, this was known as the Houla Massacre (BBC, 2013, 8 June) and many reports also show the

¹⁰ Saudi Arabia exercise substantial influence on Islamist rebels and Iran is critical to Assad's survival in Syria (Gerges 2013)

sectarian violence done on Alawites by Sunni rebels, mostly al-Nusra and FSA, such as massacre of Halta and Aqrab. Similarly, in September 2013, Al –Nusra killed many Alawite people in the regions in the Homs (Tets 2013). There were also many incidents of surveillance when pro-regime forces and Shabiha checked I.D card of local to distinguish between Shia and Sunni for example in the Tell Kalakh village, which is alone Sunni village surrounded by 12 Alawite villages the I.D cards of the residents were checked to segregate the Sunnis (BBC 2012, 29 may).

The escalation of radicalized violence, other hand prompted citizen from other countries to join various factions, opposition coalitions such as FSA, the extremist groups, e.g. al Nusra and ISIS¹¹ and Kurdish groups. Many foreign fighters also came to join fighters of Salafist and Jihadist leaning such as Al Nusra and ISIS. And many Shia from Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan have joined the war supporting the Assad regime (Bakker and Singleton 2016, in Guttry et al. 2016).

According to Spencer (2016), the reason behind the hostility amid Alawite and Sunni is due to historical denouncing of Alawite as heretics¹² by Sunni (even Sunnis many demanded death Alawites as they considered them as heretics). This why to protect themselves from the centuries of political persecution, the modern day Alawites in Syria defended themselves by supporting the Hafez al Assad’s regime especially when there were evidences of the rise in the military and sectarian Sunni jihad in Syria (Spencer 2016). This is quite visible in ongoing war as the conflict is now mostly concentrated between the Jihadist fighters against regime’s heretical Alawite nature, and its alliance (Berzins 2013).

There are also may theories proposed by various scholar to end the war. One such was given by Mercier (2013), where he proposes that the struggle between the different religious sects can’t be prevented until they go through disintegration as happened in Yugoslavia.. However the division of Syrian on sectarian lines is not new. The French

¹¹ For the purpose of seeking attention of people and prompting them to join war, they promoted religious propaganda through internet and other forms of media especially ISIS.

¹²Heretic is “a person who differs in opinion from established religious dogma” basically “one who differs in opinion from an accepted belief or doctrine” (Merriam Webster 2018, Feb 5).

had divided Syria earlier in 1920 as the decision taken in San Remo conference the very same year into six national parts and these parts remained separated till 1936 (Mozes 2012). In the beginning, it was Bashar himself who aroused the religious and nationalist ideas in his televised speech in January 2013, in which he labeled the war as a holy war and also a war between Fatherland and traitor (Coleman et al. 2015, discussed in Prace 2016).

This story of Syrian war did not begin just like snapping finger, but it had its own deep-rooted historical causes and consequence that led this war to begin along with demand for democracy and greater rights and economic progress.

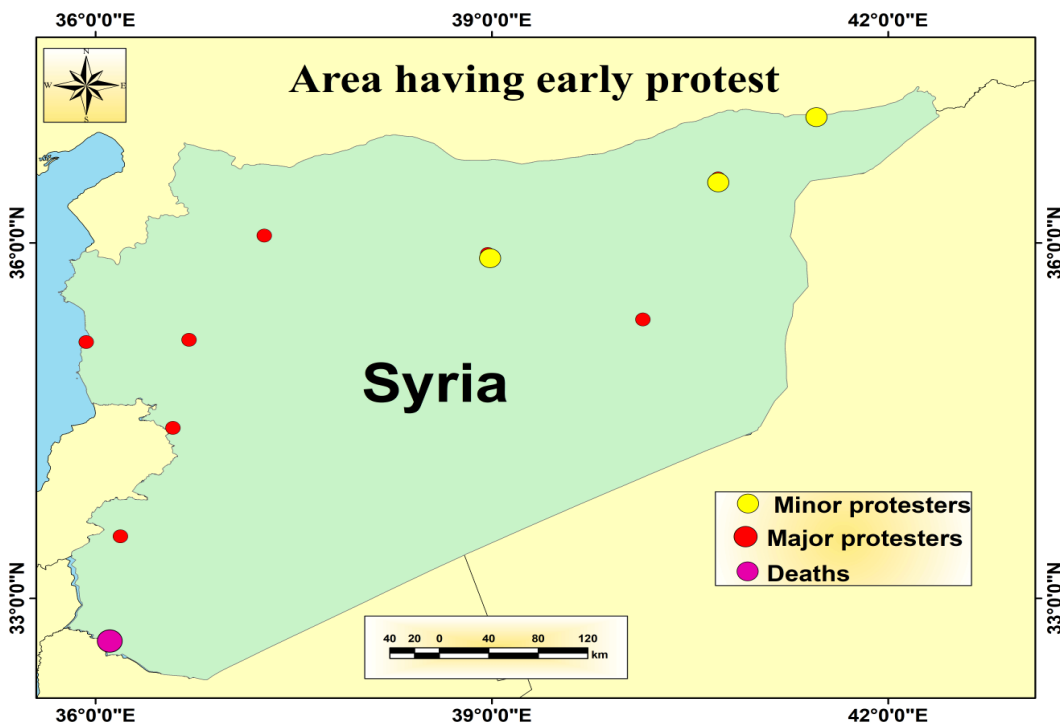
III. 3. Syrian Crisis

III.3.1 Early Protest

Six March of 2011, marked the day of official protest against the autocratic government in Syria similar to the incident happened in the Tunisia that marked the beginning of Arab spring¹³ when Bouazizi self-immolated himself in frustration toward the government for atrocities he had to face for being a poor street vendor (Abouzeid 2011). On this day in Dara'a, few schools going teenager ranging fourteen (BBC 2011) to fifteen (Gehlan 2011) were arrested for writing graffiti with the slogan "The people want the downfall of the regime" on city walls. The imprisonment and torture of 15 children prompted their relative and parent to protest. Instead of listening to them the Assad forces brutally suppressed their voices by killing the innocents. A few days later, regime security forces forced openly on people, a group of those mourning at the death of people killed before in Darra, leaving one dead. These incidents led to the birth of series of protest spreading to nearby area of Dara'a and the major cites against the inhumane behaviour of regime and its forces toward the residents. The early protests by people were for political freedom, democratic reforms and against economic difficulties, as these entire problems created a lot of difficulties for majority population, not for President Assad's submission (BBC 2011).

¹³ Similar to Tunisia and Egypt before war, the Syrian protesters, Islamist and secularist, demanded freedom and justice from 40 year old regime (Viney 2017).

However, before the incident of Dara'a, the ground for the protest began in early January in 2011. But these protests were sporadic and without any major objective. The anguish of people erupted in March, especially on 15 March the day of mass protest¹⁴ which is dubbed as the ‘day of rage’ when hundreds of activists, demonstrator, and imminent personalities gathered in major cities such as Damascus¹⁵ and Aleppo for demands (BBC, 15 March 2011) some also call it the ‘cradle of revolution’. In this protest the security forces detained six protesters but did not used force against the people, but the protester's rally is broken by Assad supporter (BBC 2011, March 16).



MAP III.1

Map: Area having early protest (Prepared by the researcher)

Source: <https://www.care2.com/causes/at-least-15-killed-in-Syria-protests-power-phonelines-cut-in-daraa.html>

¹⁴ The Syrian people said that they are protesting against the brutal repression measures by Assad, including travel bans, tightening of internet and unusual arrest of political prisoners (Flock 2011).

¹⁵ More than 200 pro- democracy protestor gathered in Damascus with demands of reform and removal of Assad from office (Flock 2011)

This mass protest turned the flames of prodemocracy protest to the revolution that reached starting from Dara'a other cities including Aleppo, Latakia, Damascus, Deir ez zor, Homs, Ham, Idlib town and many areas. Many series of local protest¹⁶ continued mushrooming to the other parts of Syrian cities especially the urban centers. These earlier protests are organized for political freedom, democratic reforms, and economic difficulties, as these entire problems created a lot of difficulties for majority population, not for President Assad's submission or removal (BBC 2011).

III.3.2 Early Protest to the fueling of revolution in different parts of Syria

With the escalation of the protest, the open use of artillery and fire by president military and forces became common scene. As a result people took arms, to protect themselves (Musarurwa and Kaye 2016), and later to remove or expel the Assad regime military out of their local areas¹⁷ (BBC 2015). Similarly, over other parts in Syria people to take up arm either to protect themselves or to fight with regime people. As discussed by Peterson (2013), that in Tal- Rifaat , city of 20,000 people living peacefully in agricultural plain, took arm against security force when demonstration turn root to massive conflict which government tried to smash and this clash continue till 2012 when everyone in the city formed into team. With the increase of government atrocities, these groups emerged as the different rebel factions. Similarly, incidents occurred in Homs and Baniyas. In Homs, 2,000 people gathered by the Khaled bin al Waleed mosque, they were assaulted, and some were arrested and also in Baniyas hundreds of protesters gathered, they were repressed violently (NYT 2011, 18 March). This condition turned the peaceful events into revolution.

Government atrocities and besieging of cities began after the initial protest as President Assad began to send a tank and artilleries into cities and allowing regime security forces to open fire on demonstrators and gatherers. Each time during the demonstration, dozens of

¹⁶ The early protests were for political reform began from early January of 2011 but erupted with anguish on 15 March 2011, which was also named as the "rage of day".

¹⁷ By July 2011, thousands of locals move to the street eventually began taking arms to defence themselves. As the protest expands the locals started supporting Opposition groups and later with aim of expelling security forces they stated taking weapons (BBC 2011, 11 March).

people are put behind bars. Most of the people protested in their holy day “Friday (Jumu’ah D)” afternoon prayers with chants “the blood of our Martyr won’t be forgotten”(NYT 2011, 19 march) and “God, Syria, and freedom only”(NYT 2011, 18 March). And every time they were attacked either by pro-government militias and security force or by the supporter of Assad. According to Blanford (2011), many people died in Deir ez zor during this prolonged protest and war. As protest continues in Dara’a, many killed by open fire, and even the demonstrators are scattered by police through firing openly on them. Also, many time security forces harshly used tear gas, water guns and heavy artillery to suppress demonstration. By the end of July 2011, many personnel of Syria defense forces defected¹⁸ to form the Free Syrian Army (FSA), mostly Sunni Muslims and began fighting against the Assad regime.

In the central plain of Syria, Homs¹⁹ and Hama experienced the largest protests, most excessive and extended for a long time. Both of these cities were also sieged for a long time till mid-2013, when Assad’s force captured it back from rebels with the help of Hezbollah (BBC 2015, 9 Dec). According to Holliday (2011), it was from Homs, the country’s ethnic cleavage visible and offensive operation to quell uprising succeeded in increasing sectarian violence in the region. Hama was last to enter in the oppositional activity because of the 1982 massacre that concluded Muslim brotherhood uprising (Holliday 2011). The massive resistance of resident against Assad regime turned the region to besieged, where fight between Assad’s army units; rebels and regimes forces acted a catalyst for civil war (Shadid 2011, discussed in Bhardwaj 2012). Other protest is reported in Latakia and Kurdish town in Northeast and also several towns around Damascus, but the addition of Aleppo and Hama into the growing number of towns and cities rising around the country was welcomed by the opposition (Blanford 2011).

¹⁸ Many regime forces and senior officers who are forced to kill protestor (if they don’t regime forces will kill them)defected the army and led to the creations of FSA and joined many other rebel groups (Viney 2017).

¹⁹ In Homs, 2,000 gathered by the Khaled bin al Waleed mosque, they were assaulted and some were arrested and also in Baniyas hundreds of protesters gathered near, they were repressed violently (NYT 2011, 18 March)

Determined to starve the civilian to separate them from rebel groups, they sieged many areas in Syria that are rebel-held and installed checkpoints which prevented the entry of food and supplies, resource and ammunition. Many hospital and dispensaries became starved of medicine, and with a surge of price medicine became unaffordable, communication diseases prospered and with food scarcity malnutrition has skyrocketed (Mariwala 2017).

III.3.2.1 Death toll during the protest and conciliatory reforms

Similar to Tunisia and Egypt before it, Syrian protesters, Islamist and secular alike, demanded freedom and justice from the 40-year-old Assad regime (Viney 2017). Since the beginning, about 53 % of civilians died due to explosive weapons (HRW 2014). As a result of the continuous fight, Assad regime doubled the use of explosive devices in 2014 that resulted into 35% death toll took place in that year alone. Many eye witnesses revealed to Media that the Syrian authorities are committed a crime against the innocent civilians, who are staging peaceful sit-in and even on those who did not participate protest (Kristina C, 2011). Due to unprecedented pressure from early uprising in March and April 2011, Assad announced some conciliatory reforms to appease people including higher wages, more freedom(media and communication) and ended 48 years emergency that is restricting basic right of civilians on 11 April (Barker 2011)²⁰.

III.3.3 Insurgency to civil war

The journey from peaceful protest to the uprising and civil war involves the interplay between numerous factors, many faction, and different actors. Many protestors took up arms due to the brutality of the regime and joined the defecting army men's that formed the free Syrian Army (FSA). According to the Syrian Network for human right, more than 16000 deaths out of 21,000 are caused by Government in the early years of protest (Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2015). According to Prace, Bashar regime killed more people than the rebel groups even after the involvement of ISIS, and Al Nusra

²⁰ The emergency was placed in 1963, when Hafez came in power through coup, this emergency law restricted public gathering and authorizes military to detain anyone they “suspect or who threaten security of nation” (Baker 2011).

heavenly in conflict since 2014 (Prace 2016) as rebels in the early phase of the conflict were moderates and also badly equipped (Coleman et al. 2015 discussed in Prace 2016).

III.3.3.1 Oppositional military and political groups in Syrian war: FSA and SNC

Since the July 2011, when FSA is formed, the demonstration against the regime turned into violent uprising when the government begins the use of heavy artilleries against the demonstrators and also sectarian violence caused by pro-regime militia²¹. It also paved path for the rise of oppositional militia across Syria including, Syrian democratic force controlled by Kurdish people's protection units (YPG), Jabhat Fateh al- sham, Lebanese Hezbollah and since 2013 self-proclaimed state ISIS (Aljazeera 2017, Oct 1). The most perplexing aspect of the war is the involvement of more than 1000 arm oppositional groups or rebels groups in the war (BBC 2013, Dec 13). The oppositional movement is carried out under two major groups joined by numerous rebels groups and supported natives mostly Sunnis, one is military group FSA formed by defected officers of Syrian armed forces (Landis 2011) and other is political groups Syrian national council (SNC)(Humud et al. 2017).

The ongoing violence had prompted foreign power into war. President Obama calls Assad to step down in August 2011 due to perpetuated violence created by his forces (Humud et al. 2017). Neighbours of Syria playing a critical role in the War, mostly due to the fear of spillover to their territory and also fear of power vacuum that could turn the country into a base of terrorism. Both Oppositional groups are based in Turkey, as SNC is formed in Istanbul and FSA²² is also based in Turkey. FSA is commanded by Col Riad al-Assad and its name is adopted by numerous rebel groups in their fight against the Assad regime (BBC 2013, Dec 13). Turkey also provided refuge to many Syrian dissidents. Syrian opposition activists also convened in Istanbul in May 2011 to discuss regime change.

²¹ Assad, since the beginning, had been blaming armed criminal gangs and terrorist for unrest from 2011. However, the locals and activist had accused the pro-government militias in aggravating violence and killing people. Locally the regime supported militias are known as "Shahiba" (BBC 2012, May 29).

²² The name of FSA was frequently used by many small rebel factions in fight against regime security forces (BBC 2013, Dec 13).

In 2011, Turkey²³ also gave the right of free passage to FSA and allowed them to operate from Special refugee camp based in the southern Turkey that ultimately encouraged foreign intervention in the Syrian war. Turkey²⁴ in the beginning of May 2012, provided arms and ammunition to some Syrian opposition fighters and also the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation trained²⁵ police men of FSA (Stack 2012).

In 2012 November, the Syrian national coalition unified with various oppositional groups converted into a National coalition for Syrian revolutionary and Oppositional forces, which was signed in Qatar (Al Jazeera Nov 12, 2012). It is funded and supported by major Sunni states of West Asia joined with the USA notably Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia through finance, logistics and military support. Regime from beginning of protest was claiming that the protestors are the Islamic fundamentalist with aim fuel fear in different sect so that they would support him and with actual emergence of these jihadist²⁶ and Salafist insurgents in revolution, that divided the countries into different sect supporting different factions (Coleman et al. 2015, discussed in Prace 2016).

III.3.3.2 Sectarianism in Opposition and involvement of Extremist and Salafist organizations

In early days of protests, the 90% of FSA is consist of Sunni Muslim and a few Shias from Alawites, Druze (Karouny 2012). Many minorities also together formed the

²³Syrian crisis also shows the conflict between Turkey- Syria Kurds-ISIS. Turkey had been ally of Syrian before the beginning of civil war and since its inception Turkey is condemning the brutal acts of Syrian army against the demonstration that led to emergence of Civil war (Zalewski and Spencer 2011).

²⁴ Mr. Erdogan had planned of creating buffer zone to stop spilling turmoil in turkey border area (Zalewski and Spencer 2011)

²⁵ The Turkish national intelligence Organization began training some Syrian opposition fighters from May 2012 (Stack 2012).

According to Sengupta (2015), Turkey has been providing the intelligence and logistical support to the coalition, but their officials denied the direct help to al Nusra.

²⁶ Major groups Islamic and Salafist groups are Jabhat al- Nusra, ISIS, Jaysh al- Muhajirin wa al-Ansar, - Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya, Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, Liwa al-Tawhid, Liwa al-Haqq, Ansar al-Sham and the Kurdish Islamic Front (BBC 2013,13 Dec).

