

US FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CRISES IN LIBYA AND SYRIA: A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST EXPLANATION OF AMERICAN INTERVENTION

by
Cem Boke

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Political Science and International Studies Department
School of Government and Society
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham
6 October 2016

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Neoclassical Realism Framework and Methodology	16
2.1 Neo-Classical Realism (NCR)	16
2.2 Methodology and Research Design	29
Chapter 3 US Historical Relationship with Libyan and Syrian Regimes	34
3.1 US Historical Relationship with the Libyan Regime	34
3.1.1 Evacuation of US Bases and Increasing Soviet Influence in Libya.....	35
3.1.2 Nationalisation of US Oil Assets and Companies in Libya	36
3.1.3 Qaddafi Support to anti-Colonial, separatist and Terrorist Groups.....	37
3.1.4 Berlin Disco Attack and US Air Strikes in Libya	38
3.1.5 Pan Am Flight 103 Explosion	39
3.1.6 Qaddafi`s Weapon of Mass Destruction	40
3.1.7 Improving Relations	42
3.2 US Historical Relationship with the Syrian Regime.....	44
3.2.1 The Arab-Israeli conflict and Soviet Influence in Middle East	44
3.2.2 Stability in Lebanon.....	46
3.2.3 Iran-Syria Alliance	48
Chapter 4 Threats to US Interests vis-à-vis Libya and Syria Conflicts	55
4.1 Threats to American Security.....	61
4.1.1 Libya	61
4.1.2 Syria.....	78
Chapter 5 Intervening Variables	126
5.1 Elite Ideology/Obama Doctrine	126
5.2 US Economic Constraints	145
5.3 Libya/Syrian Opposition and the US Elite Perception.....	154
5.4 The Impact of the Public Opinion on US Interventions in Libya and Syria	204
Chapter 6 Comparative Analysis of Libya and Syria Cases.....	240
Chapter 7 Conclusion	265

Appendices.....	279
Appendix 1 Interview Questions.....	279
Appendix 2 Revised Interview Questions	281
Appendix 3 Interviewee List.....	282
Bibliography	283

Abstract

Third-party intervention in civil wars is a phenomenon that presents a complex research puzzle in the fields of both International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). While intervention decisions impact the duration and result of a given conflict, they also have broader regional implications and political consequences for those that intervene. Considering the significant role of the United States (US) in international politics and its political, economic, and military clout, the dynamics behind US interventions constitute a significant research area.

The central questions this thesis aims to address are 'what are the dynamics behind US foreign policy choices vis-à-vis Libya and Syria's internationalised intra-state conflicts?' and, more specifically, 'What were the components that underpinned the selection of different set of elements from the intervention spectrum at different times and scales during the Libya and Syria conflicts'. To address these questions, small-N case study was used as the overarching methodology. The Libya and Syria conflicts provide valuable test cases to analyse the drivers behind the selective application of intervention in time, form, and scale by the US.

The existing literature points towards the relevance of both systemic and domestic level factors. Neo-classical realism (NCR) is employed as the theoretical framework, and incorporates independent (threats to US interests vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts) and intervening variables (elite Ideology/Obama Doctrine, US economic constraints, US elite perception of the opposition in Libya and Syria, congressional dynamics and public opinion) at the system and unit levels respectively. The dependent variable - US foreign policy choices – varies across three main forms: non-intervention, non-military intervention, and military intervention.

NCR has proven to be a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand the rationale behind the US's suboptimal foreign policy choices. The results of the research conducted here reinforce the notion that it is problematic to explain foreign policy decisions exclusively from the perspective of a balancing against power or threats without considering the impact of intervening variables at the domestic level. The research also underpins the importance of political leaders and elites' perceptions (regarding opposition groups as well as of domestic political restraints) through which systemic incentives and constraints are filtered and the contours of interests and threats are identified.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank to my supervisors Professor Stefan Wolff and Professor Mark Webber, who provided invaluable, constant support and guidance throughout the research. Without their patience, encouragement and backing it would be impossible to overcome the obstacles and complete this PhD. I am indebted to them for helping me realise my dream.

Secondly the sacrifices my family has made during the last four years is beyond appreciation and expression. Without their understanding and unconditional support it would not have been possible to finish this journey. In the most difficult times their presence and reassurance was the main source of inspiration through which I sought sanctuary.

Thirdly, my parents, who did their best to provide the finest educational opportunities and encouraged me to push the limits for a better future. They played an important role in my decision to pursue a PhD.

I am also immensely grateful to all those who contributed to the development of the research through interviews and exchange of ideas. I would like to finally thank to Maximilian Lempriere for the professional copy-editing of the thesis.

List of Figures

Figure 1 Armed Conflict by Type, 1946-2014	4
Figure 2 Number of Conflicts in 2014 by Type	4
Figure 3 Researches Using NCR as Theoretical Framework	28
Figure 4 NCR Framework for the Analysis of US Intervention Decisions Vis-a-Vis Civil Wars in Libya and Syria	29
Figure 5 Hybrid Congruence and Process Tracing Method	33
Figure 6 Intervention Spectrum: Non-Military and Military Intervention Means.....	33
Figure 7 Threat Matrix based on Capability & Intention	57
Figure 8 US Trade in Goods with Libya, US Census Bureau	70
Figure 9 US Imports from Libya of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products, US Energy Information Administration	71
Figure 10 China's Oil Imports from Libya, ChinaAfricaRealstory.com.....	71
Figure 11 Civilian casualties between 2008 and 2014	92
Figure 12 Number of Syrian Refugees, March 2012-August 2015	111
Figure 13 U.S. trade in goods with Syria, US Census Bureau.....	113
Figure 14 US Imports from Syria of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products, US Energy Information Administration	114
Figure 15 US Military Spending in Years.....	150
Figure 16 Syrian Opposition Extremism Spectrum as of September 2013.....	187
Figure 17 US Public Opinion on US intervention in Libya PEW Research Center, 10-13 March 2011	213
Figure 18 US Public Support to Libya Intervention, CNN/ORC Poll, 18-20 March 2011.....	215
Figure 19 Support for US Military Action in Libya, by Political Party, Gallup Poll, 21 March 2011.....	216
Figure 20 PEW Research Center, 24-27 March 2011 The US Public Support to US Conducting Airstrikes in Libya	217
Figure 21 US Public Support for Libya Intervention, CNN/ORC Poll, 9-10 April 2011.....	218
Figure 22 Public Support to US military actions against Libya, Gallup Poll, 22 June 2011..	219
Figure 23 US Public Support for Libya Intervention, by Political Party	219
Figure 24 University of Maryland, the US Public Opinion on Syrian Uprising, 1-5 Apr 2011	222
Figure 25 US Public Opinion about the US Responsibility in Syria Conflict	223
Figure 26 University of Maryland, the US Public Opinion on Potential Actions in Syria, 08 October 2012	224
Figure 27 US Public Opinion about the Use of Force in Syria to End the Conflict, by Political Party, Gallup Poll, 28 May 2013	225
Figure 28 US Public Opinion about the Influence of Economic and Diplomatic Efforts to Resolve Syrian Conflict, by Political Party, Gallup Poll, 28 May 2013.....	225
Figure 29 The US Public Support to range of Options against Chemical Weapon Attacks, 24 Aug 13.....	226
Figure 30 US Public Support for Missile Strikes and Supplying Weapons to Rebels, Post-ABC Poll, 3 September 2013	227
Figure 31 US Public Support for Proposed Interventions before Commencement of Such Actions	228
Figure 32 Support for Potential US Military Intervention after Chemical Weapon attack in Syria, by Political Parties, Gallup Survey 3-4 September	228

Figure 33 Potential Impact of US Congress Passing a Resolution Authorising Military intervention in Syria after Chemical Weapon Attack, CNN/ORC Poll, 09 September 2013.	229
Figure 34 US Public Opinion on whether it is in US Interests to be involved in Libya and Syria Conflicts	229
Figure 35 US Public Support for Airstrikes in against Syrian Regime, PEW Research Center, 4-8 September 2013	230
Figure 36 Cross Party Support for Airstrikes against Syrian Regime post Chemical Weapon attack, PEW Research Centre	231
Figure 37 Public Support to US Airstrikes against ISIL.....	235
Figure 38 US Public Support for Various types of Intervention Means against ISIL, CNN/ORC Poll, 25-28 September 2014	236
Figure 39 US Public Opinion about the level of threat ISIL Poses to the US, CNN/ORC Poll, 25-28 September 2014.....	237
Figure 40 Evolving US Public Opinion regarding the threat posed by ISIL to the US, CNN/ORC Poll	237
Figure 41 US public Support to Sending Ground Troops into Combat Operations against ISIL, CNN/ORC Poll.....	238

List of Tables

Table 1 Threat to US Interests in Libya	77
Table 2 Five Phases of Syria Conflict.....	117
Table 3 Threat to US Interests in Syria.....	123
Table 4 US Electoral Cycle and Election System	210
Table 5 Approval Rates for US Military Interventions, Gallup Poll, 21 March 2011	216

Chapter 1 Introduction

The 'Arab Spring' uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa that started in late 2010 and early 2011 against the corruption, poverty, and political repression that exemplified the autocratic regimes in the region brought regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and triggered the birth of a wide range of social movements in Bahrain and Yemen. Conversely, relatively few implications were seen in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, where the administrations were compelled to introduce socio-economic and political reforms to placate internal unrest. The positions taken by regional actors and global powers during the uprisings had profound repercussions for those states experiencing turmoil and for the wider Middle East and North Africa region. The US acquiesced in uprisings against pro-US Egyptian and Tunisian governments, militarily intervened in Libya against the Qaddafi regime at the early stages of the conflict, exercised a cautious approach in Syria by supporting political reform initially and providing limited support to political and armed opposition groups fighting against the Assad regime, and condoned Saudi-led suppression of the uprisings in Bahrain that threatened the pro-US Kingdom. US motives urging selective, distinct, and tailored approaches to those turmoils poses a crucial research puzzle.

Third-party intervention into civil wars in general and US intervention in particular is a phenomenon widely researched by scholars within the fields of both International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Scholars have attempted to explore the factors that drive the decisions behind third-party intervention by exploring external determinants (i.e. the international system and the relative position of the intervener) and internal determinants (i.e. the intervener's domestic politics). The research question this PhD addresses concerns dynamics behind US foreign policy choices vis-à-vis Libya and Syria's internationalised civil wars. More specifically, the research aims

to identify the underlying components of the processes and causal mechanisms that led to the US selecting elements from the intervention spectrum that differed in terms of both time and scale in the interventions in Libya and Syria. The conflicts in Libya and Syria have given rise to intervention strategies that differ in terms of form and scale; the absence of a direct US military action against the Assad regime constitutes a crucial research puzzle worthy of investigation.

These two conflicts were selected as cases for several reasons. First and foremost, both conflicts represent a narrowly-scoped subclass of the general intervention phenomenon; among the `Arab Spring` uprisings only those in Libya and Syria turned into `internationalised civil wars` involving an armed struggle between the incumbent governments and rebel forces and which saw third party intervention in support of belligerents. At the early stages of the uprisings the crackdown of the protestors by armed forces transformed the political uprisings into armed struggle. The presence of weapons of mass destruction, emerging ungoverned spaces and power vacuums, increasing threat of terrorism, and humanitarian crises (in the form of refugees, internally displaced people and civilian casualties) became a source of concern for the international community. The potential spill over effects engulfing the Middle East and North Africa region and even reaching to Europe stimulated international actors to get involved and take action, one way or another. The Libyan and Syrian regimes were both non-democratic and both monopolised political power, exploited national resources and pursued anti-western foreign policy agendas that provided incentives for other actors` intervention. The comparison of the US response to two Arab Spring uprisings will potentially help us to better explain factors underpinning US intervention in civil wars.

John Gerring (2004) defines a case study as “a work that focuses its attention on a single example of a broader phenomenon”. The aim is to grasp the common attributes of the phenomenon through in-depth analysis of a single unit (Gerring, 2004). The broader phenomenon in this research is ‘US interventions’, while Libya and Syria constitute the units to be probed. Gary Thomas sees the case study as a focus that provides an in-depth and multi-angled perspective. He defines case study work as:

the analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates (Thomas, 2011:23).

Thus, the Libya and Syria cases will be explored to understand the driving forces behind the US’s selective application of intervention in time, form and scale. That necessitates exploring the dynamics that influence the US decision about whether or not to intervene in the first place and after the principal decision is made what the level of ambition and commitment should be. While there are many large-N empirical analyses of the dynamics influential in intervention decisions for civil wars, small-N qualitative case studies have been underexplored in the existing literature.

Apart from the Arab Spring uprisings, intrastate conflicts in general and civil wars in particular constitute a significant aspect of international politics. Since the end of World War II there has been a steady increase in the number of intrastate conflicts. Even though there has been a period of decline since the mid-1990s, the majority of conflicts have still been intrastate. In 2014, 39 of the 40 active conflicts were fought within the boundaries of a state between government and opposing groups. Thirteen

of these conflicts were internationalised with intervention from other states in the form of troops (Themner and Wallensteen, 2013).

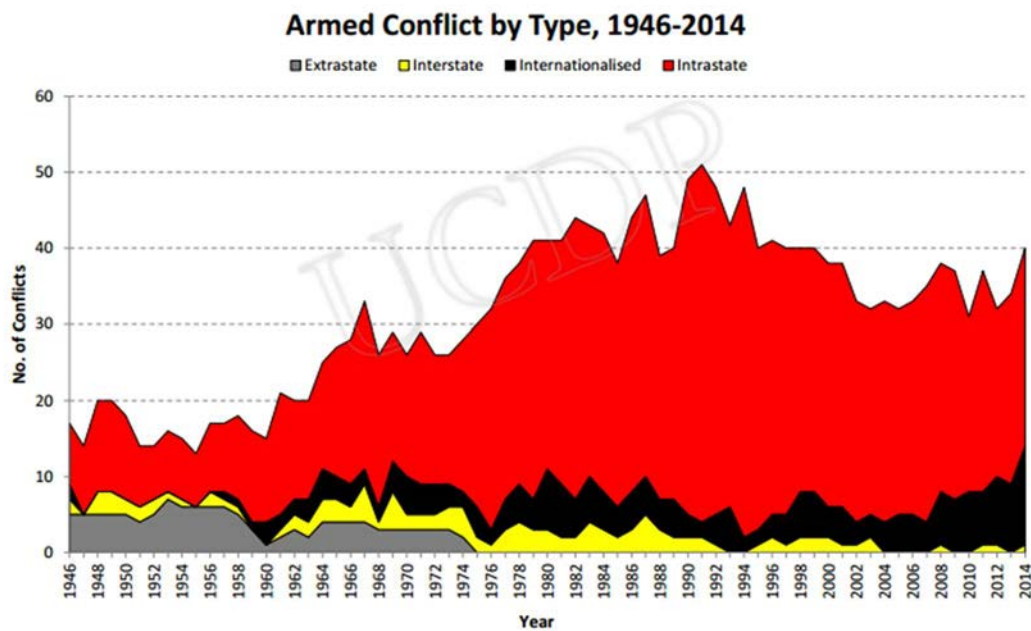


Figure 1 Armed Conflict by Type, 1946-2014

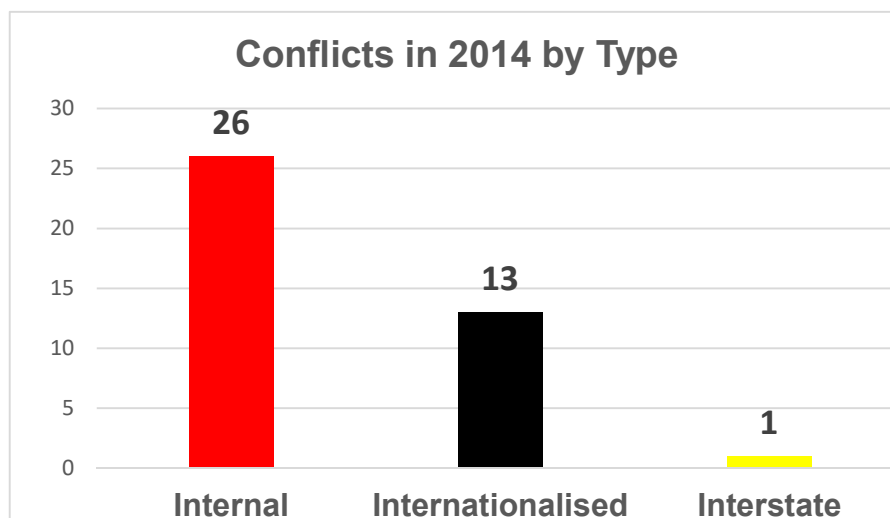


Figure 2 Number of Conflicts in 2014 by Type

Data Source: [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) (UCDP)/ Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Armed Conflict Dataset (Pettersson & Wallensteen, 2015)

Intrastate conflicts are defined as conflicts that occur between or among two or more groups within the internationally recognised territory of a state. The sub-categories for intrastate conflicts are mainly civil wars and inter-communal conflicts. Civil wars are characterized by the involvement of government forces against non-state actor(s) whilst inter-communal conflicts, meanwhile, involve two or more non-state groups (Sarkees, Wayman, & Singer, 2003). Within that characterisation Libya and Syria conflicts fall under the criteria of an 'internationalised civil war'.

