

RUSSIA'S PERSPECTIVE ON SYRIAN QUAGMIRE AND CHALLENGES TO SECURITY FROM ISIS MENACE

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ABSTRACT

Russia's perspective on Syrian quagmire and challenges posed to security and rising menace of ISIS is about Syrian crisis which has engulfed the entire region into catastrophic war and has destabilized the regional peace and security. The brazen ambition of ISIS and Daesh to create Islamic caliphate and control oil economy and terrorize the civilians has been disheartening. The refugee crisis is looming large over Europe due to Syrian conundrum. The terrorist groups have strong sectarian divides which have threatened the entire Shia crescent which causes tension in the region. Israel feels threatened by the onslaught of Daesh and Al-Nusra front which has devastated Syria and has spread its tentacles to the parts of the world. There is obviously a great power rivalry because of Syrian quagmire. Iran and Syria are the allies of Russia in the war-torn country Syria. The geopolitical leverage Russia is trying to gain in the region by controlling the situation there. The political gimmick has led to the terrorist attack on Ambassadors, Airplanes, and vital security installations. The Isis has been recruiting and crating the militias from the mountain peoples of Caucasus region of Russia. They are trained and disarrayed and disgruntled people flock to join the Isis to wage holy war. Syrian government herculean task is a reconstruction of war -ravaged Syria and triumph over terrorism by liberating region controlled by ISIS..

KEYWORDS: *ISIS, Regional Peace and Security, Islamic Caliphate, Control Oil Economy, Syrian Conundrum*

INTRODUCTION

Russia is confronting twin challenges of ongoing civil war in Syria and the rising menace of ISIS. Russian forces ISIS and its attacks were aimed directly at ISIS. Russia and Iran have a convergence of interest in supporting the Assad regime to counter US moves on the Syrian chessboard. The two failed states of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Iraq and Syria are the dominant Shia Crescent has created fiasco by creating ISIS who is adamant to control the oilfield and it creates its own Caliphate over it. The maddened tyrant Abu Bakar al- Baghdadi has rattled the entire Iraq and Syria. The Atrocious acts of the insurgency of ISIS may spill over and has security concerns in the region. The countries afflicted by terrorism has given full support to the worthy cause to fight against the combatants. The state of relation between different countries has seen their foreign policy and national security orientation converging towards global security concerns. The moot question arises about the aggravated global security and terrorism and how Moscow is responding to that. Russia support for Syria has been motivated by many factors like preponderance of global power and position, commercial weapons sale and support for

Assad regime. Russia's support to embattled president Bashar al-Assad was to strengthen its position in the Middle East, the Mediterranean region and among western countries. (Dyner: 2016)

The world order has manifested many global threats perceptions and security challenges in the post-1991 era. However Security is an ambiguous and vague concept. The core concept of security means the absence of threats. The dictionary meaning of security means being protected from danger, feeling safe and free from doubts. Security is concerned about challenges and vulnerabilities, risks of subjective fears. For National security the state is a point of reference for Human security human beings are the referent. Security forms the part of High politics and trade as low politics. 'Security threat' is an expression of hurting somebody, destruction retaliation, intimidation or Coercion. (Booth: 2007)

The brutal phenomenon of terrorism is widely spread across the globe. The terrorism has deeper ideological and political ramification on human security and its existence. The belligerence stance of the fighting countries and way to clampdown the act of terrorism got prominence in near future. Earlier the concept of security was confined and dominated to the hard power of military and strategic calculations during the Cold war period. After the failure of the League of nation and UN after two world war there was a need felt for collective security. The area of Security studies came to be an interesting domain after the terrorist attack on 9/11, Madrid tube train bomb blast, a global war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. From Realist assumptions states were locked in power struggle so security gained a subordinated and derivative of power. John Herz in 1950s introduced the concept of 'security dilemma' through which state attempts to seek and look after security needs automatically by self- help, which further lead to the insecurity among nation-states for defensive and threatening postures. Robert Jervis has introduced the concept of 'Security regimes' which draw attention from state to system level analysis. (Katzenstein: 1996)