National Unity brigade²⁷ consist of rebels majorly from the minority communities of Syrian including Druze, Christians, Ismailis, and Alawites. The goal²⁸ of the group was to establish a civil and a democratic country for "all ethnicities and social identities" (Kodmani and Legrand 2013). The Kurds²⁹ also observe this unfolding war as an opportunity to seek secession from Syrian and form own autonomous region similar to Iraq (Gunter, 2015).

FSA weekend in mid-July due to insufficient fund and ongoing Chaos was exploited by jihadist groups. Since the early months of 2011, the jihadist groups joined the rebellion in their fight against President Assad as they found Syrian crisis as easy access and safe heaven for arm and ammunition (BBC 2018, 10 January). Pro-democracy activist and a Syrian writer, Haythan Manna, said that the turn of the peaceful protests into armed struggles had divided opposition into multiple factions and that had weaken the broad popular protest which eventually led to integration of numerous local demands which made the fulfilment of the broad demand more difficult (Zunes 2012). Zune (2012), further elaborated that the assertive armed struggle between regime and rebel units or FSA had heightened the involvement Islamist, which directly turns the political discourse into the sectarian. The crisis was fully utilized by the Al Qaeda and its affiliates as they started commencing their operations in Syria for increasing their influence and fighting against Assad favoring Sunnis under the name of Jabhat al Nusra³⁰. In their first suicide attack, they hit the govt building in Damascus (Humud et al. 2017). Since 2012 the extremist attacks became common view as al-Nusra alone took responsibilities for

²⁷ National Unity brigade is also known as Kataib al-wihda al- wataniya, were created in August 2012 consists of around 2000 people. They many units are located in several parts of Syria and are fighting for civil and democratic rights (BBC 2013, 13 Dec).

²⁸ As the civil war extended many monitories and rebel groups came out in fighting each having their own aim.

²⁹ Kurds are fighting with two major groups one is People protection unit and Kurdish Islamic front, supported by Kurds from turkey and Iraq.

³⁰ The Nusra (Support) Front is jihadist faction that was created with the help of ISI. Since 2012 it emerged as one of most active rebel groups against the Assad regime. In 2012 December US designated it as a terrorist entity as being affiliated with al- Qaeda. Al-Nusra has sought to build popular support by providing social services and carrying out public works (BBC 2013, 13 Dec).

approx. 600 attacks including many suicides attacks from late 2011 to end 2012 (Humud et al. 2017).

This escalation made the USA shut its embassy and also compel to seek humanitarian support to Syrian people and Russia, on the other side, amidst criticism send it envoys to resolve the crisis (Schwartz and Gladstone 2012). International communities also augmented their efforts to pursue a negotiated solution to the conflict, with commencement of Geneva communique where both USA and Russia called for the creation temporary administrating body with full executive powers but this attempt does work due to opposition of Iran and Syrian participation by National Syrian Council (BBC 2014, January 22). However direct confrontation involving foreign countries began when Hezbollah, with support from Iran, started fighting on the Assad side from 2012 with an aim to counter the indirect participation of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and America, as they are funding and supplying arms and ammunition to Syrian national council through Turkey and Jordan (Adigbuo 2014 and Bhalla 2011, discussed in Musarurwa and Kaye 2016)

III.3.4 *External Power: The involvement and acceleration of the Syrian war*

Foreign intervention and backing to the different side have played a significant role in escalating war (Aljazeera 2017, 1 Oct), as the war includes numerous regional (Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar Turkey, Lebanon and others) and foreign (US, Russia and other) players. The chemical attack of 2013³¹ and rise of ISIS are two major events that dragged the US and Russia³² directly ³³into civil war with the aim to resolve war through diplomatic maneuvering. However many authors argues that the aim to resolve the

³¹ It was the worst lethal chemical attack after the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, when Saddam Hussain' regime strike on the Kurdish town Halabja (Borger 2013), that killed around 5,000 and thousands were injured.

³² With the involvement of major powers the civil war became international war as these powers are fighting with rebels groups, supporting different sides in war and also trying to contain each other influence in the Syria. Their alignment with factional oppositional group

³³ The rise of Refugee crisis and increase in terrorist attacks, both are the important factor that played significant role in direct involvement by US and Russia (New York Times 2015, Sep 30).

conflict by two superpowers is a superficial blanket covers the major objective to strengthen the existing influence over the WANA region.

The chemical attack of August 2013 occurred when government rocket containing Sarin³⁴ attacked the Ghouta³⁵ that killed more than 500 civilians³⁶ (The Daily Star Lebanon 2013, Aug 22). This event was described as the US point of entry in the Syrian war, as the US became directly involved in the war supporting those who are fighting against the Assad regime (Musarurwa and Kaye 2016). The US was indirectly³⁷ involved in the Syrian war since the beginning of the conflict, when it demanded the resignation of Assad and also issued economic sanctions to curb Assad's finances to his military maneuver (Conway 2017). This move by the US was supported by France, Germany, and Britain, with a call on Assad to resign for "the sake of Syrian people" (Wilson and Warrick 2011).

With the expansion of ISIS and massacre done by them, the war in Syria gets concentrated amid ISIS, USA, Russia and their coalition. IS took advantage of withdrawing USA troops from Iraq, and chaos inside Syria including widespread Sunni anger against Shia led government helped IS, mostly Sunni rebels to build a haven for its arm and access to weaponry (BBC 2108, 10 Jan). Amid civil war by socializing Syrians in the name of religion and sect, ISIS laid out its future plan of an Islamic state and started controlling and seizing territories of Syria. After controlling enough portion of Syria, it renamed the name into Islamic state of Iraq and Syria in 2013 and in subsequent year declared caliphates in western and southern Iraq (Al Jazeera 30 Oct 2014).

³⁴ Sarin, is a deadly nerve agent that is highly toxic chemical weapon that can kill in a few minutes and is approximate 26 times deadlier than cyanide (Baker 2018).

³⁵ It is a suburban area located in south western part of Syria, surrounding Damascus on its eastern and southern side.

³⁶ According to Borger (2013), Fahad Almaski, spokesman of FSA based in Paris, revealed that they their branch documented 1,729 deaths and more than 6,000 had suffered from breathing problem following chemical attack

³⁷ According to Porter (2015), Obama administration had provided arms and weapons to the Syrian and Non- Syrian rebels groups in period of 2012-2013 through its Sunni allies Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar with the purpose to force President Bashar al Assad out of power.

In March 2014 Raqqa was seized by different oppositional groups and by extremist groups, e.g. Nusra Front, and ISI. All of them started operating from the same region. This opportunity gave ISIS immense possibility of expansion, and as a result, it started consolidating and expanding its territory inside Syria. As the ISIS, moved inside the territory of Syria near the Kurdish region, its men killed and enslaved thousands of Yazidi minorities. This killing also prompted the USA and its coalitions to start air strike against the ISIS both in Iraq and Syria in 2014. The involvement of the US and Russia deepened more into the war after the surge of refugee and terrorist attack from ISIS (New York Times, 2015). As a consequence, the rivalry between both US and Russia became visible in the war that led to the creation of a playground of proxy war³⁸ involving both regional powers and internal rebel group in Syria³⁹

The military intervention in Syria by Russia was carefully planned with the view that Assad regime is vital for reducing radical Islam (Dekel and Magen 2015). However, Moscow had its stake to protect the key naval port of Tartous, its sole Mediterranean base for black sea fleet and also Latakia, where Russia has air base (BBC 2015, 30 Oct). Russian force is concentrated mainly on the coastal area and Latakia region, where Alawite minority is concentrated and aiding Assad's forces by attacking the rebel-controlled region (Dekel and Magen 2015). Russia in 2015 forged alliance with oppositional units similar to the USA to fight against the ISIS and also the heavy involvement of Russia in political activity of Syria has somehow made it leader that challenged USA (Dekel and Magen 2015).

According to Osborne and Stewart (2015), Moscow's intervention has been a catalyst in the transformation of civil war in Syria into an international war as in this war many great powers are directly involved except China (Osborne and Stewart 2015). UN attempted to

³⁸ In term of proxy war according to Abukhalil (2014), eight proxy wars are going in Syria. These are internal Wahhabi war, between regional power Iran and Saudi supporting different side, Shia Sunni war ; USA – Russia involvement direct or indirect; The regional conflict between the global organization of the Muslim Brotherhood on one hand and the regional Salafis on the other; Qatari and Saudi conflict; The Hezbollah versus the Future Movement; Clash of Islamic identities.

³⁹ What once started as a peaceful protest against Assad regime have led to evolution of multiple –multi structure crisis of Militia, which is founded on religion, ethnic cleavage and political ideology (Phillips 2016).

a political resolution for ending Syrian war was ended due to the differences between permanent member of UNSC and other members such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey aligned themselves with USA and Iran, Russia, Iraq with Syria even also Russia used its Veto power in UN Security Council to support. Since Dec 2012, Russian military personnel disguised as an advisor helping out Assad army on operating its aircrafts (Borger 2013). West has been criticizing Russian presence since the beginning which was refuted and justified by Russian as it had not violated any international law and also no supporting any side that may exaggerate conflict till 2012 (Irish times 2012). Russia in 2013 had started military support to Syrian by providing armored vehicles, radars electronic warfare and many weapons that are justified in term of fighting with ISIS and rebel (Dekel and Magen 2015).

The direct military intervention of Russia in Syria began in the year 2015, including air strike against ISIS, al Nusra and other opposition to the regime with an aim to prevent regime collapse (Osborne and Stewart 2015). According to Osborne and Stewart (2015), the involvement of Russian air strike had plunged the Civil war of Syrian into the volatile stage. Even civilian in Syrian has said that the Russian air forces have released a new level of devastation on their towns. However,, both BBC (2015, Oct 1) and Porter (2015) had claimed that the air strikes had targeted the opposition groups⁴⁰ of the army of conquest allies such as Al-Nusra and Salafist group Ahrar-ash-sham position especially those which are held in Latakia and coastal regions⁴¹ other than ISIS-controlled territory. Many times Russian Air strikes also have been targeted rebel groups, which are backed either United States or by al-Qaeda's affiliate near the front lines with the regime. This helped Assad strengthen his control over the population in the western part of the country (Laub 2016).

The association of both superpowers in war is portraying the ongoing rift between USA and Russia, resembling cold war as both parties in this conflict are using its method, tactic, and strategies similar to cold war and supporting different side. According to Abukhalil (2014), they through these tactics against each other have created a new field

⁴⁰ According to Laub (2016), Russian air strikes targeted region near by Latakia and Coast which was occupied by oppositional rebel groups rather than ISIS, and ISIS do not control areas next to government strongholds apart from a few around Aleppo and Deir al-Zor.

⁴¹ In this regions Assad has strong hold.

of proxy war in Syria. It's not just about Russia – USA and their plots but more menacing war wagging amid Shiites- Sunni and their protector state Iran and Saudi Arabia (Spiegel 2016). Still, after the seven years of the war, the conflict had taken a new turn that consists of the resurgence of hostility between rival groups such as Kurds and turkey.

Many scholars favour the point that the great power has instigated the perpetuation of disruption in Syria. Before this war the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11 had been a huge catalyst for sharpening of the fault line between different countries in Syria as this event draws the Syria and Iran close and other Gulf nation including Saudi Arabia Egypt et aligned to the moderate west camp (Manfreda 2015). According to Chovanec (2015), from 2005 USA is funding and training anti-regime rebel or opposition units with an aim to the overthrown regime in Syria and most of US-financed Opposition group actually serving for foreign interest rather than national goals (Whitlock 2011), with apparent justification that the finance is just for democracy promotion (Chovanec 2015).

The support of USA to Shia rebel against ISIS has aroused dissent in Sunni as they and in their view, US involvement in conflict began too late with little efforts. The efforts of CIA to organize Moderates militia into one had failed, and many groups supported by the USA retreated and failed to wear extreme groups, many time walking out and leaving arms to other groups (Chovanec2015). The rapprochement by Turkey and Saudi Arabia for an army of conquest⁴² had fueled disagreement between US and its Sunni allies as Obama administration alleged that they are arming extremist jihadist in Syrian war who were terrorist attacks on the West plotting notably al Nusra. Hence due to above-mentioned disagreements the influence of the US weekend in the last two years of the war. Similarly, both France and Britain get involved with the aim of the fight against ISIS through military and air strikes. Like the US, since the beginning, the UK has been supportive of US step of calling Assad to leave office (Black 2015). The UK has

⁴² In March 2015, the reconciliation between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar enabled the creation of “Army of conquest” that consists of various opposition groups, it was specifically initiated to build coordination within rebels in northern Syria (Laub 2016) to boost up the abilities of Al Nusra and its allies (Porter 2015).

provided intelligence information⁴³ to Free Syrian army through Turkish officials by operating from Cypress bases⁴⁴

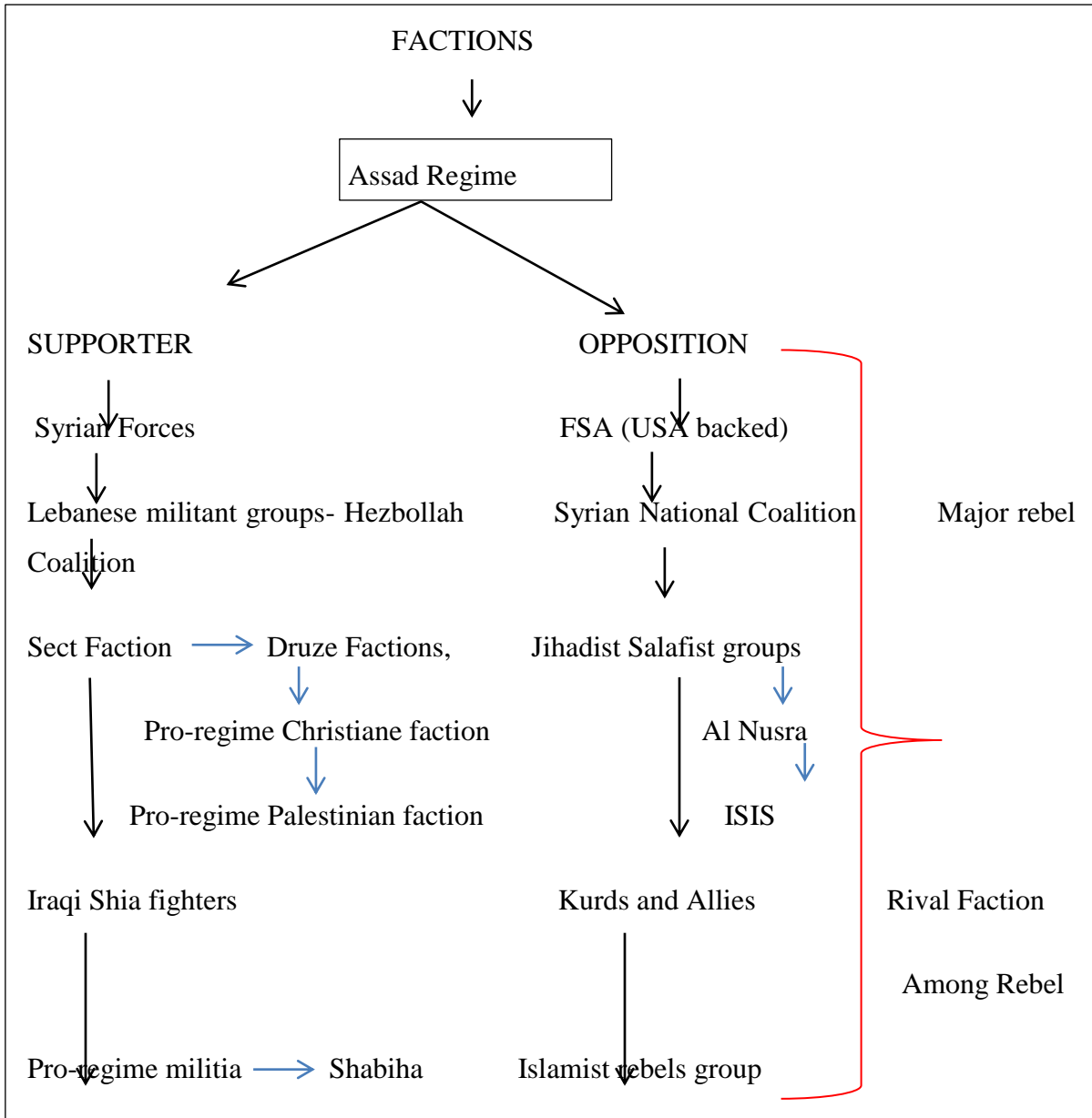


Figure III.1

Figure: Assad regime supporter and Opposition (Prepare by the researcher)

⁴³ According to Gazzette(2012), many unnamed Syrian official as British spies revealed that they gather intelligence information then passed it to Turkey and from turkey they passed it ultimately to Syrian reel groups

⁴⁴ In Cypress, UK have two bases, one in Akrotiri and other in Dhekelia (Gazzette 2012).

Along with intelligence information, since 2012, they have been providing financial assistance to unarmed opposition rebel with non-lethal military aid, radar, satellite and humanitarian medical assistance (BBC 2012, Aug 10). At the end of 2015, France⁴⁵ drafted a UN resolution sponsored by UK that urged the member's nation to take the necessary step to fight against ISIS and Al Nusra front (BBC2015, 21 Nov). Both France and UK started air strike from end 2015 in Syria (Wintour 2015), however, France the involvement in the war was particularly for self – defense in the wake of Paris terror attack⁴⁶ which was supported by the UK⁴⁷. Germany has been experiencing a hard time since the Syrian war started due to the influx of refugee and boost in the population⁴⁸ that causes anti emigrant protest, and dissent among people and government inside Germany. German intervention began against ISIS with the Paris attack of 2015 which was initiated with the Bundeswehr mission in Syria and Iraq under the Operation Inherent Resolve⁴⁹. Germany, like Russia, has been cooperating with Assad for fear of ISIS expansion in its people as its six million populations are Muslim (Hersh 2016).

