United State / Russia Interests and the Management of the Humanitarian Crisis in the Syraian Conflict, 2011-2019

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Abstract: This study examined the respective interests of the United States and Russia in the Syrian war spanning the years 2011 to 2019. Over the course of time, numerous researchers have focused their scholarly contributions on the aforementioned matter, basing their explanations on the political economy and realist framework of analysis. However, these scholars have not thoroughly investigated the crucial elements that underlie the increasing levels of violence in Syria. The present study is grounded in the theoretical framework of structural realism for the purpose of analysis. The research employed the documentary approach as a means of data collecting. The data were obtained from several sources including books, journal articles, online sites, and official documents. The study's findings indicate that the divergent interests of the United States and Russia contributed to the escalation of the Syrian war, consequently impeding effective conflict management efforts. The report underscored the significance of United States and Russia refraining from undermining each other in Syria in order to attain a sustainable peace. Consequently, the report proposes a revaluation of the United States-Russia relationship, advocating for a renewed approach that fosters enhanced collaboration and facilitates a more profound level of cooperation between these two dominant global powers. In order to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Syria and effectively address the ongoing conflict, it is imperative for both the United States and Russia to abandon their zero-sum approach and instead utilize their respective power and influence to facilitate a negotiated resolution. This resolution should be based on the principle of mutual consent, requiring all conflicting parties to engage in compromise.

Keywords: Unites State, Russia Interest, Management, Syrian Conflict, Humanitarian

1. Introduction

The Assad dynasty has held power in Syria since 1971. The Presidency of Syria was assumed by General Hafez al-Assad within the framework of the Ba'ath Party. After the passing of Hafez in June 2000, Bashar al-Assad, his son acquired the mantle of leadership. Hafez Al-Assad, the former leader of Syria, has faced allegations of instituting a bureaucratic framework marked by a notable cult of personality. This problem endured beyond his demise and was subsequently inherited by his son. In the past before the current internal crisis in Syria, multiple opposition parties have articulated a fervent aspiration for a fundamental restructuring of the government. The sentiment expressed was influenced by perceived socio-economic and political challenges within the country, including high rates of unemployment and inflation, limited prospects for social advancement, pervasive corruption, lack of political freedom, and the existence of oppressive security forces (Blanchard, 2012). The opposing organization exhibited a calculated approach by patiently waiting for the opportune moment to instigate a confrontation against the administration of al-Assad, which has been characterized by certain writers and pundits as authoritarian. The Arab Spring, a sequence of tumultuous revolutions that transpired in 2011, had its genesis in various Arab countries including Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. The protests subsequently extended to Syria, where citizen activists passionately but peacefully demanded a regime change. In response to the escalating protest, President Bashar al-Assad made public remarks on a global scale during the demonstrations that took place in Damascus in March and April 2011. The aforementioned statements delineated his dedication to enacting reforms in various domains: encompassing - entitlements of individuals to partake in organizational endeavours; establishment of political factions; impartiality of electoral processes; advancement of societal fairness; and the protection of the rights of diverse ethnic communities residing in Syria, such as the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmens (SESRIC, 2017).

In light of a robust response by the government's military, the initially nonviolent revolt underwent a progressive transformation into an armed insurgency and internal strife, pitting government loyalist forces, commanded by President Assad, against opposition forces led by the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Most of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) members used to be in the Syrian army before they defected (Dunne, 2012). Syrian society has been profoundly impacted in a number of ways, including societal, cultural, political, and religious facets, by the conflict that started in 2011 and has continued throughout the Middle East and Europe. (Young et al., 2014). Moreover, the phenomenon has transcended national borders, leading to disruptive consequences for the Middle Eastern region as a whole (Nuruzzaman, 2014).

The Syrian Conflict emerged within the broader context of the Arab Spring uprisings, which swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011. Protests initially erupted in Syria in March 2011, driven by demands for political reforms, greater freedoms, and an end to the repressive rule of President Bashar al-Assad. However, the regime's violent crackdown on dissent escalated the situation into a full-blown civil war, characterized by armed resistance, sectarian tensions, and regional proxy involvement (Dunne, 2012).

