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The French foreign policy towards the Syrian crisis (2011-2016)

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ACRONYMS:

FPA: Foreign Policy Analysis

FSA: Free Syrian Army

IR: International Relations

ISIL: The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

ISSG: International Syrian support group

SNC: Syrian National Council

How did the French Foreign Policy influence on the Syrian Crisis during the last 5 years? Can we say the influence is positive or negative and where, with what we can see the outcomes of those influences? What conditioned the policy of France during the Syrian crisis?

ABSTRACT

My master's thesis topic is dedicated to the study of the French foreign policy towards the Syrian crisis. The data collection method that has been selected is the study of primary and secondary sources. My goal is to investigate the Syrian policy of France and to mark its role in the crisis.

First, we focused on finding the answer to the question: "How effective was the French intervention in Syria?" Because, by analyzing the intervention, we can mark the policy of France. One can note that there has been a principal and strong link between France and Syria from early history. We can see it in languages, religion or culture in Syria.

I hope my thesis will help better understand the real situation in some parts of the Mediterranean, as an example of French policy towards Syria and their problems and perspectives.

Key words:

Key words used to find sources are as follows: "French policy", "Intervention", "Terrorism, and "Refugees" in Syria, "Aids", and "Arab spring".

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Introduction

This paper investigates the roots of culture, religion, national ethnic, corruption, and other key factors under the topic: Syrian policy of France. I attempted to analysis bilateral influence of geopolitical ambitions, regional policy and world policy.

My thesis is about the French foreign policy towards Syrian crisis in last five years. It consists of four chapters. First chapter encloses the historical background. The second chapter examines Syria's Arab spring. The third chapter is devoted to terrorism, refugees, humanitarian aid, and the fourth: outcomes of French intervention on Syria.

The thesis considers the questions which are below mentioned: What were the reasons that led France to be involved in the Syrian crisis? Were the aims of the French intervention served? Was the intervention successful from the French point? What was the position of France within the Security Council of the UN regarding the issue of Syria? We also try to consider France-Syria relations from history until Arab Spring taking into account bearing Baath party and Hafez al-Assad's period.

The second chapter is about Syrian conflicts under French policy during "spring". In this chapter, I examined the roots of Arab Spring and today's situation. The Arab Spring was carried with its dangers and open doors for some world forces, and an opportunity to at long last shake up the adjust of force in this critical locale after numerous times of despotic "strength" which in any case constantly debilitated to bubble over given individuals' hidden outrage with existing conditions. For a few nations like France, they considered this to be a chance to test America's strength in the area. In this chapter I also discussed the French stances with others in international places about Syrian issues.

Despite the fact that ISIS is geographically in a specific range, it is seeping into every one of these worries such as power, territorial and ideology. The setting (of Islamist politics) is significantly different from it was before the uprisings and I don't think our direct and radical twofold helps us understand this.

Continuous disagreements (unemployment, corruption, repression, monopoly, autocratic regime, violence of human rights, and brutal relations to population) with the population brought to complex situation in all Middle Eastern countries. France has many reasons to intervene in Syria. Below we investigate those reasons. We tried to analyze the outcomes of French intervention, first of all, on itself and on Syria, as well as on EU.

The third chapter analyses terrorism, refugees and international aids for Syria. In this chapter I considered terrorism, its definition, background and its influence on refugee's migration policy. I investigated types of refugees, economic-political migrants and the roots of their problems, the amount and purpose of aids. The fourth chapter is about the situation of the French policy within the country and the outcomes of French intervention on Syria.

This thesis analyzes also the reasons of the Arab uprisings that have been given short shrift or that have been caricaturized in the downpour of writing on the subject. The accentuation will be on the Syrian case, especially as far as the weighted political-financial contemplations that have been ignored in a few investigations. The stalemate in Syria at the season of composing is demonstrative of a requirement for a more nuanced and multifaceted examination of the reasons for the revolt. The paper is concluded by hinting the state of things to come regarding the coherence of comparative political-monetary recipes, independent of who stays standing.

Chapter I: An overlook to the French-Syrian relations.

1.1 Diplomacy: Background of France-Syria ties.

The Syrian-French relations have deep historical roots. People started living on the current Syrian territory nine thousand years before the Christian era. It was a transit corridor for East and West rulers and a geostrategic land, which has rich resources both above and under the land. Thus, it was under the influences of many rulers: Assyrians, the Neo-Babylonians, Persians, and finally, Greek and Roman rulers. Until the 7th century Syria was Christian country, then it was occupied by the Umayyad Dynasty. This was the first page of Islamism and Arabism in Syria. During this time the culture and economy developed. Syria traded with silk fabric products that were brought from Far East China through Silk Road until European and Turkish pressure started. Since the late 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century Frankish Crusaders ruled the region the following two centuries. In 1516 the country was conquered by the Ottomans (the country were divided into four administrative divisions, including 1) Damascus, 2) Aleppo 3) Sidon –modern Lebanon 4) and Tripoli). The Ottoman Empire ruled the country until the 19th century when Napoleon started European colonialism policy in North Africa and the Middle East. Later in the Middle East, the former Ottoman Empire territories were ruled under the influences of France, Britain and Italy. (Please refer to the figure 1.)