III.3.5 Involvement of regional powers

The second major proxy war waging in Syria is between Riyadh and Tehran. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia have been competing for many decades to control West Asia and the Islamic world. Syrian war appeared as an opportunity for both of them to contain each

⁴⁵ In 2013, France called for military intervention when Assad government was accused of using chemical weapon in Ghouta which killed more than 1400 people. However this appeal by Paris was neglected because of negligence of US toward the issue. This was due to reluctance by US congress and Britain parliament to intervene directly in Syrian issue (Black 2012).

⁴⁶ The famous Paris attack of 13 November 2015, were a series of terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS in Paris and Saint-Denis (Suburban part of Paris) (Kostov and Chow 2015). This attack killed around 130 people and nearly injuring 413 people out of them 100 seriously injured (France 24 2015, Nov 15). Apart from Paris attack France had also experienced similar terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo office that killed many people including police officers.

⁴⁷ UK began air strike a month after France against ISIS.

⁴⁸ According to Anderson (2016), many scholars think that the surge of population is beneficial for Germany as its population is declining due to low birth rate.

⁴⁹ The US military operation against ISIS in Iraq and Syria was officially designated as Operation Inherent Resolve in 2014. This name was applied retrospectively to all US military action applied against ISIS since Aug 8 2014 (CENTCOM 2014),

other by supporting other with own motives involving both religious and strategic aims. Each side is assisting its respective Islamic sect with intelligence, propaganda, and artillery as a result escalating sectarian-based violence (Schlein 2014).

Religiously, the Alawite sect is an offshoot of Shia Islam, which is Iran's official religion (US department of state 2018). Since the Sunni majority is dominated by an Alawite minority, Iran saw it as a strategic counterbalance to Saudi Arabian run Sunnis Persian Gulf monarchies. Hence here again comes the long rooted Saudi –Iran rivalry which is also fueling Sectarian cleavage in Syria. As been closest ally Iran had been providing significant support to Syria through funding, troops, technological maneuver during the ongoing war (The Economist 2012). This war has been an open channel for supply of Hezbollah⁵⁰ militants, are the main thrust in Lebanon politics, who are fighting alongside the Assad forces. Since the involvement of Hezbollah, Iran with the help of this organization is trying to preserve the Assad as president (Holliday 2013) that had multiplied the power of regime as a result helped in winning back the region occupied by rebels. Iran is also supporting Shahiba militias, to make it more promising for Assad to win, stop him from falling and that helping Iran swiftly projecting its forces in Syria (Fulton and Weyr 2013). Recently, it was asserted by British Broadcast that Iran is building a permanent military base in the south of Damascus, which was warned by Israel, with the aim to control land route from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea, with a bigger picture to influence region (TOI 2017, 10 November).

Tapping on ancient sectarian hostility, the Saudi clerics called on the youth of Arab and Muslim countries to joined the war against Shia Assad and also asked to provide moral, material, political and economic support in the name of their Holy war, "Jihad", against Syrian regime and their backers Iran and Russia (McDowell 2015). Even the Saudi clerics had described the Russian direct military intervention is similar to the Afghanistan invasion by soviet in 1980 which enable the promotion of international jihad (McDowell 2015). Saudi Arabia is backing oppositions in Syria with several regional and domestic objectives, one of them is breaking years of ties within Iran and Syria and ensuring that

⁵⁰ Hezbollah are also known as the Lebanese party of god created in 1982 with the help of Iranian (Mabon 2016).

Iran is not benefitting due to change in the balance of power in Syria (Manfreda 2017). Saudi is siding forces that are struggling with Assad's forces in order to change the regime by providing vast financial aid and weapon to Assad opposition militias with a desire to not repeat that happened in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Earlier Syria had maintained a balance alliance under Hafez with Saudi Arabia that does not lost long. The US invasion and occupation Iraq, Lebanon war of 2006 and the pipeline 'Syria- Iraq- Iran' strengthen the ties between the Iran and Syria that eventually led to the decline in Syrian – Saudi relation (Wagner and Cafiero 2013).

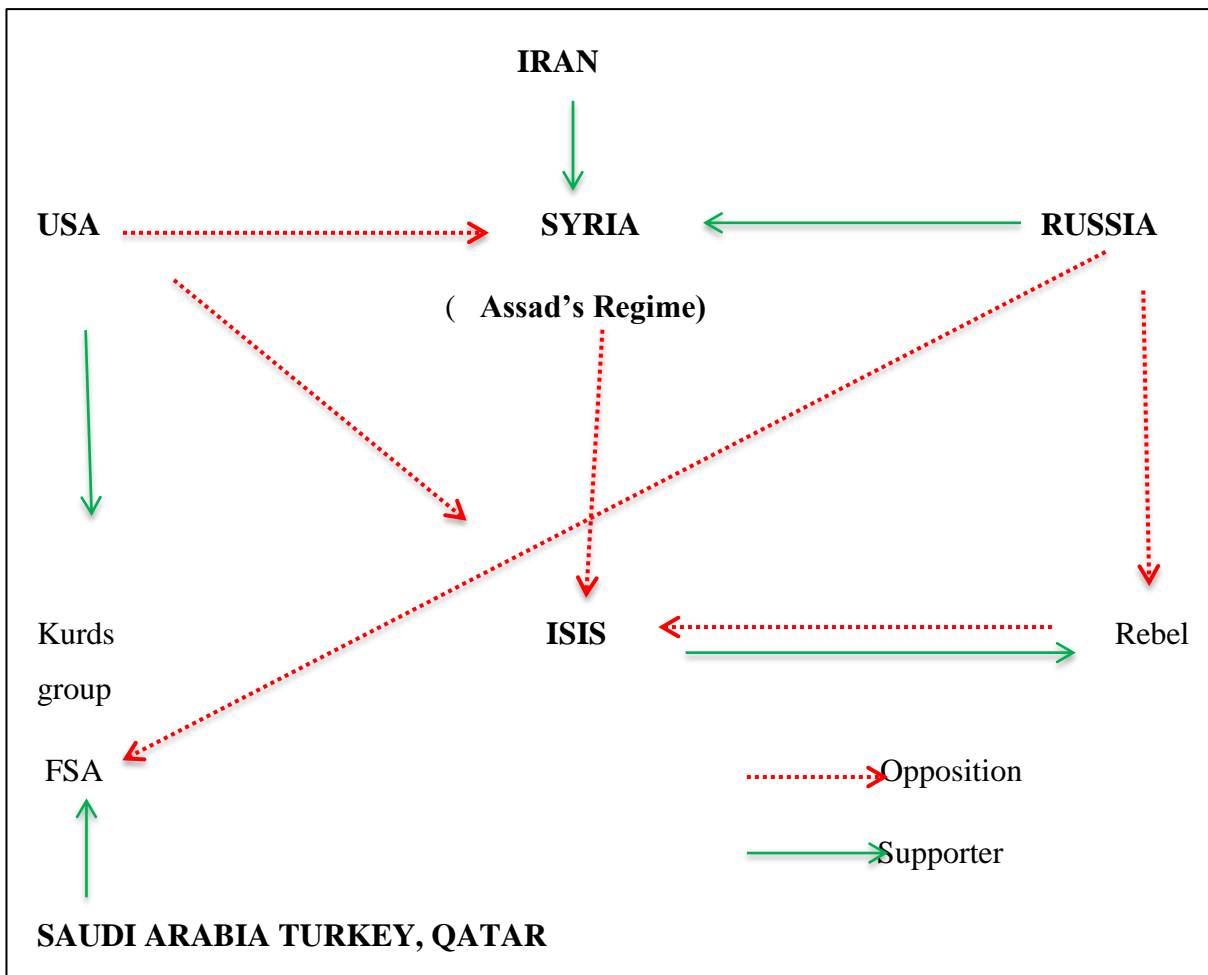


Figure III. 2

Figure: Key regional players in the Syrian war (Prepare by the Researcher)

III.3.6 Involvement of Immediate Neighbour

With the spilling of battle along borders to it eventually attracted its neighbors from Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey and with their involvement in Syria also became battle field among neighbours. Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan had entered into the war a little late directly before that they had not played any significant role in the Syrian war. Lebanon is the immediate neighbour⁵¹ of Syria is not officially involved in the war but is greatly affected by it. Since 2011, Lebanon has been experiencing the worst spillover⁵² of Syria conflict, as many insurgents or rebels from both sides of war went to Lebanon to fight each other on Lebanese soil. One of such incident was a blast in mosques in 2013 done by rebels from Syria that killed more than 40 people (Holmes and Siddiq 2013) Thus fight has resultant in Sectarian violence due to the involvement of Shia Hezbollah in the Syrian war has outraged native Sunnis (Bassam 2013). This sectarian violence has divided Lebanon into two major spheres as Sunnis of Lebanon are supporting oppositional rebel groups and Shia's are aligned to the side of Assad (Holmes and Siddiq 2013).

Jordan and Syria, both are historically part of greater Syria, and hence their relation has same historical roots (Nasser 2103). However their relation became strained due to the ongoing civil war and its impact on Jordan, and also attacks⁵³ by ISIS on Jordanian soil. Jordanian government started military intervention⁵⁴ in Syria with the aim of toppled ISIS from its roots when the Jordanian Air Force joined the US intervention around

⁵¹ The role of turkey is already mentioned in the section on oppositional military and political groups in Syrian war: FSA and SNC

⁵² According to Holmes and Siddiq (2013), the involvement of Lebanese Hezbollah in Syrian war was main reason behind the spillover of war.

⁵³ The air strike by Jordanian side escalated when ISIS captured the Mohd Safi Yousef Al- Kasasbeh (Royal Jordanian air force pilot) and burned him to alive while keeping in cage (Chulov and Malik 2015).

⁵⁴ In 2014 on 23 September, the Minister of state for Media Affairs and Communications of Jordan declared that, "We took part in the strikes which are part of our efforts to defeat terrorism in its strongholds." Together with a statement, that same day, of the Jordan Armed Forces, saying their Air Force had at dawn launched strikes against "terrorist groups", and with U.S. announcements that they had begun strikes inside Syria together with partner nations, this brought the Jordan times to conclude that, apparently, Jordan had joined the US-led strikes against ISIL in Syria (Jordan Times 2014, Sep 23).

September 2014⁵⁵ (MEE and agencies 2014). According to Hubbard (2014), Jordan had supported the oppositional moderate insurgent group⁵⁶ known as Southern front and also provided support to its foreign backers⁵⁷ on its soil. In initial days of the war, it had supported the cause of the New Syrian Army⁵⁸.

Israel on the other hand, never confirmed their involvement in the war until December 2017 when according to Reuter staff, Israeli forces confirmed their multiple attacks on attacks on militant of Regime and Hezbollah during last six years as it has been alarmed by increasing role of Iran in Syrian war (Reuter 2017). The intervention of Israel in the Syrian conflict began in 2013, according to Gerges (2013) that also played an important role in morphing the internal arm struggle to the regional war. As in the war, Israel is trying to contain Turkey and other Arab nations with little sign of Turkey and Israel are struggling against each other.

The impact of this war has been widespread as the flames of war have reached the neighbours, and the repercussions are even felt in abroad. The huge migration of the Syrian to Europe has impacted the internal politics of many European countries and EU. Apart from political, it has to impact social and economically both to its neighbours also to Europe and other parts of the world. Hence the next chapter is devoted toward the discussion on the impact of the Syrian conflict in both home and abroad.

⁵⁵ Many militant had tried to enter into Jordan as a result they were expelled by Jordanian border guards. Jihadist troops retaliated after these events by firing inside the Jordan (MEE and agencies 2014).

⁵⁶ Jordan came into war with only objective to fight against the expanding ISIS and their inhuman brutal tactics rather than Syrian government.

⁵⁷ According to Hubbard (2014), Jordan provided a significant ground for proliferation of oppositional groups and even provided weapons and intelligence services which were operated by Operations rooms in Amman administered by Jordan, Saudi Arabia and United nations.

⁵⁸ The New Syrian army was formed in May 2015 by defected Syrian Arab army official and joined by other Arab rebels with an objective to expel ISIS from eastern Syria and liberate the Euphrates valley from their paw. CIA had provide training and advanced weaponry in Jordan (US department of defence , 2016 and Murphy 2015).

CHAPTER IV

Impact of the Syrian conflict: Home and abroad

This chapter provides an insight on the impact of the Syrian conflict on Syria and abroad both. Since the seven years of the war, the consequences are felt worldwide which is revealed through various media and telegenic programs. As a result, the chapter is divided into two parts, the first part focusses on the impact on Syria itself including a discussion on the humanitarian crisis, migration, and atrocities caused on the citizen with special focus on children. The chapter also discusses the gender-based violence against men¹ in this war period. The second part of the chapter discusses on the impact of war in abroad especially on Europe and the immediate neighbours of Syria.

IV.1 Introduction

Motivated by the success of Arab spring, which toppled the entrenched administration in WANA region², numerous demonstrations occurred in Syria with demands focused on achieving political and economic reforms along with some positive changes³ in Assad regime. However, the responses by government and its brutal tactics morphed the protest into a full-fledged war, and that led the half of the Syrian population to leave to other places (Jabber and Zaza 2014).

This ongoing war has impacted every aspect of life in Syria including Society and social fabric of life, led to the loss of political right and damaged economy, and devastated educational infrastructure including power sector, trade, and medical services. However, the impact of war is not limited to the Syrians only, and it has also reached to the other parts of the world beyond the WANA region. It has a huge impact on the world politics, especially on the political affairs EU and European states. In the same line, Issa (2016) had said that the war has many outsized impacts; one of the most well-known impacts

¹ The GBV against women is discussed in chapter fifth

² Especially in Tunisia, Yemen, Libya and Egypt.

³ The positive change for which Syrians are demonstrating includes justice , human right, democracy, equality and equal opportunities for all (Jabber and Zara 2014).

was the disruption of the European politics and economic issues in Europe due to the influx of a large number of refugees⁴. Another well-identified impact was the rampant mushrooming of ISIS amid the Syrian crisis. The growth of ISIS had led to an increase in terrorist attacks abroad from France to U.K, Yemen to Libya (Issa 2016). However, the terrorist attack in Europe increased when refugees entered that sparked security issue and had even encouraged nationalist politicians in exaggerating the European political instability (Demir and Rijnoveanu 2013).

The influx of refugee had destabilized the economic, social and political condition of close neighbors Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan as they are hosting about millions of migrants from Syria. Apart from all these, the involvement of the USA and Russia had started a new era of struggle for influence. Some scholars have gone to that extent of terming their intervention in the war as the resurgence⁵ of the cold war.

The Humanitarian crisis is deep in this conflict as about a million of people had fled from their homes, either globally or internally and many were killed, as UN said till 2015 about 2.5 lakh died in conflict (BBC 2016). About nine in every ten people are living in most indigence condition in camps and neighboring countries (UNHCR 2017). According to UNHCR (2017), Turkey alone is hosting 3.2 million Syrian refugees, mostly living in registered government camps in urban areas. Moreover, the life of those refugees living in Lebanon is a struggle as more than 70% are living below the poverty line, and in Jordan migrants are trapped in exile, living outside camps

IV.2 Syria: Subverted and destabilized

The bloody war in Syria had affected more than half of its population. Before war Syrian population was around 22 million, but due to war more than 11 million were displaced either internally or to other nation in West Asia or Europe. Out of this population, more than 1 million were wounded till March 2015(Stamm and Harness 2016). However, with

⁴Due to large influx of Syrian masses in Europe, many European countries close its border which ultimately led to the blocking of European route from Balkan to Greece (Issa 2016).

⁵ According to Khoury (2015), the interests of both Russia and the US in the Syrian crisis are not compatible with each other as both are struggling for their influence which is seen as a part of a new cold war of global dimension. The author further argued that the Russian intervention in Syrian is seen in the broader terms of now cold war as Russia was trying to establish as solid footing for taking role in either war or making peace in Syria.

the continuation of war, the scene became more deadly as more than 5 00,000 people died in Syria till December 2017.

IV.2 1.Humanitarian crisis: Migration and refugees

In the year 2017, the United Nations stated that the world is facing the worst form of humanitarian crisis since the end of 1945 as more than 20 million in just four countries were facing famine and starvation. Perry Mordaunt, the secretary of state for international development of the United Kingdom, in 2017 declared that 2018 might be bleaker when it comes to the humanitarian crisis (Malnick 2017). It is not only Syria that is facing migration and humanitarian crisis, but there are numerous parts of the world where the suffering of the people remained unreported⁶. However, the crisis of Syria is disastrous than other crisis as more than half of its people left their homes. The below next two subtopics give an insight on the migration and refugees crisis caused by Syrian war

IV. 2.1.1 Migration and refugees

According to Humanitarian Need Overview, since 2011, Syria had entered the seventh year of armed conflict which causes about 13.5 million people to migrate (IOM 2017). About 3.5 million people are either stuck in a besieged area or living it is where hard to reach (OCHA/HNO 2017). According to UNHCR, about 6.1 million people are internally displaced (IOM 2017). In addition to this, another report was published by UNHRC in 2017 which show that approximately 4.2 million have taken refuge in its five neighbouring countries. The number of registered refugees are about 2.7 million in Turkey, 1.07 million in Lebanon, 0.63 million in Jordan and 0.24 million in Iraq and finally 0.118 million in Egypt (UNHCR 2017). About 15000 to 20 000 Syrian civilians are remained trapped in cities inside Syria and are at constant risk to the crossfire of the ongoing arm conflict.

