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Everything will be decided in Syria

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EVERYTHING WILL BE DECIDED IN SYRIA

ABSTRACT

It is difficult to understand the current situation in Syria without making an analysis of the historical reasons that have led to the country on the brink of collapse. This brief article intends to expose the lines of rupture of the Syrian regime as well as the regional and international importance of this conflict.

Key words

Bashar Al Assad, sunni/chii division, civil war

Syria is, at the same time, a symbol and a symptom of a regional war that recast the composition of what will be the Middle East: it is this too much to fight and it is resolved in this nation state.

Hans Kung remembers that the city of Damascus has an ancient history of more than four thousand years. Mentioned first in 1470 BC to be conquered by the Pharaoh Tutmés II, this beautiful city bears the marks left by King David, the Persians, the Seleucid Empire, the Romans, and the Byzantines. However, from the year 634, Damascus, is primarily (though not only) Arabic and for almost a century (661-750) the Umayyad Caliphs ruled from there a huge Islamic Empire. That glorious history is behind us, and today we are distant witnesses of a civil war that has led to the country to the verge of a total collapse and human tragedy that is far from being over.

In my classes about the Middle East I put emphasis on the huge tensions experienced by entire countries and other international actors (United States, Russia, Britain, China, and France, among others) that converge in Syria

Professor Emile Hokayem, Senior Fellow at the International Institute for strategic studies, in his book *Syria's Uprising and the Fracturing of the Levant* lists five reasons behind the tensions:

1. The discrepancy between the Government and their society (delegitimization);
2. The confrontation for regional leadership between Iran, some Arab countries of the Gulf (especially Saudi Arabia), and Turkey;
3. The deepening of the Sunni/Chii division;
4. The role of political Islam in the identity of the Arab and Muslim and non-Muslim groups;
5. Breaking the balance of different ethnic groups in traditionally multi-ethnic societies (in Syria the Kurdish case is most obvious).

The regional impact of this conflict is already unquestionable; for example, the flight of the Kurds to the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq will have demographic, political and economic implications. The large number of refugees in Jordan is threatening the precarious stability of a regime that historically barely survives in a ruthless region. Turkey, which for too long has called on the international community to intervene in its neighbour, receives the impact of refugees seeking asylum in the South of the country. Lebanon is absorbed by the violent dynamics. Israel distributed gas masks among its population and prepares militarily for conflict on their northern border and finally, Iran becomes witness of how its main ally in the Middle East pound an existential battle, while the Gulf countries are committed to which groups Sunni fundamentalists are the final winners.

Internationally, the picture is more complex with the Security Council paralyzed by the fundamental disagreement between Russia and the United States on the construction of the law (*ius ad bellum*, and *ius in bello*) and legitimacy of operations. Similarly, little is debated on the consequences of the post-conflict period in the short and medium timeframe (reconstruction of the state, social cohesion, and the Syrian identity preservation), central questions that have inhibited rapid participation in the conflict by actors such as the US and Britain due to the previous conflicts in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003).

President Putin has made it clear that his country will only validate only the decisions agreed upon in the Security Council and interventions supported by international law, while President Obama is in a dilemma whether to act unilaterally or to negotiate a plausible solution with Russia on terms of equality.

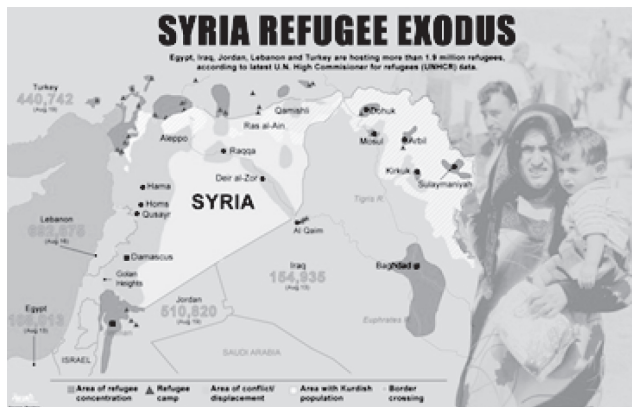
The use of chemical weapons by the government forces is, at least, difficult to prove clearly and forcefully, which inhibits Russia and China from proclaiming their support for an intervention, which, moreover, would cause harm to their area of influence, as well as their military and commercial presence in the Middle East. Likewise, the Kremlin puts on the table the analysis of the Syrian

case, where it was not only the Government of Assad who has committed crimes of war and against humanity, but also the opposition has not hesitated to use inhuman methods during the fight.

The viewpoint of President Obama is different because the refusal of the British Parliament's support to Prime Minister David Cameron in his intervention proposal, joined with the uncertainty of the French, Washington sees itself deprived of two fundamental props that placed it in a dilemma: how to act in the Syria case without compromising the credibility of a President who wanted to mark out the legacy of the Bush doctrine?

The columnist of Haaretz, Anshel Pfeffer poses varying degrees of involvement: the first involves an attack limited to strategic objectives (bases, and military stores of chemical weapons) without removing Bashar Al-Assad's power, which would result in a scenario similar to the Iraq post Hussein. The alternative would involve ground presence; however, realising it is practically impossible at the moment, because of the great military and economic costs that this would entail added to the unpopularity among the American population of this intervention.

The scenario may not seem more difficult and daunting: already more than one hundred thousand dead, two million refugees, millions of internally displaced persons, destruction of infrastructure, cultural and historical sites, fracture of the fabric of Syrian society are the result of the civil war. When I was finishing writing these words, I heard that the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the use of military force in Syria. Will the decision of the Washington be beneficial to the future of Syria or will it further exacerbate the war?



Source: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/09/03/Obama-confident-of-getting-Congressional-support-for-Syria-strike.html>.