Technical specifications and definitions for civil wars differ in various research designs in the literature which has crucial implications, particularly for large-N empirical studies. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) (cited in Derouen & Sobek, 2004) define civil war as a conflict that: inflicts at least 1,000 conflict deaths; challenges the existence of the sovereign state in which the conflict occurs; and involves the state and opposing rebels launching a campaign that inflicts casualties as well. Sambanis also refers to Small and Singer's (1982) (cited in Sambanis, 2004, p.816) definition of civil war as "any armed conflict that involves military action internal to the metropole, the active participation of the national government, and effective resistance by both sides."

Regan defines intrastate conflict as armed, sustained combat between groups within state boundaries in which there are at least 200 fatalities (Regan, 1996), whereas the widely used Correlates of War dataset criteria is 1000 fatalities per year (Regan, 2002) and UCDP-PRIO dataset criteria is 25 conflict related death in a given year (Kreutz, 2010).

The narrow and broadly scoped definitions of foreign intervention range from those that emphasise solely the exertion of military power against an opponent to

those that conceptualize intervention more broadly to include economic, logistical, and diplomatic assistance or sanctions applied to influence the outcome of the conflict.

In a recent study that sought to analyse how foreign assistance to one or both sides in a civil war influences the dynamics of the conflict, Lockyer defines foreign intervention as “the transfer of resources from an external state to a contesting party in a civil war.” Resources are broadly defined as the transfer of funds, arms, equipment and foreign troops (Lockyer, 2011). Seeking to identify the conditions under which foreign countries intervene in civil wars, Woo defines foreign intervention as “the active and overt involvement of a country in foreign civil wars through the deployment of troops or naval or air forces, as well as through the provision of logistical aid, military advisers, or military forces.” (Woo, 2009). Chang and Sanders go further, to perceive enforcement of targeted arms trade sanctions upon the rebel group as a form of intervention (Chang & Sanders, 2009). Yoon’s understanding of US intervention in civil wars encompasses both non-military and military activities, ranging from economic assistance, arms supply, deployment of advisers and troops in combat role into a war zone, to direct military engagement in a combat operation (Yoon, 1997).

James Rosenau also makes a distinction between non-military and military intervention and introduces two criteria for an action to be considered an intervention: convention-breaking and an authority-oriented act. In that context Rosenau describes interventionist behaviour as:

Constitute[ing] a sharp break with then-existing forms and [...] directed at changing or preserving the structure of political authority in the target society. (Rosenau, 1969)

For this research, third-party intervention is conceived broadly as not only the exertion of military power, but also economic, logistical, and diplomatic assistance or sanctions that are applied to influence the outcome of the conflict. The US response

to those the Libya and Syria conflicts meets the criteria outlined by James Rosenau and can thus be defined as an intervention.

Understanding the US's externally-driven interests as the primary motivation for intervention falls short of offering a convincing explanation for the variation in the US's response to similar or different situations. This thesis seeks to address that shortcoming; to do so requires an analysis of the "domestic environment in which foreign policy is formulated" (Yoon, 1997). Thus, this research utilises neo-classical realism (NCR) as the theoretical framework to systematically analyse domestic and external factors and their interplay in accounting for foreign policy decisions¹.

The thesis also contributes to the literature by incorporating domestic level intervening variables as part of an application of NCR. NCR is employed as the theoretical framework by incorporating independent variables (namely, threats to US interests vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts) and intervening variables (namely, elite ideology/Obama doctrine, US economic constraints, US elite perception of the opposition in Libya and Syria, Congressional dynamics and public opinion) at the system and unit levels respectively. The variation in the dependent variable that represents American foreign policy choices/outcomes is broken down to non-intervention, non-military intervention, and military intervention with specific sub elements.

The intervention literature refers to a multitude of factors as potential drivers for intervention. Amber Aubone's survey of the intervention literature (Aubone, 2013) highlights the influence of both system and domestic level drivers. This bolsters the appropriateness of using NCR to explore a state's intervention decision

¹ Elaboration on what this implies will be undertaken in Chapter 2.

Empirical studies of US interventions have several limitations: Firstly, most large-*N* studies consider intervention on the basis of a narrowly scoped definition that refers simply to the use of troops and direct military engagement in combat operations. Secondly, most of those studies ignore the fact that the motivation of the intervener may change over time during the protracted conflicts (Mullenbach & Matthews, 2008) (this was for the most part the case for Syria, as we will see). Thirdly, there is a lack of consensus on: the criteria by which the conflicts are sub-divided into subcategories; key parameters that define the common framework for intrastate conflicts; and missing variables that could not be incorporated into the models because of unavailable data may result in contradictory conclusions.

To mitigate these limitations, the thesis explores military intervention, but also non-military forms of intervention such as diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, arms embargoes, the provision of training, weapons, and equipment to warring parties, and the sharing of intelligence. The temporal analysis of the cases and the US response to changing dynamics allows for an exploration of the shifts in the motivation of the intervener. In depth analysis of the cases helps to identify the most significant drivers of intervention and the way these factors influence the intervention decision, but does so in a way that avoids being bound by the limitations of the data sets available. In depth analysis of the cases also provides further data that can inform future large-*N* research.

The existing literature on the decisions underpinning US interventions in civil wars by and large takes into consideration both external and internal factors. Brands' research exploring US military interventions in Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, and Grenada identifies regional instability, the influence of a malign rival, threats to US interests, bureaucratic consensus, and congressional agreement as important

determinants (Brands, 1987). Fordham, meanwhile, explores the relationship between two of the most important factors underpinning US interventions, namely security concerns and economic interests (Fordham, 2008).

Yoon's empirical research explores US interventions in internal conflicts that occurred between 1945 and 1989. It takes into consideration strategic security interests, economic interests, public opinion, the electoral cycle, and the state of the US economy as domestic variables. Yoon's research suggests that strategic interests are the driving factors, while domestic factors (except for public opinion) serve as limiting factors of US intervention (Yoon, 1997). Ostrom and Job also empirically explore the probability of the US use of force by operationalising variables in the international, domestic and political arenas (Ostrom & Job, 1986).

However, up until now only a few qualitative studies attempted to employ NCR. Colin Dueck's model of US military intervention stands out in particular. Dueck's model takes into consideration national interests and potential threats to those interests on the one hand and domestic political incentives and constraints on the other in order to explain and predict why and how the US engages in military interventions. With regards to the Libya and Syria conflicts, there has been a significant gap in the analyses and understandings of the US foreign policy dynamics and decisions underpinning the intervention. Kevin Marsh analysed why and how the Obama Administration intervened in Libya in his qualitative research by using Dueck's NCR model (Marsh, 2014). James Sperling analysed the different levels of commitment of the UK, Canada, France, Germany and Italy in contributing to Operation Unified Protector during the Libya intervention by using NCR as a theoretical framework (Sperling, 2016). However, qualitative analysis of the US intervention in Syria from the perspective of NCR has not yet been conducted.

In this research Dueck's model was employed to explore the influence of both national interests and the political constraints and incentives on the US foreign policy choices. The model required a comprehensive analysis of US interests vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts as a starting point. The analysis of those interests exclusively yields to expected or optimum US foreign policy choices that should have been pursued as the overarching US policies. However, understanding the difference between the expected or optimum US foreign policies and those that were put in practice during the course of the conflict necessitates the incorporation of domestic variables.

The analytical examination of Libya and Syria conflicts revealed the fact that pure neorealism falls short of explaining US foreign policy decisions. The neorealist explanation, which focuses on national interest and threats to those interests, could by and large explain and predict expected US foreign policy decisions in Libya. However, there was a contradiction between expected and observed US foreign policy decisions during distinct episodes of the Syria conflict. While the threat perception to US interests in Syria was higher compared to Libya, US intervention was limited in form and scope. So the incongruence between expected and observed foreign policy decisions in Syria and the contradiction between Libya and Syria cases prove the deficiency of neorealism as a theory of foreign policy analysis. This analytical gap could be filled by incorporating intervening variables to explain the deviation from expected foreign policy choices.

As a conclusion, the intervention decision for Libya was predominantly taken out of US strategic interests and threats to those interests (H_1) and the intervening variables influenced and limited the scope of the military intervention (H_2) which confirms both hypothesis. For the Syria case, the intervening variables in general and

particularly the Obama Doctrine and the perception of the opposition in Syria seemed to have affected the form and the scope of the intervention options chosen by the US administration; the intervening variables sufficiently explain the deviation from expected and optimal US foreign policy choices. Thus, the analytical evidence supports the hypothesis and renders NCR as a viable theory for foreign policy analysis by confirming H₂ for both Libya and Syria cases.

With regards to the distinct interpretation of NCR, the Libya case confirms semi-orthodox interpretations of NCR that considers external drivers as the primary driver of intervention decision, whereas domestic constraints have a secondary influence by limiting the form and the scale of intervention. US response to Syria confirms the orthodox interpretation of NCR, which posits that domestic constraints interfere when states diverge from the incentives of the international system.

NCR has thus proven to be a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand the dynamics behind the suboptimal foreign policy choices of the US administration. The results of this research reinforce NCR applicability as a theory of foreign policy analysis and, in particular, highlights the role of foreign policy executives' perceptions and their interpretation of national interests, threats and other systemic incentives and constraints.

With regards to the methodology employed, the use of process tracing helped to identify different elements of the causal chain that led to particular foreign policy outcomes in the Libya and Syria conflicts. The congruence methodology proved a powerful tool to test NCR theory, as it was employed in conjunction with process tracing.

The analytical insights of this research are mainly extracted from an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources. These sources included President

Obama`s speeches, US Congressional records, US Secretary of State, Secretary of Defence and top Generals` testimonies at Senate and the US House Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, the memoirs of key Administration officials, speeches of former ambassadors, official documents and reports, research papers, books, and media accounts.

The qualitative analysis of those sources is triangulated and corroborated with structured interviews conducted with subject matter experts, academics and officials to probe further insights regarding the US foreign policy making process and how that process could have worked throughout the Libya and Syria conflicts. The interviews are not the primary sources of the research, rather they are complementary to the analytical research. The interviews are used to support or challenge the insights derived from primary and secondary data. Interview questions which encapsulate the independent and intervening variables and their potential influence on the dependent variable are presented in Appendix A and Appendix B. The second version of the interview questions represent the revised questions to reflect a shift in the theoretical framework. The limitations of structured interviews are mitigated by the selection of open-ended questions to give maximum flexibility to the interviewees in expressing their ideas comprehensively. Aberbach and Rockman underline the importance of open-ended question in interviews to reach an analytically elegant end-product and to increase the validity of a given study (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002).

As suggested by Gideon Rose, "significant area expertise is critical for an accurate understanding of countries` foreign policy behaviour" (Rose, 1998). The composition of the interviewees including US citizens with a profound expertise in Middle East and North Africa affairs were instrumental in painting an as accurate as possible picture.

The interviewees are chosen from Libya and Syria subject matter experts from NATO, national intelligence services, and academics working on US foreign policy and the Middle East and North Africa regions. NATO experts have been following the political, economic, and security situation in Libya or Syria even before conflicts emerged. The US initiated, and later NATO mandated, operations in Libya provided a comprehensive understanding of the internal and international dynamics of the conflict. Similarly, US efforts to take action for the Syria crisis from the beginning and preparation for contingency planning for a potential NATO operation in Syria made it possible for the analysts to be kept up to date about the actors and factors affecting the dynamics of the conflict. Thus, NATO experts were a proven valuable source who could provide useful perspective pertinent to the prevailing conditions and conflict characteristics that led to different forms of intervention. Considering different sort of intervention strategies followed by the US and keeping military intervention on the table depending on the changing situation on the ground and regional implications observed during the course of the conflict kept NATO vigilant and prepared for a potential mandate.

Bearing in mind the risks of attribution of personal opinion to institutions and nations, coupled with the sensitivities concerning ongoing conflicts, it was left to the interviewees' discretion whether or not to remain anonymous. Any reference to those individuals who opted to remain anonymous was made via numeric reference throughout the research. The list of interviewees along with associated restricted information is presented in Appendix 3.

Structure of the thesis

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical and methodological framework. The chapter starts by exploring the literature on NCR and its application in various studies. It examines the main strands in NCR and then considers a NCR model for military interventions. The chapter presents a NCR model encompassing independent, intervening, and dependent variables to explain US foreign policy vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria interventions. The chapter also outlines how process tracing is employed to analyse the cases and identify different elements of the causal chain that led to particular foreign policy decisions, and the way the congruence method is employed to test NCR theory with case studies.

Chapter 3 examines the historic US relationship with both the Libyan and Syrian regimes in order to provide a baseline context for the detailed analysis of the independent, intervening, and dependent variables.

Chapter 4 is the first part of the qualitative analyses and focuses on the international dynamics underpinning US decisions on the Libya and Syria conflicts. The chapter starts with the identification of US interests concerning security, prosperity, values and international order with regards to Libya and Syria conflicts. The chapter then explores threats to those interests to establish a baseline of expected US foreign policy decisions with regards to US intervention options to Libya and Syria conflicts.

Chapter 5 constitutes the second part of the analytical effort and examines the potential impact of domestic constraints or incentives on US decision making along the lines of four intervening variables: the Obama Doctrine, US economic constraints, elite perception of the opposition in Libya and Syria, and Congressional dynamics and public opinion.

Chapter 6 outlines the analytical outcome of the research by explaining the essential elements of the causal chains that resulted in particular US foreign policy outcomes vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts. The chapter starts with the Libya case, followed by Syria, and is completed by a comparison of the two.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarises theoretical conclusions supported by brief analytical discussions extracted from the cases. It also discusses limitations encountered during the research, suggestions for further research, and potential implications for US foreign policy in the near future.