Let me give some details about these mandates or secret agreement. It is called “Sykes –Picot” which is signed in May 1916. But they didn’t announce the agreement on time, instead Britain supported Arab King –Emir Faisal with financial and military in its fight against Ottoman Empire. He took the Damascus in 1918 and was introduced as a king who rules from the Taurus Mountains of Turkey to the Sinai desert in Egypt at the National Congress in March 1920. In summer of this year King Feisal’s ‘period’ got the end in spite of nearly not started yet because of French troops made him flee to abroad by entering Syria. Then the ‘Sykes-picot’ went out to the center and was let know to the world which already made a deal on dividing the former Ottoman Empire territories: France controlled today’s Syrian and Lebanon territories. Palestine and Iraq were controlled by Britain as appointed at the San Remo Conference of April 1920.

See figure -1¹: (The map of the territories, which were appointed under the secret “Sykes-picot” agreement in May 1916 by European rulers.)

¹ Map-1: J. Dufourcq&O. Kempf, 2016. P-9;

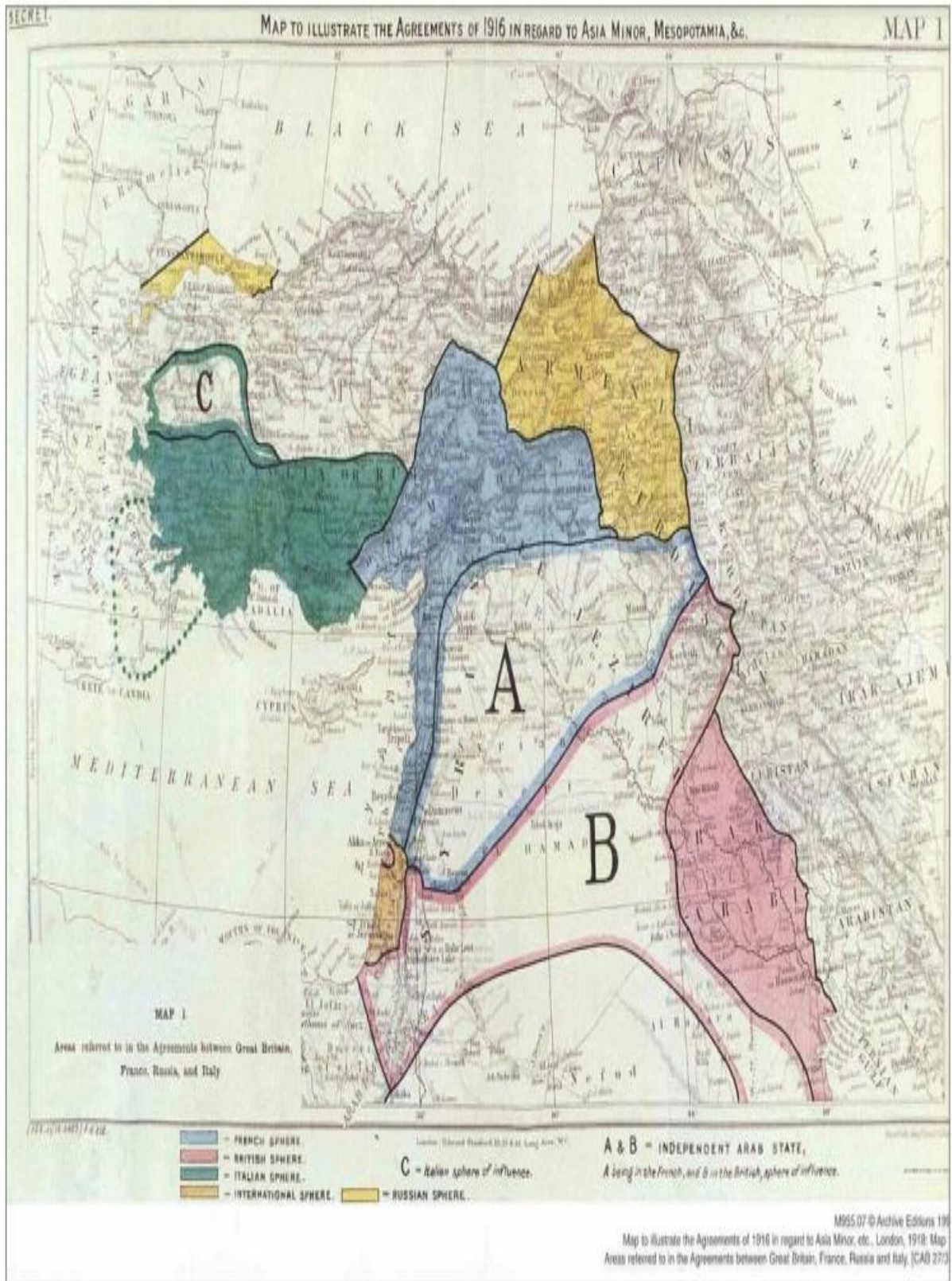


Figure-1.

Few words about Lebanon. It was founded in 1919 with the French support. Until that year, it used to be a part of Empire, where the Maronite Christians lived in Tripoli, Sidon, and Tyre cities. It consists of the major part of those area's population. By this way France divided Syria into three autonomy parts: the Alawite on the seaside, Druze in the south and Lebanon. If we don't take some exceptions during this period, the Alawite state and Jabal al-Druze state had been ruled as a separated from Syria like Federation since 1922 till 1942, in order to avoid national movement inside the country against French colony. Also, there were other factors, such as many religious and ethnic minorities inside Syria. This helped France to divide and control instead of unity. The French mandate, which was assumed in September 1923, got the end in 1945, that it was devoted not to make a new colony, however, to maintained its role in the region and to strengthened its presence in the Mediterranean.

