

Geopolitics and Russia's Policy in Syria: Via Realism Perspective

Nasreen Akhtar¹

Abstract:

Russia exposed and expanded its profound, interests towards Syria during an acute crisis. It re-emerged as one of the leading global power in world politics which is evident from its major role in the Syrian war since the Arab Spring. The dynamic contribution of Russia in the Syrian crisis paved the way for Russia to engage itself in the complex politics of the Middle East and pose a great challenge to the United States. The major cause of Russian intervention in Syria is its security and political interests because Syria has been its strong ally in the Middle East since the Cold War. Owing to its firm stance to stay in the Middle East, Russia established a strong relationship with the Syrian regime, and they both also signed security agreements. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the Russian policy in Syria through the realist perspective and to explain how Russia has shifted its foreign policy in the Middle East vis-à-vis the United States.

Key words: Russia, foreign policy, Syria, crises, interests, realism, Middle East

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East region has never been a peaceful land. However, internal and external factors have been perplexing the regional dynamics and encouraged major powers to engage to protect not only regional political interests but also their own self defined priorities. During the Cold War, the United States (US) and the former Soviet Union have had their allies to shield their strategic interests; however, geopolitics altered when the US invaded Iraq in 2003. The US changed the regime in Iraq which alienated ethnic and religious factions. Regime change in Iraq, immensely created unrest in the Middle East which resulted in Arab Spring 2010.

At the end of 2010, the Arab Spring started in Tunisia which triggered uprisings against the long-held regimes in other states of the Middle East such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. The Syrian civil war started in March 2011 against the regime when President Bashar al-Assad failed in bringing transformation and economic reforms in Syria, and, his regime violently responded to the demonstrators. The Arab spring was considered a regional issue but the Syrian war became an international affair when Russia strongly supported Assad's regime. Russia's position in the Syrian conflict has been criticized by the regional Muslim states along with the West especially the US. However, Russia firmly continued to defend Assad's government at every forum when sanctions were imposed by the world community for Assad's harsh policy against the people opposed to his regime. Russia and China both used veto power at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to prevent the US move against President Assad (Black, 2014). During the Syrian conflict, Russia has been supporting Assad's regime politically, and militarily. Nevertheless, in 2015, Russia directly intervened in the Syrian civil war through providing air and ground forces.

The post-Cold War era was more complicated (Everett, 2016), it made the realist debate on the rationality of international affairs even more complex (Wieclawski, 2020) because the old Russia was expanding its geo-political interests and assisting its old allies in the Middle East. The pre-Cold War arena designed a complex system, which was chaotic, and conflictual. The two superpowers were supporting their under developing, and economically fragile allies (Akhtar, 2019). To explain Russia's policy in Syria an interpretative approach has been used. This approach helps us to analyze

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Politics & International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: nasreen.akhtar@iiu.edu.pk

secondary data in qualitative research which is more acceptable and applicable to understand in-depth contextual issues in the fields of political Science and international relations.

Political Realism: Theoretical Underpinnings of Russian Policy in Syria

Realism as an important theory of international relations holds power as a centre of the analysis in international politics and state as the main actor in the competitive international politics. This theory explains the behaviour of states by assuming that, most of the time, states ignore the specified norms and rules of international politics to pursue their vested interests and maximize power in the world. Russia's policy toward Syria follows this (realism) approach vis-a-vis the contemporary international environment, which compels the state to act accordingly. Although this theory does not focus on non-state actors - International Organizations, terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) in the case of Syria. Realist theory focuses on power acquisition and the state's national interests. Thus countering the expanding threats of ISIS in Syria actually explains the security interests of Russia. Russia needs its presence in Syria *"for the strategic accesses to the Mediterranean Sea, which Russia as a land-locked country values, opening the way to the Indian Ocean and providing more security to its southern flank. Russia wants encirclement of Europe, and find allies to the South"* (Grygiel, 2020). As Scholars have observed that Russia has redefined its "threat perception," (Kreutz, 2010) and it would strive to control world politics. Russia under Putin's leadership has designed its broader national interests.