Chapter 2 Neoclassical Realism Framework and Methodology

The objective of this thesis is to shed light on the foreign policy dynamics that were decisive in the US response to the civil wars in Libya and Syria. It contributes to an understanding of third-party interventions in civil wars and US interventions in particular. In this context, analysing the Libyan and Syrian civil wars provides an opportunity to test the explanatory power of NCR, help establish its limits, and also to develop a comprehensive understanding of US foreign policy dynamics with regards to military intervention as a foreign policy tool. A combination of a congruence method and theory oriented process tracing will be applied to conduct within-case and cross case analysis for the Libya and Syria conflicts.

To test the theory I will use Stephen Van Evera's three steps as a scheme: This involves: 1) explaining the theory; 2) outlining the expected outcome driven by the theory; and 3) exploring the cases and checking if congruence between expectation and observation is present (Evera, 1997). This chapter first explores the literature on NCR and its application in various studies. This is followed by a proposed NCR model encompassing independent, intervening, and dependent variables to explain US foreign policy vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria civil wars. Finally, the way process tracing and congruence method is employed to analyse the cases and test NCR is outlined.

2.1 Neo-Classical Realism (NCR)

Brian Rathbun argues that NCR is a logical extension of neorealism, and incorporates ideas and domestic politics into the analysis to explain the underlying reasons of a particular foreign policy choice when a state disregards the structural

incentives of the international system (Rathbun, 2008). Similar to Rathbun, a significant amount of research using NCR strives to explain the state's foreign policy divergence from the neorealist predictions with reference to the intervening role of domestic political pressures between foreign policy choices and structural premises (Fordham, 2009,p.253). For example, Thomas Juneau develops a variant of neoclassical realism, a theory of foreign policy mistakes, to explore the causes and consequences of Iranian action. Juneau provides "a framework differentiating between ideal, optimal foreign policy — which responds solely to structural pressures and incentives — and actual, suboptimal choices, which arise following the filtering effect of domestic pathologies" (Juneau, 2015, p.4). To provide a more accurate explanation of foreign policy choices in Iran, Juneau introduces three intervening variables: 1) status (to which the state aspires: great or regional power); 2) regime identity (national identity and strategic culture), and; 3) factional politics (factional and/or bureaucratic competition) (Juneau, 2015, p.41).

Thus, NCR attempts to expand upon neorealism and fill an explanatory gap by incorporating state-level factors as mediating or intervening variables between the imperatives of the international system and state behaviour (Quinn, 2013). Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell situate NCR as both a framework for explaining foreign policy choices of a state deviating from neorealist premises and as a distinct theory that provides an additional explanatory framework for why a certain foreign policy was pursued (Ripsman et al., 2009,p.285,287), but argue that it doesn't necessarily imply a complete departure from neorealist predictions.

Before getting into the details of NCR it is worth discussing, albeit briefly, the theory of neorealism itself. Structural realists advocate that prevailing anarchy stems from the structure of the international system and this condition results in a self-help

environment in which each state aims to maximise its relative power to counterbalance its opponents for the sake of maintaining security. While defensive realism sees states as security maximizers, offensive realism argues states are power maximizers. Defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz claim that states are satisfied when they obtain enough power to ensure their security and survival, whereas offensive realists like John Mearsheimer argue that states are willing to acquire as much power as possible and make use of any opportunity to alter the existing distribution of power in their favour (Dunne and Schmidt, 2014).

Waltz's balance of power theory has been challenged by Stephen M. Walt's balance of threat theory, which postulates that 'power' alone cannot explain state's balancing behaviour and proposes 'threat' and 'proximity' as additional factors that need to be taken into consideration. Therefore, balance-of-threat theory incorporates power, geography, offensive capabilities, and intentions to explain the balancing behaviour of states in the international system. While balance-of-power theory predicts that states will confront the strongest state in the system, balance-of-threat theory predicts they will mobilise internal sources and/or externally seek alliances against the most threatening (Walt, 1997). The main distinction Walt introduces is the idea that threat perception is shaped by other states' perceived intentions (Walt, 1992) in addition to capabilities. According to Walt, states balance against different kinds of threats, not just power alone (Walt, 1988).

In this regard Steve Yetiv's research on the US's role in the Middle East explores American foreign policy with regards to Iran, Iraq, and Russia and tests two strands of neorealism: balance of power and balance of threat. The results suggest that in US foreign policy, balancing regional threats has taken precedence over balancing against power at the regional or global level (Yetiv, 2006). In an e-mail exchange in May 2015,

Yetiv reiterated his conviction that the US has rarely practiced balancing policy in the Middle East and balance of power is one of the last things the US is thinking about with regard to these states.

As neo-realists disregard domestic factors there is growing body of research that suggests that the relative position of a state in the international system is not sufficient to explain foreign policy choices. Robert D. Putnam uses the metaphor of the two-level game that decision-makers play at the domestic and international level in an attempt to reconcile both simultaneously. In addition to the international position of a state, decision makers take into consideration public opinion and elections, on the one hand, as domestic determinants of foreign policy and international relations, and parties, social classes, interest groups, legislators, and executive officials as the sub-state actors, on the other (Putnam, 1988).

Having briefly examined neorealism, in this section I will endeavour to explore what NCR provides analytically as a theoretical framework. NCR, firstly developed by Gideon Rose, aims to explain the causal relationship between particular foreign policy choices of a state (as the dependent variable) with reference to both relative power in the international system (as the independent variable) and domestic factors (as intervening variables). Rose acknowledges the role of systemic pressures and incentives as the primary drivers, particularly relative to material power and the position of a state in the international system, but also underlines the importance of elite perceptions by stating:

There is no immediate or perfect transmission belt linking material capabilities to foreign policy behaviour. Foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perception of relative power that matter (Rose, 1998).

So decision makers' perceptions filter systemic pressures/incentives and translate these into foreign policy decisions. Rose explains that process as a causal chain between independent, intervening and dependent variables that allows one to gauge the impact of intervening variables over structural empirical predictions (Rose, 1998). The central question at this point is what weight should be given to intervening unit-level variables in the decision making process for US intervention.

Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro suggest leaders' assessment of relative power and other state's intentions set parameters for how states define their interests and that NCR is thus a valuable framework to explain variation in the foreign policies of a state over time (Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, 2009,p.25,26). The link between defining the boundaries of national interests and leaders' assessment of relative power and other state's intentions is important to be able to understand the systemic influencers of foreign policy.

Particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the move from bi-polarity to uni-polarity relieved the international constraints on the US, which resulted in greater leeway in making foreign policy decisions. With little risk of an effective counterbalancing or lack of imminent threat stemming from a nation state (Ripsman et al., 2009,p.295) the US was expected to "act in an unconstrained manner and without the fear of retaliation" (Lobell, 2009,p.48). That is visible in the greater number of military interventions the US has undertaken since the 1990s.

Robert Jervis defines uni-polarity as "a system in which one state has significantly more capabilities than any other" and, in broader terms, as "a system in which the uni-pole's security and perhaps other values cannot be threatened by others". Jervis attributes changing US foreign policy from one administration to the next to the lack of an acute threat from a nation state after the cold war and highlights

the increasing impact of non-state actors and other counterbalancing mechanisms like nuclear weapons and terrorist groups. So, while the US was still concerned about preventing the rise of a peer competitor, it was also determined to counter transnational terrorism, maintain an open international economic system, and ensure the prevalence of certain international norms (Jervis, 2009). In that context it is safe to suggest that foreign policy decisions of US foreign policy executives (FPE) are conditioned first by perceptions regarding the status of the balance of power/threat in the international system, which in turn shapes security interest perceptions; and second, by the constraints and inducements emanating from domestic level factors in foreign policy decision making processes (Lobell, 2009,p.64).

There are various schools of NCR, which differ in their interpretation of the independent variable as the basis of analysis. According to the mainstream and original school pioneered by Gideon Rose, the independent variable is power and power shapes the parameters of state foreign policy (some other researchers use threat as the independent variable) (Thomas Juneau, 2016). Others start the analysis by defining and prioritising national interests and the threats to those interests within the current structure of the international system (Kitchen, 2010). Colin Dueck puts forward a framework to specifically analyse intervention decisions and outlines how, why, and the extent to which domestic politics matters in shaping US military interventions abroad while leaders seek to pursue national security interests. He argues that international systemic pressures are the most important cause behind foreign policy behaviour of particular states, but only because of their mediating effects on unit-level variables such as elite perceptions and domestic political conditions (Dueck, 2009,p.141,145,150) According to this model, when facing the possibility of major military intervention, firstly the President and FPEs question the national

interests, particularly security interests of the US, and potential threats to those interests. Subsequently, when they perceive severe external threats to vital interests, domestic political incentives and constraints condition the scope and scale of the intervention (Dueck, 2009,p.139,148).

The most challenging step in NCR analysis is defining the right set of intervening variables. Studies utilising NCR as a theoretical framework provide valuable alternatives for the selection of intervening variables. So, in this part I will briefly look into research that has focused on NCR as a theoretical framework. Tudor Oneo categorises different approaches to NCR according to the weight the researchers attribute to intervening variables. He labels his categories: orthodox, semi-orthodox and revivalist. The orthodox interpretation posits that domestic variables interfere only when states diverge from the incentives of the international system. Alternatively, the semi-orthodox interpretation acknowledges the foreign policy choices of a state as being guided first and foremost by a state's relative power, capability or influence and attributes a limited role to domestic politics. The revivalist approach, meanwhile, challenges the supremacy of the international system and prioritises the influence of domestic factors and actors as the primary drivers of foreign policy (Onea, 2012).

Lorenzo Cladi and Mark Webber deploy an 'orthodox' interpretation of NCR to understand a country's foreign policy divergence from systemic incentives with reference to variables located at the domestic level. In their research on Italian foreign policy in the post-cold war period the authors subsumed elite perceptions, distribution of political power and government instability as intervening variables into their analysis to understand how Italy responded to systemic incentives and formulised its foreign policy (Cladi and Webber, 2011). This model is suitable to analyse a country's general foreign policy direction, along with the changes in the international system, however it

falls short of giving enough analytical depth to understanding specific policies and choices of a state with regards to intervention.

As mentioned above, NCR's perspective on military intervention is explained by Dueck, who stresses the importance of how state elites perceive national interests. Here, decisions on military intervention or non-intervention are contextualised through national interests under domestic political considerations and constraints. These constraints are expected to constrain and influence the form, timing and the scale of an intervention (Dueck, 2009,p.139). Kevin Marsh used this model to analyse why the Obama administration intervened in the Libyan civil war in 2011. The author examined the interplay between the US security interest in Libya (regional stability, energy security, values, international order) and domestic constraints or factors (the fiscal and economic crisis, military overstretch, US public opinion/war weariness, divided Congress, President and his advisor's perceptions). Marsh concludes that NCR proved valuable in the analysis of military interventions to understand how systemic-level factors drive military intervention while domestic politics and elite perceptions constrain the nature of the intervention (Marsh, 2014). Marsh's model is tailored and fit for the purpose of analysing intervention decisions as part of a country's FPA. However, the intervening variable 'President and his advisor's perceptions' is too general and requires further analyses of the President's and his advisors perceptions with regards to national interests, threats to those interests, and conflict itself. This blurs the line between independent variable and intervening variables. Moreover, this model does not take into consideration the perception of the President and his advisors vis-à-vis rebels, which is the crucial element in the context of civil war.

Other research that uses NCR as a theoretical framework analyses US 'Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf against Iraq and Iran between 1991 and 2001.

The research underlines the value of using NCR, which balances both regional and international inter-state dynamics and domestic level constraints to explain particular foreign policy choices, namely perceptions of power and threat, domestic institutions, and interest groups (Edwards, 2013). Similar to Marsh, Edwards handle 'perceptions of power and threat' as an intervening variable that is situated in relation to the dependent variable, 'interests and distribution of power within the international system'. Zenonas Tziarras uses NCR to explore Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East since 2002. Tziarras considers 'elite ideology' and 'domestic interest groups' as intervening variables at the domestic or unit level to explain the variation of TFP behaviour (revisionism or status quo), within the framework of system level independent variables, 'relative power changes', 'external threat perceptions' and 'international economic interdependence'. Tziarras concludes that system-level drivers and international power relations play the primary role in conjunction with unit-level variables in shaping and causing shifts in foreign policy (Tziarras, 2014). Tziarras's choice of independent variables focuses on security and economic interest conceptions of Turkey. For the US this requires a tailored approach, as the US is a global power assuming broader responsibilities, which means taking into consideration other elements of national interest like 'values' and 'international order'.

Jason W. Davidson uses NCR theory to explain why the UK, France and Italy's support for US led military operations abroad varies. He does so by analysing international level power and security imperatives and domestic politics. Davidson's NCR conceptualisation starts with the basic neorealist assumption that expects states to maximise their relative power and security under the incentives of an anarchic international system. Davidson's NCR frame work focuses on three domestic variables to explain variance in allies' burden-sharing decisions: alliance value, target

threat to national interest and prestige, public opinion, and electoral relevance (Davidson, 2011).

James Sperling uses NCR to analyse variance in British, Canadian, French, German and Italian responses to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973 and the varying levels of willingness to contribute to Operation Unified Protector during the Libya intervention. As the analytical starting point, the author's model takes exogenous shifts in the relative distribution of the global and regional balance of power as the independent variable. Sperling introduces four distinct intervening variables: material interests (oil and gas supplies, bilateral investment and trading, mass migration); constraints on extraction and mobilisation of capabilities; domestic political context (public opinion, electoral cycle, and vulnerability of government); national security culture (the lens through which national authorities view the structural position of the state) (Sperling, 2016). Given that it takes the electoral cycle into account, Sperling's approach is a crucial element applicable to US FPA with regards to Libya and Syria as Congressional and Presidential elections have the potential to influence the nature and timing of intervention decisions.

As opposed to scholars that prioritise the importance of international level incentives, there is some literature, including that from Randall Schweller, which advocates a revivalist strand and provides an NCR explanation of the under balancing behaviours of states. Schweller's revivalist interpretation of NCR identifies the influence of domestic factors and actors as the primary drivers of foreign policy. The author posits that domestic variables thwart balance of power predictions and constrain the foreign policy options of states. Schweller looks at four domestic variables: elite consensus (disagreement) about the nature and extent of the threat; the political and policy costs and risks; government regime vulnerability (the likelihood

of political survival); elite cohesion (the degree of fragmentation among political leadership over ideological, religious, cultural, ethnic differences, and diverging interests); and social cohesion (relative strength of ties that bind individuals and groups together) (Schweller, 2008). While Schweller proposes exploring exclusively domestic variables, he cannot escape from indirectly looking at the international dimension. 'Elite consensus (disagreement) about the nature and extent of the threat' takes international dynamics into account from the perspective of elites. So, the combination of a model probing external and internal factors seem to be a viable model for US FPA. Several other qualitative and quantitative research reinforce that predisposition.

For example, Luca Tardelli analyses US military interventions in internal conflicts with a specific emphasis on elites and domestic politics. His research highlights the dual nature of political elites and elite dynamics connecting international and domestic politics (Tardelli, 2013). Tardelli perceives 'orthodox' interpretation of NCR to explain deviation of US foreign policy from neorealist expectations.

Amber Aubone posits third-party military intervention as a foreign policy tool used by leaders to achieve desired ends and underlines the importance of taking domestic politics of the intervening state into consideration. Aubone examines the factors employed by various scholars seeking to explain when and why the US militarily intervenes in civil conflicts. This research categorises the determinants of intervention into two groups: external and internal. External determinants refer to international systemic (balance-of-power) factors, relations between the intervener and target state, parity of government – rebel forces and head of state's perception of the conflict and target state. Internal determinants include domestic considerations such as military

capabilities, socio-economic conditions, domestic politics, processes, structures and presidents' perception of threats (Aubone, 2013).

Paul K. Huth also argues in his empirical analysis of major power interventions between 1918 and 1988 that a realist approach can be strengthened by incorporating how the domestic political concerns of state leaders may influence their foreign policy decisions (Huth, 1998).