⁶ The Syrian crisis is apparent to the world due to huge reporting of the events day by day by media. However many crisis occurred in the world remained unreported. Such as the crisis of the Sudan, Eritrea, Lake chad basin, DRC and others are well not reported by media (UNHRC 2018)

Europe has been profoundly impacted by migrants or refugees that had entered⁷ Europe and continued entering from have been the impetus or the dawn of crisis in the European Union.

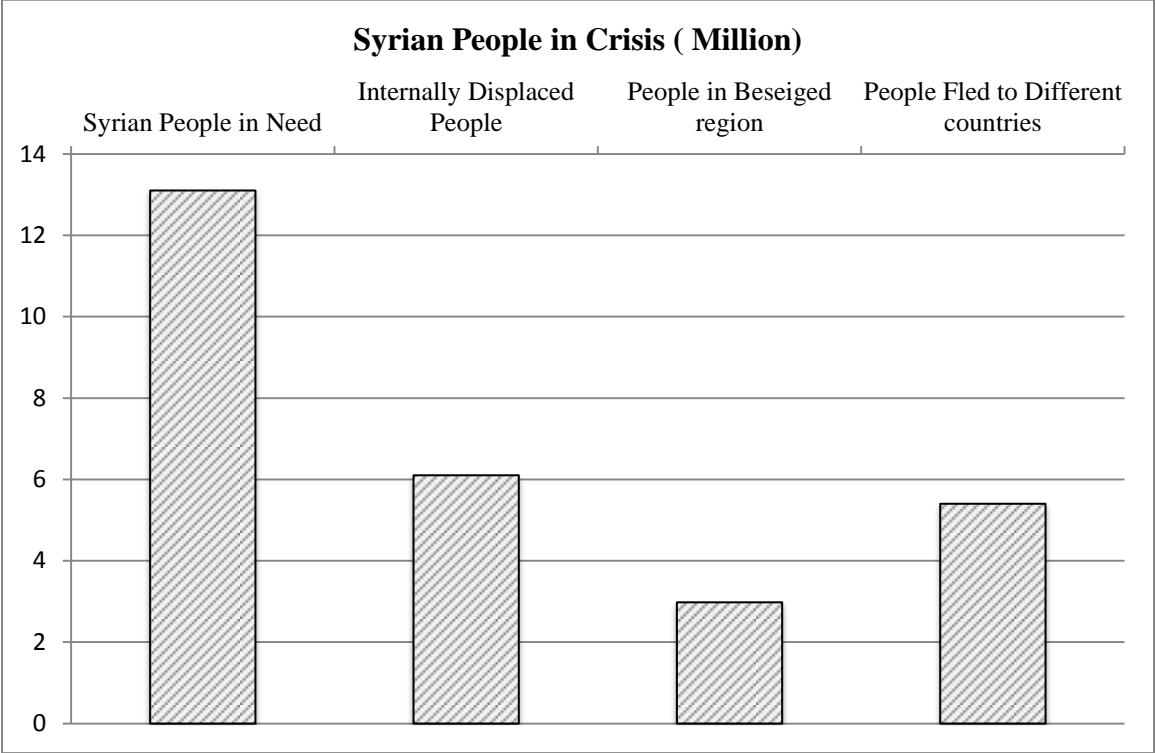


Figure: IV.1

Data chart: Syrian People in crisis (Prepared by the researcher)

Source: <http://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>

IV. 2.1.2 Impact on Infrastructure

In Syria, armed conflict has led to the significant loss of Infrastructure and also political instability that has resulted into an incapacity of the state to carry out primary function including maintenance of law and order, provision of essential service. This scene of political instability Syria has led to severe economic repercussion has severely impeded government ability to execute needed reforms (ESCWA 2016). The Syrian crisis has

⁷ In early month of 2016, more than 1, 35,000 people reached Europe and in 2015 more than millions migrated to Europe through both and sea (BBC 2016).

gendered consequences as in such volatile condition women and girls are the most significant sufferer in Syria (UNHCR 2016).

Before 2011, the Syrian literacy rate was around 90%, but due to war about more than 2.8 to 3 million children are out of school or are unable to attend school⁸ regularly (UNICEF 2014 and UNICEF Canada 2016). Child marriages and child labor is prevalent everything as a parent think this is a way to cope up with desperation (UNICEF Canada 2016). According to World Bank, till early 2017, the condition in Syria has more deteriorated as about half of the school, educational, medical facilities and a third of houses are destroyed by ongoing war, and that has impacted economy badly. According to UNICEF, the wealth concentration within elites has resultant into the gap between poor and elites, and over the whole course of the war, about 80% of Syrian now lives in poverty (UNICEF Canada 2016).

IV. 2.1.3 Damage to heritage cities

The Syrian war is not only about the humanitarian crisis, terrorism, increasing migration but also the subsequent loss of livable cities and the necessary infrastructure needed for survival. Most of the world heritage cities are now an ambiguous surfeit of dirt and with some squatter hidden places where people are living in vulnerable conditions. The violent struggle amid rebels groups, ISIS, and the regime has devastated the world heritage sites of Syria such as Damascus, Aleppo, the famous Crac des Chevalier castle, the Citadel of Qal'at Salah El-Din (one of the UNESCO heritage site), the beautiful heritage villages of the northern part of the Syria, Palmyra, and Bosra (UNESCO 2013). The prolonged conflict had destabilized the infrastructure including sanitation, water, electricity, and additional social infrastructure also destructed such as school and healthcare system; most of them are rigorously damaged and destroyed in these cities (Bijlani 2017)

IV. 2.1.4 Casualties: death toll in the war

With seven years of war, the exact death casualties are uncertain as different organization/groups working inside have different data and numbers. However on an

⁸ About 33 % of Syrian school became unusable, according to UNCEEF, either schools are used a military shelters or destroyed completely by attacks (Chappell 2017).

estimate of 0.4 million to 0.55 million people died due to war by a different fraction but still, there are many undocumented deaths.

According to the World Bank, the death toll reached more than 400,000 died since 2011 (Human right watch 2018). However, the Syrian network of human right claims the death toll from March 2011 to March 2017 is around 206,903 (only civilians, not militia or rebels) it also includes 24000 children and 23000 females. In this 94 %, people are killed by Syrian – Iran - Russian militias (SNHR 2017).

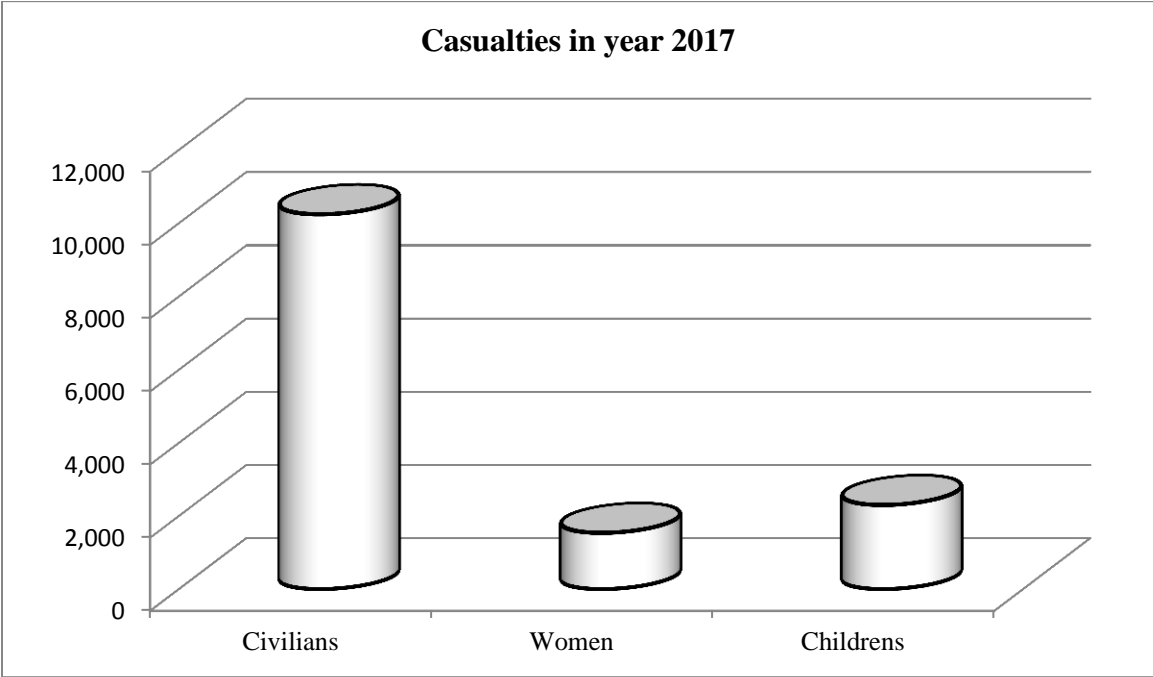


Figure IV.2

Chart: Data from the Syrian network of Human right

Source: <http://www.iamsyria.org/death-tolls.html>

In the year 2017 alone more than 10,240 civilians are killed in Syria including 2,298 children and 1, 536 women’s (SNHR 2017). The Syrian Observatory for human rights has documented the casualties around 344, 6612 people in Syrian since March 2011 till December 2017. Of these around 19 thousand children fewer than 19 died in conflict (SOHR 2017). Apart from casualties, women, children, and youth are hardest hit by war as living without houses, loved and in dire need of necessities.

Children hardly come to mind when it comes to the victims of war even though suffer similar to the women and men in any war. However, the Syrian war particularly has been deadliest was for children till yet as declared by many intergovernmental organizations. The impact on child always remains hidden behind the outcome of the war, even though physical damage to their body is apparently visible. The concept of ‘war child’ evolved in Germany during early 1990, only when the children of World War II began discussing their experiences (Bode 2004). Simulate the Syrian war child immensely came out to express their feeling and their thought through media. Hence this chapter gives a special attention on account of Syrian children during the last seven years of war.

IV.2.1.5 Impact on children in Syria war

In recently, the air strike campaigning by Assad regime in eastern ghouta of Syria had killed more than 270 people in three days (The Hindu 2018, 22 Feb), that had killed more than 50 children alone (BBC 2018). The viral picture of deceased Aylan Kurdi, who died by drowning while crossing the Mediterranean to reach Greece, had made the world to realize the horrific condition of Syrian people due to war (Withnall 2015).

According to UNICEF, 2017 had been the worst years for Syrian children⁹ as most of the places that are deemed to be safe for children, school, parks, playground, hospital and their own homes are ripped by war (UNICEF 2018).

As the war, with not ending symptoms, raging the number of child death¹⁰ are also increasing as till 2016 in every four deaths one was a child (Ireland 2017) and about 8.4 million Syrian children, either in Syria or outside, are in great need of humanitarian including 3 million refugees with thousands of children born dire situation, also in camps, who are not aware of life beyond camps (Unicef 2018). In the first two years of the war, the guns and arms were the chief weapons used in war and shootings by them were the main cause behind the death of innocent civilians and out of these deaths, according to

⁹ According to UNICEF (2017), around 2.3 million children are now living as a refuge in neighbouring countries of Syria.

¹⁰ Many children in Syrian war die due to the indirect effect of war. The war wiped out the sufficient infrastructure needed for the survival of human being as a result due to the absence of food, medicine and vaccination led to the innumerable death of children.

Lancet of global health journal, 9 % deaths were of children (Ireland 2017). The death of children doubled when bombs¹¹ and shelling¹² replaced guns.

Apart from the death toll, another symptom that is apparent in the Syrian war is the recruitment of children for various purposes in war. According to Chappell (2017), UNICEF said that more than 851 children are recruited by various rebel groups and were used in war for different purposes; this figure doubles the figure of 2015 in term of recruitment. They are used¹³ for fighting directly in the war on frontlines, as suicide bombers and prison officers (UNCIEF 2017).

Casualties of children are not the only aspect related to them, but the war has given dire consequences to them including stress, tension, and retardation in growth, post-traumatic disorders, sexual abuse, and child marriage. In a survey of 450 children and adult, organized by NGO savethechildren, had revealed that the more than million children are exposed to constant mental stress as 1 in every 4 children are at risk of severe mental disorder on Syrian land and nearly 2.4 million Syrian children across West Asia, Eurasia, and Europe are going through stresses, adversities and unpredictability what will happen next as a refugee (Save the children org 2017).

Child marriage is one of the growing problems both in Syrian and especially in Syrian refugee communities. This is not a new fact among Syrian children, just that the situation of war has exacerbated the climate due to an increase of poverty, lack of primary needs, increase in gender inequality and, decline education and health facility that caused the child marriage to happen¹⁴. Even before the war, more than 13% girl child in Syria were married before the age of 18 (UNICEF 2014).

¹¹ Many children, in urban cities such as Aleppo and Damascus, killed directly due to shelling or by dropped bombs (Ireland 2017).

¹² According to Ireland (2017), in 2013, 19 % of war casualties were children and number of children death climbed to 20 % in year 2015 (Chappell 2017). This numbered reached to 23 % by the end 2016 due to continuous use of shelling, bombs and guns

¹³ Those children which are recruited by rebels faction are gradually taking parts in combated role and also as a executioners of plans used in war against opponents (UNICEF 2017).

¹⁴ According to Savethechildren (2017), many parents married off their daughter at a tender age just to enter into Jordan and other neighbouring countries. As the girls or a woman who marries to Jordanian men, sometimes gets sponsorship that allows them to move out of the camps along with family.

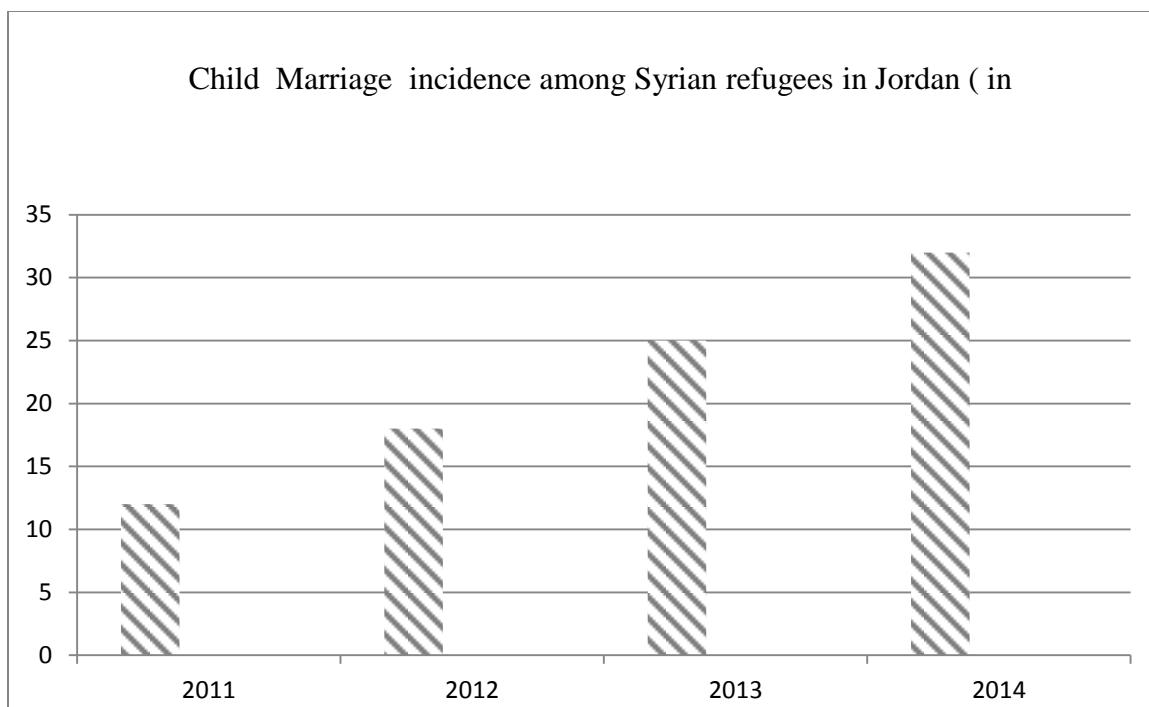


Figure IV.3

Figure: Child Marriage incidence among Syrian refugees in Jordan¹⁵

Source: UNICEF- A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan, 2014

In Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, each year number of child marriage among Syrian refugees is increasing. In Lebanon, around 41 % girl child below 18 got married, and much marriage remained unregistered in 2014. A similar case is in Iraq and Jordan; the above chart quietly indicates the increasing percentage of marriages.

Since the beginning of every day, the news has been full of casualties with special mention of children. Children are special creation as they are dependent on the care, empathy, and attention of adults who love them. In this war much time the different forces have especially targeted kids to fulfill their objectives. Apart from casualties due to heavy shelling or chemical weapons, many children died while crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. Many research works were done on sexual violence have revealed the horrific incident occurred with children.

¹⁵ The numbers of child marriages which were recorded by the Jordan government occurred among Syrian communities

IV.3. Atrocities against civilians: camps, detention, and sexual harassment during the war

Syrian women, men, young and old, all were subjected to deliberate and discriminate attacks and. Syrian people underwent arbitrary arrest, both by the Syrian government and their militias and have suffered or experienced several methods of torture¹⁶ in detention (Nasar 2013). The rebel groups opposing the Assad regime have had carried out numerous serious abuses including killing, torture, kidnapping, forceful confinement and use of child (Human right watch 2016). According to the Human right watch (2016), the extremist group also like opposition rebel factions, e.g. Jabhat al Nusra, and ISIS has been carrying out the systematic and widespread human right violation.