ISIS which wants to establish on caliphate by capturing oil fields is posing threat and challenge to many stakeholders involved in Syria. Russia is afflicted by terrorism and extremism in many parts has a similar viewpoint to fight against terrorism and insurgents. The collective security efforts and security framework need to be made for fighting this debacle. The USA has created fiasco in the Middle East by bombing Iraq and sanctioning Iran, supporting the Jewish state of Israel as its West Asia as a military outpost there. There needs to collectively done to tackle the growing terrorism across the world it is highly embedded in the social and political phenomenon. The political vendetta and clash of civilizational values need to be amicably pacified. Terrorism has a psychological impact on masses as it is dehumanising and demonising influences perpetrated by mercenaries. ISIS has turned into a formidable threat to the US security interest in the region. ISIS is posing threat to the immediate neighbours in the Middle East and its intentions to attack Saudi Arabia, Israel and the west. Recently ISIS claimed responsibility for attacking Paris and left 127 death toll and severe casualties. The Syrian crisis has been catastrophic to global Peace and stability and has culminated in the creation of ISIS and major spillover of refugee crisis in Europe. Russia does visualise ISIS as a legitimate security threat and uses an anti-ISIS posture to pursue its greater strategic interest. Iran continues to provide logistical support to Syria. The Arab League is channelling money supply to Islamist extremist opposition groups. Regime preservation is the sole goal of Russia in Damascus and secures its position in the Middle East by developing a partnership with Iran and its allies. (Spaulding: 2015)

Russia has been very supportive of Global War on Terrorism securitization linking with the Chechnya problem it has vehemently opposed US-led invasion on Iraq, and it is unavoidable and imprecise to calculate strategic blunder of menace of terrorism being portrayed by outfits Al Qaeda. Israel has been prudent enough to have linkages of confrontation and warfare with the Arab world as the American Global War on Terrorism which has broader securitization concerns. (Buzzan: 2006)

The foremost security challenges confronted are Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction WMD, mounting ethnic and religious tensions in breakaway republics, organised terrorism spilling over Russia's Porous borders. American led invasion in Iraq got criticism from Russia and it was forced against the wishes of UNSC resolution. Russian air and missile strike intervention is a recipe for disaster. In Syria government machinery are willing to take hold of the warzone with the help of Hezbollah troops but Israel can target them through airstrikes. Israel has developed strategic interaction with Moscow is precisely worried about the quantum of arsenals and armaments would be possessed by Hezbollah which may jeopardise its interest and purposefully may serve as Russian ally in the battlefield. (Baev: 2:2015) There are many questions popping up what would be the future course of action in Syria and how it is going to fundamentally affect the Israeli Security interests. The recent development of improvement in the relationship of US Iranian there is diminishing relation with the most important ally of Russia. There have been a formidable threat from the ISIS in Syria and Iraq despite a large amount of expenditure from the US on military strikes. The regional security and stability are being threatened by the number of Syrian refugees moving to neighbouring European and Middle East countries, a growth of the extremist group and spreading conflict in neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq. The Syrian quagmire has repercussion on the region by causing spillover effects of refugees outreaching to Europe and the creation of global challenge manifested to world order by the creation of ISIS in the region. (Ibid)

Russian Intervention in Syrian Quandary Overview and its Implication for the Region