At the beginning of this research, I started with the mainstream NCR School pioneered by Gideon Rose, which prioritises the relative power of a state within the international structure as a determinant of the parameters of a state's foreign policy. However, in depth analysis of US relative power vis à vis Libya and Syria proved insufficient and unsuccessful in identifying ideal or optimal US foreign policy choices. However, Colin Dueck's interpretation of NCR, which starts by examining national interests and potential threats to those interests, allows room for analysing multiple elements that affect interest and threat perception. Therefore, in this research I will follow Colin Dueck's interpretation of NCR.

With regards to the set of intervening variables that will be used in the analysis, in addition to common intervening variables that stand out in the previous researches (summarised below) like elite ideology, public opinion, economic constraints I will also look into US FPE perceptions vis-à-vis rebels in Libya and Syria as an additional variable. The capability, ideology, and end state objectives of the political and armed opposition in both Libya and Syria was a constant concern for US FPEs.

Author	Independent Variables	Intervening Variables	Dependent Variable
Lorenzo Cladi & Mark Webber	How changes in the international system that emerged at the end of the Cold War affected Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elite perceptions - Distribution of political power - Government instability 	Italian foreign policy in the post-cold war period
Kevin Marsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US national interests in Libya * energy security * regional stability * values * international order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The fiscal and economic crisis - Military overstretch - US public opinion/war weariness - Divided Congress - President and his advisor's perceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intervention/non-intervention as a foreign policy choice - The scope and nature of the US intervention in Libya
Alex Edwards	Interests and distribution of power within the international system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceptions of power and threat - Domestic Institutions - Interest groups 	Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf
Zenonas Tziarras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relative power changes - External threat perceptions - International economic interdependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elite ideology - Domestic interest groups 	Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) towards Middle East since 2002 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revisionism - Status quo
Jason W. Davidson	International level power and security imperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alliance value - Target threat to national interest and prestige - Public opinion and electoral relevance 	UK, France and Italy's support to US led military operations abroad and variance in allies burden-sharing decisions
James Sperling	Shifts in relative distribution of global and regional balance of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material interests (oil and gas supplies, bilateral investment and trading, mass migration), - Constraints on extraction and mobilisation of capabilities, - Domestic political context (public opinion, electoral cycle, and vulnerability of government), National security culture 	Variance in British, Canadian, French, German and Italian response and support to Libya intervention
Randall Schweller	Balance of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elite consensus - Government regime vulnerability - Elite cohesion - Social cohesion 	Under balancing behaviours of states <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great powers - Small powers

Figure 3 Researches Using NCR as Theoretical Framework

I will also adopt a revised version of the hypothesis used by Kevin Marsh, who has also applied NCR to understand why the Obama administration intervened in the Libyan civil war in 2011.

- H₁: The US FPE take a decision to intervene militarily first and foremost in response to substantial threats to US interests representing the expected option for the US.
- H₂: Domestic constraints (intervening variables) influence the form, timing, and scope of the intervention, and the rationale behind the deviation from expected intervention strategies can be explained by intervening variables.

It is also important to establish a framework that can capture case specific attributes while analysing the causal relationship between the independent,

intervening and dependent variables for the Libya and Syria cases. In that context the following framework will be used as the basis of analysis in the research.

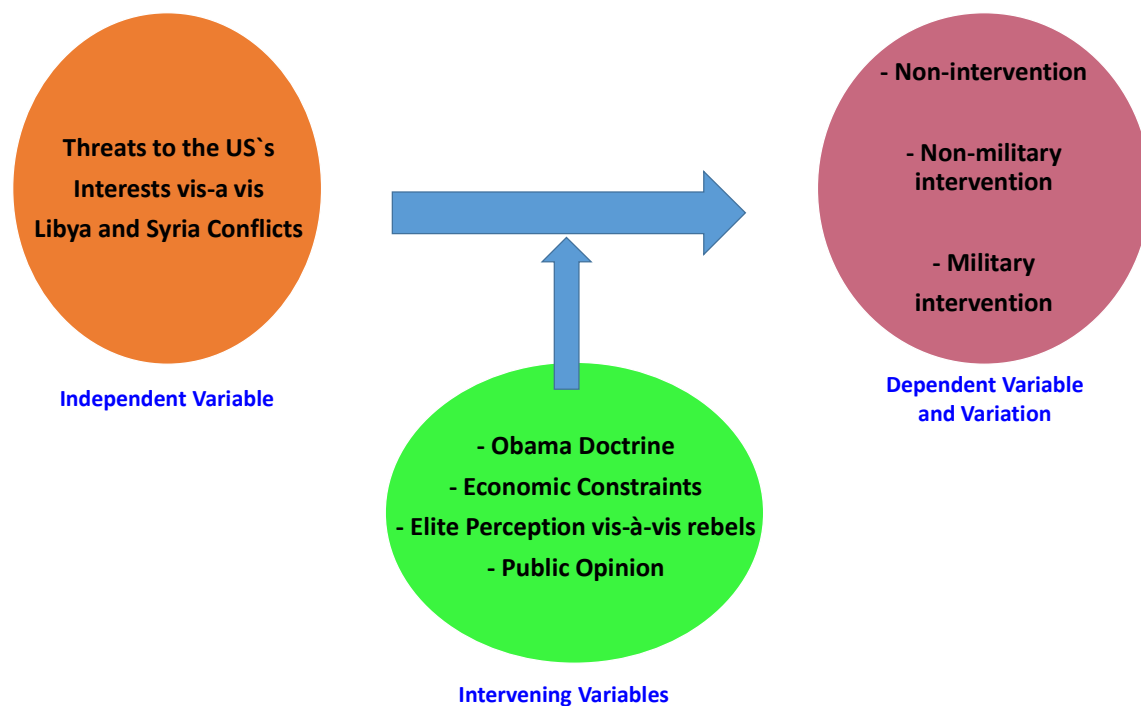


Figure 4 NCR Framework for the Analysis of US Intervention Decisions Vis-a-Vis Civil Wars in Libya and Syria

2.2 Methodology and Research Design

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett suggest that combined application of congruence and process tracing methods is a powerful tool to test theories with case studies. Combining two methods enables the investigator to make a sound judgement about whether “the congruence between the independent and dependent variables is causal or spurious and also provide opportunity to take into consideration intervening variables and causal process that connect them” (George & Bennett, 2005,p.182). The congruence method helps assess a particular theory’s ability to explain or predict

the outcome of a case (George & Bennett, 2005,p.180) while the process-tracing method attempts to establish the causal chain and mechanism between the independent variable and the outcome of the dependent variable (George & Bennett, 2005, p.206,207).

Process tracing is defined by Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel as the “examination of intermediate steps in a process to make inferences about hypotheses on how that process took place and generated the outcome of interest”. Thus process tracing requires the analysis of the case retrospectively from the outcome to potential causal mechanisms in play (Bennett & Checkel, 2014).

In that sense, process tracing can be used to probe whether a hypothesised casual mechanism between independent and dependent variable is plausible. Jason Lyall recommends process tracing to effectively judge whether proposed mechanisms linking independent variables to outcomes are viable (Lyall, 2014). Thus, for the Libya and Syria cases, process tracing seems essential to identify the sequence of events leading up to particular forms of intervention and to gauge why and how a particular intervention strategy was pursued by the US.

In process tracing, the investigator explores and looks for evidence for a chain of events or the decision making process to establish the cause–effect link between independent variable and outcome (Van Evera, 1997, p.64). Van Evera provides an explanation on how to apply congruence and process tracing methods to test theories. The author divides the congruence method into three categories to test theories:

- **Type 1 Congruence - Comparison to typical values:** First the investigator establishes the expected value for the independent variable and the outcome of the dependent variable for the theory to be valid. Then the observed values of the variables are compared with the theory expectation, which allows for

measurement of the congruence or incongruence between expectation and observation (Van Evera, 1997, p.58).

- **Type 2 Congruence - Multiple within-case comparisons:** The investigator makes a number of paired observations of values on the independent and dependent variables across the spectrum of the case. Then the investigator assesses whether these values co-vary with the predictions of the test hypothesis (Van Evera, 1997, p.60,61).
- **Hybrids of Congruence Type 1 and Type 2:** The investigator makes a number of paired observations of values on the independent and dependent variables and compares these with each other and the hypothesized typical value (Van Evera, 1997, p.63).

I will utilise a hybrid of congruence type 1 and type 2 methods accompanied with process tracing. Type 1 congruence method will be used for the within-case analysis of Libya and type 2 congruence method for the multiple episodes and outcomes of Syria case. In addition to within case analysis a cross-case comparison will be conducted between two cases for the episode depicted as 'episode 1' below for both Libya and Syria conflicts.

I will analyse the interaction among independent and intervening variables regarding the intervention choices the US applied or considered over time in one episode for Libya and five episodes for the Syrian conflict in a staggered manner. The time points annotated with thick dotted lines below correspond to significant shifts in the conflicts which provided an opportunity or urge for the US to take more decisive action over the course of both conflicts. I will look into the Libya conflict from the moment the protests began on 15 February 2011 up until the NATO intervention ended

on 31 October 2011 as one episode. If this is considered as the first intervention in Libya, the second refers to US targeted air strikes against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Libya since 2015. However, this phase was not included in the analyses as the scope of the research is to understand the dynamics behind US interventions into intra-state conflicts. So, the air strikes or plans for second intervention against ISIL in Libya can be considered as part of US efforts to degrade and destroy ISIL worldwide.

For the Syria case, the first episode starts with the onset of the Syrian demonstrations in March 2011. The second episode was initiated with the mass killings of protestors perpetrated by the Syrian regime in August 2011 which led to the militarisation of the Syrian opposition. The beginning of the third episode was marked by the emergence of a united political and armed opposition, which provided the US with the opportunity to offer support against the Syrian regime. The fourth period started with the use of chemical weapons, which crossed the 'red line' drawn firmly by the US administration and emergence of ISIL as a prominent actor in Syria. And finally, the fifth episode started as ISIL took control of a vast swath of territory in Syria and Iraq and declared an Islamic caliphate. That period will be analysed until 30 September 2015, when Russia started building up its military force inside Syria and assisted the Syrian regime's offensive against the opposition groups and, at later stages, against ISIL.

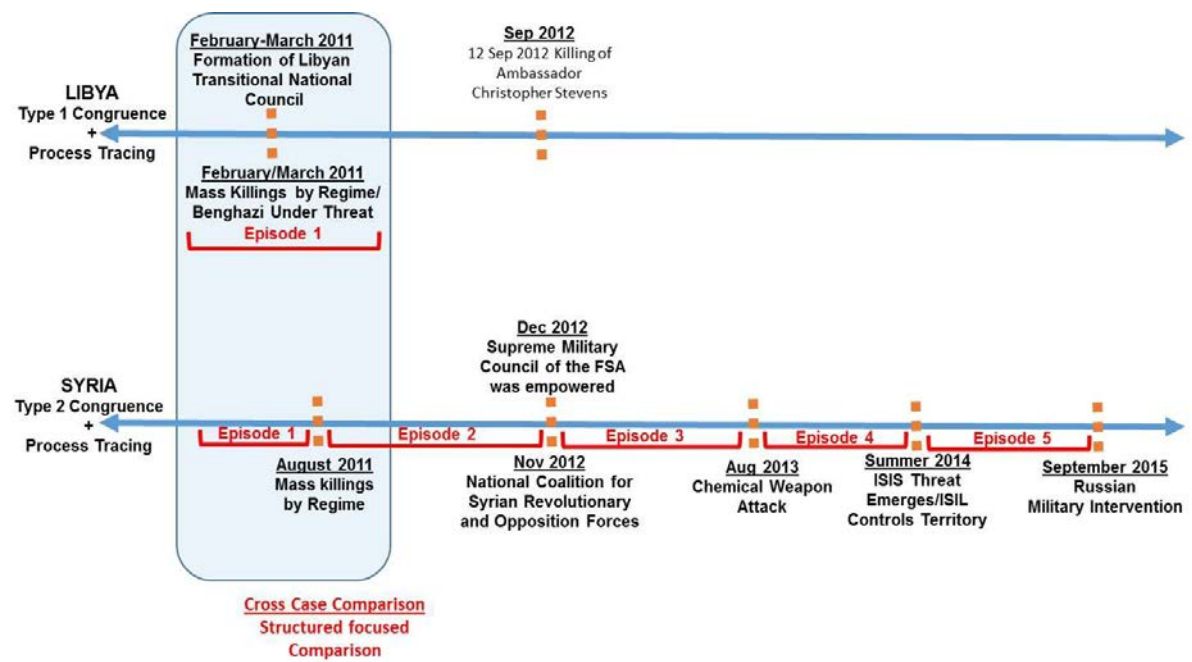


Figure 5 Hybrid Congruence and Process Tracing Method

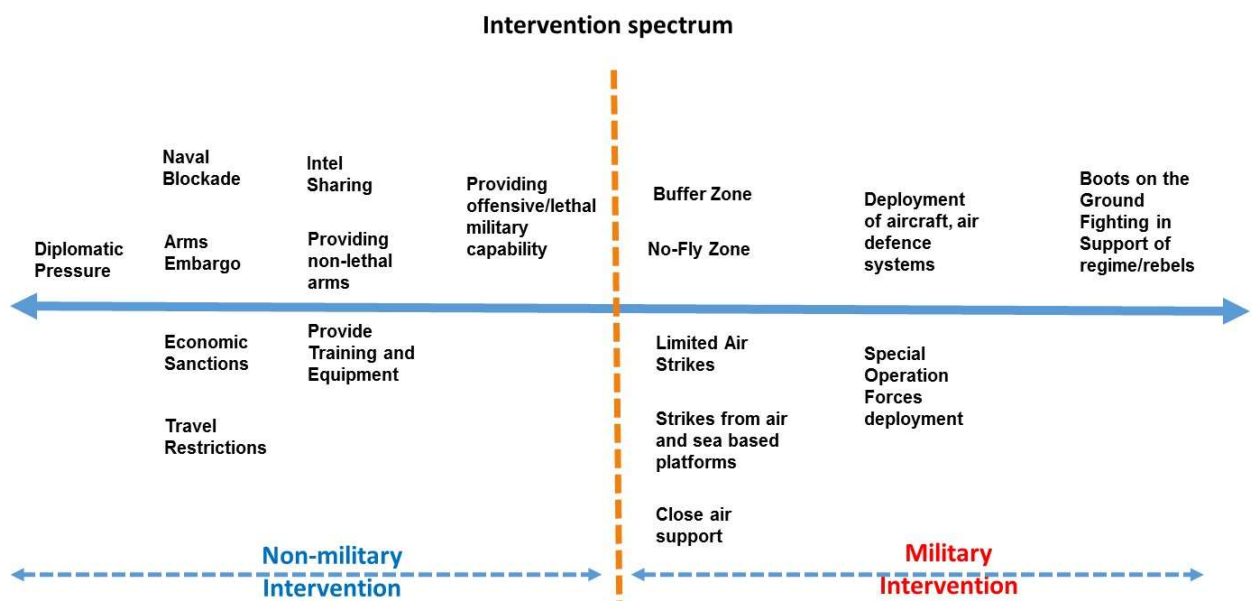


Figure 6 Intervention Spectrum: Non-Military and Military Intervention Means

Chapter 3 US Historical Relationship with Libyan and Syrian Regimes

Before looking into the details of the processes that led to a particular US response with regards to the Libya and Syria conflicts the US relationship with both Libyan and Syrian regimes in recent history needs to be examined. Such an examination provides a baseline context for the detailed analysis of independent, intervening, and dependent variables in the following chapters. More specifically, understanding the historical context of the bilateral relationship the US developed with Libya and Syria over the years will shed light on recent developments. Particular references to national security interests, which are examined in Chapter 4 in terms of security, prosperity, values and international order domains, will facilitate the tracking of the processes that led to particular US choices. Retrospective analysis of recent history brings forward several issues like basing privileges US enjoyed in Libya and advantages provided to oil companies before Qaddafi, Qaddafi's support to international terrorism until 2001, and his weapons of mass destruction capability development efforts until 2004 as the principle issues that can be cross referenced with US national security interests by 2011.