Coming to the 1947 years, in Syria, the Arab Socialist Baath Party was established by Michel Aflaq and Salah-al-Din al-Bitar, who came from the Alawite minority. But, nobody knew and imagined that the party would become "an iron problem" to the Syrian's future at that time. In 1958 Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and Shukri al-Kuwatli who came to power in Syria three years ago, signed an agreement thinking to develop relations and provide political stability, but it didn't last long, because of Israel-Palestinian war and civil war in Lebanon. After some time, Hafez al-Assad who was former Defense Minister came to power in 1970 with the support of America's hegemony. As a result of wars with Israel in 1967, intervening to Lebanon in 1976, Syria became "military base" of neighboring countries such as Palestine and Lebanon. It kept the position even until today.

When Hafez al-Assad died from heart attack in June 2000, after a month, his son – Bashar al-Assad came to power as if he was a liberal president. He tried to improve his image by doing many 'cosmetic' reforms. One of them was that he released 600 thousand political prisoners in his early presidential years. Unfortunately, it became known that his reforms were temporarily.

Chapter II: War and Politics in a stateless regime or a state with many regimes.

2.1.1 France and Arab spring in Syria.

«En Syrie, une solution militaire est improbable, une solution politique impossible.»

(“In Syria, a military solution is improbable, a political solution impossible.”)

Henry Laurens²

In 2008 Nicolas Sarkozy tried to improve relations between two countries, which were frozen until he was elected. He invited Bashar al-Assad to Paris for the Bastille Day celebrations, but there was no any positive outcome, because the negotiation was under American ambitions to re-colonize Syria as a solution.

Furthermore, in 2012 a new president François Hollande was elected in France. He had more willing to intervene into Syrian conflict. He made two decisions regarding France –Syria relations. They are: 1) recognizing Syrian coalition and 2) closing its embassy in Damascus. Bashar al-Assad continued his father’s policy – anti-west, anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian policy. In spite of his popularity within country, he could not save the political stability and sovereignty of his republic.

2010 was the beginning of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North African countries that spread to neighboring states. The Syrian government widely used the Media machine to assure the population that the country was the most secure and stable country of the world for many years. Anyway, this endeavor couldn’t avoid of revolts over the country.

From other governments’ experience one can state that many incidents emerge when more responsibility falls to the shoulder of the government. If we look at the Hafez al-Assad’s regime (See figure-2), we realize the situation from inside. When he came to power in 1970, he tried to strengthen his power by building an autocratic regime. He took all opportunities only to his hand which gave rights to rule the country as he wished. He aspired to be political hegemony within the country and at last he managed it. As a result of his dictatorship, he ruled Syria during thirty years. It means the Alawite minority that consists of the smallest part of Syrian population has been ‘political elite’ for nearly half century. During this long period, Assad’s family and the Alawite minority

² J. Dufourcq&O. Kempf 2016, p-7;

occupied the most important, strategic, and the highest political positions in the country. This was the cause of high corruption in the country and brutal repression in every sphere.

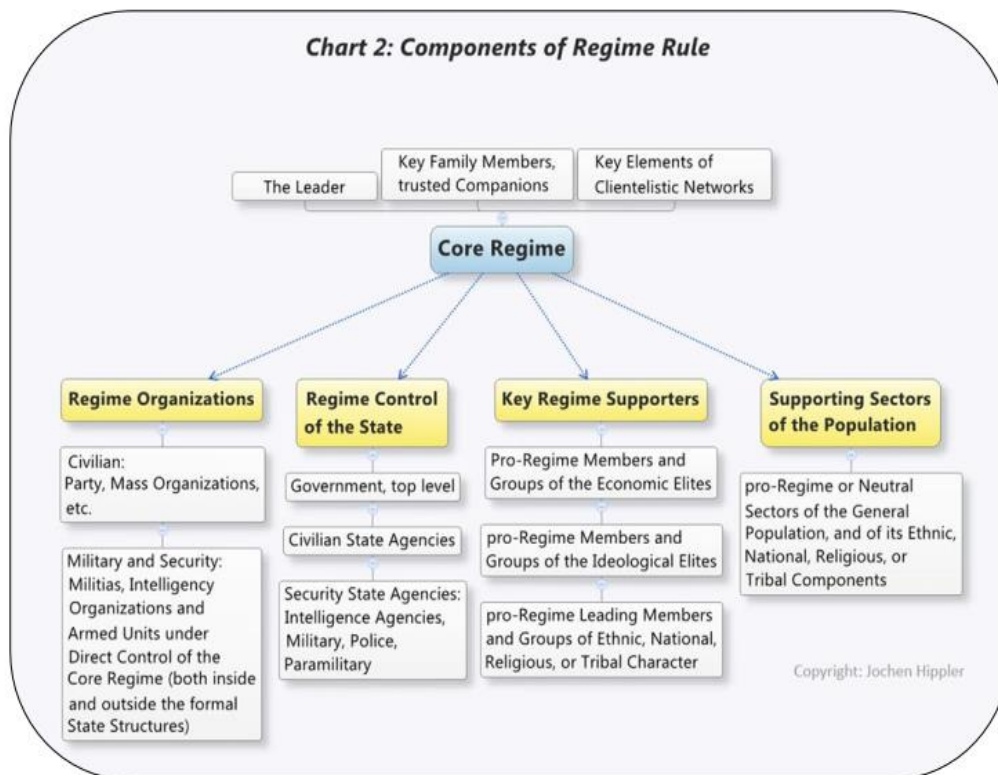


Figure-2³: Here you can see a schedule about the regime and its characters. It will help us to easy imagine dictatorship system or its ‘pyramids’.