Syrian quagmire and overview of the crisis and broader consequences in the region have enigma for the scholars. The rising discontent and displeasure with the authoritarian government of Assad fuelled the Syrian crisis. The Assad government has been ruling since the 1970s in Syria and they are part of Shia sect Alawites though in Syria 74% of the population is Sunni dominated. The key actors in the Syrian crisis are the Assad Government and its International allies like Russia, China, Iran and Hezbollah. The Syrian rebels have been led by different factional elements like the Free Syrian Army, others including Kurdish Forces and Army of Islam. The splinter group and offshoots of Al-Qaeda are Al-Nusrah which working and fighting in Syria. These terrorist organisations were settled in parts of Northwest Syria and are located near Aleppo. The Allies supporting the Syrian war are US-led coalition with the UK and France, Turkey and Arab league. The ISIS which is located in eastern Syria and northern Iraq are targeted by airstrikes of US-led coalition and Russian airstrikes. The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant has established control over the eastern Syria and assumed control over stateless region of Raqqa as ISIL's de facto capital. The Russian intervention can be attributed to the geopolitical dynamics of the region and balance of power within Syria. The casualties and sufferings inflicted to the Syrian people are highly condemned. Russian intervention in Syria has bolstered the Assad regimes position there. Through massive Russian Airstrikes Assad got control of opposition forces in Northern Syria. There are other contrary viewpoints and counter narratives about the Russian air campaigns and Syrian armed

opposition groups are directed to fighting allegedly against the Baathist regime Assad and rather than they have colluded with ISIS.

The civil war in Syria has caused a huge displacement of population and 200,000 death and drawn the virtual caliphate empire of ISIS. The embroiled sectarian conflict of the country has fuelled Shia-Sunni religious divide. Russia's major action in Syria involves expanding and development of Tartus naval base and expansion of airbase at Latakia. There is no substantive role played by Russian naval forces in the Syrian civil war. Putin continued for his build-up of Tartus port as strategic point making the Russian military, air and defense base prepared for the deployment of forces. (Cordesman: 2015)

The warfare involved in Syria has been termed as Hybrid Political warfare because of deployment of a large number of T-90 tanks, Su-24 strike fighters and personnel. The UNSC has been entitled the assignment of holding peace and international orders were ironically unfortunate as dismal performance of UNSC tried to impose and uphold the Responsibility to protect (R2P) was really sceptical. The UN secretary General expression taken into consideration that Syria was transformed into a warzone as leading to the state of "Proxy war with regional actors and arming and weaponising one side and another side of Syria." (Cordesman: 2015)

Kofi Annan designated as special ambassador and negotiator to Arab-League chalked out the plan to work on Six-Point Plan on 27th March 2012. The Syrian conflict proposed the Annan plan which incorporated usage of the ceasefire, withdrawal of tanks and troops, a release of political prisoners, journalists, humanitarian assistance and suggested for political dialogues and negotiation process to be led by Syrians. (Adams: 2015)

Syrian government forces have used aircraft, tanks, heavy artillery and bombings to destroy and threaten the non-combatants and citizens living in Aleppo, Damascus, Daraa, Idib and Raqqah as governorate which were controlled by opposition groups and were supporting the opponents of regimes. Different forums have been initiated like Vienna Talk for bringing all major stakeholders on the same negotiating Tables. The initial meeting occurred on 30 October and was gone to by delegates from the UN, EU and seventeen nations, counting Iran and Saudi Arabia. The strategic goal is to preserve an Alawite "core Syria". Russia has played a crucial role in the fight against international terrorism anti- IS and Coalition by forging with western forces and providing them de-facto no-fly zone in Syria. (Markus and Oliver: 2015)

Role of Russian Radicalism in the Spread of Terrorism

The terrorism and global security are interconnected concepts. Russia has been a victim of state-led repression in North Caucasus, Dagestan and Chechnya. There can easily figure out the Wahhabism and Salafism indoctrination of ideology in the youth of the regions. Russia has suffered the extremism perpetrated by Chechen radicals and other Islamic radicalism in central Asia Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Russia has radicalism spreading to the other parts of the world. Russia has different ethnic and sectarian groups in considerable numbers in the North Caucasus mountainous region. The intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 by the Soviet Union for mujahedeen's was funded by Saudis. Russia has shown its deep anxiety and troubled by the Saudis financial assistance being poured for aiding and abetting clandestinely for resurrecting the former Soviet space by re-Islamising it causing an ideological contestation by spreading Wahhabism in the region. (Trenin: 3)