E. H. Carr is known as a scientific realist theorist in international relations, who studied the state behaviour scientifically. According to Carr, "the pursuit of power by individual states took the form of promoting national interests, a term defined as the foreign policy goals of the nation" (Burchill & Linklater, 1996). As we know that international politics is a "struggle for power" (Morgenthau, 1949) and the ultimate goal of a state is to seek more power. International system is anarchic where international politics is determined by the actions of the great powers. Hence realism focuses on the relations between great powers. Russia, being a former great power, has a clash of interests with its Cold War enemy the US in Syria and former's alliance with the Assad regime determines the Moscow's presence in the Middle East. Russia's policy in Syria might be the hunt for a great power status to restore its importance as one of the main centres of world politics. Apart from this, Russia has several other interests such as historical, ideological, political, strategic, and economic etc. Throughout the cold war both Syria and the Soviet Union were close allies in the Middle East. The post-Cold War Russia cultivated its policy to continue good relations in the Middle East to pursue its security and economic interests (Katz, 2010).

Realists assume that the international system is anarchic (Waltz, 1979), which results in the perception of collective insecurity between the states because the conflict of the national interests. Therefore, the security policy of every state depends on the prevailing geopolitical environment. In this anarchic world system, one state's growing military power might be intended to ensure its own individual security but it may create a problem for other states because it is not possible to determine the offensive or defensive intentions of a state (Toft, 2005). The only way to prevent the security dilemma is to "ensure a rough balance of power between the states" (Waltz, 1979). Realism explains the Cold War balance of power between the US and Russia (Sun, 2014). In the contemporary world, although, the US has a strong place in the Middle East and has a strong influence than that of Russia, but through its expanded military presence in Syria, Russia would protect its security interests. Russia, however, created a threat to balance vis-à-vis the US in the Middle East (Walt, 1987). Stephen Walt has explained "theory of threat to balance" as:

The more aggressive or expansionist state appears, the more likely it is to trigger an opposing coalition. If balancing is the dominant tendency, then threatening states will provoke others to align against them. Because those who seek to

dominate others will attract widespread opposition, status quo states can take a relatively sanguine view of threats. Credibility is less important in a balancing world because one's allies will resist threatening states out of their own self-interest, not because they expect others to do it for them. Thus, the fear that allies will defect declines (Walt, 1985).

In the present complex geopolitics and regional environment, Russia has enough potential to upset the balance in the Middle East vis-à-vis the US. Russia has Iran's support as an old ally as well as the U.S rival, would upset the balance of power in the Middle East because "the strategic stakes" are high for Russia and Iran in the region (Behraves, & Cafiero, 2019).

RUSSIA'S MAJOR INTERESTS IN SYRIA

Geopolitical Interest

Every major state desires to be one of the main influential actors in world politics. For a major power, it is vital to play a crucial role- not only in regional politics but also in world politics to secure its strategic interests. The Soviet Union, during the Cold War, played a very decisive and critical role in the Middle East. Post-Cold War era, though, would not recognize Russia as a superpower but it has the capacity to upset the geopolitics since its "military doctrine 2015" (Valori, 2020). Russia keeps its presence in the Middle East owing to the new geopolitics in the Middle East and tension between the East and West. As Valori (2020) states:

All possible sub-military threats multiply the hotbeds of tension, while North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is focusing again on the East-West confrontation, thus providing to the East a wide range of possible instruments which are automatically taken away from the West. The last complete Russian military doctrine was made public on December 25, 2015. Before, Russia's participation in the war in Syria and hence even before the new projection of Russian power onto the Mediterranean, partly resulting from Russia's relative success in Syria. In essence, Russia's last doctrine was conceived in a very different phase of the East-West confrontation. The Russian development of advanced medium-long range weapons, capable of hitting the Atlantic Alliance and the United States with the maximum speed and effectiveness without warning and without triggering nuclear-type equilibrium.

Historically, Syria and the Soviet Union have been important strategic partners in the 1970s. The 1980 "Soviet-Syrian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" ("Soviet-Syrian treaty," 2008) strengthened the security partnership. This, twenty years, treaty of cooperation provided strong security liaison in case of threat to peace in the Middle East. Since 1971, Moscow had leased port to a Russian naval facility in the Syrian city of Tartus- which is significant to protect Russia's interests in the Middle East region and beyond. In December 2017, Russian Foreign Council ratified an agreement between Syria and Russia, on Russian forces' access to the naval base in Tartus. This agreement is valid for 49 years with possible extension for more than 25 years (Behraves & Cafiero, 2019). Russia can keep eleven ships at Tartus Naval Base (LaGrone, 2017). Tartus Naval Base is the only facility outside of Russia's territory (Gardner, 2012). Russia, collaborating with Assad's regime, has greatly increased its influence at Tartus Naval Base that provides Russia's Navy a "bigger foothold in the Mediterranean Sea" (Karmanau, 2019).