The detention center and camps where Syrian civilians are kept while interrogation is similar to what Agamben's conceptualization of camps and 'bare life.' The Agambenian concept of bare life is about the reduction of a human to his or her biological existence only while their political existence is withdrawn by those who have power. The person or administration who has powers in their hands decides whom to exclude or include in the state's political and legal representation (Agamben 1998). Their lives are bare, devoid of social and political rights, as some people are sidelined on the suspicions of being threats. Many checkpoints have been installed to figure out between the supporter and non-supporter of the Assad regime. Thousands of Syrian migrants risk their lives to reach safer places by crossing numerous borders with a desperate aim to make life better, could be seen as such bare lives.

VI.3.1 Gender-based violence: victim both men and women

“A man would never speak of this. Why should he? We know that everyone in jail is raped – it is normal.” -Sami, Men's Focus Group Discussion, KRI (UNHCR 2017).

¹⁶ The incommunicado detention and torture remain rampant in detention facilities during the all faces of war

Syria is now one of the most unstable countries to live at the current time, citizens in Syria are engrossed with myriad problems, battling each day. With the escalation of war, the number of human right exploitation increased including starvation, torture and sexual abuse. Many studies by the human right organization, especially report of UNHCR, found the widespread sexual violence against men (VAM), which was more rampant after the dawn of war. In Syria, during the war man is both perpetrator and victim of sexual violence.

A UNHCR study found that rape, sexual exploitation, and torture are common with Men and boys by multiple parties both in inside Syria and outside in host countries (UNHCR Staff 2017). The victim of VAM had revealed that the process contains the extensive and brutal torture and the victims range from an old man in his 80's to a juvenile of 10 years (Alameri 2017). According to Alameri (2017), the main perpetrator was armed groups in the war-torn country and attacks outside Syria were designated as “opportunistic” use by either refugee or local men. In an interview with Chynoweth, Ahmed, a refugee living in Lebanon, narrated the tragic story of a deceased uncle in the detention of Syria. He said “a few months after he was released, he told us – he broke down, crying in front of us – that there was not one spot on his body that had not been abused by an electric drill. He had been raped”. After his release, the person became an alcoholic and stopped eating proper food as a result died due to kidney failure (Chynoweth 2017). The testimonial collected by UNHCR staff in their surveys also reveals the similar horrific tragedies of men. In this regard, UNHCR report reveals that many times armed men had entered villages in Syria and raped men and boys as narrated by interviewed men. Similarly, in asylums and camps, the boys have suffered sexual abuse at the hands of men in their community or other refugee males (UNHCR staff 2017). According to Alameri (2017), those children who lie in the bracket of the laborer and those who are teenage, are the most vulnerable as always at the brink of being sexually assaulted.

Like men, children are also sexually abused by both rebel opponent and Assad's forces. As Surk (2014) in this context discussed, a report published by UN revealed the situation of children, which shows that the children were brutally tortured, maimed and even sexually abused by both rebel and Assad forces. Many rebel factions even employ them

as a combatant during fights. Lara, a female respondent, in her conversation with UNHRC staff, stated that the main reason why people left Syria is not just shelling or bullet but because of fear of honor or of being sexually abused any time by anyone (Chynoweth 2017). A group of Syrian women staying in Jordan protected that more than 30 to 40 percent of all men, kept in detention must have experienced sexual violence in the hand of officers. In Lebanon, a 2013 rapid assessment of 520 Syrian and PRS male youth and boys (age 12-24) revealed that about 10.8 %had experienced an incident of sexual harm or harassment in the previous three months (UNHCR 2017).

Since the women chastity is Syria and other parts of the world are attached to the honour of the family. As a result, society is more concerned with the women and their safety. During the different years of the Syrian war, women are brutally abused in many forms by various perpetrators. Hence a separate next chapter is solely dedicated to the study of the violence inflicted on the women.

VI.4. The increased risk of terror activities worldwide

Among all consequence, the most horrifying and most significant challenge was the rise terrorism and expansion of ISIS, especially when Al-Qaeda, its branch ISIS, and its allies had built northern part of Syria and Iraq into a proto-state (Herar 2016). Since 2013 May till the end of that year, ISIS alone carried out around 46 attacks in different parts of the world, and since 2014 the figures for attacks doubled. Since 2015, around 100 attacks were carried out by this organization per months both in Syrian and other parts of the world (START Background Report 2016). Besides this, the involvement of external powers especially western countries in Syrian crisis had provided an opportunity to ISIS and other extremist organization to claim that the great powers are at war with the Islamic religion (Lister et al. 2017). According to START report (2016), around 5000 terrorist attacks are carried by the ISIS between the span of four years form 2012 to 2015. These attacks killed more than 33,000 people and injured 41,000, and along with this many people were captured as a hostage (Brady 2017).

Al Qaeda has reincarnated in the shadow of ISIS and the chaos of Syrian war and established its local affiliate which has become 'largest guerrilla army in history' (Miriello and Hume 2017). It has placed itself as with aim to overthrown government and establishes an Islamic state that presented it as itself as a moderated substitute for Sunni rebels and units.

According to Jenkins (2013), many jihadist foreign fighters who are engaged war hiding any of the dominant groups such as ISIS, rebel groups, al- Qaeda, and Jabhat al – Nusrah, act as jihadi tourists who take a picture and upload to social media boasting their friend. Most people in western countries and other parts of the world fear that these jihadist fighter, who learn few combat skill while staying with extremist, when return home may pose a danger to other people with their higher chances of getting engage in terrorist activities, (Jenkins 2013). There was also fear of recruitment of foreign individuals by terrorist outfit for carrying out a terrorist operation in the West or European countries. One such example was of Muhammad Atta, who was recruited by al Qaeda to lead 9/11 attacks. However, he initially went to join the war in Afghanistan (Jenkins 2013). From 2014 many Al Qaeda affiliates are taking advantage of political instability in West Asia due to the Syrian war, for taking their operation particularly in North Africa, Yemen and Syria (US department of state, 2014).

It is not only about terrorist attacks, like ISIS, and other terrorist organizations also have radicalized people through their propaganda using medium of media. Which was visible in the case of Zale Thompson, a USA citizen, who killed four police officers in New York under the influences of the online video on beheadings done by IS, al Qaeda, and al Shabaan. One such most famous attack was when, inspired by online information on beheadings by, ISIS and al Shabaan had killed four police officers in New York (Algar et al. 2014). The ISIS and al Qaeda inspired member had carried many time brutal killing of innocent to terrorize Western and European countries. In 2015 December, one Muslim couple killed 14 people and injured many simultaneously in San Bernardino, as they both were inspired by the extremist thoughts propagated by the ISIS (Sherrano et al. 2015).

According to the Institute for the Study of War (2015), the "individuals inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham and with links to al Qaeda conducted the many terrorist attacks in Syrian and round the world." The Attack on the Charli Hebdo one was carried out by one of the Islamic branches of al Qaeda that killed 12 people in France (Rayner 2015). Another instance in France itself when a man named Amedy Coulibaly had killed four people whom he held hostage in a grocery shop, who was inspired by ISIS (Payne 2015).

Before the Syrian war, ISIS had some existing infrastructure that gave it an opportunity to mobilize rebel group in its favor that eventually helped to attract more resource and more fighters (US department of state 2013). The Syrian war gave enough space to ISIS for grooming as today its network spreads too many other parts of the world with the development of its branches in Egypt, Philippines, Indonesia, Somalia, Bangladesh and Mali (Osborne 2016).

IV.5. Impact of the Syrian conflict in Europe

According to Amnesty International (2015), the year 2015 had experienced the worst refugee crisis as around 19.5 million people migrated around the world¹⁷. In the year 2015, alone more than 13 million people claimed for asylum¹⁸ in Europe¹⁹. With more than 0.4 million application for asylum in Germany as it stood at the first position²⁰. Previously, European countries had welcomed Syrian refugees generously but due to an unprecedented influx of refugees (Tyyska et al. 2017) and the rise of xenophobic²¹

¹⁷ Even though record numbers of refugees have reached Europe in last few years, still countries in west Asia, South East Asia and Africa are hosting majority of refugees (Amnesty international 2015).

¹⁸ According to UNHCR (2016), during period from April 2011 to Dec 2015, about 897,645 Syrian applied for asylum in Europe. The top recipient countries are Germany and Serbia with 59 % application and Sweden, Hungary, Denmark, Austria and Netherland received around 29%.

¹⁹ According to European commission around mid-December more than 5,000 per day migrants cross Turkey to reach Greece Europe, which was reduced around 80 per day during mid-march 2016 (European commission 2017).

²⁰ After Germany, Hungary got highest numbers of the application for the refugees status till the end of 2015 (BBC, 4 March 2016).

²¹ According to UNESCO (2017), the word xenophobia, comes from Greek word Xenos- the stranger and phobos- fear. Originally it stand for 'fear for stranger' but usually it I taken as ' hate for stranger'

attitude²² toward refugees had resultant into dissent of European people toward particular government in Europe. Due to this refugee crisis, Fascism and far right-wing politics have risen in Europe as new party emerged winning the heart and mind of the people such as the Marine le Pen party in France, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in Germany and UK Independence party in Britain (Lodhi 2017).

IV.5.1 Impact on immigration policies of European countries

EU has made attempts to the solve refugee crisis in Europe through settlement, and humanitarian assistant, reunion with family and visas but an attempt has resultant into a division between the members and opposition in EU (Tyyska et al. 2017). Even many countries which first open the door for Syrian refuge had started closing door due to large incoming of people that caused stress on host countries citizen either by closing their borders or by deporting²³(UNHRC 2016).

According to Valdaru (2017), this crisis brought a considerable change in the immigration policies of several countries that are used to be very open (as part of Schengen area) and hence paved path for legal or identity crisis. Even with massive immigration, Greece and Italy did fulfill the EU's Dublin regulation and allowed the free movement of refuge to move inside Europe. This caused the unmanageable burden on the member of EU as most of the refugees ended up in Germany, Sweden, Austria, Finland and Benelux nations²⁴ (Lehne 2016).

.Xenophobia can be understood as "an attitudinal orientation of hostility against non-natives in a given population"

²² Due to the fear that the extreme increase in muslim refugees will enable the muslim people to impose the Sharia law in the European countries, which is against the European liberal couture (Lodhi 2017).

²³ Deporting to countries from where refuges are traveling into EU countries.

²⁴ Benelux is defined as BE is Belgium, Ne is Netherland and Lux is Luxemburg.

IV.5.1.1 Quota System and resettlement of refugees

According to Brady (2017), a quota system²⁵ was applied to EU countries which aimed to resettle Syrian refugees landing in Greece and Italy to other nations in Europe. However not every state supported²⁶ it, and in particular, the UK chooses to remain out of this system (BBC 2016, March 4). The countries such as Germany, France, Italy, and Malta supported the proposition on the other hand many central and eastern nations such as Hungary, Poland, Estonia and Slovakia opposed it strongly (Dockery 2017). Moreover, those countries, which favored this system, had pledged to resettle 30,900 Syrian refugees, which is just 0.7 % of total migrants, which is a way below needed (Amnesty International 2016).

However, the thing does not go in seamlessly as after a few days Hungary, erected fence, a razor wire along its border Serbia to reduce the migrant's incoming and they also sealed their terminal to stop refugee's movement to other EU nation. Germany, on the other hand, opened its border for Syrian refugee with the announcement in response to what happened in Hungary that "we will manage it" (Dockery 2017).

The event of November 13, 2015, when terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS killed 130 people, revealed that along with the innocent people some perpetrators also entered Europe. According to Maher (2017), since 2015 there has been an increase²⁷ in terrorist attacks in Europe. These terrorist attacks boosted the xenophobia among European people.

²⁵ This quota system, is based on Dublin asylum rule, was designed to fair distribution or relocation of refugee in 28 EU countries. Under this each of EU nation was assigned with a percentage of population that is quota percentage, to handle. This distribution among EU nations was based on national population and wealth of that country. And also if a country refuses to share the burden then it has pay to the other country about 250,000 euros per person for settling their share of population (Baczynska 2016).

²⁶ The significant surge of people caused stress on economic system of many EU nations which were already facing their own economic crisis, and also EU's institutional and legislative framework was also not capable to deal with high influx (Lehne 2016).

²⁷ According to Maher (2017), the major factor that increased the terrorist attacks are : 1) Europe's poorly integrated Muslim population, 2) its nearness to crisis region of West Asia and North Africa, 3) increase in the vulnerable section in Europe due to influx of refugee

IV.5.2 Insurgence of Right-wing nationalism in Europe

This Xenophobic attitude with rising immigration into Europe led to the rise of far-right politics in Europe. These right-wing parties²⁸ enforce the ideologies that are anti-immigration, anti-Muslim and anti-sentiments with a nationalist and populist aspect. Apart from rising immigration, two other major factor that played an imperative role making a path for the right wing is the unstable economic situation in Europe. Most of these parties used populism as a tool for influencing public (Venho 2016). The rhetoric speeches help in gaining support that is visible from the electoral results. With the surge in migrants especially after the Syrian crisis which causes the economic burden on European countries, the scene changed in Europe. Public along with far rightist ministers began demonstrating against the immigrant along with the demand of their deportation, and also against parties or minister supporting that helped them to gain remarkable support during recent a few years. According to Venho (2016), these parties gained remarkable result in elections of many countries in Europe, e.g. France, Austria, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, and Hungary.

IV.6 Impact on Syrian neighbours

The Syrian war since its beginning has been impacting both the world and especially its neighbours. The Spillover effect is worrisome in Lebanon, which is still going after seven years. The war has impacted every sphere of its neighbours, from political to social and economic.

IV.6.1 Impact on the political system

The spillover effect began with the movement of refugees²⁹ from Syria to neighboring states. *Lebanon* has one of the worst experiences of Spillover as the Syrian war extends to its territory. The fighting amid supporter and opponent reached to Lebanon as rebel

²⁸ The features of these recent growing far right parties are different those parties arose in the past before this Syrian crisis (Venho 2016).

²⁹ According to Colling (2013), “ since the beginning of hostilities in Syria in March 2011, around 10 of thousands of Syrian people reached to Lebanon in year 2013, which causes enormous pressure on economy of country and also led to rise in local tension and strife.

traveled to fight on Lebanese soil (Holmes and Siddiq 2013). With the infiltration of Syrian rebel in Lebanon, the suicide bombing became a common event. One such prominent suicide car bomb attack was in March 2014, in Bekka valley that killed four people along with local Hezbollah leader in Hezbollah dominated region. From then the Hezbollah dominated regions, especially the eastern and Lebanon and southern Beirut, have suffered many suicide bomb and deadly attacks due to their support to the Assad regime and sending troops in Syrian to support Shia in the war against Sunni led rebels groups (Al Jazeera 2014, March 17).

In 2014, both ISIS and Al Nusra infiltrated into Lebanon and started capturing its territories. One such example was the invading of Aarsal by the joint group of ISIS. Again in August 2014 Al Nusra raided and seized the northeastern Aarsal. These two prompted the Lebanese military to attack along with support from Syrian air strikes. The Hezbollah leader, in June 2015 claimed that the both Al Nusra and ISIS had captured territories in Lebanon that had to exaggerate clash amid Shiite Hezbollah and Sunni extremists (Masi 2015). According to Holmes and Siddiq (2013), this situation fueled the revival of sectarian violence in the country. The ethnic and political composition of Lebanon resembles that of Syrian, due to geographical proximity and the political parties are aligned and described by support opposition to the Syrian regime (Colling 2013).

Lebanon's two political blocks March 8 and March 14 are siding different groups in the Syrian conflict. The March 14³⁰, the political alliance which is led by Sunni Muslim "Future movement" political party that is supportive of Syrian Sunni rebels against Assad, and on the other hand March 8 is predominantly Shia Muslim alliance run by Hezbollah and Amal³¹ (Colling 2013). These two alliances have been on bitter odd since the time of their origin, and again this war has further divided them. Difference between these two alliances had led to the postponement of a legislative election that was planned

³⁰ On March 14 2015, during Cedar Revolution when protestors from different sect and all political groups gathered together against both the Syrian military presence in Lebanon and March 8 alliance. This marked the largest gathering in Lebanese history as they demanded Sovereignty, freedom and independence. This movement was led by Saad Hariri and his son along with other prominent figures (Salamey 2016)

³¹ The two famous Shia party in Lebanon

to held on June 2013 and further with the resignation of PM Najib Mikati, the two block failed to form a cabinet. That led to political deadlock till 2014.

In *Jordan*, according to Colling (2013), apart from the high influx of refugee it si not affected much in its political affairs as happened in Lebanon. It had experienced some limited attacks by Syrian rebel groups especially on border regions as a few rocket and mortar fire. Sometimes it also has experienced the protest and unrest in refuge areas due to the inhabitable condition of refugee camps. However to reduce the conflict spillover and to limit Jordanian³² to enter into Syria, the Jordanian government have deployed their military on the border (Colling 2015).

Similarly, according to Colling (2015), *Turkey* has similar experiences across border areas like Jordan as bullet and shelling keep landing in Turkish territory precariously. Many time conflict spillovers occurred in Turkey. In June 2012, a Turkish reconnaissance jet was shot down by Syrian killing pilot over the Mediterranean that led to beefing of security forces and air defense along the border. Turkish government blamed militants aligned with the Syrian government for the attacks (Celikkan 2012). Again in the same year in October, a mortar shelling by Syrian military landed in Akcakale town, killing 5 Turkish people women and four children and wounding eight people as a result Turkish forces responded against the Syrian troops (Celikkan 2012). Many such incidents occurred that killed many Turkish citizens³³.

IV.6.2 Impact on the Social and economic life

Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq being immediate neighbour due to geographical proximity are highly affected by the Syrian war both socially and economically. They at first allowed Syrian in their territory to settle or live in camps but as time ran with no hope of ending the war, these people started moving inside into to the local cities and

³² They can be militant, extremist and smugglers.