The United States has been a significant player in the Syrian Conflict, driven by a combination of geopolitical interests, strategic considerations, and humanitarian concerns. Initially, the Obama administration supported opposition groups seeking to overthrow the Assad regime, viewing it as part of a broader push for democratization in the region. The provision of military aid, training, and diplomatic support aimed to bolster the opposition's capabilities and pressure the Assad government to negotiate a political solution.

However, the US approach faced challenges, including the fragmentation of opposition groups, the rise of extremist elements such as ISIS, and the complexities of navigating regional power dynamics. Despite efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to mitigate the suffering of Syrian civilians, the United States grappled with the balance between advancing its strategic interests and addressing the humanitarian crisis (Borshchevskaya, 2016).

Russia's involvement in the Syrian Conflict has been guided by its longstanding strategic interests in the region, including maintaining influence in the Middle East, safeguarding its naval base in Tartus, and countering Islamist extremism. In 2015, at the request of the Assad government, Russia launched a military intervention to bolster the regime's position and combat rebel forces. Russian airstrikes targeted opposition-held areas, contributing to significant territorial gains for the Assad regime. Russia's intervention reshaped the dynamics of the conflict and complicated efforts to find a peaceful resolution. While Moscow framed its actions as counterterrorism operations aimed at stabilizing Syria, critics accused Russia of exacerbating the humanitarian crisis through indiscriminate bombing campaigns and targeting civilian infrastructure (Luce 2017).

The United States and Russia have played pivotal roles in shaping the humanitarian dimensions of the Syrian Conflict. Their divergent interests, interventions, and management strategies have complicated efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and find a sustainable resolution to the conflict. By examining their roles within the context of the Syrian Conflict from 2011 to 2019, this study seeks to provide insights into the complexities of managing humanitarian emergencies in conflict zones and the challenges of balancing geopolitical interests with humanitarian imperatives.

2. Conceptual Delineations

a. Concept of Armed Conflict

According to Evans (2006), communities are more likely to engage in armed conflict when they have both the resources for violence in terms of materiel and political/social support. This occurs when individuals believe that violence is their only alternative for effecting change and can persuasively advocate for this necessity. Internal conflicts,

Armed conflict manifests as a dynamic interplay of myriad factors, ranging from political grievances and economic disparities to social inequalities and ethnic tensions. At its core, armed conflict is often rooted in deep-seated structural injustices and historical grievances, which fuel a cycle of violence and perpetuate cycles of conflict (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). However, the proximate triggers of conflict, such as contested elections, resource scarcity, or identity politics, serve as catalysts that ignite latent tensions and escalate localized grievances into full-blown violence (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).
Furthermore, armed conflict is not a monolithic entity but rather a spectrum of violence that spans from interstate wars to intra-state conflicts and insurgencies. Each manifestation of conflict presents unique challenges and dynamics, necessitating tailored approaches to understanding and addressing its root causes. Whether driven by ideological fervor, ethno-nationalist aspirations, or geopolitical interests, armed conflict remains a persistent feature of the global landscape, demanding nuanced analysis and multifaceted responses.
According to Ohlson (2008), require three crucial components to converge: motivating complaints as reasons, capabilities and opportunities as resources, and a view that violence is the only way to attain desired goals. In 2011, Bellamy's perspective highlights the significance of identity in political grievances, emphasizing their depth and capability judgments. Stewart recognizes horizontal discrepancies as major aspects in 2010.
Armed conflict, a deeply complex and multifaceted phenomenon, finds its origins in a diverse array of interconnected factors, each contributing to the intricate tapestry of violence and strife that engulfs societies. Political grievances, economic disparities, social inequalities, ethnic tensions, and ideological differences represent just a few of the myriad catalysts that can precipitate conflict. These root causes of conflict, often deeply entrenched and multifaceted, weave together in a tangled web of interrelated dynamics, shaping the course of violence and upheaval.
Structural factors serve as the foundational underpinnings of armed conflict, laying the groundwork for discontent and unrest. Poverty, inequality, and governance failures create fertile ground for the seeds of conflict to take root, as marginalized populations grow disillusioned with the status quo and demand change (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities exacerbates social tensions, fueling grievances and fostering a sense of injustice among disenfranchised communities. Proximate factors, on the other hand, serve to intensify existing tensions and escalate conflicts to a boiling point. Resource competition, whether for land, water, or natural resources, often serves as a flashpoint for violence, as communities vie for access to