After the cold war, Moscow faced diverse political, social, economic and security challenges at domestic and international level which reduced its activities in the region that also reduced its

international position. At the beginning of the 1990s, Russia prioritized West in its foreign policy but after few years Russia was disappointed with the Western attitude towards it because Russia was regarded as an equal partner. Thus, Moscow turned back to its traditional policy in the Middle East, especially Syria, Iran, and Iraq. However, Syria was not a priority of Russian's foreign policy, despite it remained its important partner in the region. Syria's importance increased in recent decades due to regional geopolitics. In 2003, after US intervention in Iraq, the Russian and Syrian relations became apparent. Since then Russia began to play its pivotal role of Assad's regime protector and diplomatic shield. In return, Syria would protect the Russian political, economic and strategic interests in the Middle East region (Notte, 2017).

Owing to the ongoing crises in Syria, over the past many years, Russia has become a central player in Syrian conflict and in the Middle East. The Russian expanding military intervention in Syria in support of Assad's regime made significant impacts on regional politics. Moreover, Russia's increasing cooperation with Iran, Turkey, and Egypt continue to increase its sphere of influence not only in Syria but in the whole region. Russia has reset its geopolitical interests in Syria. Russia's military activities in Syria and Iran refer to its intention to expand its "power-projection capabilities" in the region (Notte, 2017). Tartus port is a Russia's strategic asset, because it is only way for Russia to establish its foothold in the Mediterranean. Tartus is essential to Russia and its allies in the region, it has been operating in the past and will continue to operate (Gardner, 2012). This naval base boosted up Russia's operational capacity in the region.

The geopolitical interests of Russia, which are at stake in Syria, include the core of its post-Soviet presence in the Middle East-and its alliance with Assad's regime. According to Notte (2017), there are two driving motives behind Russia's projection of military power in Syria such as to prop up the Assad's regime and force the US to more actively reengage Russia in diplomacy. Another geopolitical interest is the growing regional clout of Russia as its active involvement in Syria has paved the way for its economic and diplomatic relationships with other *regional and extra-regional* actors in the Middle East (Notte, 2017) Weapon deals with Algeria, Iran, Bahrain, Turkey, and Lebanon, conducting joint military drills with some actor (Iran, China and Pakistan), investment in the Syrian frontier, and ties with a pivotal player like Turkey, has all put Russia in a position to influence the regional political and security environment. This increasing regional clout was not the initial driver of Russia's foreign policy toward Syria but gained importance when the Syrian war turned into a ground of broader US-Russian confrontation (Notte, 2017) vis-à-vis Assad's regime.

National Security and the Dilemma of Terrorism

Russia's security interests are also at stake in Syria, which can be determined by analyzing the historical experiences, geographical proximity, and terrorist spillover effect. The geographical proximity of the Middle East to the Caucasus and Central Asia is one of the main determinants of Russia's foreign policy toward Syria. Syria is not so far from the North Caucasus part of Russia, as the distance between Damascus and Dagestan's capital is approximately 1,600 kilometers (Wlodkowska-Bagan, 2017). Thus, the links between the extremists from the Middle East and the Caucasus have become a major concern for Russia's security interest in Syria.

Russia's security interest in Syria has its deep roots in its historical experiences as well. At the time of the second Chechen War after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Chechens and other separatist groups attacked and threatened Russia internally. The unrest in the North Caucasus was perceived by the government as a threat of Chechen separatism that could spill over to other parts of Russia leading toward state disorder and collapse (Notte, 2017). As expressed by President Putin in an interview: "the essence of the situation in the North Caucasus and in Chechnya is the continuation of the collapse of the USSR...if we did not stop it, Russia would cease to exist...if we did not immediately stop the extremists... we would be facing a second Yugoslavia" (Hill, 2013). The

situation in Chechnya was stabilized by the “Chechenization” policy (Matejova, 2013) and antiterrorist operations.