³³ According to Colling (2015), “ in year 2013 , a suicide car bomb exploded in Hatay province of Turkey killing 43 people which was followed by another similar incident of detonation in Reyhnlı region killing 13 people.

town³⁴. The spillover heavily impacted Lebanon as it was already a weak nation. The crisis had badly impacted the different aspects of Lebanese citizen. It has adversely impacted life on different levels including increasing demographics, regressing economy, exhausting social services, complicating politics, and decreasing security as well as worsened the life of displaced Syrians themselves.

IV. 6.2.1 Deterioration of financial system

The impact of incoming Syrian people has highly impacted the economic structure of the host country. The impact is so high back hands then tell confidence of the host communities and also affected the relationship between the countries. Syrian War has blocked the trade between the countries and has been an impediment in trade from Levant region to outside. The impact is so depressing that investors lost interest in the in this Syria and its neighbouring countries that's crippled the foreign investment in the in the region that supplementary in their negative growth. This negative economic growth further pushed the poor countries into the dearth of the financial burden and seriously impacted their meager resources. Since the advent of refugee influx in Turkey, the government of turkey has spent around 1% of its GDP on hosting Syrian refugees (Esen and Binatli 2017).

Jordan administration, since the advent of the Syrian war, according to Jordanian Economic and Social Council, had spent more than \$1.2 billion on providing necessity items to the Syrian people till the end 2015(Achilli 2015). Apart from earlier mentioned data, the MoPIC ministry of Jordan revealed another data of \$7.9 billion which are spent on hosting Syrian migrants (Jordan Independent Economy watch 2015). According to the Jordan Independent economic watch (2012), many studies and research did Jordan revealed the increase in debt on Jordan over the past a few years due to the massive inflow of Syrian. The largest increase in debt occurred in the year 2012³⁵.

³⁴ According to Esen and Binatli (2017), this pattern of movement from camps to cities in search livelihood is prominent feature in Turkey.

³⁵ In this year the energy crisis in Jordan was at peak and also because of exaggerating conflict in Syria, the refugee began to flow into Jordan in the same year (Jordan Independent economic watch 2012).

The refugee's burden, according to MoPIC ministry, has worsened the basic facilities of the country which pressurizes the public finance. This burden also pressed the government to increase expenditure on providing subsidies on water, electricity, food item, gas, and other items; all these situations has further inflated the economy of Jordan (Jordan Independent economic watch 2012). Moreover, the influx of migrant also a negative impact on the housing sector as the rent in Jordan has increased to the exorbitant price, the rate either tripled or even quadrupled in the border zone and another area is having a high number of refugees. (Achilli 2015)

In *Lebanon*, according to ILO (2013), this conflict had an impact on both the economy and labour market significantly. The Lebanese economy and labor market are more hurt by the ongoing crisis than other sectors. However due to less foreign investment along with high trade deficit the real estate and tourism sector (Lebanon economy was highly dependent on this two-sector) also slowed which has ultimately slowed economy of Lebanon. According to UNDP, 2015, the economy of Lebanon plummeted with debt as it rises to 141% of its GDP in 2013 as a consequence the GDP growth reduced from 10% in 2010 to 1% in 2014 (Cherri et al. 2014). In the year 2014, in the country, the unemployment rate coupled to 34% as one out of five Lebanese was unemployed (UN 2014). Additionally, the Lebanese government and world bank estimations revealed that the since 2011, Government and World Bank estimates reveal that the number of poor people in Lebanon increased directly to double numbers since the dawn of the war. The poor currently living in Lebanon is about 2.1 million out of them more than 336,000 are living with less than US\$2.4 per day, which is under Lebanon's lowest poverty line (UN2014).

IV.6.2.2 Impact on the Social life of neighbours

According to Esen and Binatli (2017), there have been many different arguments in term of the impact of Syrian refugees on the society of *Turkey*. The excessive arrival of migrants from Syria has been a curse in the informal sector and on another hand boon for formal sector. As in informal sector due to excessive supply of labor, the

native are displaced from their jobs and wages to decrease and informal sector due the impact is unambiguous (Del Carpio and Wagner 2015). According to Ceritoglu et al. (2017) and Tumen (2016), in Turkey, it was found, after analyzing a micro-level dataset³⁶ from the household survey, that the Syrian refugees increase unemployment and formal employment, but decrease informal employment. Other than employment the refugee inflow has led to an upsurge in the prices³⁷ of food, rent, and housing charges. This crisis also caused a significant reduction in the internal migration of native into the affected region (Akgündüz et al. 2015).

Jordan, according to UHDP (2014), before the beginning of the war Jordan was already suffering from many problems including the infrastructure unavailability such as non-availability of better housing, sanitation and safe drinking water and the problem of management of solid waste management. The fulfillment of the local demand including the availability of the cash, energy resources, social services support and another primary item also exacerbated to incoming of the Syrian into their land. Hence threatened the sustainability of quality service provision in the most affected Governorates (Jordan Independent Economy watch 2015). With estimated millions of Syrian in the country has heightened the competition for access to schooling, health facilities, public utilities and infrastructure (Jordan Independent Economy watch 2015). According to UNDP (2014), the unemployment³⁸ rate in the country has increased as Syrian competing with locals for the job, especially ready to work at lower wages.

In *Lebanon*, Syrians are concentrated mostly in peripheral towns which are poorer than the other region of the country and hence worsening their living conditions. With the influx of refugees, the employment opportunities worsened³⁹, same as Jordan, due to the surplus availability of skilled and unskilled labors (ILO 2013). Mostly Syrian arrived in

³⁶ Which involve the comparison between the labour market outcome of Turkish labour before and after migration of the Syrian people.

³⁷ According to Tumen (2016), the decline in prices of commodity is higher in formal labour intensive sector than informal labour intensive sector.

³⁸ The unemployment rate in Jordan increased from 14.5 % to 22.1% between short period from 2011 to 2014 (Cherri et al 2014).

³⁹ As Syrian workers started working for lower incomes for longer time without social benefits which led to decrease in both wages and job for Lebanese (ILO 2013).

poor communities hence posed an enormous challenge to the country's finance. Demographically, in Lebanon, at the end of 2014, one out of four was de facto Syrian or Palestinian refugee migrated from Syria (Cherri et al. 2016). According to UN (2014), in Lebanon urban densification rose to one-third with a population⁴⁰ density rises from 400 to 520 persons per square kilometer. Due to additional magnitudes of the population, the public infrastructure of Lebanon became exhausted, including the national health system, infrastructure, and education. In the health sector impact are highly visible, as Lebanon is experienced a 27% hike in tuberculosis cases since 2011⁴¹ (Cherri et al. 2014). Due to the increasing burden on the medical sector, Lebanon had decreased access to primary health care because of perceived reduced quality of care, overcrowding, and increased waiting time (El-Jardali et al.. 2014). Research published by the Ministry of Environment of Lebanon in 2014 traced the range of damage to the already fragile environment in Lebanon. This research showed the wastage of municipal finance on the management of waste particularly in peripheral towns of Lebanon has increased by 40%, and 92%. As a result, since 2011, wastewater pollution has increased by 33%.5 (UN 2014 and Cherri et al. 2014).

The above chapter provided a comprehensive discussion on the impacts of the Syrian. Since the beginning of the war, the telegenic reports were full of the damages occurred due to extensive bombing and shelling due to which the people of Syria lost their livable places along with the love ones. Hence an in-depth study was needed to show the grief and anger of helpless Syrians.

The next chapter of the research gives an insight on the women of the Syrian and violence inflicted on them.

⁴⁰ Many Syrian are living in informal settlement that is around 1,421 in 2014. With increasing numbers the informal settlement also increasing (UN 2014).

⁴¹ Since 2011, Lebanon is witnessing lack in medical staff , equipment and medication due to financial constraint and increasing population (Cherri et al 2014)

Chapter V

Women and the Syrian conflict

The third hypothesis of this research is about the violence inflicted on Syrian women in Syria and abroad and in this chapter this hypothesis is examined. Hence the whole chapter is based on the Syrian women and Gender-based violence (GBV). The chapter also gives prominent examples of the GBV happened in other parts of the world. The chapter begins with the discussion on the basic concept of the GBV with some examples including those in Liberia, Rwanda, and Uganda. The other parts of the chapter dwell with war-related violence inflicted on women especially rape and sexual harassment such as how women are a target in raids and at checkpoints and also the atrocities imposed on women during the raid, detention and in camps. Later part of the chapter discusses about the sexual exploitation of the Syrian women in the neighbouring countries and abroad.

V.1 Introduction

Women and Men, both experiences the violence in conflicts differently as wars are always gendered both in causes and consequences (Asaf 2017). Women are a most vulnerable section as according to UNFPA (2017), the violence against women is one of the most widespread human right violations in the globe as it knows no social political and economic boundaries. Gendered based violence has been defined in a myriad form including every aspect of society especially oriented toward women, the victims of violence. In this context, GBV is described as the violence committed toward women and girls and the thinking that the women's role as subordinate to men is the cause of violence perpetrated against them (IASC¹ 2005).

Hence GBV is defined, by IASC, the as 'any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially-ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and women (IASC 2005, in UNFPA Regional Syria Response Hub 2015). Hence, in short, violence against women (VAW) consists of acts that cause physical, sexual and

¹ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is one of the primary agencies for the coordination of humanitarian assistance. It also involves a unique relationship with many UN and other Humanitarian partners in humanitarian assistance. It was established in year 1992.

mental harassment including a deficit of liberty and these acts break numerous national and universal laws about a human right. Similarly United Nations defined physical abuse inflicted toward women and girls as “ any act of gender-based violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threat of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (Al- Shdayfat 2017).

GBV is not only used to narrate the violence executed on women but also used by some scholar to define the gendered dimension of a certain form of violence inflicted on men and boys. Mostly sexual violence committed with the purpose of reinforcing socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a man and male power (GBVAoR 2014). GBV demoralizes dignity, erodes security and undermines health and security. Gender-based violence undermines the health and independence of victims, yet is surrounded and protected by societal silence in the name of honor. The victim usually suffers the sexual and reproductive health concerns (hardly get available medical facilities comprehensive medicines), including unwanted or either forced pregnancies, traumatic fistula, STD, and HIV, unsafe abortions and even death quite often (UNFPA 2017).

Rape and sexual abuse are described as tools of the war crime, genocide, and crime against women (UN OHCHR 2008). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, opposite or hostile faction uses rape as a weapon to destroy a community entirely (OHCHR 2008). It acts as a “slow murderer” of the community using rape as a weapon because it eradicates communities, as happened in the war of former Yugoslavia, rape was used as a deliberate tool to accomplish ethnic cleansing through impregnation (Watts and Zimmerman 2002). Similarly, in Rwanda, the destruction of the Tutsi tribe involved both rape and sexual violence, even refuge seeking women from massacre were raped by local militias (Pickup et al. 2001). The wars of the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are turning point when the international community focused on how gender-based violence constituted of rape used as deliberate tactics or strategy to damage communities (Sweetman 1998). However, these GBV strategies are not a new phenomenon of women is not new as from Liberia to Japan; women had severely suffered in wars. Rape was also documented in civil and independence wars of

Liberia, Uganda, and Rwanda and most heinous during World Wars in a different location. One such example was the Bangladesh liberation war when women are enslaved and raped in captivity leading to huge impregnations. During 13 years long civil war of Liberia, according to OHCHR, in a survey held in 10 counties in 2005 -2006, showed that around that 92% of the total women interviewed had been sexual abused or either raped (OHCHR 2008). During World War II from 1932 and 1945, around ten thousand of East Asian women from Korea, China were continuously raped by the Japanese military in China, Korea, and the Philippines in the name of “comfort women” (Fisher 2015). Women and sexual activities/ violence during the war have different context from rape to providing voluntary sexual pleasure. The next topic discussed the same.

V. 2. Women and war-related violence

Women experience the war differently from the man² as the rape, and sexual activities are used as a tactic to terrorize or annihilate the opposite communities. Many varied contexts were attached to sex during the war such as the voluntary participation of women during war (as a war bride), extreme rape and harassment, voluntary sex for necessities and militarized brothel to boost soldiering power of soldiers.

In Syria during different phases of the war, voluntary sex became a commonly heard phenomenon as women sacrifice themselves either to protect themselves or to provide food and shelter to their loved ones. However, there are many instances heard during many wars where women voluntary indulge in sexual activity to boost the morale of soldier as their duty toward nation one such example was of “Victory girls”³ of US. These women had provided free sex to soldiers as their “patriotic duty” (Goldstein 2001). Similarly, in Syria during this ongoing war, many girls were forced into sex slavery even by their relative and parents. A teenage girl from Syria told her horrific story to media,

² Women are often sexually assaulted or raped during war or conflict with an objective to ashamed or humiliate their men and families (Hague 2016).

³ According to Goldstein (2001), “victory girl’ connotation was used for a women who pursued sexual relations with servicemen out of a misplaced patriotism or a desire for excitement. She could also, however, be a girl or woman who, without actually engaging in sexual relations, was testing the perimeters of social freedom in wartime America.”

where her father voluntarily gave her for providing sexual pleasure to the Jihadist extremist. Her father called this act as part of “jihad” and related the coerced rape to theology where every time she gives sexual favour to men, she gains more deed and with every sexual act her sins withers away. And every sexual act is considered equal to the martyr, and in the end, she will get heaven (Brown 2014). Amid the crisis, women become the most vulnerable section as everyone including parent can make use of them like an item rather than considering them as a human.

V.2.1 Syrian conflict, women and war-related violence

The ongoing Syrian civil war has deepened the current refugee crisis in Europe, which led to various vulnerability and insecurities for women, counting with domestic violence against women (VAW) to sexual and gender-based exploitation. In this context, Freedman⁴ (2016), wrote that the many women, alone or with family tried to reach Europe to other safer places from violence inflicted areas of their countries, in pursuit of protection and stability, get subjected and experienced violence in their expedition to the destination.

According to Al- Shdayfat (2017), violence against women (VAW) is not studied sufficiently as few studies conducted in the Arab world from the Mediterranean to North Africa, the WANA region, indicated a high prevalence of physical and sexual abuse against women and girls in the region. When the anti-regime peaceful protest started in early March of 2001, Syrian women took part and marched shoulder to shoulder with Syrian men, from that time women are involved and included in all aspects of war from peacebuilding, political negotiation to fighting; however, they are the largest section who suffered heavily. Close to eight years since the Syrian conflict started in the year 2011, the sexual and gender violence continue to remains as a major worry in the life of women and girls; as abduction, detention and death due to abuse continues with time. According to Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2018, gendered- based violence, including verbal abuse, domestic violence (containing family brutality inflicted upon women and girls),

⁴ Here the author, Jane Freedman is discussing about the refuge women from Syria, Afghanistan and other parts of WANA.

child marriages, fear of detention and sexual harassment continues to penetrate into the life of Syrian women and girls inside and outside Syria (UN 2017). United Nation committee highlighted the condition of women in Syria, in specific, that the regime and non- state actors (pro-regime and opposition groups) both together were inflicting violence against the women and girls in the scenario of civil war (Human Right Watch 2016).

Similarly according to Amnesty International, since 2011, about 50% Syrian women in Jordan and 52.7 % in Lebanon have faced physical abuse and financial exploitation, being groped or pressurized to have sexual relation by with smugglers , security staff and other refugees and similar incidence occurred with women staying or traveling to Europe (Amnesty international 2015). Hala, 23-year-old women from Aleppo, explains her plights as “at the hotel in Turkey, one of the men working with a smuggler, a Syrian man, said if I sleep with him, I have to pay less or nothing. Of course, I said no, and the same thing happened to all of us in Jordan” (Amnesty international 2015). Many Syrian women and girls mostly above 15 ends up working as a prostitute or in a brothel or as laborers in their migrated countries (World Bank 2015); these women’s are highly deprived of their right, even in Lebanon whether its citizen or non-citizen their rights are linked to religious and political conditions (Joseph 1999). Hence in this traumatizing war scenario, women are deprived of rights, only they must raise children and do household chores (Finch 2013).

V.2.2 Syrian women: Violence in home raids and at checkpoints

In the whole theater of war, women, not lone but most targeted gender, as the multiple forms of sexual violence are a widely used the tool in war especially to intimidate and humiliate women. Due to this a nation of victimized, fearful and traumatized victims are created in the respective regions (Wolfe 2013, in Freedman et al. 2017)⁵. According to Wolfe (2013), the Norwegian foreign minister Espen Barth Eide, in 2012 at United Nations cited what is happening in Syria now is a mirror of what happened in Bosnia

⁵ It is difficult to accurately access the data due to ongoing war as Syrian government officials currently refuse to allow access to journalists, researchers, and aid workers to verify the cases of sexual violence.

war, as he was pointing toward the rape of thousands of women in Syria. Rape is used in Syrian war not just as an ordinary war crime but as systematic and tool to subjugate and intimidate both civilians and rivals groups both by govt regime and rebel groups. It is happening, happening⁶ every day and women are surrounded by violence in all side in the conflict as perpetrators⁷ are Syrian army (pro-government militia- Shabiha), ISIS and rebel groups (Giovanni 2013 and Freedman 2016).

Testimonials of women reveal how horrific have been such an event and their devices of a war crime are even most assaulting than rape. While narrating their ordeal three women elucidated their tragedy how a group of men bumped into their house and raped them, they didn't stop there as after raping them they burned the women vagina with cigarettes while yelling "you want freedom? This is your freedom" (Women's media centers- Women under siege 2013). A young woman in Aleppo, Syria's largest city, which has been the site of some of the war's fiercest fighting and worst atrocities, said she was arrested by government troops for putting up revolutionary posters. She was partially stripped, blindfolded, and tied to a chair and "Then they said they would pass me from man to man" (Giovanni 2013).