Iran is an important ally of Russia in the Middle East and Syrian war. They have a strategic interest to control gas and natural resources in the region. Iranian theocrats want hegemony in the region by capturing territory through allies. Iranian theocratic states wanted to strengthen the Shia version of Islam against Sunni Islam led by arch conservatives Salafi and Wahhabi doctrines emerging from Saudi Arabia. These doctrines are encapsulated, motivated and imbibed by ISIS, Al-Qaeda and other violent Jihadist. (Khindaria: 12)

Recent years Russia has emerged as a major country from where ISIS receives its recruits. The fighters came from the restless region of North Caucasus and Central Asia. The four declared provinces of Caucasus emirate Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria had pledged their allegiance to ISIS. These people are moderate Sufi but always resisted the tsarist rule and incorporation by Kremlin. The Chechen side has transformed the nationalist cause into Islamist by incorporation of Jihadi component into it. In 2011 many fighters from Russia migrated to the battlefield of Syria. Chechen fierce fighters got a prominent position in the fight against the Bashar-al-Assad's regime. Syria based jihadist group were led by Chechen emirs from North Caucasus. (Borchevskaya: 7) The feelings of far-right nationalism and xenophobic tendency in Russia has led to rejection among Muslims. Russian government policy perpetuates radicalisation and instability which has the farthest outreach in its periphery. ISIS has preached and mobilised the disenchanting and disenfranchised youths of the region through social media websites *odonoklassniki*. (Ibid: 8)

Radical Islamism ideology threatens the regime security of the state. The recruitment drive for Central Jihadist is being done by the IS from the mountainous people of North Caucasian region of Russia. The ideological confrontation of violence associated with the radical Sharia rule and teaching is not a new phenomenon in North Caucasus. The foundation of Caucasus emirate was led in order for the creation of Islamic emirate under theocratic Sharia law and wage global Jihad. (Hedenskog & Holmquist: 1) There is the perception that people from Russia's North Caucasus region jihadist if they returned from Syria and Iraq they will form there caliphate and governorate. Tatarstan and Bashkortostan are the Muslim dominated regions of the Russian Federation from where the people are proselytising and moulded to liberate Syria and Iraq by joining them as freelancing mercenaries for ISIS. (ibid)

Islamic State and its Paranoid Ambitions in the Periphery and Region

Russia operation was treated as a strategic failure, a double standard by the west, the western states have contributed to the emergence of the Islamic state. Russian intervention was treated as the war against terrorism and fighting for terrorist forces in Syria. Moscow has been working for the inclusion of Bashar al Assad in the peace process and seen as a blow to the west. While Washington is fearful of the stabilisation of situation in Syria that is why they are criticising Russian intervention. Russian intervention has repercussions far beyond Syria. Russia does not differentiate warring groups in Syria doesn't imperatively categorise them as a good terrorist or bad terrorist as the West did. (Kaczmarek: 2016)

The alleged involvement of a multitude of actors in Syria has led to the proxy war situation. The Syrian government of Assad regime asked the help from Russian ally to fight against Jihadist. The Russian president Putin positive to wipe out the terrorism and its network by covertly or overtly decimating the ISIS, AL-Qaeda and its affiliates like Al-Nusra and other

terrorist groups. Putin is interested in building an international coalition against the Islamic States. The opposition groups like Al-Nusra Front and the Free Syrian Army were easily strikeable by the Russian air and military forces. Putin's initiative to organise anti- IS coalition includes the Assad regime, Egyptian president Al-Sisi etc. The main objective of Russia action is to get the leverage of aircraft movement. Russian air attacks have a purpose of to sabotage and decimate the key opponent's group of the northern part of Syria and on outer fringe areas controlled by Assad's troops as well as rebel enclaves. (Markus and Oliver: 2015)

Admitting the harsh realities it is obvious that Russian Leadership is in position to contain Syrian civil war and defeat the ISIS. The long term perspective of Russia's move in Syria is to make sure that Post Assad Syria will be an ally or client of Russia. Russian strategic analyst Dmitri Trenin has viewed Russia intervention in Syria and keep the Assad regime in power to maintain its influence in the region of Middle East. There has been Russia's geopolitical and geo-economics interest involved in Syrian conundrum. Russian gas exports to Syria are the biggest consideration and Russia has enough time to develop Nord stream and south stream. (Malashenko: 2013)