The radicalization among various ethnic groups still exists in the North Caucasus, especially in Dagestan and Chechnya. In 2015, it was estimated that an increasing number of people from Russia and the other former Soviet republics were recruited in ISIS. According to the Russian Federal Security Service, the number of Russian citizens joining ISIS had increased from 1700 to 2400 from February to September in 2015 (Hille, 2015). Thus, the growing threat of ISIS in Syria was not only a threat to its ally regime in Syria but also to Russia's own national security. This can be considered as one of the reasons that Russia intervened in Syria in 2015 to stop the spillover effect of terrorists out of Syria toward the Russian borders. Russia justified its intervention in Syria as a “war against terrorism” and against ISIS (Daher, 2018) that would upset the peace in the troubling states.

Russia's Strategic Interests

Russia supports the Assad regime to protect its broader and core strategic interests in the Middle East. About fifty percent of the world's oil reserve is located in the Middle East- Syria is significant for Russia's future energy projects. The economic interest that is at stake in Syria is “preserving access of Russian companies to Syria's market to ensure that the country continues to buy Russia-made arms and machinery, ensuring diversification of Russia's economy, which is largely driven by the oil and gas sector” (Saradzhyan, 2015). In 2014, Russia was Syria's tenth-largest trade partner. However, for Russia Middle Eastern countries are not as important economic partners as European and Far Eastern countries (Wlodkowska-Bagan, 2017) because Europe is the biggest natural gas and oil export market for Russia. The current instability in the Middle East has weakened Russian Middle Eastern competitors and it is in fact favourable for Russia to remain as a dominant energy exporter in Europe. The unresolved conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya etc. (Gardner, 2012) potentially, involved Russia and other major powers in the regional affairs.

After the outbreak of war in Syria Russia increased heavy military equipment supplies and military personnel to Syria. Hence, unlike economic interests, Russia's military and strategic interests are vital in Syria (Bishara, 2015). Russia, despite the global challenges, “wants to be an indispensable actor” (Frolovskiy, 2019). In 2015, Russia further enlarged its military presence, dramatically established air bases and conducted successful airstrikes to facilitate Syrian forces to recapture many areas from ISIS. Thus Russia's military presence proved very effective to support the Assad's regime, protected its naval and air bases in Syria, proved itself unavoidable for the settlement of the dispute, and to be treated as a great power by the US (Suchkov, 2020).

Survival of the pro-Russian regime in Syria is also critical for important political stakes not only in Syria but the whole Middle East as well - the regime change in Syria might undermine the post-Soviet position in Syria. If the Western backed Sunni opposition wins, it would strengthen West's influence in Syria. This might result in closing Russia's military bases in Syria as a result it would weaken Russia's efforts to enhance its global status by increasing its influence in the Middle East (Wlodkowska-Bagan, 2017).

Confronting with Regime Change Forces

Russia considers Arab spring a replica of the Western supported colour revolution in the former Soviet Republics, which overthrew the Pro-Russian regimes in the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Ukrainian revolution of 2004 and the Georgian revolution of 2012 were taken as the funded revolution by the US to destabilize Russia (Cordesman, 2014). Then the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei, accused the US of attempting “to impose homemade recipes for internal change on other nations to export of democracy” (Wlodkowska-Bagan, 2017) that has made the world vulnerable. A Russian Army General stated after the fall of the Libyan regime that the tactic of “color revolution

used by leaders of some countries to remove undesirable political regimes might later be applied to Russia and its allies" (Notte 2017) Thus keeping the historical occurrence into the account Russia did not support the regime change in Syria in the wake of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and showed persistence in defending the Assad regime despite the strong US opposition.

In Russian review, the fall of Assad will be geopolitical disaster for the Middle East. The collapse of Syrian regime would provide an opportunity to the terrorists such as ISIS and other radical factions to rise and increase their capacity to upset the regional peace. The regional environment, after the fall of the Saddam Hussain regime in Iraq and the Gaddafi regime in Libya, might be taken as examples that supported Russia's view about the regime change in Syria. Russia, however, opposes the US policy which has been supporting the forces of regime change in the Middle East.