According to Euro –mediterranean Human Right (2015), many women were illegally arrested or detained for peaceful activism. One such lady is Samar Kokash, a peaceful activist, who was arrested by the Syrian Military Intelligence Division and later sentenced for 5 years with charges of financing terrorist groups. Amid Syrian war, ISIS went to a greater level created a "theology of rape" that includes sexual slavery and rape (Hague 2016). This jihad sex is now an ordinary characteristic in the Syrian war and surrounding region.

⁶ The Journalists and human-rights workers are largely banned from government-controlled areas—most of my interviews have been from the rebel side (Giovanni 2013)

⁷ Both victims and witnesses told to Human right watch correspondent that the soldiers and pro-government had sexually exploited women and girls as young as 12 ,especially during homes raids (Human right watch 2012)

V.2.3 Data on women and atrocities

The arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing and rampant torture were recorded by both women media center and Syrian network for human right in their survey. According to SNHR (2013), the percentage of women death increased to 9 % of that total victim, alone in the early months of the year 2013⁸ alone.

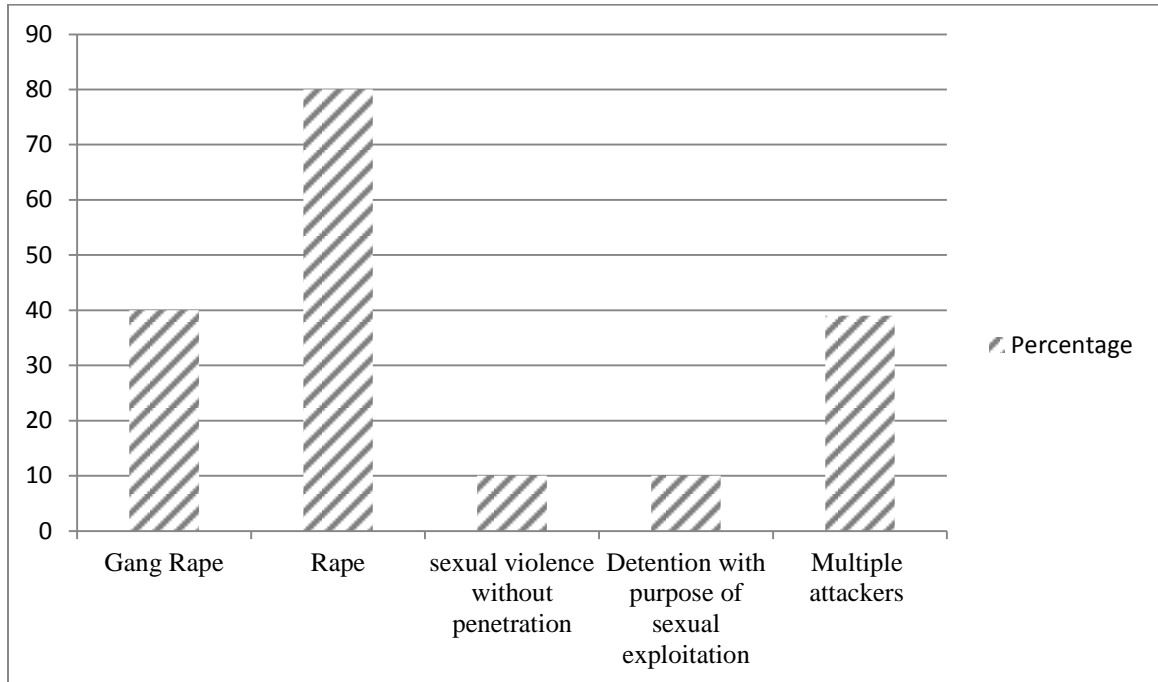


Figure V.1

Figure: Sexual violence against Syrian women March 2011- March 2013

Source: Women Media center's project women under siege

According to women media center⁹, out of 162 reports of violence on Syrian people¹⁰, about 80 % are women victims, in age between 7 -46. Of those, 85 percent reported

⁸ This data is collected between January to April 2013.

⁹ In their project women under siege they collected data of around 162 different stories and divided accordingly into different from of GBV violence experienced by both men and women.

¹⁰ Data was collected by Women media center's women under siege project along with Columbia university epidemiologist , Syrian activist and journalists, the Syrian- American medical society had documented data about where and how men and women are raped and abused sexually (Wolfe 2013) .

rapes; 10 percent include sexual assault without penetration, and 10 percent include detention that appears to have been for sexualized violence or enslavement for a period of longer than 24 hours. Gang rape allegedly occurred in 40 percent of the reports about women (Wolfe 2013).

According to the women media centre, in the above mentioned data, the Assad regime forces inflicted more violence than any other sources. As more than 60 % of the attacks were committed by Assad regime forces. Other 17 % of the attacks were carried together by Shabiha and government forces. More data revealed that most of the rape (around 54%) was done by Assad forces; Shabiha forces allegedly perpetrated around 20 % rapes. And both Assad forces and Shabiha committed around 6% of rape out of the data collected (Wolfe 2013).

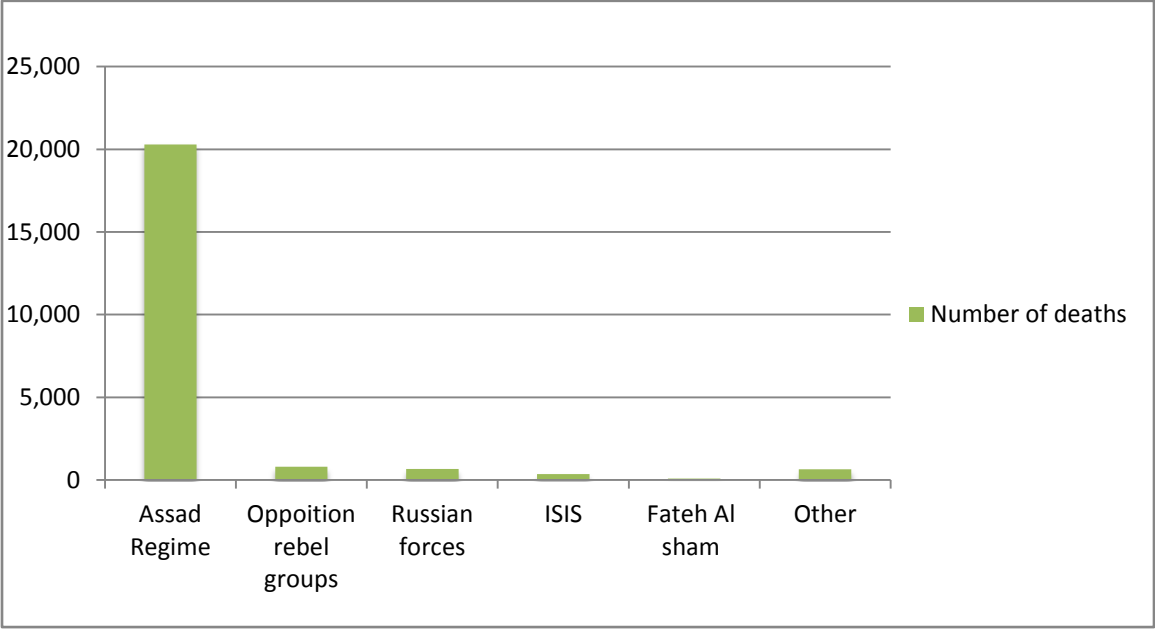


Figure V.2

Figure: Perpetrator of violence in Syria – resulting in deaths

Source: Syrian Network for Human Right, 2016

The Syrian network of human right recorded data on violence against Syrian women for longer time frame from March 2011 to November 2016. In these dates around 13,920¹¹ women¹² were arrested either at a checkpoint or during home raids as the government forces started arbitrary arrest since the day of popular unrest in March 2011 (SNHR 2016). In term of extrajudicial killing around 22,823¹³ women were killed either by the government, ISIS or rebel groups.

Government forces, according to SNHR, intentionally targeted women whether involved in peaceful protest, which are related to activist and demonstrators or found helping internally displaced peoples or wounded and even detained women or girls from their college and educational institution¹⁴ (SNHR 2016). In 99% of all women, arrest is done without any legal warrant and women are even prohibited to contact their relatives and families. In many cases, government forces and opposition groups detained women from streets, work places or even in ambulances. In addition to above data, the around 55 women die due to torture inflicted upon them by influential parties in Syria and more than 7686 women are subjected to sexual violence at the hand of government Assad regime forces of this 856 incident occurred in the official and non-official detention center (SNHR 2016).

The story of Saidah reveals the torture inflicted on women by government forces is a 24-year-old woman, was arbitrarily arrested by Assad regime forces at a checkpoint in Damascus. She tells her story in the following words.

“I have a baby girl who is one year and three months old. My husband left Aleppo two years ago. I was arrested on August 22nd, 2013 in the town of Jadeeda. I was at Qatana in the Damascus country side - (when I was arrested) and was imprisoned in the area

¹¹ Out of this number about 12, 850 are adult women and 1070 are girl's child (SNHR 2016).

¹² This toll also includes the women who disappeared forcibly or still at detention (SNHR 2016)

¹³ Of this 12, 164 were adult women and 10,659 were girls child (SNHR 2016)

¹⁴ In first 18 months of early protest Syrian Regime forces arbitrarily arrested or detained women or girls associated with political opponents, journalist and human right activist (Euro mediterranean Human right Network 2015).

branch (for military security) until the end of 2013. I was then transferred to the military interrogation branch for nine days, after which I was sent back to the (previous) area branch. The interrogator who was questioning me was called Abdel Kareem by wardens. I did not see his face as I was blindfolded during interrogation sessions. The main charges against me were interacting with the militant opposition on the internet and financing (the opposition). The torture I was subjected to in the previous two branches consisted in suspending me from my arms, severe beating, kicking and whipping with what they call Al Akhdar Al Ibrahimi – a green plastic pipe generally used for sanitary installations. Upon my return to the area branch, the interrogator asked me to confess that I practiced jihad sex with my husband's brothers and relatives in my city, Aleppo. This (confession) would be in exchange for my freedom. He said I would have to confess to this on the official TV station. When I refused, I was subjected to severe torture and threats to keep me arrested for two years at least. They also said they would transfer me to the notorious Palestine Branch. When I insisted on refusing the TV filming, I was transferred at the end of last year to the Adra prison. I was sent to the field court and charged with funding and promoting terrorism as well as practicing jihad sex" (Nassar and Euro-Mediterranean n Human Rights Network 2015)

V.3 Raid, Kidnapping, Abduction and Rape: Atrocities against Women

Many examples round the world explain how women are singled out especially for the imprisonment and rape including torture and execution. The testimonials from the conflict between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Peru and Rwanda depict grave violence inflicted on women during war times. Rape, is identified by a few psychologist as the most disturbing form of traumatic event has been used in many armed conflict including those in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cyprus, Haiti, Liberia, Somalia, and Uganda. Systematic rape was many time used as a weapon for the ethnic cleansing. The example of both Bosnia and Rwanda fit into this category.

In Bosnia, more than 20,000 Muslim women and girls¹⁵ are systematically raped during the conflict that started in April 1992 (UNICEF 1996). Similarly in some raids in Rwanda, virtually every adolescent girl who survived an attack by the militia was subsequently raped. Many of those who became pregnant were ostracized by their families and communities. Some abandoned their babies, and others committed suicide(UNICEF 1996).

In addition to rape, girls and women are also subject to forced prostitution and trafficking during times of war, sometimes with the complicity of governments and military authorities. During World War II, women were abducted, imprisoned and forced to satisfy the sexual needs of occupying forces, and many Asian women were also involved in prostitution during the Viet Nam war. According to Hynes (2004, discussed in Farr 2009), many times it was seen during numerous war that government from “all side of war have initiated, accommodated, and tolerated military brothels, believing that a regulated system of brothel will, among another thing will boost the soldiers morale for war” and may lead to ultimate victory. The context of ‘comfort women’ and ‘victory girls’ are related to the systematic regulated militarized brothel during World war I and II.

V.4 Rape and sexual violence: Stigma, shame and atrocities

The victims of rapes or sexual harassment have been seen blamed for or tainted for their victimization across different culture throughout the globe (Farr 2009). In most of the countries, that had experienced war or experiencing war, the victims of sexual violence during war have been seen subjected to some level of societal born shame and stigma later led to ostracism and if the rape results into the pregnancy, the condition of victim becomes direr. In her report to the U.N, Grace Michel observed that those girls or women who become pregnant through rape are often seen rejected by families and communities’ resultant young mother either abandon their babies or commit suicide (Graca Machel 2000, discussed in Farr 2009).

¹⁵ Teenage girls have been a particular target in Bosnia ad many impregnated girls have been forced to bear 'the enemy's' child (UNICEF 1996)

V.4.1 Syrian women: stigma, shame, and atrocities

Syria is a conservative society and honour plays a significant role in maintaining the social fabric of Syria. The arbitrary arrest, detention, rape and sexual violence are methods inflicted on women that directly target the women's honour¹⁶ and dignity causing severe impact not only on the victim but also affecting their families. According to Nassar and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and (2015), in Syria, the virginity until marriage is considered equal to her family honour. Hence rape or sexual exploitation gives profound humiliation to girls and her family.

In Syria amid the crisis, it has become a widespread belief that if a woman is detained then she must have been raped. Due to Syrian feudal mindset and stigma associated with rape and sexual exploitation people tend to stay away from families of women who were detained or held in captivity (Nassar and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network 2015). Women are also subjected to torture or threat of killing by government forces to make a false confession. Many women and girls are forced to make confession from practicing 'Jihad al-nikah'¹⁷ or sexual jihad (Nassar and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network 2015). The most ironical aspect is that parent force their daughter to marry someone they want if a girl does not agree they beat her on a name that she brought shame on other parent even sell their daughter to jihadist for sex than where is the shame

V.4.3 Honour killing or crime

In the name of honour and defending their honour Syrian families often commit a crime on the mere suspicion of an affair or romantic link, a false accusation, or for being raped or sexual exploitation. In Syria, before civil war honour crime was an intricate part of

¹⁶ Women's chastity and virginity intact until marriage is not only a case of the Syria. In India and Islamic countries, men still considered marrying a virgin woman as this thing highly embedded in traditional values and sex before marriage including rape brings dishonour to girl's family. In such cases, girls or women are mostly blamed.

¹⁷ The term jihad al- nikah was first appeared in Lebanese media outlet in 2012.

society and many Syrian believed that defending the chastity of women is the moral obligation of men.

According to the Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic et al. (2016), “in the year 2010 alone in Syria more than 300 -400 honour crime happened. Many women were killed just because of forceful sexual assault or being in a romantic relationship and these victims also include the LGBT individuals. During the ongoing war, the extensive use of rape left numerous women or girls in a vulnerable situation where the killing of women who are raped or even suspected of being raped is a natural obligation to prevent dishonour.

There are many instances which reveal the honour crime¹⁸ is rampant in Syria due to conflict-related sexual assault inflicted on women. One of such occurred in Syria when a father shot his daughters when armed forces approached in their homes for the raid, in fear of shame he might experience with the rape of his daughters (Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic et al. 2016). This is also common among Syrian people staying in neighboring countries where the victim faces the real horror of honour killing. In June 2014, two minor Syrian boys staying in Lebanon with their family member admitted killing of their 24- year old sister, why because she left the house at night without telling where she was going (The Daily Star Lebanon,2014 June 13).

The story of Zainab is nineteen years old girls, who belong to the Homs region of Syria, tells her story about her detainment and family reaction to it. She was kept in government captivity for three months. She was tortured brutally for getting information regarding her brother who was involved with rebel groups. After her release, her story became more stigmatic and grim. She told that upon her release, she directly went to her aunt place. They explicitly refused to have her because of fear of dishonour. As she stayed in detention center hence, they accused her of having being subjected to sexual atrocities that brought dishonour to their families. They forced her to leave the house, and after

¹⁸ According to Basu (2013), statistics from United Nations reveals that one in every cases of honour killing every year internationally comes from India. Of the 5000 cases reported overall world around 1000 is from India alone. But there are also huge unreported cases hence many NGO claims around 20,000 cases globally every year.

that, she went to Damascus. In her journey, she met a young man with whom she marries. However, when she called and told her younger sister that she is married now and happy, her sister replied that one of her brothers wanted to get rid of her because she disgraced the family. After a few months, her brother sends two brothers to kill her and her husband (Nassar and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network 2015).

Her story clearly shows how the Syrian people think of rape and forceful detention of women. Even they know amid war, women are forcefully rape and sexually abused, but still, society blames only women. A similar condition is of Syrian society.

V.5 Forced marriage and informal trades

In the climate of wars the traumatized¹⁹ women especially girls fell into the trap of trafficking both in their countries and also across border carried out either with impunity or with force.

In Syria, with worsening war climate the women became sexual dummies as both regime forces and rebel militias demand sexual labour led to the sexual enslavement and informal trade of enslaved women and girls. Both migration and displacement of people due to war and conflict increased the vulnerability of women toward sexual violence especially among refugee and IDPs both in camps and settlement (Mohamed 2017). According to the UN Office on Drug and crime (2014), in a global report, it was suggested that roughly 36-62% of 20.9 million people are trafficked globally for sexual exploitation. Due to an unprecedented increase in refugees highly vulnerable to sex trafficking cases and forced sexual enslavement, Buchan termed Syria²⁰ as the greenhouse of human trafficking (Buchan 2016).

¹⁹ Trauma can be because of many reason one of them is financial constraints or other may be security issue. It can be due to displacement, instability and the collapse of laws and also collapse of basic services can heightened the risk gender based Violence, child marriage and sex slavery (McAlpine et. al 2016).