limited resources amidst growing scarcity (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Identity politics further exacerbate divisions, as ethnic, religious, or cultural differences are exploited by opportunistic actors seeking to mobilize support along sectarian lines.

Moreover, triggering events can serve as the spark that ignites latent grievances and propels societies into the throes of conflict. Electoral fraud, government repression, or other forms of political oppression can galvanize opposition movements and mobilize populations against oppressive regimes (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). These incendiary events serve to crystallize discontent and mobilize disparate factions towards a common cause, laying the groundwork for widespread unrest and violence.

In essence, armed conflict emerges from a complex interplay of structural, proximate, and triggering factors, each contributing to the volatile mix of grievances and tensions that underpin violence and upheaval. By understanding the multifaceted nature of conflict causation, policymakers, academics, and humanitarian organizations can work towards addressing the root causes of violence and fostering sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

The present research classifies conflicts into four types. The term "extra-systemic armed conflict" refers to wars between states that extend outside their borders. "Interstate armed conflict" refers to military conflict between two or more states. In contrast, "internal armed conflict" refers to a situation in which a state's administration faces internal opposition organizations without the intervention of outside forces. To be characterized as a "non-international" or "internal armed conflict," two requirements must be met. First, conflicts must reach a certain level of intensity and be collective. Second, all parties concerned must have a detectable level of organization.

The term "internationalized internal armed conflict" refers to a situation in which a government engages in hostilities with internal opposition organizations, while other states (known as secondary parties) become involved on one or both sides of the conflict. Such confrontations frequently involve territory takeover, individual oppression, and breaches of human rights. An "internationalized armed conflict" happens when factions within a country fight each other with the assistance of different powers. Syria's ongoing conflict is a recent example of this type, attracting numerous actors such as the United States, Russia, and Iran due to their disparate goals and efforts to maintain geopolitical power.

b. Humanitarian Crisis

A humanitarian crisis is defined as either a single incident or a series of events that endanger the physical and mental health, safety, and overall well-being of a community or a large population. The conflict in question can take the form of an internal or external fight that often spans a large geographical area (UNHRC, 2021). Such occurrences can be linked to circumstances such as armed warfare, natural disasters, scarcity of resources leading to famine, and disease outbreaks. Children suffer significant physical, psychological, and societal consequences as a result of humanitarian disasters. According to multiple sources, there is a substantial threat to the lives of millions of people in numerous countries, including but not limited to Syria, Yemen, Bangladesh, Venezuela, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A humanitarian crisis can include a variety of disasters and is typically linked to pre-existing vulnerabilities caused by insufficient development sustainability (Casalin, 2021). Individual sensitivity magnifies the occurrence of humanitarian crises, which can be caused by either natural or man-made circumstances. There is an idea that the presence of insufficient human-centered development adds to the vulnerability of individuals' living standards, resulting in the formation of imminent humanitarian problems within conflict scenarios. According to SESRIC (2017), military conflicts and natural disasters are the primary causes of humanitarian crises. The different elements that contribute to humanitarian disasters are interrelated rather than acting alone. In many cases, the lines between these drivers and the following consequences of humanitarian crises are blurred. Fragility, poverty, violence, governance, economic decline, displacement, natural disasters, and human rights violations can all be mutually reinforcing elements, given the interconnected nature of humanitarian disasters. The aforementioned elements include deprivation of human needs, the fragility of governmental institutions, the collapse of economic systems, violations of human rights, and the occurrence of migration and displacement.