Firstly, the country was plunged into the bog of corruption by Assad’s family and the Alawites minority who have been keeping their power as an elite during half centuries. As a result, every official of Assad’s regime became rabid very much. After all, abusing powers became common. For example, open markets, bazaars became “orchard” of tax-collector and police.

Secondly, most of the population of North African and Middle East countries consists of men and women, who are aged from 18-34 years old. The unemployment rate was very high. There was no investment or no enough business environment. Government fulfills its duty or plans only on papers. Political hegemony disrupted the normal life that Syria had in the past. High level positions in the government are occupied by the elite. In addition, the country is not attractive for foreign investors,

³ Hippler, 2013, 24p

because of the regime, political situation, instable financial situation, lack of competition, and other economic issues.

Thirdly, the diversity of religion (Shiite Muslim, Sunni Muslim, the Maronite Christians, the Alawites, the Druze, Ismaili Muslims, Yazidis, and Jews) and ethnic minorities (Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Circassians, Assyrians, Lebanese, and Iraqis) made the situation even more complicated. Assad's family didn't consider opinions of Sunni Muslims when ruling the country or making decisions, while Sunni Muslims accounted for the majority of the population, there were many contradictions and hostile spirit among minorities like Shiites-Sunni, which couldn't dare to do revolt before.

Fourthly, there were many radical groups, who announced themselves as the best Muslim groups or states like ISIS and al-Qaeda. They attracted young men and women who want to be heroes around the world with the motto "Jihad", but they did absolutely wrong and unsuitable things to Islam and its "Jihad". Because, nowadays the term is unavailable as terrorist claim. The Jihad of Islam today only claims to fight against his greedy, insatiable, and carnal desire, but it completely doesn't admit not only killing people, even offend other innocent people with words. According to Sharia rules, killing innocent people is a big sin.

Fifthly, the security forces of the country didn't defend its population, but defended its regime from population. As a result, the revolts changed into civil war. Because, Assad didn't retire as his neighbors, but on the contrary, he asked help from global powers like Russia by searching 'sponsor' who rehabilitating prove the innocence him and his policy in international arena on purpose to keep his post and strengthen his own power. Then, his opposition did the same thing like Assad and they asked support from the west and some regional powers like Turkey, Israel and Saudi. This Assad's decision was a dominant cause of why civil war brought to proxy war of global powers in Syria.

Furthermore, the political class is divided over the question of French position which is devoted to end Syrian conflicts. Gulf countries, which motivate some Islamists in the Syrian opposition, might support France's stance on Syria to detriment of European interests while French public opinion doesn't want military intervention. (Murkocinski and Sasnal, 2013, p.2)

In the words of Didier Billion who works as a deputy director of Institut des relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), there are three reasons of French intervention which had impact to Hollande's decision towards Syria:

“The first one was the incorrect assessment on the power level of the Assad regime. Related with this incorrect assessment, France tended to underrate the Assad regime while evaluating that the intervention would evoke the collapse of the Assad regime easily. The second reason was the moral standing of the diplomats that encircled Hollande. These diplomats who pursued a moral approach toward the international crises had an influence on Hollande's intervention decision. The last reason was the ongoing debate between the Gaullists and the Atlanticists regarding the French foreign policy decisions. The Atlanticists who defend a French foreign policy close to the US axis rather than seeking an independent foreign policy were more influential on the Syrian file. Then, when the US was searching for allies to intervene, France that wanted to have a say on the Middle Eastern issues did not hesitate to participate the intervention coalition.” (Guler, 2014, p5.)

Nobody will deny that the French election in 2012 didn't change the France's stance towards Syria. France hosted to the “Friends of Syria” meeting in Paris in July 2012, where was the first step for creation of the Syrian National Coalition in Qatar begun and a decision of sales to Syria was blocked in June 2013 by French and British diplomats. (Murkocinski and Sasnal, 2013, p. 2)

As it is known that France is more active than many western countries in tackling the Syria conflict. In spite of this, after “Geneva II”, the relations went on getting cold in spite of the long and costly diplomatic efforts of the “Friends of Syria,” which is often reminded with the name of Sarkozy.

“On May 29, the newly elected president, François Hollande, announced that the Syrian ambassador to France, Lamia Chakkour, was to be expelled over the Homs massacre that had taken place a few days earlier.” (Dufourq&Kempf, 2016, p14.)

In fact, during the two years France was content only to call Assad's retirement. Its steps concluded only diplomatic and political attempts. Later, in 2013 France started to consider military intervention.

No one denies that it was not easy for France to intervene in early years of Syria' Arab spring. In particular, after British parliament's decision about not giving permission to David Cameron for intervention, as if Hollande was betrayed. From this point, France really was in need of the political and diplomatic support of its allies. Because, it was clearly seen that France was isolated on the diplomatic scene in some meaning in the case of Syrian intervention.