3.1 US Historical Relationship with the Libyan Regime

The relationship between the US and Libya gradually deteriorated after Qaddafi came to power in 1969 after overthrowing King Idris. The attacks on 11 September 2001 became a turning point for Libya-US relations as Qaddafi saw this watershed as an opportunity to reach out to the US. The main features of the relationship will be detailed in this section in order to get deeper insights regarding the potential reflection of historical US-Libya relations influencing the decision to intervene.

3.1.1 Evacuation of US Bases and Increasing Soviet Influence in Libya

After World War II, the US and the Soviet Union viewed Libya as a strategic asset due to its proximity to the Mediterranean and as a transit point for increasing political influence in the Middle East and North Africa (St John, 1982). During the cold war, US interests required countering potential Soviet expansion into Africa and the Mediterranean (Ogunbadejo, 1986). Eventually, the US supported the creation of an independent pro-western Libya under a UN mandate to contain Russian involvement in Libya. On 21 November 1949 the majority of UN member countries voted in favour of Libyan independence (five Soviet-bloc countries and France abstained). The decision took effect as of 24 December 1951 (Ronen, 2013).

King Idris also saw alliance with the US as a shield against external threats. The Libyan regime signed an agreement with the US in 1954 that allowed for the use of Wheelus Air Base near Tripoli in exchange for American weapons and the development of the Libyan Air Force (US Library of Congress, 1989). Until the discovery of oil in 1959, the monarchy in Libya maintained its pro-Western orientation as US basing agreements provided both direct income and access to financial assistance (St John, 1982).

Rising Arab nationalism led by Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser and anti-western sentiment within the Libyan population in 1964 led Idris to call for the evacuation of US bases in Libya. The complete evacuation of military installations used by the US was accomplished by mid-1970 (US Library of Congress, 1989) just after Qaddafi took power. Israel's victory against Syrian, Egyptian, and Jordanian forces in the 1967 Six Day War also increased the pressure upon King Idris as the signatory of the basing

agreement with the US (Blanchard & Zanotti, 2011) that was believed to have supported Israel during the war against Arab forces.

After the 1st September 1969 coup, Qaddafi's anti-western, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric, suspected links with terrorist groups and activities and animosity against Israel limited US and Western Europe arms sale to Libya. As part of the reorientation strategy and as a means of avoiding isolation, Libya developed closer ties with the Soviet Union. Soviet arms sales and technical assistance in nuclear energy research to Libya increased rapidly. In 1975 the Soviet Union provided Libya with a 10-megawatts research nuclear reactor and in 1978 both parties agreed to construct a 300 megawatts capacity nuclear power plant in Libya (St John, 1982).

In the period of 1969-1975 Libya purchased 2 billion US Dollars (USD) worth of Soviet arms (Laird, 1984). While Libya received huge amount of arms from the Soviet Union, between 1968 and 1977 it also bought 490 million USD worth arms from Western Europe to diversify its sources. However, the sheer magnitude of Soviet weaponry increased Qaddafi's ability to pursue his regional objectives (Menon, 1982).

As part of the zero sum game character of the Cold War, both Russia and US aimed at curbing the influence of one another. However, after the evacuation of US bases in Libya, Moscow was unable to reach an agreement to open a military base in Libya, which limited Moscow's influence over Libya and its leverage in the region.

3.1.2 Nationalisation of US Oil Assets and Companies in Libya

After Qaddafi seized power in Libya through a military coup, the relationship with the US deteriorated gradually, mainly as a result of Qaddafi's anti-western policies. One of the main causes of the deterioration of relations was Qaddafi's decision to increase his control over Libyan oil resources (Zoubir, 2002a). Initially,

Qaddafi pressured US oil companies to renegotiate oil production contracts in order to increase Libyan government share of the revenue (Blanchard and Zanotti, 2011).

The strained relations between Libya and the US deteriorated further after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, in which Libya participated in the Arab oil boycott against the United States (Ohaegbulam, 2000). Qaddafi followed this up by announcing in the following year that he intended to nationalise US oil companies.

As Libya provides high quality and low cost oil and gas extraction and export opportunities near to Europe, lucrative oil and gas business have always been part of international interests in Libya. Currently Libya has 41.5 billion barrels of oil and 51 billion cubic feet of natural gas reserves (Doha Institute, 2011).

3.1.3 Qaddafi Support to anti-Colonial, separatist and Terrorist Groups

In parallel to his ideological standpoint, which was based around notion of anti-colonialism, Arab nationalism and socialism, Qaddafi backed anti-colonial separatists, revolutionaries and, in some cases, terrorist groups all around the world (Blanchard & Zanotti, 2011).

Qaddafi declared his objective as overstressing US's military capability by forcing it to fight on multiple fronts throughout the world. In that context Libya was accused of sending arms to insurgency and secessionist groups in Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua), the Middle East and Africa (Lebanon, Chad, Sudan) and Europe (the Irish Republican Army-IRA) (Ogunbadejo, 1986). The US also perceived Qaddafi as an actor who attempted to destabilize Libya's pro-western neighbours (Ohaegbulam, 2000).

Qaddafi's support of the IRA from the early 1970s was mainly intended to weaken the British government as reflected his anti-western imperialism rhetoric

(Ronen, 2013). The notorious image of Qaddafi was also reinforced by his suspected links in the killing of Israeli athletes in 1972 at the Munich Olympics and the assassination of the US ambassador to Sudan in 1973 (Ohaegbulam, 2000).

The US withdrew its Ambassador from Libya in 1972 and the remaining embassy personnel were withdrawn after the embassy was completely shut down after it was set on fire on the 2nd December 1979 (Embassy of US, 2014). This incident was followed on the 29th December 1979 by the US decision to place Libya on the list of state sponsors of terrorism (Davenport, 2014).

In 1981 President Reagan closed Libya's embassy in Washington on the grounds that Qaddafi supported international terrorism. Shortly after, US navy jets shot down two Libyan aircraft over the Mediterranean (Schumacher, 1986). The incident took place during a US naval exercise on 19 August 1981, as two US navy F-14 shot down two Libyan SU-22's 60 miles off the Libyan Gulf of Sirte, which Qaddafi unilaterally declared as Libyan territorial waters and which the US refused to recognise (Gwertzman, 1981).

Libyan intelligence was also suspected of providing weapons used for the simultaneous attacks on the Israeli Airline's check-in counters at the Vienna and Rome airports in 1985, which saw dozens lose their lives and many more wounded (Ogunbadejo, 1986).

3.1.4 Berlin Disco Attack and US Air Strikes in Libya

1986 was a significant year for US policies toward Qaddafi as the US militarily confronted the Libyan regime twice in that year. In the first instance, ships from US Sixth Fleet crossed the self-declared line in the Gulf of Sidra. As Libyan forces retaliated, the Sixth Fleet sank two Libyan boats on 26th March 1986 and also attacked

an anti-aircraft missile site. On 15th April 1986, US aircraft targeted Tripoli and Benghazi as a retaliation for the bomb attack carried out on 5th April 1986 at La Belle disco in Berlin, which was regularly frequented by US military personnel (Schumacher, 1986). The disco attack had killed two US soldiers and a Turkish citizen and injured more than 225 individuals, including 200 Germans (Der Spiegel, 2011)². In response, US aircraft flew from aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean Sea and air fields in Britain. The US air strikes culminated in thirty-eight Libyan casualties, including members of the Qaddafi family, and the loss of one US F-111 jet with its two pilots (Ohaegbulam, 2000).

3.1.5 Pan Am Flight 103 Explosion

On 21st December 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 bound to the US from London exploded over Lockerbie in Scotland, resulting in the deaths of 43 UK, 190 US and 19 other nationalities. In November 1991, the US accused Libyan nationals Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi and Lamin Khalifa Fhimah of planning and executing the bombing and requested Libya to extradite these two individuals (B. Smith, 2011).

UNSC Resolution 748, sponsored by the US and the UK, was adopted by the Security Council in March 1992 and called upon Libya to cease all forms of terrorism, stop supporting terrorist groups and denounce terrorism. The resolution blocked Libyan airliners from entering international airspace and prohibited Libyan provision of arms related material in all forms (UNSC, 1992). The sanctions against Libya were broadened with the adoption of UNSC Resolution 882 on 11th November 1993, which requested nations to freeze funds and financial resources owned or controlled by the

² As part of Qaddafi's efforts in mending relations with the West, Libya agreed to pay 35 million US Dollars in 2004 to the victims of the La Belle disco attack (Bahgat, 2008).

Libyan government or public authorities outside of Libya and banned the transfer of material designed for oil production and refinement (UNSC, 1993).

As the sanctions crippled the Libyan economy, Libya moved to normalise its relationship with the West and stopped its support for terrorist groups. Later, Libya provided the British government with information about its past links with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) (Zoubir, 2009). Libya, the US and the UK also agreed in 1998 to the trial of the two suspects accused of organising the bombing of Pan Am flight 103. The trial would take place in the Netherlands under Scottish law (Plachta, 2001).

Eventually Tripoli accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and paid compensation estimated at 2.7 billion US dollars to the families of the victims (Zoubir, 2009). Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al-Megrahi, who had been convicted of the Lockerbie bombing on 31 January 2001, was released from prison after serving eight years by Scottish Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill on compassionate grounds due to his ill health (The Scottish Government, 2009). The US president and the victims' families reacted to the decision and residual hate in the US public was revealed. Nothing equivalent happened in Syria.

3.1.6 Qaddafi's Weapon of Mass Destruction

As retaliation against Israel's refusal to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Libya did not initially sign the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC), which took effect in 1997. However, Qaddafi changed his position in order to shake off economic sanctions and political isolation. After nine months of secret negotiations among the US, UK and Libya, Libya agreed to give up its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme and signed the CWC in January 2004. Depending on the pace of implementation, the US promised Libya improved economic and diplomatic ties

(Bahgat, 2008). Libya`s declaration of 24.7 metric tonnes (MT) of sulphur mustard, 1,390 MT of precursor chemicals, 3,563 unloaded aerial bombs and three former chemical weapons production facilities was verified by Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) inspections. Libya destroyed its arsenal of unfilled aerial bombs in 2004, and before the Libyan uprising in 2011 Libya also had destroyed 51% of its sulphur mustard stockpile and 40% of its precursor chemicals (OPCW, 2013)

After the overthrow of Qaddafi, the new Libyan government announced the discovery of previously undeclared sulphur mustard stockpiles unloaded to munition. The newly discovered stockpile was carried to the Ruwagha depot in south eastern Libya, where the remaining chemical weapon stockpile of the Qaddafi regime had been kept since 2004 (OPCW, 2012). The process, supervised by OPCW, resumed in 2012 to destroy the remaining stockpile by the end of 2016 (The Guardian, 2014a)

Libya`s ballistic missile arsenal, which could be used as a standoff carrier platform for WMD capability, was also a source of concern for the US. Libya`s surface to surface missile arsenal comprised of Soviet made Scud-Bs (with a 300 km range) and a limited number of North Korean supplied Scud-Cs (with a 600 km range) (Bahgat, 2008). In accordance with the 19th December 2003 agreement, Libya pledged to eliminate all ballistic missiles with ranges of 300 km or greater and payloads of 500 kg or greater. By 22 September 2004, the verification teams had removed Libya`s five SCUD-C missiles and their launchers. Libya initially decided to convert 417 SCUD-B missiles to meet the limits imposed by the agreement; later the US managed to persuade Qaddafi to destroy all Libya`s SCUD-B missiles. However SCUD-B missiles were still in the inventory when the Qaddafi regime was overthrown (Busch and Pilat, 2013).

Libya also turned over 4,000 centrifuges used for producing enriched uranium, and blueprints for how to build a nuclear bomb to the US in 2004. Upon delivery to the US, President Bush stated that the world would be safer and quickly eased restrictions on doing business with Libya (Sanger, 2011). Libya's remaining enriched uranium stockpile was completely taken out of the country in December 2009 (US London Embassy, 2014).

We can draw parallels between the dismantling of Libya's chemical weapons and nuclear weapon building capacity and the process initiated by UNSC Resolution 2118, which aimed to eradicate all chemical weapon related material and sites in Syria, and the Joint Plan of Action (JPA), which intended to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon development capacity. These initiatives started after 21st August 2013 chemical weapons attack in Syria and the US-Russian agreement dated 14th September 2013. The UNSC resolution 2118 was adopted on 27th September 2013 and the JPA commenced on 24th November 2013. The most noticeable common characteristics of the international policies of Libya, Syria and Iran was their hostile attitude toward Israel, strained relations with West and friendly alliance with Russia. This encouraged the US to lead disarmament efforts against perceived threats to national and international security.

3.1.7 Improving Relations

Improved relations between the US and Libya began in April 1999 as Libya turned over two intelligence agents to stand trial for their suspected links to the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 (Blanchard & Zanotti, 2011). Two months later the first official diplomatic contact took place, which saw permanent UN representatives of the

US and Libya meet under the auspices of Kofi Annan on 11th June 1999 to clarify the preconditions to lift the imposed sanctions against Libya (Zoubir, 2002b).

The US took a cautious approach before restoring full diplomatic relations. Qaddafi's offers of counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation following the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 and his 2003 decision to dismantle Libya's weapons of mass destruction and long range missile development programs signified further steps that improved relations with the US (Blanchard and Zanotti, 2011). After US sanctions were gradually removed, full diplomatic relations were restored on 31st May 2006 and subsequently Libya was removed from the list of states sponsoring terrorism (Blanchard and Zanotti, 2011).

Obama's first speech after Qaddafi's death in 2011 referred to the Libyan leader's use of terrorism as a political weapon and reminded Americans that Qaddafi supported terrorism. In addition, Obama called for the new government to work with the international community to secure dangerous material, and cited Libya as a proof of the strength of American leadership across the world alongside the weakening of Al-Qaida, the winding up of operations in Iraq, and Afghanistan's successful transition to democracy (White House, 2011). President Obama's emphasis on two crucial national security interest is important to note; terrorism and WMD. Historically, the US also targeted the Libyan regime militarily on the grounds that it supported or took part in terrorist activities targeting the US and wider international community. This reinforces the notion that the US takes first and foremost its security interest into consideration before making intervention decisions.

However, just before 2011 the US had already resolved its most prominent concerns vis-à-vis Libya; the Libyan regime had quit supporting international terrorism, started cooperating to hinder AQ's activities in the region and agreed on a roadmap

to get rid of Libya`s WMD capability and capacity. As the US managed to subdue the Libyan regime, the process led to a less dangerous and cooperative Libya in the region before the Arab spring uprisings and the intervention.

3.2 US Historical Relationship with the Syrian Regime

Since Syria gained independence from France in 1946, it has had strained relations with the US. In US-Syria relations, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Soviet influence in the Middle East, stability in Lebanon, Iran-Syria relations and Syria`s support of the Iraqi insurgency post 2003 came to the fore before the Arab Spring uprisings as the main contentious issues that have influenced the course of mutual relations. Looking into those historically important issues provides the necessary background to the bilateral relations and has the potential to shed light on the US diplomatic efforts in Syria since the civil war started in 2011.