Humanitarian crises loom as formidable obstacles on the global stage, presenting intricate challenges that resonate across borders and impact the lives of millions. These crises, whether triggered by armed conflict, natural disasters, economic instability, or political upheaval, pose significant threats to human security, impede development efforts, and undermine the stability of societies worldwide. This scholarly review endeavors to delve into the multifaceted nature of humanitarian crises, delving into their root causes, examining their far-reaching consequences, and scrutinizing the diverse responses marshaled to confront these challenges.

Armed conflict emerges as a primary driver of humanitarian crises, with its devastating repercussions reverberating far beyond the battlefield. The scourge of war displaces millions, inflicts grievous harm on civilian populations, and lays waste to vital infrastructure, leaving communities shattered and vulnerable (Sida, 2021). Natural disasters, another recurrent catalyst of humanitarian crises, unleash untold destruction upon societies, uprooting lives, and livelihoods in their wake. From earthquakes to hurricanes, these catastrophic events sow chaos and suffering, underscoring the urgent need for robust disaster preparedness and response mechanisms (IFRC, 2020).

The consequences of humanitarian crises are profound and multifaceted, exacting a heavy toll on the individuals, families, and communities caught in their grip. Displacement emerges as a defining feature of humanitarian crises, with millions forced to flee their homes in search of safety and shelter. This mass exodus strains resources, strains social cohesion, and exacerbates the vulnerability of displaced populations (UNHCR, 2021). Moreover, humanitarian crises precipitate food insecurity, malnutrition, and outbreaks of infectious diseases, compounding the suffering of affected populations and deepening the humanitarian emergency

(WHO, 2020). Social and economic repercussions abound, with livelihoods lost, social networks fractured, and poverty entrenched, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and marginalization (IFRC, 2020).

In response to these complex challenges, a myriad of interventions has been mobilized to address humanitarian crises and alleviate the suffering of affected populations. Humanitarian aid organizations stand at the forefront, delivering life-saving assistance to those in need, including food, shelter, medical care, and psychosocial support (UNOCHA, 2020). Disaster response efforts pivot swiftly to provide emergency relief, restore essential services, and facilitate the recovery and reconstruction process in disaster-affected areas (IFRC, 2020). Conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives aim to address the root causes of armed conflict, foster dialogue, and promote sustainable peace and stability (UNDP, 2020). Concurrently, development assistance endeavors to build resilience, strengthen institutions, and advance sustainable development goals, laying the groundwork for long-term recovery and resilience-building (World Bank, 2020).

Finally, humanitarian crises stand as formidable tests of our collective humanity, underscoring the imperative of solidarity, compassion, and concerted action in the face of adversity. By unraveling the complexities surrounding humanitarian crises, this scholarly review endeavors to inform more effective strategies for prevention, response, and recovery, paving the way for a more resilient and compassionate global community.

3. Empirical Review

According to Adebayo (2020) in his study on impacts and implications of the involvement of Russia in Syrian crisis, on Syria and also the spill-over effect to the other countries. The researcher made use of the secondary method of data inquiry. Through the research, he discuss that although, Russian forces have recorded successes, and the negative impacts of the involvement of the Russia in the Syrian crisis are very overwhelming including killing of civilians, destruction of properties.

According to Musarurwa and Kaye (2016), the current crisis has resulted in a more significant influence on individuals compared to the combined consequences of the Haiti Earthquake, the Indian Ocean Tsunami, and Hurricane Katrina, as reported by World Vision in 2015. However, the study conducted by Musaruwa and Kaye (2016) revealed that it did not garner equivalent levels of attention or responses.

According to the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, the prevailing violence has engendered an intolerable degree of anguish for the general populace, encompassing women, children, and men alike. The use of language, despite its capacity to evoke intense emotional reactions, inadequately represents the distressing and appalling situation in contemporary Syria. The attached hyperlink directs to a document titled "Valerie Amos Statement to Security Council on Syria" on the official website of the United Nations Office. As stated by Aaronson (2014), in December 2013, a cumulative population of 9.3 million individuals residing within Syria required humanitarian assistance. Within this specific demographic, a total of 6.5 million individuals were forced from their residences and were presented with an exceptionally harsh winter season, which constituted one of the most severe weather conditions ever encountered in Syria. Furthermore, the total count of Syrian refugees actively seeking asylum in the surrounding nations was approaching approximately 2.3 million individuals. The current crisis has resulted in an unemployment rate of 3 million individuals, including the disruption of education for 3 million youngsters.