Above all, France played a significant role in Syria's history even in drawing modern Syrian borders. The both details help us to understand:

- a) "Sykes-Picot" agreement in 1916 and the mandate about the created state
- b) strong political impact after Syrian's independence

As a result, the Baath Party came to power with the French support. It is enough to remember that Baath Party leaders were educated in France who were believed to transit religion secularism in Syria. (Dufourq&Kempf, 2016, p.57)

Moreover, France should accomplish some steps taking into account they would be compatible with French national interest and universal values. They are:

- 1) should provide the balance of power not only in Syria, even in the region and in neighboring countries like Iraq and Lebanon
- 2) should promote the Sunni majority's role in Syrian regime. (Dufourq&Kempf, 2016, p.58)

In addition, France participated in many conferences devoted to Syrian conflicts. The one of which was the Vienna conference. According to France's foreign ministry, France pointed out Mr. Assad's retirement and abandoning of the Iranian's troops who stayed in Syrian territory as "military adviser".

2.1.2 The Vienna process.

The Vienna peace talks for Syria were held on 14 November 2015, as the talks of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) which twenty countries participated, including Iran. This Conference devoted to Syrian opposition in Riyadh, Damascus, and Kurdish in Syria. France participated and sought some opportunities regarding Syrian conflict. They mainly focused on ease fire and to give

humanitarian aids according UNSC resolution 2165 and UNSCR 2139 as well as ISSG reaffirmed UNSCR 2199 which bans the illegal oil trade from which terrorist benefit. They discussed also about fighting together against DAESH, Al-Nusra and other terror groups, and increase the amount of humanitarian aids for Syrian victims.

According to M. Laurent Fabius, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, he welcomed with his counterparts about the results of Riyadh conference taking into account UNSCR 1267. It was one of the fruitful meeting for France about resolving Syrian crisis. As he believed, it was an opportunity for face to face negotiation.

The second point, the conference was based on Geneva I protocol which regarded a Syrian transition government. The other point, Vienna conference was held without the opposition of Syrian regime. France was one of the main actors who suggested political solution except military one.

2.1.3 France's stance within UNSC regarding complex Syrian crisis.

It is the fact that France and Syria are member countries of UN and have equal rights and opportunities, but France solely differs from the Syrian Arab Republic with a privilege that it is one of the five permanent members (USA, UK, France, Russia, and China) of UN who can veto.

Taking into consideration all incidents across the world, at High-Level Plenary Meeting of the 60th session of the UN General Assembly (14-16 September 2005, UN Headquarters, New York) all Heads of State and Governments agreed and signed the document A/RES/60/1 (in documents is often referred as "R2P"—Responsibility to protect) regarding that any state has responsibility not to suffer, but in contrast, to care his population.

“The Security Council reaffirms the relevant provisions of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including paragraphs 138 and 139 thereof regarding the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”⁴

⁴GlobalR2P.org Available at: <http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/unsc-resolutions-and-statements-with-r2p-table-as-of-april-2017.pdf> Accessed on 20 April, 2017, p11 #12

According to this summit, France, Germany, Portugal and the UK drafted a resolution which means that Syrian government immediate cessation of attacks against civilians and human right abuses, when the first activists were killed on 18 March 2011 in Syria. Later of this month, Assad's armed troops and his militias moved against civilian protestors, as its outcome, initially killed hundreds.

It can be seen that there are some issues within UNSC over the Syrian resolutions.

- 1) on October 4 2011, UNSC resolution on Syrian civil war failed to pass came six months after conflict started.
- 2) on February 4, 2012, Russian and Chinese diplomats vetoed EUs sanctions on Syria
- 3) on July 19, 2012, Russian and Chinese vetoed the draft resolution stipulating the ban of the use of heavy weapons
- 4) on May 22, 2014, this resolution focused on putting barrier for genocide and all violations of human rights by Syrian regimes, and armed opposition groups in Syria.
- 5) on October 8, 2016 the resolution pointed out 13, 5 million needed for humanitarian aids, and register the outrage while Syrian armed forces retook the Aleppo. China abstained but Russia kept his stance about veto.
- 6) on December 5, 2016, UNSC called on all sides to stop any attacks in Aleppo and provided humanitarian aid. But, as usual Russia and China voted against the resolution like as previous ones.
- 7) on February 28, 2017, Russia and China blocked the resolution which focused on banning the use of chemical weapons in Syria
- 8) on April 12, 2017 in this latest resolution was planned to ban the use of chemical weapons and to held international investigation in Syria on purpose to prove the real guilty who used chemical weapon "sarin" on April 4. China abstained, but Russia kept his stance about vetoing.

Moreover, in January 2014, representatives of Syrian regime and Syrian oppositions met in Geneva under UN umbrella, but nothing about solution or promotion of Syria's framework was made.

As a result of disagreement among regional actors, the situation in Syria has escalated into a devastating proxy war by Assad who was motivated thanks to supports from Putin, Xi Jinping and Hassan Rouhani. Also, he has been willing even to use chemical weapons against his citizens since 2013 until today, but Mr. Putin is still supporting Syrian regime, while President Assad has used chemical weapon on 4 April 2017. It was the seven times that Putin supported him. But France has also constantly been supporting all UNSC resolutions related to Syrian conflicts about sanctions which have been passed since 2012, in stark contrast to Putin.

2.2 Syria: Area of influences and French game.

2.2.1 France and US

It is obviously that President Hollande has become America's primary ally in Syria case in the Middle East. In addition, France provided logistics support in Syrian issue.

It is an evidence that after the Paris attack, France requested support from US CIA to share information about ISIS in Syria. Since then, they have been working together by sharing intelligence data at the highest level.