IS has Islamist recruiters and operatives influential figures and charismatic preachers, towering personalities in north Caucasus and Turkey. They boasted that they have the support from many countries with them. According to Salafi activist 'IS tried to create a feeling that cream of the nation was with them. (Europe report N 238: 201 Islamic State has been designated the role of delegitimising the role of Al Qaeda's leader Ayman al -Zawahiri and to control caliphate. A caliphate is indicative of Islamic statehood that has legal implication for entire ummah (Islamic community). The caliphate is the romanticised religious utopian dream of the revival of Islamic entity to liberate and reclaim the dignified position and power of Muslims who have been subjugated and disenchanted. The analyst of Jihadism in Iraq and Syria have suggested that IS having conspicuous control over territory claims to run functioning state, if it is stopped it will lose its magical spell. (Ibid)

ISIS has been the wealthiest militant group and it is financed by the stolen eye, ransom money, black market from the sales of ancient artcraft, funds of supporters and sympathisers. Russia, Iran. Iraq and Hezbollah have provided military support and assistance to the Syrian regime by funding governmental and nongovernmental militias. The failure of US-led Geneva process for building peace and non-violent resistance, Russia and Iran are making diplomatic and military moves in Syria civil war through Moscow Track. There has been binary developed over the role and position and influences of the US and later coming into play by Russia and Iran. Russia wants to install better air defense and completely rejects the US perspective of establishing a no-fly zone. (Cambanis: 2015)The developments unfolded in the Syrian war have been influenced by the Gulf monarchies and Turkey which they have stalemated and led to a frozen conflict. The furtherance and continuity of the war has been perpetuated by the Sunni dominant insurgents and protagonist sponsors. The USA considers Russia friend Bashar al Assad as long term threat which will proliferate and foster Jihadi in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon backed by the Hezbollah and Hamas. (ibid)

Syrian quagmire needs to address the concerns of governance, corruption and disenfranchising the Sunni. The dissolution Syria into smaller defacto Jurisdiction would provoke the strong reaction from Russia and Iran as it would lead to the formal division of country for the interest of other states. It would have negative consequences on the reunification of moderate opposition forces and adversaries. The USA has castigated the presence of Assad regime which is aggravating the

extremist group. Syrian opposition group who are fighting ISIS has welcomed US presence and wants strong robust military action to oust the ISIS. (Blanchard et al 2015)

The US and UN have put allegation on the allegedly use of nerve gas on the civilians by Syrian military forces which killed 1400 people and put restriction from the Organisation of the prohibition on Chemical Weapons. (OPCW). UNSC charter 2118 mandated Syria to give up the use of chemical weapons in Chapter VII of UN provision. (ibid) Syria has a huge stockpile of the nerve agent Sarin and mustard agent. ISIS has foreign fighters from North Caucasus and central Asia who travel to Syria under the operatives of Jabhat al -Nusra. Recently Islamic movement of Uzbekistan became the part of IS which operated in Pakistan and Afghanistan. (The Soufan Group 2015)

ISIS has been considered both as parasite and para-state or hybrid enemy as its operational activity is going to increase exponentially. ISIS and its recruiters are from hilly terrains of the Caucasus in Russia. The feeling of alienation and rejection has been deeply imprinted in the minds of Russia due to growing tendencies of Xenophobia and far right nationalism. ISIS has been clearly divided into three differing camps: (i) Kurdish militia fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria suffering attacks from the Turkey and Sunni militias, (ii) affiliates and offshoots of Al Qaeda conducting bombing and casualties against Assad regime and (iii) Iranian Revolutionary Guards corps (IRGC) Quds militia forces reinforced by Russian air power. (Dannenberg :2015)