Hartberg, Bowen, and Gorevan (2015) have emphasized that there has been a decrease in the level of humanitarian access to important regions of Syria in the preceding year, despite its pivotal role as outlined in the 2014 United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The population living in areas with restricted or inaccessible access for humanitarian groups has witnessed a significant rise, approximately doubling from 2.5 million individuals in 2013 to 4.8 million individuals by the beginning of 2015. As per the analysis of specialists, the United Nations inter-agency convoys successfully delivered aid to a collective population of 1.1 million individuals residing in the regions that were most seriously affected. The depicted figure illustrates a notable decline of around 1.8 million individuals in comparison to the preceding year. Hartberg, Bowen, and Gorevan (2015) reported a noteworthy reduction of 96 percent in the allocation of food and agricultural support in areas identified by United Nations humanitarian agencies as having limited or no reachability between February and June 2014.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2016a) has reported that the Syrian crisis has resulted in a death toll above 250,000 as of 2016. There is an estimated population of approximately 4.3 million individuals who are presently categorized as refugees, alongside an additional 6.6 million individuals who have experienced internal displacement within their respective nations. As to the report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2016b), it has been determined that a substantial amount of USD7.7 billion is necessary to effectively meet the urgent humanitarian needs in Syria throughout the year 2016. As of October 2016, a cumulative amount of USD5.3 billion had been effectively mobilized in support of this endeavour. The crisis exemplifies the repercussions that arise due to the international community's failure to adequately fulfil its responsibility of protecting individuals on a global scale (Solberg-Henriet, 2015).

According to Uzu (2017:p6), an inquiry was undertaken to assess the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, revealing that the nation has experienced significant fragmentation due to six years of armed conflict. Syrian children and families have been disproportionately affected by the detrimental repercussions of the conflict. The ongoing conflict has led to a notable fatality rate, with a significant number of individuals perishing, and a substantial segment of the population, approximately 11 million people, being compelled to abandon their homes and necessitating humanitarian assistance. The expert emphasized that March 15, 2017 marks the initiation of the sixth year of the war. Following the aforementioned events, an overwhelming population of around 5 million Syrian individuals have sought refuge in foreign nations, while an additional 6 million have experienced internal displacement within the confines of their national borders. Children impacted by this crisis have frequently experienced the most unfavourable consequences, such as the unfortunate occurrence of losing family members or friends as a result of violence, enduring both physical and psychological strain, or facing difficulties in their scholastic pursuits (Uzu, 2017:6).

Uzu (2017) posits that the intensification of armed conflict results in a subsequent amplification of humanitarian needs. The speaker made mention of the current population live in areas that are characterized by limited accessibility or are experiencing a state of siege. This population has surpassed 5.5 million individuals, signifying a growth of one million in comparison to the initial figure documented in 2017. Within the overall population, a substantial segment of 860,000 inhabitants presently inhabits 18 places that are experiencing a state of siege. Despite numerous attempts to establish a cessation of hostilities, the conflict has continued without interruption, leading to a lack of advancement in improving the accessibility of humanitarian aid. Across the entire country, healthcare facilities, including hospitals, have suffered significant destruction as a result of aerial bombings, rendering a portion of them non-functional. In 2016, there was a recorded number of around 425,000 individuals who encountered internal displacement. It is worth noting that over half of this affected population was concentrated within the Aleppo governorate. The speaker emphasized that the population of Syria surpasses 18 million inhabitants. Based on Uzu's (2017:9) findings, there was a notable rise in the percentage of economically disadvantaged individuals within the Syrian population in 2016, reaching around 50% of the overall population. As a consequence, there was a cumulative count of 6.4 million refugees who received help, whilst an additional 7 million refugees were left without sufficient support.