France and USA collaborations include:

- a) diplomatic ally
- b) projects for refugees
- c) supporting their own stances about Syrian regimes
- d) partnership against terrorism in Syria
- e) full up each other, standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder by military action in Syria

2.2.2 France and Putin's Russia – A Too Close Embrace?

On 26 November, 2015 Thursday in Moscow Putin and Holland met to negotiate Syrian conflict. They agreed to collaborate in fighting against ISIS, similar jihadi groups in Syria and to exchange intelligence anti-terror although they had different views with regard to Assad and his regime. Taking into account this meeting, some experts say that France is representing the West and leading

negotiations with President Putin. In this meeting the two leaders also discussed to use of airstrikes to eliminate illegal oil trade that ISIS had been using as a financial source for a long time.

"We are ready to cooperate with the coalition which is led by the United States. But of course incidents like the destruction of our aircraft and the deaths of our servicemen are absolutely unacceptable," Putin said.⁵

2.2.3 France is alongside UK within EU

It is vivid that UK and French leaders defend the common interests of the EU, because the both of have rights and opportunity in UNSC to influence the organization by putting veto or other ways as they are permanent members of the UN. France and EU have mutual benefit in Syrian cases. France is short of more allies who support him in Syria. The EU has common interest to deescalate Syrian war. Though, the EU has common stance with France taking into account that none of member states can provide national political and economic interest individually as. As well as, France needs to develop cooperation between member states to strengthen the role of EU in Syria with different diplomatic initiatives like "Geneva II" summit.

(Murkocinski and Sasnal, 2013, p. 2)

It is known that when Syrian Arab spring started, the European leaders –Sarkozy, Angela Merkel and David Cameron demanded the Syrian President's resignation. Though, taking into account the brutality in Syria Cameron was preparing for intervention with Hollande, but his plan was rejected in August 2013 by parliament. After that solely France joined US coalition towards Syria. EU supports France with imposing sanctions to Assad like banning from travelling to Europe and sanctions to Assad's wealth.

⁵Uk.reuteurs.com Available at:<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-russia-france-idUKKBN0TF20120151127> (Accessed 19 April 2017)

2.2.4 France and NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) supports France and the coalition which is led by US and it considers using chemical weapons as a threat to international peace and security. NATO always refers that it supports all international efforts that bring peace and political solution to Syrian crisis. According to 13th Secretary General of NATO -Jens Stoltenberg: “The Syrian regime bears the full responsibility for this development. NATO has consistently condemned Syria’s continued use of chemical weapons as a clear breach of international norms and agreements.”⁶

France has been releasing information about using chemical weapons by Assad in Syria and demanding strictly to stop it since 2013 till today. France is one of the best active players among NATO members in Syria and in the region about diplomatically, politically and military intervention as well as refugee issues.

⁶ NATO.INT Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_143082.htm Accessed on 20 April, 2017

Chapter III Terrorism in perspective.

3.1 French policy towards Syria under the international terrorism nexus

This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps, the end of the beginning.

Winston Churchill⁷

It is obvious that in recent years many European countries such as Germany, Belgium and France have been suffering from terrorist acts. What is terrorism? What is its goal? Who are they? Are they always successful? Unfortunately, nobody can ignore the reality that nowadays not only Syria or some Middle Eastern countries, even the world, where we live, suffers from terrorism and its relations to ideology, culture, religion, history, politics, and economics. A definition of “Terror” is being discussed with fundamental principle of philosophy, law, engineering, psychology, and human endeavor. It might be seen easy to define, but not.

It is a fact that since entering the Syrian war in support of Syrian opposition, France has become a prime target for ISIS and Assad’s regime. In the end France faced many terroristic attacks which were organized by ISIS in Syria.

For instance, on January 7-9 2015 at the offices of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo 12 people were killed and at Hyper Cacher supermarket 4 people were killed. In response, the government deployed 10000 soldiers in the street to guard worship places, tourist sites and shopping centers.

Besides that on 13 November 2015 a concert hall, a major stadium, restaurants and bars were hit by gunmen and suicide bombers, as a result of which 130 people died and hundreds were injured.

Furthermore, France after Paris attacks carried out some raids inside the country including in Bobigny, an eastern suburb of Paris, the southeastern French city of Lyon and in Toulouse in

⁷ Sue Mahan (2008), “Terrorism in perspective”, SAGE, London.

southwestern France on purpose to prevent other terroristic acts. As previously mentioned, Hollande did all raids after he declared war to terrorists who might bring a threat to French citizens.

Additionally, on 14 July 2016 Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel drove a truck into crowds who were celebrating Bastille Day in Nice city of France, in which 84 people were killed and dozens more injured. Later, ISIS in Syria took the responsibility of the incident.

It can be observed that France has been fighting through diplomacy and military against terrorists who settled in Syria –Al Qaeda, al-Nusra and ISIS. Last year on September 29, in New York at the meeting of Iran and P5+1 countries, France discussed with global powers about Syria and its solutions including terroristic issues.

As a matter of fact, those terror attacks made officials to improve and strengthen the UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014) about combating to terrorism and the additional Protocol to the Council of Europe's Convention on the Prevention of terrorism which puts barrier for “terrorist travel, passive training, financing and facilitation of such travel”.

3.2 French policy about Syrian refugees–the forgotten millions.

The economic, social, and human cost of caring for refugees and the internally displaced is being borne mostly by poor communities, those who are least able to afford it. Enhanced international solidarity is a must if we want to avoid the risk of more and more vulnerable people being left without proper support.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres⁸

It can be seen that France has been receiving Syrian refugees since civil war started. French policy about refugees is carried out under French asylum law, which is based on international and European law. As a matter of fact that Syrians were registered as a refugee first time at 2012, one year later after the conflict started, their waves were seen in France since 2013.