3.2.1 The Arab-Israeli conflict and Soviet Influence in Middle East

Ever since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel`s victory over Palestinian and regional Arab forces (Ma`oz, 1999), the US`s most pressing concern in the Middle East has been regional stability and Israel`s security (Stevenson, 2014)

Egypt and Syria, the main actors of the war, signed a defence cooperation accord in the event of an Israeli assault. After the Soviet Union shared intelligence about mass troop build-up on the Syrian-Israel border in May 1967, Egyptian President Nasser dispatched his troops into Sinai to curtail upcoming Israeli aggression against Syria and closed the Strait of Tiran (Ziser, 2002). The intelligence regarding Israel concentration on the border turned out to be false and was intended to discourage

Syria from taking pre-emptive military action against Israel; the Soviet Union feared that as a result of an all-out war, Israel would defeat Arab armies which would weaken the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East (Mann, 2013). Nasser's announcement on the 22nd May 1967 underlined Egypt's decision not to allow any Israeli ship to traverse in and out of the Gulf of Aqaba and set the stage for a renewed war (Barak, 2007). Israel pre-emptively launched an attack against Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian targets and captured the Golan Heights, east Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Syrian Ba'ath regime blamed the US for providing Israel with weapons to ensure its victory (Mann, 2013).

UNSC Resolution 242, adopted on 22nd November 1967, stipulated that Israel should withdraw from the territories it captured during the 1967 war (UNSC, 1967) but this requirement has not been met. Syria and Egypt attacked Israel on 6 October 1973 to regain the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, which had been occupied by Israel during the 1967 war. Israel had to ask for US aid to repel Arab forces. At that point, US intelligence and weapons support to Israel (Operation Nickel Grass) and Soviet arms transfer to both Egypt and Syria became preeminent for both parties' calculations. As the UK received 80 percent of its oil supplies from the Arab world (compared to 5 percent for the US in that period), it avoided risking its interests in the region by supporting Israel's cause and rejected US demands to use the Royal Air Force (RAF) base at Akrotiri in Cyprus. The US reportedly intended to use that base to conduct intelligence collection mission against Egyptian anti-aircraft defence systems, which downed dozens of Israeli aircraft. As anticipated by the UK, Arab oil producers imposed an oil embargo against the US on 17th October 1973, conditioning the termination of the embargo on Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands (Hughes, 2008).

US support to Israel in its efforts to defeat Egypt and Syria can be attributed to two main US interests in the Middle East: to secure Israel's existence in the region and to curtail Soviet economic and military influence. The US supplied military hardware enabled Israel to regain the Golan Heights and Sinai by 25th October 1973 (Gutfeld and Zumbrunnen, 2013). UNSC Resolution 338, adopted on 22nd October 1973, also called for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 242, which required Israel to roll back to pre-1967 war positions (UNSC, 1973)

Even though the US brokered a bilateral peace agreement between Israel and Egypt at Camp David in 1978 which called on Egypt to demilitarize the Sinai in exchange for Israel's withdrawal and yielding the territory to Egypt, the US administration saw that a sustainable Arab-Israeli peace could be realised only if the Syrian-Israeli dispute was also resolved (Ma'oz, 1999).

However, the fact that the US had designated Syria a state sponsor of terrorism in 1979, mainly on the grounds that the Hafiz al-Assad regime supported rejectionist Palestinian groups' struggle against Israel, made peace prospects unpromising. On the one hand Syria supported the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other factions as part of its negotiation strategy to have leverage against Israel in its effort to regain the Golan Heights, and on the other hand, backing the Palestinian cause was a source of legitimacy for Assad's dominant minority regime by exploiting the Arab nationalist sentiment of the Syrian population (Byman, 2005).

3.2.2 Stability in Lebanon

After the Arab–Israeli War in 1948, Lebanon received over 150,000 Palestinian refugees and the Arab defeat of 1967 Arab–Israeli War encouraged Palestinians to embark on resistance against Israel along the Lebanon-Israel border. To counter that

threat, Israel funded and armed Maronite-Christian Lebanese militias, with the support of the US, in their effort to resist Palestinian and predominantly non-Christian Lebanese militias worked to secure its northern border (Wight, 2013).

In 1975, a civil war broke out between the factions in Lebanon. One year later Syria intervened in favour of the Maronite-Christian Lebanese militias, weakening Palestinians' posture³. However, Syrian intervention could not stop PLO attacks against Israel from Lebanon and Israel invaded Southern Lebanon in 1982. Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon increased attacks against Israel and, more importantly, stimulated the creation of Hezbollah. Syria withdrew its troops from Lebanon when local and international pressure escalated over the assassination of Rafik Hariri and amid raising accusations over Syrian involvement in 2005 (Wight, 2013).

Rafik Hariri had been critical of Syria's influence in Lebanon and had recently supported the UN resolution calling on Syrian forces to leave the country (Chulov, 2014b). UNSC Resolution 1559 was drafted by the US, UK, France and Germany and adopted on 2nd September 2004. The main emphasis of the resolution was the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces (referring to all remaining Syrian forces), the disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese militia (referring primarily to Hezbollah), and a free and fair presidential election without foreign interference or influence (referring to Syrian pressure to extend incumbent pro-Syrian president's term by three years) (UNSC, 2004).

³ Syria's choice of allying with Maronite Christian militias against the PLO seems to be counterintuitive, however it could be traced back to Syria's complex patronage network that relied on alliance with minorities in Syria, including Christians and Druzes, and threat perception stemming from a potential Sunni dominated Lebanon.

Two distinct power alliances had emerged in Lebanon by 2004, polarising the political landscape because of their differing stances on the role of Syria in Lebanon. On one side, pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud, Hezbollah, and Syrian President Assad, and on the other side an anti-Syrian bloc led by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, supported by Druze Walid Jumblat, and Maronite Michel Aoun locally and by US, France, and Saudi Arabia internationally.

Hariri's overt and strong opposition to Syrian presence in Lebanon (Bosco, 2009) led to accusations that Syria was responsible for his assassination. The international tribunal established by UNSC Resolution 1757 on 30th May 2007 (UNSC, 2007) started its investigation in 2009. In January 2014, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) opened the trial of five suspects *in absentia* who were deemed to be the Hezbollah members responsible for the bombing that killed Hariri and 21 others. At the time of writing, a verdict is still pending (Lutz, 2014).

3.2.3 Iran-Syria Alliance

US policy over Syria can be better understood by analysing the Iranian-Syrian Alliance that has prospered gradually since 1979. Syria and Iran deepened their relations to attain their own goals in the region (Bartell & Gray, 2012).

The factors that contributed to the convergence of interest for both countries can be primarily grouped in three categories: making sure the Iraqi government under Saddam's reign was not hostile to both nations; opposing Israel policies in the Middle East; and ensuring mutual interests in Lebanon by keeping influence over Hezbollah as a proxy.

Iran-Iraq War

Since 1979, Iran and Syria had emerged and consolidated their alliance despite their distinct and diametrically opposed ideologies; Iran is a theocratic and Persian nationalist country while the Syrian regime is characterised more by its secular, pan-Arab, and socialist credentials.

Saddam`s decision to invade Iran in 1980 just a year after the Iranian revolution was an important test for the Syrian-Iranian alliance. The alliance played a critical role after Iraq`s invasion of Iran in September 1980 to prevent Saddam Hussein`s Iraq becoming the dominant power in the Middle East (Goodarzi, 2013). In 1982 Syria supported Iran by closing its border with Iraq and shutting down the Iraqi pipelines that crossed its territory (Drysdale, 1992).

Iran`s military victories over Iraq in 1982 increased the risk of Iraq`s collapse, which meant increased Iranian influence throughout the Gulf. This development persuaded the US to abandon its neutrality policy and to favour Iraq in the conflict. The US also pressured Israel not to provide direct arms sales to Iran, but Iran could still get arms from North Korea, Libya and Syria. Gulf States, led by Saudi Arabia, predominantly backed Iraq as well on the grounds that Iran posed a direct threat to Arab Gulf states. US objectives in the crisis could be summarised as curbing Iran`s influence in the Gulf, maintaining oil supplies throughout the Gulf and curtailing Iran`s efforts to export its revolution beyond its borders in the Middle East (Stern, 1984).

Iraq`s assault was perceived by Iran as a war waged against transnational rhetoric of Iranian revolution and thus US, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan supported Iraq in its effort to defeat Iran. By 1983, the US began providing Iraq with aid and by 1987 this assistance amounted to 652 million USD. By the late 1980s, annual trade between the two states reached 3.7 billion USD. The US also embarked on a limited intelligence

sharing programme with Iraq. The shooting down of an Iranian airliner in July 1988 by a US naval vessel was perceived by Iran as the precursor of a more robust American military campaign against Iran and pressured Iran to end the war (Takeyh, 2010).

Persian Gulf War (1990)

In 1990, two years after the Iran-Iraq war ended, Iraq invaded Kuwait. During the crisis, while Iran remained neutral, Syria joined the US-led coalition to contain Iraq, raising its prospects for a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Goodarzi, 2013) and, more specifically, regaining the Golan Heights from Israel.

Syria cooperated with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and organised an Arab League Council meeting. The organisation voted to resist the Iraqi occupation by force. Syria justified the organisation's decision to collaborate with western powers on two grounds: inter-Arab conflicts should be handled by Arab governments and invasion of Kuwait weakened the Arab world in its struggle against Israel (Lawson, 2007).

The Operation Desert Storm coalition was led by the US and included the UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Egypt. Syria became part of the joint military command formed by Egypt to protect Saudi Arabia and contain Iraq in the region. While Egypt agreed to offensive action against Iraq in January 1991, Assad accepted sending troops to Saudi Arabia for defensive purposes only (Bennett, Leggold, & Unger, 1994).

Iraq War (2003)

The invasion and the following war that toppled Saddam Hussein sent a strong message to Assad. The US's key expectations from Syria were to cease its support to Palestinian armed groups, moderate its anti-American rhetoric and normalise relations with the US (Zisser, 2005). From a joint Syrian and Iranian perspective these two were content that a long-time foe was neutralised, but were worried at a potential

US effort to follow with targeting both nations as part of the US war on terror (Goodarzi, 2013). US policy priorities in Syria can also be traced through the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, signed on 12th December 2003, which required sanctions on Syria unless it ceased its support of international terrorist groups, ended its occupation of Lebanon, ceased the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and stopped supporting or facilitating terrorist activity in Iraq (Sharp and Blanchard, 2011).

The threat perception Syria and Iran shared increased their collaboration to fuel an insurgency in Iraq and try to get the US bogged down in Iraq to a level that it cannot dare to attack Iran and Syria as well (Goodarzi, 2013). The US accused Syria of allowing foreign fighters to enter Iraq through the porous Iraq-Syria border and establish a supply line from Syria into Iraq (Rabinovich, 2009).

Opposing Israel

Iran used his antagonist posture against Israel as a sign of its solidarity with the cause of Islam, crossing the boundaries of Arab-Persian nationalism and Shia-Sunni sectarian differences to increase its influence in the region. By contrast, Syria's anti-Israel stand can be attributed primarily to the Alawite minority regime's Arab unity idealism and its efforts to use this stance to boost its legitimacy domestically and regionally (Goodarzi, 2013).

Maintaining Influence in Lebanon and LH

Israel invaded South Lebanon in 1982 and besieged Beirut to force the PLO out of Lebanon and secure its northern border. Between 21st August and 1st September 1982, PLO forces were evacuated and the multinational force comprising US, French, and Italian forces who had taken the responsibility of the safety of

Palestinian civilians withdrew their forces by 10th September 1982. However, the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, the leader of the Maronite Lebanese forces, on 14 September 1982, a day after his inauguration as president by the backing of Israel and US instigated revenge attack by Phalangists against the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatilla under Israeli occupation, killing hundreds of Palestinians. This incident prompted the arrival of the new Multi National Force (MNF) back to Lebanon. However on 23 October 1983 two trucks loaded with TNT hit the US and French barracks in Beirut, killing 241 US and 59 French personnel (Wood, 1998).

This specific attack and following increasing insurgency attacks against Israel forces culminated in the withdrawal of MNF forces from Lebanon in early 1984 and the partial withdrawal of Israel by January 1985 (Mowles, 1986). The ultimate withdrawal of Israel, after 18 years of occupation, took place in May 2000 as a result of increasingly effective guerrilla campaign that inflicted heavy Israeli casualties (Bartell & Gray, 2012). Between 1991 and 2000, Syria was reportedly involved in unsuccessful US-brokered peace talks with Israel to regain the Golan Heights in exchange for peace and the recognition of Israel (Goodarzi, 2013).

Having looked into historical issues, we can see that a number of things key to US security interests and had implications for the international order: securing Israel's existence in the region; curtailing Soviet economic and military influence, particularly over Syria; stemming Syrian clout over Lebanon, thus sustaining extremely fragile balances in Lebanon; and hindering Syria's support to extremist/terrorist groups targeting US and coalition forces in Iraq.

Conclusion

Positive US-Libya relations maintained between 1951 and 1969 were followed by nearly three decades of strained relations until the late 1990s when US sanctions seriously hurt and pressured Libya to take tangible steps toward the normalisation of bilateral relations. During the period of intensively strained relations, the US had three significant military confrontations with the Libyan regime, resulting in the US downing Libyan aircraft and sinking ships in the Mediterranean Sea, and US aircraft hitting targets in Tripoli and Benghazi. The Qaddafi regime's counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation with the US after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and its signing up to the Chemical Weapon Convention to dismantle its WMD program culminated in the US removing Libya from the state sponsors of terrorism list and normalising relations. However, even after the relationship started to normalise, in the memories of the US public the Libyan regime was mostly remembered for its role in promoting terrorism, particularly its involvement in the bombing of Pam Am. It was not a coincidence that President Obama referred to both Qaddafi's use of terrorism as a political weapon and necessity to secure dangerous material after his death in 2011.

The main contentious issue between the US and Syria had been the Syrian regime's confrontation with Israel and its support of anti-Israeli groups, which led to the US government putting Syria onto the State Sponsor of Terrorism list in 1979. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Syria and Iran shared a similar threat perception against the US, which pushed them to coordinate efforts to fuel an insurgency in Iraq against US forces and to establish a facilitation network through its porous border with Iraq. Continuous Syrian cooperation with Iran and support to Hezbollah as being a transit route for Iranian arms transfers and suspected Syrian regime complicity in killing of Lebanese prime minister in 2005, who had been critical of Syrian troops in

Lebanon, were among other contentious issues that negatively influenced bilateral relations.

Thus, when the Arab Spring uprisings started, the US had a gradually improving and relatively better relations with the Qaddafi regime in contrast to the Assad regime, which was still on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. The US response, taking into consideration only the historical relationships, presents an anomaly, where the US took a direct intervention decision against the Libyan regime in a very short time which culminated in regime change, while the US administration refrained consistently from direct military action against Syria despite a sustained negative trend in US-Syria relations for decades. This contradiction presents an important incentive to analyse the overarching international and domestic US dynamics that could have influenced US intervention calculations.

With that in mind, the following two chapters will be dedicated to the threats to US interests vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts and to US domestic constraints and incentives respectively.

Chapter 4 Threats to US Interests vis-à-vis Libya and Syria

Conflicts

The aim of this chapter is to establish the baseline expected US foreign policy decisions with regards to military intervention in the Libya and Syria conflicts so that it can be used as a benchmark for a deeper analysis of the influence of domestic factors or constraints (intervening variables) over the taken decisions. This is to gauge how intervening variables reinforce or cause deviation from the expected foreign policy decisions that are expected to be driven primarily by US interests and threats posed to those interests. An expected foreign policy decision is one that conforms with neo-realist assumptions of how the US would act, i.e. what we can understand as the US's national interest. In general, a 'high' and 'very high' level of threats posed against US interests is expected to trigger a combination of non-military and military intervention, while a 'low' and 'medium' threat level is anticipated to prompt non-military options instead of military ones, or even result in no intervention at all.