In 2015 Russia intervened in Syria on the official invitation of Syrian authorities and claimed that the Russian army was fighting against ISIS and other terrorist groups which justified the intervention under international law. However, instead of the terrorist groups, Russian fighters targeted the anti-Assad groups (Wlodkowska-Bagan, 2017). The survival of Assad's Regime is important for Russia's strategic interests in the Middle East. Syria is the place where Russia can contain the US power in the Middle East.

RUSSO-SYRIA RELATIONS AND POLITICAL REALISM

International politics is determined by the six popular principles as expounded by Morgenthau (1949). In the contemporary world politics, Russia's activities and its foreign policy outlook toward Syria provides practical implications of six principles of political realism which state that "Politics is governed by objective laws which have their root in human nature. These laws do not change over time and are impervious to human preferences" (Burchill & Linklater 1996).

Realism views politics as the pursuit of national interests and a struggle for power between the states. Human nature (desire for power) is permanent which must be accepted as how it really is instead of how it ought to be. Russian President Putin is accused of having a desire for power - the key to understanding international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power (Burchill & Linklater 1996, p.75). Putin showed his commitment to defend Assad regime in Syria that determines his hunt for great power status to raise Russia [again] as one of the global power centres. Syria provides a critical playground for Russia to balance the US power in the Middle East.

The second principle of realism provides an understanding of the state's behaviour. It affirms that the state's foreign policy is determined by "interests" defined in terms of power instead of motives, morality, and ideological preferences of the leader. Thus Russia's foreign policy actions toward Syria are based on the important national interests as explained earlier. Strategically, Syria serves as an anchor for Russia to maintain and enhance its power and influence in the Middle East which, in fact, drives Russia's policy. The Russian military presence on the Syrian shores means that a large portion of the Eastern Mediterranean will be under Russian over watch (Grygiel, 2020). Russia's interests in Syria "as a strategic prize will allow Moscow to be a much more influential player in Europe. To be a great power of Europe, Russia needs to be a player in Mediterranean" (Grygiel, 2020). This is possible when Russia maintains its presence in Syria.

Though Russia has great economic interests in Europe than in Syria but Syria as its old ally provides a strong playground to re-emerge as a great power in the world politics. National interest is the sole pursuit of Russia and its actions are forced by the relative power of the state- the US which fought an ideological war, "while political leaders will cast their policies in ideological terms (defense of democracy) they are inevitably confronted by the distinction between what is desirable and what is actually possible" (Burchill & Linklater, 1996). Russia has justified its support for Assad regime by

giving its ideology for the transition to democracy and negate the Western backed revolution and political transitions. Russia viewed the regime change as disorder and chaos in the state which would collapse the Syrian state. Russia promoted its own idea of democratization in which the state has the primary role in the transition to democracy to avoid conflict, preserve social order and economic stability. Thus Russian government shaped its Syria-specific policy through the doctrine of "sovereign democracy" which favoured order over justice and regime security over human security: "The form and nature of the state power will vary in time, place and context but the concept of interest remains consistent. The political, cultural, and strategic environment will largely determine the form of power a state chooses to exercise" (Burchill & Linklater 1996, p.75).

In his third principle of political realism, Morgenthau explains the interest in terms of "power" as a universal fact. The shape of power is altered over time with the prevailing circumstances but the real essence of interests and priorities, which are power, remain identical. During the Cold war era, Moscow used hard power to intervene and establish a communist regime to expand its power in different regions of the world. After its disintegration, due to internal economic and political turmoil, Russia was not capable of using hard power to maintain its influence even in the former Soviet republics. As a result, new states emerged and Russia lost its great power position. However, Russia supported the pro-Russian regimes to maintain its influence but avoided conflict with the US and Western influence in the region. In the contemporary world, Russia introduced assertive policy by using military power in the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and playing a major role in the Syrian War. Russia's policies to exercise power in global affairs remain intact. It corresponds to the realists' belief that "universal moral principles do not guide states behavior, though state behavior will certainly have moral and ethical implications" (Burchill & Linklater, 1996).