As a rule, refugee status is defined as belonging to “any person persecuted for his/her action in favor of liberty” as well as any person over whom the United Nations High Commission for Refugees

⁸ Ostrand, 2015

(UNHCR) has competence under articles 6 and 7 of its statute, and any person who is covered by article 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Since 2011, more than ten million Syrian citizens lost their homes during Syrian crises, 13.5 million Syrians are in need for humanitarian aids. Most of them become refugees within the country or outside the country. Many of them are constantly trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea despite its danger.

Notwithstanding, France tries to use all opportunities to handle a massive Syrian refugee influx with his longtime ally – the US. Because, Syrian refugees are the world's largest refugee population, many of whom lost their houses and are attempting to enter to EU with a hope for a better life.

According to a European Union-wide quota system France should receive 24000 refugees, but not only government, but also population worries a lot about refugees, because of Xenophobia, fear and rising unemployment rate (more than 10 %). Despite those factors, activists try to mild population's attitudes about refugees. Prime Minister Manuel Valls has rejected any relocation of refugees in spite of France has seven times less asylum applications than Germany in 2015, while he has increased its security operations and to combat against terrorism.

As French media notes that France focuses on strengthening its security and border control by creating different barriers for illegal migrants move to France as other EU member neighbors with the intention to reduce gradually their influx.⁹

France would have played an active and positive role in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), in part to reduce emigration from the region. Certainly, there is little doubt that France was active in the UfM. The entire project was basically conceived by Sarkozy and spearheaded during his presidential campaign in 2007. It was launched at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in 2008 at which Sarkozy managed to gather all but two of the Heads of State and Government from the 43 Euro-Mediterranean countries. After a successful initiation establishing the organizational structure and principles of the UfM, France became one of the co-presidents. Its next meeting, the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Foreign Affairs, which outlined its concrete projects, was held in

⁹ Refworld.org Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/country,.UNHCR,.FRA,.58e394244.0.html> Accessed on 20 April, 2017

Marseilles. France even managed to retain its UfM co-presidency position after its EU presidency ended, which prevented three terms of potential new European presidencies. France has thus clearly played an active role in the UfM. (Kaufman, 2017, p.20)

According to statistics¹⁰, France gave around sixty thousand asylums each year, during three years (2013-2014-2015) gave nearly three thousand asylum visas for Syrian refugees despite France already has given one thousand and five hundred humanitarian visas and one thousand scholarship places. In addition, one example that last year France resettled around ten thousand Syrian refugees within its country.

The EU indeed in need to reduce the migratory pressure, unless the Schengen system will be destroyed, as its outcome the Europe is dramatically faced to danger –both politically and economically. Though, France through EU supported EU's agreement which costs 3 billion euro with Turkey about putting barriers for refugee influx on October 2015.

3.3 French policy about international aids for Syria.

It is known that France has been giving to support to the Syrian refugees staying in refugee camps of neighboring countries since 2012. In February 2016 at London Conference France announced the amount of international aids, which was planned for 2016-2018 years to give Syrian refugees living in Lebanon camps around two hundred millions euro and nine hundred millions euro to Jordan's on purpose to finance the youth, children of refugees and their education.

Additionally, in Paris on 8 September, 2015 International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East – Co-Chairs' Conclusions which participated 56 countries and 11 international and regional organizations received a plan regarding humanitarian, political and legal action. Based on it, France gave 10 million euro for social spheres.

After the chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun, northern part of Syria, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean-Marc Ayrault said that France sent humanitarian aids and medical

10 Refworld.org Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,FRA,,,0.html> Accessed on 20 April, 2017

personnel (The humanitarian medical shipment has just been distributed locally in Syria by the Union des Organisations de Secours et des Soins Médicaux (UOSSM – United Relief and Medical Care Organizations)) to the victims on 13 April 2017 with help of Turkey for transition the aids.

According to the estimations of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in 2013 more than 500,000 homes of Syrian people were destroyed because of the war, and the country would need \$80 billion to rebuild its economy and the destroyed infrastructure (Renner, 2015, p29).

Chapter IV: A glance to French policy.

4.1 The condition of internal French policy.

It can be observed that France has seen three presidents in six years. They are Sarkozy (2011-2012), Francois Hollande (2012-2017), and after a few weeks, a new one. France has some serious internal issues relating to its domestic policy. These issues are Muslim citizens, economy, salary, unemployment and election.

4.1.1 Muslims in France

Most of the Syrian refugees are Sunni Muslims. Muslim population of France is about 6 million and makes 10% of total population. They are the second largest religion after Catholic Christianity. Despite that, the French government gave less attention to its Muslim citizens.

As Kaufman¹¹ claims that there are some factors which government should give attention. They are:

- a) cultural factors
- b) to offer some projects on purpose the Muslims to be part of active economic population
- c) stimulate the Muslims education
- d) increase the level of the Muslims political participation
- e) destabilize the distrust, even hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims
- f) French government and party leaders should stop to voice negative attitudes to Muslims

But, in spite of all above said that according to BBC statistics in 2016 France is one of the most tolerant countries for Muslims with its longtime ally –UK.

Today, the French government is carrying out several reforms to boost its labor market and economy (Enderlein and Ferry). These reforms are focused on:

01. transition to a new growth model that is based on creating more flexibility and security for employees;
02. competitiveness;
03. building a leaner and more effective state.

Moreover, in order to create more business opportunities for investors and support job market, the country also plans to cut taxes and labor costs.