The expected US response, in line with Hypothesis 1 (H_1),⁴ will be checked against actual US foreign policy decisions. If the hypothesis is confirmed through the in depth analytical examination of Libya and Syria cases, that will reinforce the neorealist premises that foreign policy decisions are driven by national interests and threats to those interests. If H_1 does not hold for one or both of the cases this will provide clear evidence that neorealism doesn't always provide a full explanation for

⁴ H_1 : The US FPE take a decision to intervene militarily first and foremost in response to substantial threats to US interests representing the expected option for the US.

foreign policy decisions. That will in turn support and justify the utility of neoclassical realist explanations, which will be the focus of the next chapter (Chapter 5).

The threat to US national interests will be judged against the evidence available by assigning an appropriate threat level (low, medium, high, very high) in each national interest category (security, prosperity, values, and international order) for each specific episode designated for the analysis of Libya and Syria cases. (One episode for Libya and five episodes for Syria). Within those specific episodes a closer focus will be placed on catalytic moments that increased expectation for US military intervention: Qaddafi's threat to attack Benghazi; the August 2013 chemical weapon attack in Syria; and ISIL beheading US journalists in Syria.

As introduced by Walt in his balance of threat theory, offensive power or capability and intentions are two key parameters to gauge the extent of the threat posed to a nation (Walt, 1992). The following threat levels were adapted to use as a metric to identify the level of potential threat posed by state and non-state actors against US interests.

Low: Evidence and indicators of low to medium capability and low intention; or evidence and indicators of low capability and low to medium intention.

Medium: Evidence and indicators of high capability/low intention; medium capability/medium intention; low capability/ high intention.

High: Evidence of high capability/medium intention; medium capability/ high intention.

Very High: Evidence and indicators of high capability/high intention.

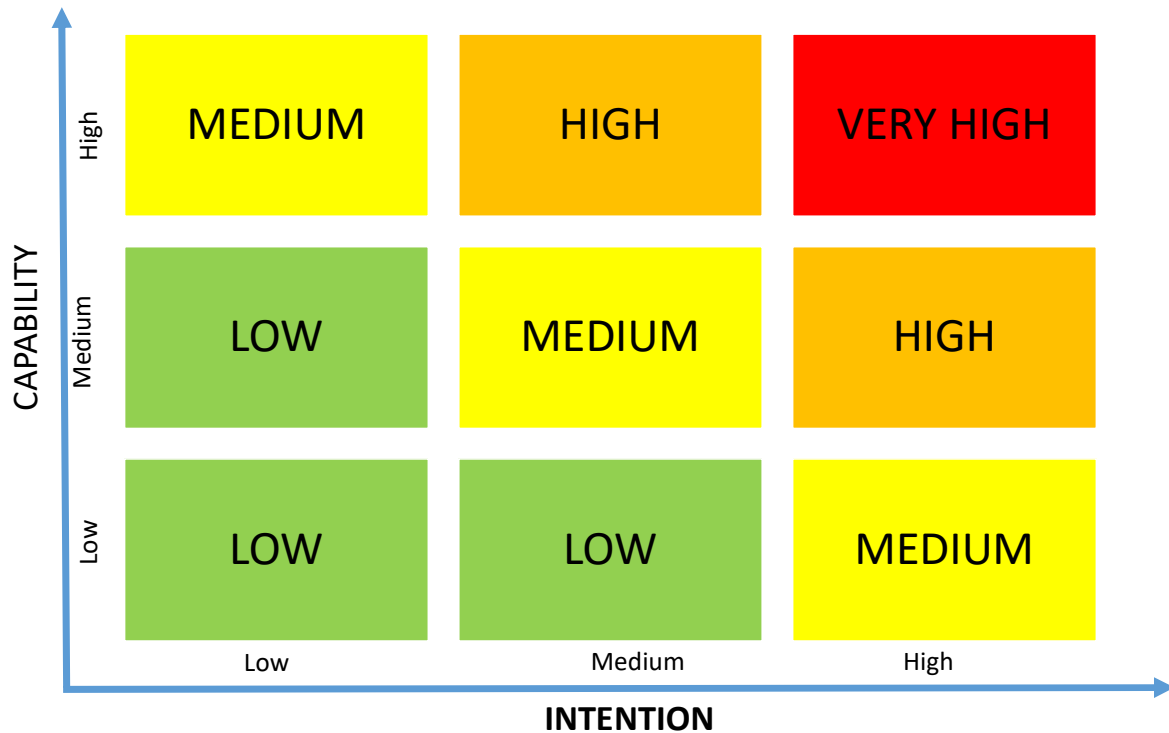


Figure 7 Threat Matrix based on Capability & Intention

The US National Security Strategy (NSS), dated February 2015 and endorsed by President Obama, outlines US national security interests under four categories (Obama, 2015a)⁵:

- **Security:** Addressing global terrorism threat and preventing the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction to ensure the security of the US, its citizens, allies and partners.
- **Prosperity:** Maintaining an open international economic system that promotes growing US economy, ensures free flow of commerce and energy security of US allies in Europe and elsewhere.

⁵ 2010 US National Security Strategy (NSS) dated May 2010 also lays out US national interests under the same categories stated in 2015 NSS.
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf,
 Accessed on 17 March 2015.

- **Values:** Defending peaceful democratic change and human rights against authoritarian states and support emerging democracies in the Arab world in the Middle East and North Africa, preventing mass killing of civilians (responsibility to protect civilians from mass atrocities)
- **International Order:** A rule-based international order that promotes peace and security through reinforcing, shaping, creating the rules, norms, and institutions.

In the NSS document particular US interests in the Middle East and North Africa are articulated as:

Dismantling terrorist networks, confront aggression against allies and partners, ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world, prevent the development, proliferation, or use of weapons of mass destruction, and promote peaceful and prosperous Middle East where democracy takes root and human rights are upheld (Obama, 2015a).

US interests in the Middle East and North Africa outlined in the NSS document were consistent with the core US interests articulated by President Obama in the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings. On 28 March 2011, President Obama underlined that the US had a strategic interest in preventing Qaddafi from killing his own people in Benghazi, which would drive thousands of additional refugees across Libya's borders, endanger transitions in Egypt and Tunisia and present violence as the best strategy to cling to power for other dictators in the region, and cripple the UN's credibility in upholding global peace and security (Obama, 2011d). On 19th May 2011 he defined US interests in the region as:

Countering terrorism and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons; securing the free flow of commerce and safe-guarding the security of the region; standing up for Israel's security and pursuing Arab-Israeli peace; ensuring stability of nations and the self-determination of individuals (Obama, 2011f).

Similarly, US interests in the Middle East were outlined by Philip Gordon, who served as Special Assistant to President Obama for the Middle East between 2013

and 2015, as maintaining stability and supporting friends and allies, preventing nuclear proliferation, defending human life, keeping sea lanes open to ensure free trade and making sure that oil continues to flow freely around the world in order to control global oil prices and preventing ISIL from having safe heavens (Gordon, 2015).

US interests articulated in policy documents were also consistently brought forward as common themes in the interviews I conducted. Those themes were: the promotion of democracy; the support to partners and friends with a particular focus on Israel, opposition and effort to contain terrorism; opposition to proliferation, and commercial access to the resources of the Middle East, particularly oil and natural gas (Interviewee 8, 2015). Thus, the main objective of this chapter will be to outline how those interests and threats shaped the optimal or expected US foreign policy decisions with regards to the Libya and Syria conflicts.

During the US Senate discussions in Congress on 14th March 2011, then Senator Joseph Lieberman outlined US national interests in Libya as: allowing the mass killing of civilians would devastate US's moral leadership image; letting Libya become a failed state would provide religious extremist groups safe heavens that they could exploit; defeat of the uprising by Qaddafi would encourage other dictators to use brutal violence to stop democratic protests; a protracted conflict and instability in Libya would negatively influence oil prices (Joe Lieberman, 2011).

Senator Howard Lawrence Berman also underscored that stemming the refugee flow from Libya and preventing Qaddafi from massacring civilians corresponded with US national interests. Additionally, he suggested that solidarity with NATO allies was an important US interest and that a refusal to help them would send a message that the US is not a dependable partner (Berman, 2011). Similarly, Senator Lindsey Graham noted that some NATO allies were supporting US efforts in

Afghanistan and so it was the US's turn to help those allies who had more interests at stake in Libya (Graham, 2011), implying the EU countries in close proximity to Libya. US Congressman Mike Rogers also indicated that preventing Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) from accessing chemical weapons and anti-aircraft weapons in Libya was in the US's national security interest (Rogers, 2011a).

Referring to Syria, Senator McCain explained that the US had strategic and geopolitical interests which took precedence over moral and humanitarian considerations. He explained why the US had to force Assad to give up power and why the stakes were higher in Syria than in Libya. The Syrian regime served as the main forward operating base of the Iranian regime and the collapse of Assad's regime would sever Hezbollah's lifeline to Iran, as Syria funnelled arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Syria also posed a direct threat to Israel, had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and materials, and sought to develop a nuclear weapons capability whilst serving as the primary gateway for foreign fighters who infiltrated Iraq and killed American troops (McCain, 2012).

Having briefly touched upon US interest in the Middle East, North Africa, Libya and Syria in this section I will look into threats facing US 'security' interests in both Libya and Syria in terms of: 1) power struggles and stability, 2) proliferation of weapons and terrorism, 3) preventing spread and use of weapons of mass destruction, and 4) refugee flow destabilising neighbours titles. The security threats will be followed by threat to prosperity, values, and International Order.

4.1 Threats to American Security

4.1.1 Libya

The US militarily intervened to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 by conducting initial strikes to gain air supremacy and implement a no-fly zone in Libya between 19th and 31st March 2011, under an operation dubbed Operation Odyssey Dawn. That operation continued under NATO command with the new operation code, NATO Operation Unified Protector, between 31st March and 31st October 2011. So, we would expect a perception of a high or very high threat that would be manifested in: security, prosperity, values, and international order domains; official documents; US Congressional speeches and discussions; and speeches made by the President and other key Foreign Policy Executives.

Security

As Arnold Wolfers points out, it is difficult to separate power and influence in international politics; nations strive to attain, maintain, or enhance coercive power and persuasive influence to ensure their security. Any change in relative power or influence of opponents urges a counter effort to restore the balance or outdo its opponents (Wolfers, 1962:103-104,123).

When Libya is considered within the context of what was going on in the wider regional dynamics, the outcome of the Libyan civil war was prominent for the potential change of balance of power and influence in the North Africa and Middle East region, with potential repercussions for regional stability. The interconnected uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East that started in Tunisia on 17th December 2010 resulted in the collapse of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's regime as he fled to Saudi Arabia on 14th January 2011. This event had a domino effect in Egypt which led to the transfer of power to the military on 11th February 2011 (Dalacoura, 2012). The rapid collapse

and the weakening of regimes during the Arab Spring resulted in a power vacuum in the region which fuelled rivalries between regional powers (Akpınar, 2015). Libya was the third country in a row to succumb, after Tunisia and Egypt, and the outcome of the Libya conflict would have broader complications for the wider region.

In contrast to Syria, which was supported by strong regional and global partners, Qaddafi had no influential allies; there was no major country capable of providing substantial economic, political or military support to the Qaddafi regime (Interviewee 2, 2015). All of Libya's neighbouring states were considered opponents of Qaddafi, and Qaddafi had substantially isolated himself prior the Arab Spring uprisings. Assad, by comparison, had managed to sustain strong and consistent backing from Russia, Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), Iraqi Shia militias, and the Iranian regime (Pack, 2015).

Contrary to the firm Russian stance on Syria, Russia had voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 1970, adopted on 26th February 2011, which condemned the use of lethal force against protestors in Libya, imposed sanctions on military and economic activities, and banned key figures in the Qaddafi regime from travelling abroad (UN, 2011a). However on 17th March 2011 Russia abstained from the vote for UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya, which authorised member states to take all necessary measures to protect civilians nationally or through regional organizations (UN, 2011b).

Libya was much more important for Italy and France, as they had significant energy interests in Libya (Interviewee 3, 2015). The US administration was pressured by France and Britain (Guerlain, 2014) to intervene in Libya as they saw the refugee influx as a threat to their security (Bellamy and Williams 2011). Libya served as a focal point connecting Africa to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea and as a transit route for migrants and weapons trafficking (Pack, 2015).

The importance of supporting allies when they feel the need had also been

reinforced by then Secretary of Defence Robert Gates in his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on 31 March 2011. He said that allies, particularly Britain and France, had assisted the US in Afghanistan, which was a vital security interest for the US administration. He saw that assisting Britain and France was in line with US interests (Gates, 2011b).

Power struggles and their implications for regional stability were not significant in the case of Libya, as it lacked allies and the capability to pose a viable threat. The stability in Libya was challenged after Qaddafi was toppled, as rival groups (Operation Dignity, Libya Dawn) were supported by distinct group of external actors, for various reasons. On the one hand, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia sided with Operation Dignity to counter Muslim Brotherhood⁶ and extremist groups in Libya, while Qatar, Sudan and Turkey supported Libya Dawn which is perceived as religiously oriented. On the other hand, France, US, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya's southern neighbours in the Sahel, including Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal were more preoccupied with the rising terrorist threat (Reeve, 2015). The structure of two blocks supporting rival political and armed groups inside Libya was reminiscent of Syrian civil war. However, at nascent phase of the Libya conflict all rebel groups and external actors had been unified against the Qaddafi regime.

Another dimension of security was the proliferation of weapons feeding conflicts and existing ungoverned spaces, which provide safe havens and breeding grounds for trans-regional terrorism. The lack of effective border controls in the Sahel region

⁶ The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 and has influenced other religiously oriented movements throughout the world. The group mixed political activism with charity work, and renounced violence in the 1970s and subscribed to democratic principles. MB seeks to introduce Islam into the political sphere and endorses the concept of political parties and participating in elections to integrate Islam into broader segments of the society. (See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12313405> and <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/what-is-salafism>)

facilitated the transfer of large quantities of weapons and ammunition from existing Libyan stockpiles, with experienced fighters exacerbating the already volatile security situation. It is believed that some of these weapons had been smuggled into the Sahel by returnees, in particular former fighters who had either been members of the Libyan regular army or mercenaries during the conflict (UN Security Council, 2012). The amount of weapons coming out of the Libyan conflict was unprecedented, with estimates suggesting that it was ten times greater than conflicts in Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan (Washington Post, 2013). A protracted conflict and a civil war in Libya would worsen the proliferation of weapons and result in empowering terrorist groups in the region. However, toppling Qaddafi was also not a remedy for that problem. The chaos that prevailed in the post Qaddafi period provided a more conducive environment for weapons proliferation.

With the end of the war in Libya, weapons used to topple Qaddafi spread far and wide across the Middle East and Africa. Following Qaddafi's demise, some Libyan fighters travelled to Syria to support the armed uprising and supplied weapons to rebels fighting against the Syrian regime (Doornbos, Harald and Moussa, 2013).

Other significant destinations for fighters and munitions were Mali and the Sinai Peninsula. The Malian combatants who had fought for Qaddafi, fled back home with weapons at the end of 2011 and formed a powerful Tuareg-led rebel group in the region known as the Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA). On 22 March 2012, disgruntled Malian soldiers, upset about lack of support, staged a coup d'état, overthrowing the elected government (Flood, 2012).