²⁰ According to Land (2016), before war, Syria was one of the major destinations for trafficked Iraqi women and refugees children, who escaped war and conflict in their countries. Also women from Somalia Morocco, Eastern Europe and former Soviet States for coerced illegal sex work here.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the early and forced marriage became a widespread phenomenon among the refugees staying in Jordan and Lebanon due to the escalation of violence in Syria. The family decides to marry off their young daughters at such vulnerable with the objective of securing their life and making them economically capable. However, such an act may result in slavery (Jones and Ksaifi 2016); the slavery can be of any type from sexual, domestic to labour slaves. UN in their one of the study related to Syrian refugees found that the Syrian families, with aim to protect their girls, arranges their early marriage and many times girls were forcefully married to save the honour inflicted upon them due to rape caused by different faction or perception of being raped while held in detention centre by Syrian military (Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic 2016).

Evidence collected during wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan and Côte d'Ivoire reveal that women, like in Syria, were abducted for sex slavery (McAlpine 2016). In Cote d'Ivoire, multiple studies indicated that those women's with low status in society had experienced greater risk than other women. Many studies showed that the victory in the war which involved the incident of abduction and rape are often celebrated, and during war times the women are considered as the "property" of captors (McAlpine 2016).

Many women are left vulnerable to exploitation due to a surge in prices of food and rent which is coupled with the cost of residency renewable that forced or coerced women to get involved sexual activities or prostitution to provide shelter, food, and necessities to their dear one (Jones and Ksaifi 2016). According to ICMPD (2016), in its neighbouring countries and other host nations²¹, Syrian refugee women are forced to provide sexual

²¹ Lebanon is a very famous for its 'high -end sex market'. It includes more than 130 nightclubs, bars, pubs etc. which has been end destination of women from Russia, Ukraine and Eastern Europe. These women are deceived about nature of job and arrive here on 'artist visa. These women often dragged forcefully into prostitution and exploited severely along with confiscation of the passport by the club owner on arrival. Since the beginning ongoing war, many NGOs suspected that Syrian women are joining the industry (Jones and Ksaifi 2016).

favours in return employment, residence or money for food. While the perpetrators ranges from house landlord, relative to brokers.

V.6 Sexual exploitation of women in neighbouring countries and Europe

During the conflict, war and emergency situation, both women and girls faces an intense danger of sexual violence in all parts of the world especially at times when leaving their homes and flees to other places or when they stay in a new environment apart from their homes.

The Syrian women and girls had suffered not in the hands of the Syrian military and rebel groups but also during their journey to different country. Similarly, Syrian women experienced horrific sexual trafficking and sex slavery in their neighbouring host nations. In this context, Osborne (2016) wrote that in Lebanon, according to Human right watch, Syrian women were lured into sex slavery with fake promises of marriage or jobs, and then indirectly forced into prostitution. In this racket of sex and forceful confinements, women were regularly beaten by perpetrators. Women were tortured on a table set up like a crucifix, shocked with an electric prod and forced to have sex more than ten times a day (Osborne 2016). One Syrian woman discloses that many young women and girls from Syria are forcefully dragged by Syrian men itself into the high-end sex industry of Beirut, Bekka, Tripoli and Daher al Ein (Jones and Ksaifi 2016).

V.7 Sexual slavery, Aid worker, and Survival sex

History has shown that women were trafficked near battlefield and military bases as a sex slave. According to Watanabe (1999), “trafficking in women is a form of sexual slavery in which women are transported across national borders and sold for prostitution, sex tourism, or false marriages or as "catalog brides," forced domestic labor, or migrant workers” (Watanabe 1999). Women are considered as a body for pleasure only that is why during wars they suffer a lot. During the Syrian conflict, many circumstances emerged that dragged women into survival sex or sexual slavery. There are numerous

cases where women are sexually exploited even by Humanitarian aid workers. One such revelation came in 2018 when a charity watchdog asked for clarification from Oxfam when its staffs were blamed²² for using Haitian women for sexual pleasure during 2011 post- Haiti earthquake relief effort (Grierson and agency 2018).

Similarly, women in Syria have been exploited sexually by aid workers from UN and International charities. These have been accused of trading food and necessary items in exchange for sexual favors (Landale and O'Dowd 2018). The exploitation is so extensive that some Syrian women became reluctant to visit distribution centers due to perception and assumption of people that woman must have offered their body for the aid. The United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA), conducted an assessment of GBV in Syria in 2017 and found that the that the humanitarian assistance was being exchanged for sex in various governorates in Syria (Landale and O'Dowd 2018). Shaista Aziz, a former aid worker, said that “there was a culture where bullying was rife, women were frequently belittled and racism was casual. And it was not just at Oxfam. This happened in many organizations where I worked for in the sector” (The Guardian 2018).

During the many phases of the war time, women and girl are sexually abused, raped and tortured by various factions including the caretaker of the state, the Assad regime As women were harassed with different purposes either to intimidate family or relatives or for the sexual favours. As a result, a woman becomes the most vulnerable section. Hence the above-discussed points give insights on the atrocities inflicted on women.

²² They also accused of inappropriate sexual behaviour, bullying, harassment and the intimidation of staff (Grierson and agency (2018).

Chapter VI

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, an attempt has been made to provide a summary of the arguments arising out of the various chapters in the process of the answering the research question. This dissertation deals with the concept of shatterbelt region to examine the Syrian conflict from a geopolitical perspective, especially keeping in view the involvement of extraterritorial and regional powers directly or indirectly. The word shatterbelt was used by many geographers before the 19th century; however, it was S. B. Cohen who elaborated the concept of the shatterbelt region in his regional model. Following Cohen, the word shatterbelt was specifically used by geographers in the 19th century to describe the factors that played an imperative role in the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. However, the word shatterbelt was first time given by Gordan East in 1961.

The flames of the ongoing Syrian war began in the year 2011 with no intention to convert peaceful protests into a full-fledged war. However many factors played a significant role in exaggerating the protests into war. These factors and features of the Syrian war are similar to the characteristics of a shatterbelt region. Hence this research tries to explain the genesis and growth of the Syrian conflict throughout the lenses of shatterbelt concept. For this purpose, the whole research deals with three hypothesis and five research questions.

The first two hypotheses are discussed in the second and third chapter of the dissertation; these two chapters deal with the core concept of shatterbelt region and the Syrian conflict. The first hypothesis is related to the core concept of shatterbelt and how this concept is helpful in explaining the present Syrian crisis. The other major hypothesis discussed in above-mentioned chapters is regarding the external involvement in the Syrian crisis and what role they played in the war.

The concept of shatterbelt explains that there are some regions beyond the geopolitical structure that are described by their political instability and splintering of areas. It is a geopolitical term, used in contemporary geopolitics to explain the serious dispute that

results in the splintering of a region. Historically, many regions emerged in the world, which shows the conversion of many conflict areas into the “zone of contention” between two great powers. West Asia is one such example which has been caught between the struggles among superpowers for influence over the region. Apart from being a zone of contention, many times, shatterbelts are also responsible for the large-scale conversion of internal conflict as a bone of contention between two alliances, as seen in case of World Wars I and II. This concept has been used by the works of many geographers but with different names. Such as Fairgrieve, Diehl and Mahan called this region the Crush zone, Buffer zone, and Debatable zone respectively. Later their ideas were popularized by Cohen through his regional model.

These above two mentioned qualities of shatterbelt are not the only featured that can help in explaining the Syrian conflict. To explain the war through this concept, various definitions of shatterbelt provided by eminent geographers or scholars are taken into consideration. Shatterbelt is described in numerous ways by different scholars or academician but signify only to those regions which are political, culturally, economical, socially fragmented due to the intersection of local conflicts with strategic rivalries.

The features of the shatterbelt region were elaborated by Cohen in his book *Geopolitics: The geography of international relation* and the most distinctive feature is that it presents a playing field of more than two global powers, such as West Asia and South East Asia, where both USA and Russia had contested for their benefit. Another definition given by Agnew and Duncan (2011) explain the shatterbelt as that region where local conflict drags into even the farthest region into the turmoil, from local strife to strategic wars. The other thing that is a common characteristic is that these regions have a very turbulent border area. The condition such as the difference between political, cultural and historical conditions coupled with environmental problems in the shatterbelts regions are said to have fueled the fragmentation from local conflict to distance city that leaving countries in fragile conditions. According to Hensel and Diehl (1994), the conflicting ideologies also said to have produced multiple fragmentations between nations abandoning them unable to solve their economic and political problem leaving the ground for further escalation. On this note, shatterbelt is defined by Cohen as those regions whose “internal, geographical, cultural, religious and political fragmentation is compounded by pressure

from major external power attracted by the regions strategic location and economic resource” (Cohen 1982).

In this research, the definition of the shatterbelt region is worked out taking elements from all of these above-discussed conceptualizations. Shatterbelts is composed of weak states which have points of conflict. This category includes both undeveloped and developing states¹. In the Syrian context, the Shatterbelt is a region composed of countries those have a substantial amount of linguistic, religious and diversity with a long history of conflict between different sects or groups of the region which is escalated by foreign power intervention. Shatterbelt regions are also characterized by influence from outside powers.

Shatterbelts are regions which are fragmented due to the presence of varied races, languages, religions, and nationalities and are marked by significant political instability, economic disparity and military presence of great external powers’.

By taking into consideration the above-mentioned definitions, a few characteristics of shatterbelts are inferred from the definitions. These characteristics are the following:

- 1) The region/ areas must be composed of fragile nations or weak state.
- 2) The region /area must have some kind of the linguistic, religious and diversity with a long history of conflict between different sects or groups of the region which is escalated by foreign/external power intervention.
- 3) The region /area must have been fragmented due to differences between their races, language, nationality, and religion that led to severe political, economic, military and social instability.
- 4) The instability in the region/ area gets heightened due to external/ regional power involvement in the problem of the region.

These are helpful in explaining the genesis and expansion of present-day Syrian crisis.

¹ It has been observed that all conflicts which could be understood though the concept of shatterbelt have historically taken place either in underdeveloped or developing states, and not in developed countries

The ongoing Syrian conflict began in 2011 after the influence from the Arab spring, but its symptoms started way back since the formation of Syria after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Since the beginning, it had been engulfed with numerous wars after the commencement of Sykes-Picot land agreement that divided the dying Ottoman Empire into many parts. This agreement, which handed Syria to France was unanimously rejected by the Syrian people. However, France started ruling the colony by ignoring the demands of the locals. This ignorance of France bred discontent among the Syrians that led to a series of revolts and conflict for independence. After many conflicts they won the independence in 1946.

The land mentioned above agreement ignored the original land boundaries between different areas. As a result, this ignorance on the part of Britain and France led to the series of conflict between various countries of the Levant region. Syria, since its emergence as a nation it was under the influence of foreign powers. The vicious impact of this land agreement was the problem of Kurds and other ethnic communities as this agreement made these people landless. As a result of its independence, Syria got engulfed with numerous problems as it already had poor economy and boundary disputes with its neighbours. However, the causes of the ongoing war are many which are comparable to the above-mentioned characteristics. One of the causes of the ongoing war is the authoritarian rule of the Assad family. The Hafez al Assad and his son rule coupled with other problems created the ground for the social insecurity which paved the way for the political instability.

During the rule of the Hafez al Assad, another dimension to the problem emerged which was already there in Syria since its formation but exaggerated during the reign of Hafez al Assad, namely, the divide between the Shias and Sunnis. Because the Assad was Alawite in one hand and on the other hand his administration used to favoured Alawite while ignoring others. That increased the bitterness between the difference ethnic communities and sect in Syria. The rivalry between Shia and Sunni was not a new phenomenon in Syrian alone; they have been arch-rival due to the difference between their religious preaching.

The Assad reign became authoritarian with time, and one-party rule persist until the beginning of the present war. Many social and political restrictions were imposed on Syrian people that made their life more vulnerable. Since the early 1960's an emergency was prevailed in Syria which was abolished in the year 2011. This emergency gave enough power to the Assad administration to curb the political rights of citizens. This condition along with special treatments Alawite sect and people who were related to administrative officers created resentment in the heart of local that led to the conflict and divide between different sects in Syria. Hence for a long time, there was a sectarian divide in Syria which was fueled through many small and sporadic struggles between different sects. This sectarian divide is visible during this ongoing war as most the rebel groups were composed of the Sunni sect against the Shia and Alawites.

Apart from sectarianism and Assad rule, other factors which played important role in ongoing war are the climatic, environmental causes, all they had created a situation of political, social and economic instability and finally, all these factors paved way for the protest which is converted in fully fled war. Thus form this analysis it is apparent that in Syria there were the evidence of some religious and sectarian divide which were born due discrimination based on differences in religious practices, race and nationality which led to the severe to severe political, economic, military and social instability

The sectarian divides during the war are fully utilized by both Saudi Araba and Iran to enter into the Syrian war. Both of them are supporting their sects hence playing a critical role in the war. The Iran and Saudi Arabia came into war directly or indirectly to support their favorable sect. Iran started backing Assad as the president belongs to Shai sect as Iran follows Shia sect and on the other hand Saudi Arabians are Sunnis hence it started supporting the rebels groups or oppositional groups which has the aim to dethrone Assad out of power. Earlier the intervention was mostly indirect but later as the war intensified the involvement became more apparent. As a result a proxy war started in Syrian involving regional powers of west Asia. This dragged the other regional states into the war. The involvement of the both these regional powers in the Syrian war gave hopes to either side as they can win the war. Hence no sign of ending the war as multiple players are involved in the war.

The neighbours got involved in the war since the beginning when migration started in unprecedented number to their homeland. Also, the spillover impact of the war was highly visible in Lebanon and Turkey and Jordan. Turkey, on the other hand, provided the breeding ground for the oppositional groups such as FSA. Hence the neighbouring countries and regional had major role exaggeration of the war.

Other than regional power, the extra-regional powers also got involved into the war, each one with their objective. The extra-regional powers which are heavily involved in the war include Russia, USA, Germany, United Kingdom and France supported by many other countries. The chemical attack of 2013 and the emergence of extremist activities by ISIS in Europe directly drew the foreign powers in Syria. Apart from the above two, due to the increase in migration and humanitarian crisis, many external powers came into Syrian war with an aim to end the war. Both U.S. and Russia came into war with the objective to end the war and reduce humanitarian crisis resulting from it. Indirectly the US got involved in the war since the dawn of war when it demanded the resignation of Assad. As US and Russia in the Syrian war supporting the different sides, many authors claimed that the Syrian war was turning into a new era of cold war.

Due to the heavy involvement of regional and external powers in the Syrian crisis, it converted into a civil war that is still ongoing since the last eight years with no sign of ending which had engulfed the life of almost every Syrian. This feature of the Syrian war is similar to the one of the characteristics of the Shatterbelt that the instability in a region gets heightened due to external/ regional power involvement in the problems of the region'. Similarly, in the Syrian war, the scene became more complicated due to interference by both regional and global powers in the war hence the characteristics of Syrian war are similar to Shatterbelt regions.

This analysis thus affirms the first two hypothesis of the research which says that the concept of Shatterbelt region explains the contemporary conflict in Syria and that Great Power involvement in the Syrian conflict has aggravated the conflict domestically and created a new World Order regime globally. From this analysis, we can infer that the Syria war can be explained through the features of the shatterbelt region. This research work also shows how the great powers played critical role in the heightening of the war.

These major affirming assertions of the two hypotheses. However, through this research work, it is difficult to infer the question of the creation of a new world order globally with any amount of certainty.

The third hypothesis of the research focusses on the gender dimensions of the war. It is not just women who had suffered in the war both men and women had equal suffering when it comes to discussing the impact of the war. The impact of the Syrian war is not just limited to Syria only it has reached to other regions of the world also. The terrorist attacks done by ISIS have shaken the world. Apart from the above-mentioned impacts, the Syrian citizens, both men and women, suffered brutally in hand of the Assad government and Opposition rebels groups. Both of these perpetrators have sexually abused both men and women in Syria. However Syrian people were also abused in hand of a citizen of other places where Syrians went for safe and better lifestyle.

Many studies conducted by international organizations and NGOs of Syria revealed the situation of Syrian women and men. Both genders suffered in the Syrian war. While men were raped and abused in detention mostly; women were abused in most of the places including their own homes by even their relatives. So during wartime women were more vulnerable than men. In the case of men, both the victim and perpetrators both are men. The process of sexual assault ranges from the extensive and brutal torture to electrocution and victims ranges from children to old men.

In case of the women, they were abused during Syrian war by various perpetrators for many purposes. One of them is to intimidate the concerned communities. As mostly government official abused or raped the women to threaten the families that were involved in the war against the Assad regime. Hence, the arbitrary arrest enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing became common in Syria especially during the first phase of the war. Women in Syrian war were abused by the different sect too. Like the Sunni majority in opposition groups raped and abused Shia and Alawites women more than women of their communities similar done by Shia.

Hence this shows that during war there is a gender dimension in which women were raped, abused and suffered in hand of the opposite faction. But this research also shows that men were also abused similarly by different factions during the war.

The ongoing Syrian conflict is one the longest and most disturbing wars of the contemporary period. It has caused agony, pain and insurmountable suffering to Syrian citizen.

I have endeavored to study Syrian war due to its barbaric consequences which has left several people stateless, homeless, jobless, moneyless, education less and even family less. Uncountable children today are compelled to live a life of orphan. Under the umbrella of international community these nasty wars are taking place which has compelled me to study the Syrian state of affairs. I deeply urge to international community, regional institutions and domestic legitimacy to explore the common path which leads to reconciliation, peace and harmony in Syria so no such war happen again in the future.

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