Syrian crisis and Emergence of ISIS and its Repercussion on Russia

Recent attacks on Russia can be seen from a broader perspective as these attacks were organised and orchestrated by the local Sunni Zealot with religious fanatics who focussed on ethno-nationalist concerned with the determination of spreading Sharia law throughout the Caucasus. Russia's recent intervention in the Middle East and its action in Libya and Egypt has provoked the indignation of Sunni. Russia has been perceived as the vanguard of Shia interest. Russian president Putin has buttressed and provided the significant military aid to the Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad regime allying with Russia, Shia Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah which are intently and purposefully enemy of Sunni Jihadist. (Clarke: 5)

The growing clout of Moscow with Lebanese Hezbollah, Assad regime and Iran and its intervention in Syria has threatened Putin for the dreadful consequences and as Moscow was an adherent supporter of growing Shia axis throughout the Middle East. Mark Katz as US expert has explored that Russia has maintained a state of equilibrium by having a delicate balance with a multitude of notorious non-state actors like Hezbollah and Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia, Assad's government and Arab regimes of Gulf. (Ferrari:2016)

The Shite Iran and Hezbollah are allies of the Russian federation. The ISIS and Jabhat-al-Nusra have controlled the remnants of Syrian state which was ransacked and set to pillage which left its ruin. ISIS was metamorphosed from the devastated and disintegrated Al-Qaeda which posed a serious threat to the international terrorism a few years down the line. ISIS has occupied the vast swathes of area in Syria and Iraq and has introduced governance there by controlling financial resources for expansion there. (Ferrari: 85)

Terrorists are recruited and included from Russia's Northern Caucasus, Volga region, the Urals as mercenaries and recruited to fight in Iraq and Syria. There was colossal damage done by a terrorist attack on the Russian Passenger aircraft carrying civilians in the Sinai region. The Russian government has deliberately enervated and incapacitated by cautiously disabling ISIS and with Russian Support Syrian army liberated Palmyra which has a great significance of political and Psychological significance. (Ibid: 87)

CONCLUSIONS

Syrian war started in 2011 by mercenaries trained, armed, equipped there by proxies on the ground supported by Saudis and Qataris. Russia has won influence in Syria and has emerged as a superpower because of it. Russia has legitimised its presence in Syria on the pretext of the natural ally of Syria in the region to liberate it from foreign terrorists and mercenaries. The bottom line is that Russia is involved in the aid of Syria and assistance of Syrian people on the humanitarian ground despite opposition from key rivals. The Syrian crisis has provoked uneasiness between great powers. Finally concluding remarks that the Syrian crisis has created a host of problem world over for instance mass exodus of the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe. There Syrian refugee faces hostile and unwelcomed gestures in different countries. There is the least stability in the Arab world because of the Arab spring and fallout of regimes. There have been interferences from external actors for regime changes forthrightly. There has been a western and flawed assumption about the regime survival and peoples support to the rogue and populist authoritarian Assad regime. The resurgent ISIS is trying to create Islamic caliphate and control the oil fields which threaten the peace and stability of the region. The Syrian crisis and ISIS have serious ramification on regional security architecture though Iran and Russia are its allies fighting to stabilise the region. Tribes choose to join ISIS than the Assad regime. The Syrian government is trying to liberate the ISIS controlled region. The remaining terrorist actively operating on the Syrian soil will go back to their respective country then only the situation will be normalised and differences with the Syrian government would be reconciled those who have been involved in anti- Syrian fronts. There have been sinister plans to change the demography of the Turks in Aleppo. Chinese Uighurs are also taking part in fighting along with Syria. The rebuilding process of Syria is important where there is an outcry for human rights flouted and civilians being thrashed needs urgency. Syria stood lowest on peaceful country index list to reside. Syria has enough natural resources needs optimum utilisation and channelled properly. There has been a huge reservoir of gas after Russia, Qatar and Iran. The nefarious design is to create the Israeli hegemony and American resistance and intervention by isolating and sanctioning Iran there thus creating regional chaos. Americans support the Syrian Kurds and Iraqi Kurds for their autonomy thus turning it into a protracted propaganda war in the region.

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