The realist school of the IR justifies the Russian policy in Syria because Russia, as an influential actor, would not provide space to the US to enjoy its domination. Although universal moral ethics are important in political actions, clash between moral actions and real interests is unavoidable. Therefore, clash of interest may prevail. Russia claimed that it intervened in Syria on the official request of the Assad regime and it was combating terrorism by fighting against ISIS and other rebel groups. In reality, Russia is fighting against the anti-regime forces to supporting Bashar al Assad who is considered as a culprit of the killing of innocent citizens by carrying out indiscriminate chemical weapon attacks just to defend its regime. Thus, morally it is not acceptable to support a regime, which is rejected by a large number of the citizens and is accused of human rights violations but the survival of the Bashar- al Assad regime as a pro-Russian regime is important for Russia's strategic interests in the Middle East. According to Burchill and Linklater (1996), "There is no universally agreed set of moral principles. The use of moral language to justify external behavior is designed to confer advantage, legitimacy, and further the national interest of the state."

In the fifth principle, there is again an emphasis on the standard set to judge the behaviour of a state is interest defined in terms of power instead of universal moral principles that are not reliable to judge political actions. But to avoid ideological confrontation, states adopt policies that minimize clash of interest with other states while promoting their own interests. Although the establishment of a democratic regime in Syria is not favourable for Russia's foreign policy interest in the broader Middle East. This is because the Sunni majority in Syria is more likely to align itself with other Sunni regimes of the region turning Syria from Russia's strategic ally to against it. Russia has promoted its own idea of democratic transition, which emphasizes over gradual, regime-supported, and stable way of adopting democratization. Thus, Russia does not clearly contradict the idea of democratization in Syria but it gives its own explanation of the procedure that should be adopted to transform into democracy because the Western supported sudden regime change will lead toward state collapse. Hence, Russia is using the rhetoric of democratization that should come from within, the one in which the state has a primary role to bring the transition. However, in the presence of

dominant Bashar al-Assad and Ba'ath party regime, this idea of gradual transition does not seem applicable. Every political sphere seems autonomous and has no similarity vi-a-vis the humanity, economy or legality. The sixth principle indicates that international politics is not concerned with the economic, legal or moral beliefs of an individual leader to analyze behaviour of a state in the international domain. As an *autonomous* sphere, it has its own criteria to determine state behaviour. How certain legal or moral ideology or economic policy is affecting the state's interest defined in terms of power is the central focus in this autonomous sphere of politics. For instance, after the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russian alliance with the West was important to gain economic interest because a state with a weak economy cannot properly stand in world politics. At that time, not much attention was given to the Middle East but now Russia after regaining some strength has focused its relations with the Middle Eastern states, which serves the important geopolitical interests of Russia to establish its powerful influence in the region. Thus, all the policies a state adopted revolve around interests defined in terms of power.

CONCLUSION

Russia's strategic interests by applying the theory of political realism explain the reality behind Russia's intervention in Syria. Keeping in mind all the important interests of Russia that are at stake in Syria give clear answers to all questions like why did Russia intervene in Syria? Survival of Syria as one of the strong anchors of Russia in the Middle East is very crucial to maintain its position and influence in the region and this is why Russia strongly supported the Syrian regime in every possible economic, military and political way.

Russia wants to counter the US and restore its power status in the region. Realism emphasizes the balance of power system in the anarchic world system. For Russia to re-emerge as one of the power centres in the world, it must enhance its capabilities on the basis of which it should be taken very seriously in world affairs. Russia played a powerful role in the Syrian crises so far. As a result, to settle the Syrian situation in the Middle East, the US may not ignore the Russia's presence in the region. Thus, Russia has proved its capability to be engaged in the important world affairs by other powerful allies. Proactive diplomatic efforts and hard power investments suggest that political stability in Damascus and rehabilitation in the eyes of its neighbours are pillars of Russia's long-term interests in Syria. Given Russia's vital interests in enduring stability in Syria, post-war realities on the ground create a dilemma of whether to pressure the regime to enact political reforms to ensure greater internal stability or to focus on the Latakia region as a geostrategic investment. Latakia is the principal port city of Syria.

With the greater assertiveness of external players, like Turkey, and Iran, with their own motives and plans for the region, Russia has to tread very carefully in the region. It would be interesting to see how Russia manages to do it in the context of the classical neorealist agenda which it seems to be following in Syria. Russia's interaction with other global actors has proven that the state makes alliances to secure its interests. China, and Russia, old rivals, are collaborating and their liaison is dangerous for the US.

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