When analysing the participation of prominent nations in the crisis, scholars such as Gorevan et al. (2015) and Shaw (2013) have observed that attempts to tackle the conflict began in late 2011 through the implementation of two initiatives by the Arab League. Nevertheless, these efforts did not result in substantial advancements. Russia put up proposals in January 2012 and November 2013 to commence negotiations in Moscow between the Syrian government and factions representing the opposition. Between the months of March and May in the year 2012, there existed a prevalent sense of hope surrounding a collaborative endeavour spearheaded by Kofi Annan, which entailed the participation of the United Nations and the Arab League. The Geneva II Conference on Syria took place throughout the months of January and February in 2014, with Lakhdar Brahimi, the former United Nations envoy to Syria, serving as its organizer. On October 30, 2015, further negotiations were initiated in Vienna, with delegates from the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, along with many regional actors like as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and significantly, Iran, marking its inaugural participation. In 2017, there was a continuation of peace negotiations with the leadership of rebel factions in Astana, Kazakhstan.

4. Theoretical Framework

The deadly power struggle and bloodshed that have occurred as a result of the Syrian conflict have portrayed a gloomy picture of international politics once again. The conflict exposed the international system for what it is: a violent battlefield in which states seek methods to exploit one another and prevent one another from becoming the most powerful actor in the system. As the bloodshed in Syria escalates, it is more vital than ever to conduct a thorough examination of the conflict's dynamics. In order to examine the impact of US-Russia ties on the management of the Syrian war, this study used the viable approach of analysis known as structural realism, also known as neorealism. Neorealism is another name for structural realism. Structural realism is an ideological divergence from classical realism, which posited egoistic and selfish human behaviour as the underlying cause of international politics and the determinant of state behaviour within the international system. Structural realism differs intellectually from post-structural realism in that post-structural realism identified human behaviour as the primary cause. This school of thought was challenged by structural realism, which asserted that the structure of the international system dictates the conduct of states acting within it. This school of thought was rejected by structural realism.

Waltz (1979), Buzan (1993), Herz (1951), Hanami (2003), Oye (1986), Jervis (1978), Mearsheimer (2001), and other prominent neo-realist scholars have posited that the presence of anarchy within the framework of the international system serves as the primary catalyst for shaping international political dynamics. Kenneth Waltz, a leading proponent of this theory, proposed in his major work, "Theory of International Politics," that the structure of a system is generated from the interplay of its basic components. The states are the key components of the framework in this scenario. According to Waltz (1979, p.72), the structure influences the acts and behavior of states, chiefly through the socialization of the people involved and the competitive dynamics among them. In light of

this goal, it is vital to emphasize that when state A and state B interact, both entities are mutually influenced by the conditions that occur from their interaction (1979:74). To put it another way, the structure can be viewed as a bridge between the state's acts and the consequences of those actions. According to neo-realist analysts, power struggles and rivalries within the international system are primarily attributable to the system's structure rather than the underlying essence of nations. Individuals' daily lives can be understood as a constant struggle for power, in which each state strives not only to achieve the highest level of influence within the system, but also to prevent any other state from achieving such a dominant position (Mearsheimer, 1995).

According to the analysis, their fundamental assumptions are as follows:
1. There is no greater central authority to impose restrictions on individual states in the international system.
2. In this context, states work on a self-help basis: they operate with the goal of survival in mind, and their interactions with other states reflect that objective.
3. Because all governments have some offensive military capability, it is impossible to predict the intentions of other states.
4. The structure will only alter if major powers act in a way that causes a shift. Most countries lack the authority to change the framework. Given this context, states would strive to counterbalance one another in order to optimize their prospects of survival.
5. States seek to strengthen their capacities in contrast to other states in order to obtain security. A state's national interest calculation is thus defined as ensuring territorial, economic, and military security. Simultaneously, a state's level of competence in compared to others either constrains or enables governments to achieve such goals. In turn, the scope and ambition of a country's interests are determined by its level of competence (Telhami 2003).