¹¹ Kaufman, 2017, p.6

4.2 The last word about French intervention in Syria.

France has long and deep links to Syria in the history, but the primary reason which made France to intervene was that R2P resolution was violated by Assad's regime by moving his troops against ordinary people who had neither weapons nor military experiences. Later he used chemical weapons against his own population. Those all attracted the world and global powers, it was also the main reason which brought to proxy war.

It can be seen that the aims of France from intervention were to retake his former reputation when Charles de Gaul's period had, the second to become world leader, the third is not to lose his influence in the region.

The complex situation in Syria impacted the types of French intervention during years. The first we can see that it were only politically and diplomatically. In 2011 and 2012 years France called Assad to stop his brutal policy to common people with imposing sanctions against Assad and his regime with USA, EU, UNSC and UK. Later Hollande decided to intervene also by French militias. The lack of the support of French public and the critics of opponents didn't change Hollande's decision about intervention.

"Hollande insisted on intervention instead of waiting for the UN report and without asking any permission from the French parliament, in line with the French constitution which allows him not to ask for."¹²

Hollande intervened the situation even though only 36% of French population supported his decision. He used French fighter jets in 2013 after the first chemical weapon was used. When some terroristic attacks were happened by Nica, theater, Charles Hebdo, Jewish store and Paris, as its outcome, Francois Hollande increased military intervention in Syria. His target was especially ISIS and other some terroristic groups such as al-Nusra and al-Qaeda. France played high role on the today's almost failure of the ISIS in Syria.

¹²(Guler, 2014, p.5)

Syrian refugees and their influx to France are a huge problem for the French government. Francois Hollande tries to reduce their numbers. For instance, in 2015 the amount of asylum plummet double down because of Paris attacks. Before, he promised that he would receive 30'000. Furthermore, he supported 3 billion plan of EU's agreement with Turkey about putting barriers for the waves of Syrian refugees in 2015.

No one denies that France has been supporting Syrian people also with humanitarian aid since the Syrian conflict started. The latest aid France gave two weeks ago on 13 April 2017 for victims who were injured from Assad's chemical weapon on 4 April 2017 in northern part of Syria. The aid concluded medical help, food, clothes and other needful things. In addition, France planned to spare more than one billion euro for humanitarian aids in Syria for 2016-2018 years despite France has already been giving money as a humanitarian aid for Syrian people who are staying in neighboring countries' refugee camps.

Although it is regrettable that Syrian crisis costed very expansive for France not only for French militias in Syria, although for the money for humanitarian aids and the money which was spared to refugees, it is all those if we don't price the amount of spiritual and material damage which brought terroristic attacks in side France.

Moreover, France should boost Muslim citizens much more than before on purpose:

- 1) To reduce the amount of radicalized people by stimulating for education with giving some temporarily privileges until they become one of the active part of French population.
- 2) To improve their financial potential by offering specialized projects. As a result, the Muslim citizens' contribution in GDP will escalate. It brings solely benefit for French economy.

It is clearly that the election which is coming close on May 7th, gives for someone worries, for someone hopes. There are some people who are worrying for Marine Le Pen's ambitions to Russia, supporting Putin's policy about Krim, Donbass and Middle East cases. In this situation we should remember Donald Trump that before election he was considered Putin's "candidate". But after the election he shows that his policy and decisions are absolutely in contrast Putin's stance. But in the experts' words that Mr. Macron is better candidate, on balance.

If I move to summary, as everybody knows that victory cannot be without sacrifices. French intervention served for its aims as well as it failed in some meaning. Because, France contributed to eliminate the influence of ISIS and terror groups such as al-Nusra and al-Qaeda in some level, and strengthened its role and influence once more in international arena and in the Middle East, but unfortunately it is true fact that the Syrian opposition which France put investment didn't make a success as France expected or planned.

Conclusion

The French and Syrian relations are at their lowest point although they have had cultural strong for hundreds of years in history. We can see from Syria-France relations that both countries worry about “each other”. Syria’s concern is to not become under French influence again as it was in history. France tries not to lose its influence in the region.

One of the reasons why Syrian Arab spring happened is that there were many problems in the social life of population, in particular the corruption was deeply rooted, and social crime became routine in the society. The growing anger of population in Syria and their resistance to the corrupted regime brought about what we see today in Syria – the civil war.

As a matter of fact the world is divided into two on the Syrian issue. Supporters of Syrian opposition: European countries such as USA, France, UK, Germany, EU countries and Sunni Arab countries. Pro-regime groups: Russia, China and Iran.

As French critics’ belief that France has bought terror attacks to itself, remembering those which has been in Nice, Theater, Charles Hebdo, Jewish store and Paris. On the other hand while starting intervention in 2013 Hollande showed as a main reason that R2P resolution was being violated by Assad’s regime and its using chemical weapon, but after Paris attacks in 2015, Hollande declared that France was at war and its target was (not Assad’s regime which had been using brutal policy and chemical weapon constantly to its own population) ISIS and other terroristic groups. Also he noted that France was searching political solution in Syria which was not Bashar al-Assad and their enemy was ISIS.

Syrian refugees and their influx to France are a huge problem for the French government. Francois Hollande tries to reduce their numbers. For instance, in 2015 the amount of asylum plummet double down because of Paris attacks. Before, he promised that he would receive 30’000. Furthermore, he supported 3 billion plan of EU’s agreement with Turkey about putting barriers for the waves of Syrian refugees in 2015.

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