According to Waltz (1979), the structure of the international system contains two fundamental characteristics. First and foremost, Waltz maintained that, in contrast to the hierarchical structures inherent in domestic politics, anarchy is the guiding principle of the international system. The term 'anarchy' does not always imply the presence of chaos and disorder. The term "it" refers to the lack of a global governing authority, as described by Waltz in 1979. As a result, it may be concluded that the international system is based on the principle of self-help. This phenomena stems from each state's fundamental autonomy, which gives them the right to define their own interests and compels their commitment to ensuring their own security and continuation. The aforementioned system is made up of individual entities motivated largely by self-preservation. The type of the international system's constituent components is the second property of its structure. Waltz claimed that all states in the system had identical qualities in the form of anarchical structures. Nonetheless, it is vital to highlight that the allocation of power among particular states varies depending on their form. According to Waltz (1979), this remark implies that the allocation of capabilities influences the configuration of the global system. Sovereign states are essential components of the international order and play an important role in global affairs. Waltz contends that, in the context of international relations, nations are considered sovereign entities that recognize no higher authority, in addition to the state's significant role as the principal actor. He stated, "To say that states are sovereign is not to say that they can do whatever they want because they are free of the influence of others..."... to say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how to deal with internal and external difficulties, including whether or not to seek aid from other states, so limiting its independence by making promises to them (Waltz, 1979, p. 96).

4. Conclusion/Recommendations

One of the world's worst humanitarian disasters has resulted from the Syrian conflict. The world's conscience has been offended by Syria's unprecedented misery, destruction, and disregard for human life. The conflict's murderous power struggle and violence has portrayed a gloomy picture of international politics once again. The crisis has shown the international system for what it is: a harsh battlefield where nations seek opportunities to exploit one another and do whatever it takes to achieve their national ambitions. And it doesn't always matter that they're meddling in people's lives. Suspicions, mistrust, and conflicting interests among the conflict's key parties have hampered the peace process. Worse, cases of opposing sides violating ceasefire agreements and indiscriminate attacks and airstrikes by opposing forces on hospitals, residential buildings, and killing women and children had resulted in massive civilian casualties, including the killing of women and children, all victims of a deadly power play and controversial ambitions of big powers - all of which had already begun destabilizing the entire Middle East. It should be acknowledged that no direct military involvement would bring peace to Syria. The pursuit of total military victory would effectively culminate in the elimination of Syria. Our research shows that if the US and Russia continue to play a zero-sum game in Syria, the conflict will endure for years and peace will be much more elusive. By extension, we will see a replay of the Vietnam War, in which the US and the then-Soviet Union fought a proxy war for years. Indeed, as the United States and Russia pursue aggressive and conflicting policies in the Middle East to protect their interests and strengthen their relative power positions in the international system, international organizations such as the United Nations have remained powerless in the face of the two great powers' lethal ambitions and Syria's worsening humanitarian crisis.

In the light of our analyses of the study and subsequent findings, we put forward the following recommendations.
1. There is an urgent need for a resetting of US-Russia relations that will lead to greater cooperation between the two major countries. Scoring cheap political points will only damage the peace process and prolong the conflict. Instead of focusing

on divisive issues that could escalate tensions and cause ideological conflict between the two major powers, the US and Russia should focus on areas of common interest and make painful compromises that will help change the conflict narrative and end the bloodshed in Syria for the sake of the Syrian people.

2. The US and Russia have mutual objectives in Syria, including combatting terrorism and jihadist groups in Syria and preventing Syria's chemical weapons stockpile from falling into the hands of terrorists. The International Syria Support Group (ISSG) established a ceasefire task group on February 12, 2016, co-chaired by Russia and the United States, and was instrumental in brokering a ceasefire agreement in Syria that resulted to a state wide suspension of hostilities. The US and Russia should cooperate together and coordinate with the UN and other relevant international organizations to provide relief and assistance to Syrian refugees and thousands of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.

3. To alleviate human suffering in Syria, both the US and Russia should emphasize diplomatic and political options over military engagement. For the sake of the Syrian people and the effective management of the conflict, both great powers should abandon their zero-sum game and instead direct their power and influence toward bringing about a negotiated solution involving compromise by opposing parties based on mutual consent.

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