Historically, weapons entered the Sinai Peninsula from Sudan, in the south. The conflict in Libya created entirely new smuggling routes to Sinai (Gold, 2013). Sinai Peninsula's location on the frontier between Africa and the Middle East makes it an

ideal location for arms sales. The looted weapons from Libyan stockpiles arrived in the Sinai Peninsula in late 2011 as militant factions took advantage of newer weapons (Ditz, 2013). The Sinai Peninsula has since the fall of the Mubarak regime, also seen the emergence of new armed groups fighting against the Egyptian authorities. In that period, the Egyptian authorities conducted operations against these groups and seized multiple cargos that included anti-aircraft machine guns, mortars and MANPADs near the border with Libya and in the volatile Sinai Peninsula. (Washington Post, 2013)

Addressing global terrorism threats was another significant dimension in both Libya and the Syrian conflicts. Potential safe havens created as a result of the ungoverned spaces in Libya and Syria for terrorists, battle hardened foreign fighters returning to home countries in the region and gradually increasing extremist trends among Libya and Syria opposition have been a constant concern for US and western allies.

By the early 2000s, the Libyan regime had renounced terrorism and effectively targeted terrorist groups in Libya, which was later praised by the US administration (S. G. Jones, 2014). Qaddafi had decisively opposed Al Qaeda (AQ) and cooperated with the West on security matters. However, the destabilization caused by the civil war that started in February 2011 provided a window of opportunity to Al Qaeda to exploit the vulnerabilities in the region. Although Al Qaeda members that fought against Qaddafi were in the minority, the vacuum created by the lack of cohesion in the political and military domain in the post-Qaddafi era enabled AQ affiliated groups to expand (Larémont, 2011). After the overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi, the number of Salafi extremists increased in Libya. In particular, the establishment of Ansar al-Sharia Libya

in 2012 highlights the emergence of Salafi extremists in the country (S. G. Jones, 2014).

Potential Ansar al Sharia involvement in the terrorist attack that took place on 11 September 2012 on the US Consulate in Benghazi, killing four Americans, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens (Joscelyn, 2014), was a contentious topic discussed both in the media and the US Congress. The vast stores of weapons, coupled with a weak state structure and hundreds of battle hardened militias created a conducive environment for extremist groups (Chivvis & Liepman, 2013).

During the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the Benghazi attack that killed US Ambassador Stevens, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton mentioned that heavily armed militants carried out a terrorist attack at US consulate in Benghazi without referring to AQ (H. Clinton, 2013). However, during the hearing, Senator John McCain argued that “the attacks were conducted by people who were at least connected to Al Qaeda” (McCain, 2013). Ambassador Christopher Stevens had served as deputy chief of mission in Tripoli from 2007 to 2009 and special representative to the Libyan National Transitional Council from March 2011 to November 2011 before he became the first Ambassador to Libya in May 2012 after the fall of the Qaddafi regime. (Feinstein, 2012)

Hillary Clinton also drew attention to the MANPADs and other dangerous weapons mostly coming out of Libya and onto the black markets. These weapons were seized by militias and made their way into other countries in the region, including Syria. She stated that Algerian and the Malian remnants of AQIM acquired weapons from Libya. (H. Clinton, 2013)

Proliferation of weapons and terrorism during the Libyan conflict constituted a significant threat to US interests in the region. It can be argued that preventing

proliferation of weapons and terrorism factored into the US calculations for intervention, as a protracted civil war would attract more extremist groups into Libya from other countries and, in light of the porous borders that accompany civil war environments, weapon smuggling would be difficult to control. It is plausible to think that this concern was projected forward by the US administration and elites and was eventually factored into the formulation of the US response to curb or control the proliferation of weapons and terrorism by an early intervention. However, the unilateral US and following NATO intervention, coupled with the power struggle among Libyan rebels and rivalry in external support, made the situation worse. In particular, MANPADs became a significant threat for both military and civilian aviation in the region. Safe havens created in Libya and Syria became a breeding ground for trans-regional terrorism, constituting great threat to the people of the Middle East and US citizens, personnel and facilities.

Preventing the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction was also a significant component of US security interests globally, and Libya was an important element in that regard too. President Obama had promised in his presidential campaign speech to 'lead a global effort to secure all loose nuclear materials around the world' (Obama, 2008a).

One of the US's foremost security interests was to prevent the use and proliferation of chemical weapons. In the case of Libya, Qaddafi had agreed to give up its WMD programme in 2004 (Bahgat, 2008). However, the fact that the Arab Spring uprisings had started the residual chemical weapon capacity and delivery means in Libya was a source of concern for both European countries and the US, since they could easily end up in the hands of extremists groups as, according to the OPCW, the

Qaddafi regime had 10 tons (out of an original 25 tons) of mustard gas left when the uprisings started (Spencer, 2011).

While Libya became part of the Chemical Weapon Convention in 2004 and agreed to give up its WMD programme, the residual capability consisting of chemical agents and delivery means constituted a threat to the US, since the regime could use it as a last resort or they could end up in the hands of extremists groups at the outset of the conflict. The significance of the WMD threat in Libya was revealed by the first move of the US and allied forces; they secured those capabilities as soon as the Libya intervention started.

The last dimension of security interests were the refugees and the destabilising effect an increase in refugees would have on neighbouring countries. The flow of foreign workers and mercenaries from Libya back into their originating countries and refugees/immigrants moving into neighbouring countries (predominantly Egypt and Tunisia) and into Europe had substantial destabilising effects during the Libya conflict.

Since Libya was so close to some of the US's European partners, such as Italy (which is just across the Mediterranean), the US administration was also concerned of potential security risks to Europe (Interviewee 4, 2015). The main US fear was that if Libya continued to destabilise, tens of thousands of refugees would continue to pour towards European borders (Interviewee 7, 2015)

Before the uprising, Libya had been a destination for African migrants, enticed by the country's oil-rich economy, as well as refugees fleeing conflict and persecution in other neighbouring African countries. Qaddafi also employed significant number of mercenaries from sub-Saharan Africa in his army (Wheeler, William and Oghanna, 2011). There are conflicting figures for the number of mercenaries who fought with Qaddafi's army. However, Western sources suggest that Qaddafi recruited up to

10,000 African mercenaries, predominantly from Sudan, Chad, Mali and Niger, to fight in Libya against the rebels (Plaut, 2011). The International Federation of Human Rights' estimate was 6,000, whereas Human Rights Solidarity gave an estimate of 30,000 (Balde, 2011).

While the refugee flow mainly influenced Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Tunisia (Zoubir & Rózsa, 2012), thousands of people also departed from Libya for Italy as well (Wheeler, William and Oghanna, 2011). The massive influx of returnees and refugees negatively affected the receiving countries, with their already strained social structures and limited resources (UN Security Council, 2012).

The refugees and immigrants fleeing from both the Libyan and Syrian conflicts and the wider regional instability constituted a significant threat to Europe. In Libya, quick enforcement of a no fly zone and targeting of Libyan armed forces was the expected US option to increase the security of the Libyan people. However, contrary to expectations, as the intervention could not bring stability in Libya the number of migrants attempting to cross Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy, Malta and Greece from Libya's coast increased gradually.

Prosperity

While bilateral trade with Libya or Syria was not a primary interest for the US, ensuring free flow of commerce and energy security of US allies, particularly European partners, is a significant US interest in the region.

After Qaddafi's decision in 2003 to dismantle his WMDs and downgrade his long range missile capability, gradual improvements in US-Libya bilateral trade were noticeable. Trade has been mainly based on crude oil and petroleum product and

equipment imports from Libya; in 2010, before the US intervened militarily, US exports and imports to and from Libya accounted for 665.5 million and 2.1168 billion USD respectively (US Census Bureau, 2015).

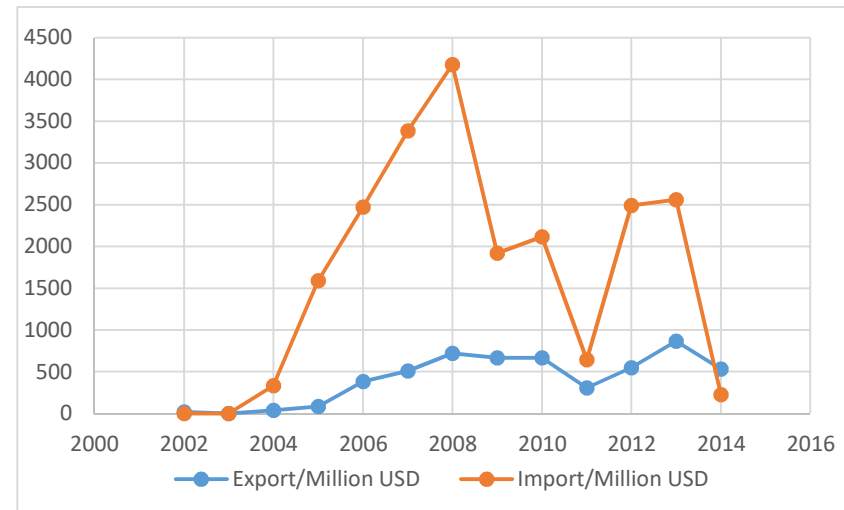


Figure 8 US Trade in Goods with Libya, US Census Bureau

Crude oil and petroleum products from Libya in 2010 totalled 25,595,000 barrels (eia, 2015a), which constituted 0.5 % of US's total crude oil imports. On the other hand, before 2011, European countries received 85% of Libya's crude exports. In that context, while Libyan oil seemed not to be crucial for the US, it was important for multiple European countries, including: Ireland, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, France, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Britain and Germany (ChinaAfricaRealstory.com, 2011).

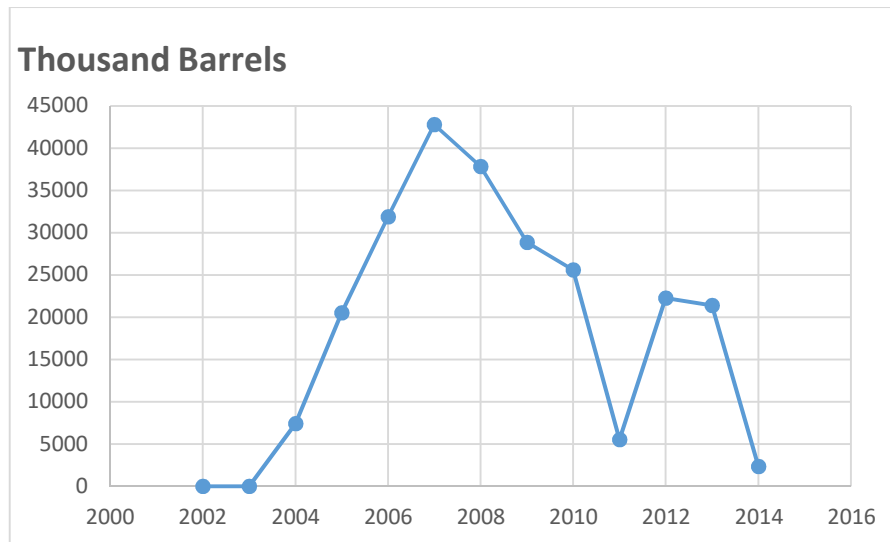


Figure 9 US Imports from Libya of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products, US Energy Information Administration

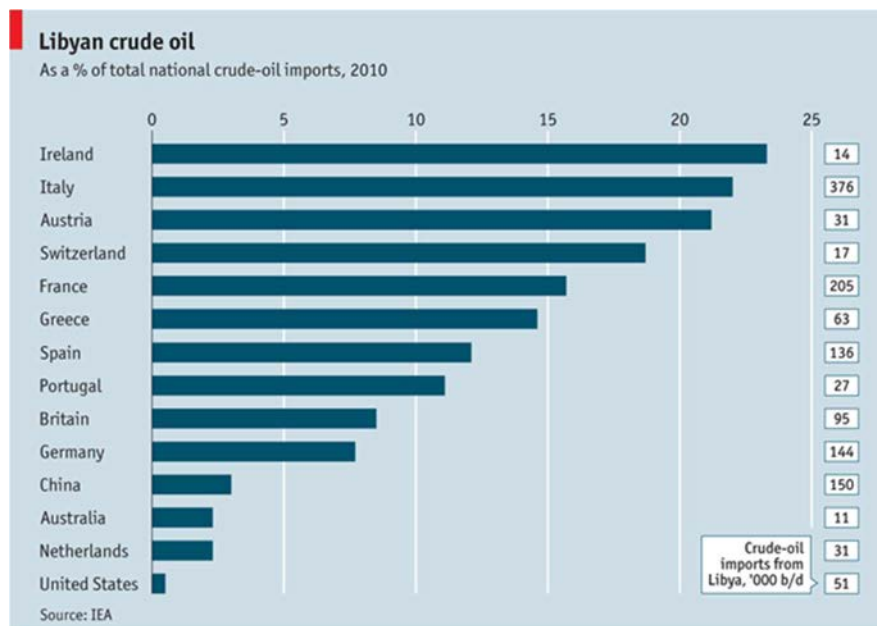


Figure 10 China's Oil Imports from Libya, ChinaAfricaRealstory.com

On the other hand, Libyan oil and gas was more important for European partners like France and the UK, and the disruption of the global oil supply and the consequent rise in oil prices (Zoubir & Rózsa, 2012) was also important for the US to stabilise prices at home. In general, there is a constant US interest in stable markets in oil

supplies (Interviewee 2, 2015). So, in Libya, significant oil and natural gas resources were important incentives for the US to stabilise the country (Interviewee 7, 2015). The potential threat to Libyan oil and gas infrastructure stemming from a protracted conflict and AQ and ISIL affiliated group's capturing and profiting from captured oil infrastructure was a threat to the US and EU and had potential implications for global oil and gas prices.

Values

The conflict in Libya was also a challenge for other US interests, such as advocating democracy and upholding human rights. The US viewed both uprisings, likewise the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, as an opportunity to establish democracy in those countries.

Just before the Libya intervention, Anne-Marie Slaughter of the *New York Times* argued that it was in the US's strategic interests to transform autocratic regimes in the region into accountable governments which could consequently decrease support for terrorist groups and violent extremism (Slaughter, 2011).

During the Senate hearing on the Benghazi attacks, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton mentioned that instability and terrorism would not fade away unless democratic institutions were established in the Middle East and North Africa (H. Clinton, 2013). As the successful regime changes in Egypt and Tunisia set precedents in the region, the Libya and the Syria conflicts were perceived as an extension of ongoing, inevitable change in the region. As the revolutions were regarded as the will of the region's people for democracy and freedom against long-lasting autocratic

regimes, the US felt obliged to choose “the right side of the history” (Tziarras, 2015). Siding with the revolution was a tough decision and major shift for the US in the region as the Tunisian and Egyptian autocratic regimes were allies of the US. However, the US often supported the push for democracy and economic freedom, which were in its long term interests (Interviewee 2, 2015).

President Obama characterised Qaddafi’s action against the rebellion as a war against his own people where he said:

In Libya, we saw the prospect of imminent massacre, we had a mandate for action, and heard the Libyan people’s call for help. Had we not acted along with our NATO allies and regional coalition partners, thousands would have been killed (Obama, 2011f).

During the House Armed Services Committee testimony Robert Gates linked the prosperity and security of the US to Middle East by saying:

Security and prosperity of the US is linked to the security and prosperity of the broader Middle East. I believe it was American national interest as part of a multinational coalition with broad international support to prevent a humanitarian crisis in eastern Libya that could have destabilised the entire region at a delicate time. What happens in Libya is in our interest, what happens in Middle East is in our vital interest. What is going on in Libya has an impact on the region. Qaddafi unrestrained could have had negative effect on democratic revolution that are taking place across the region. (Gates, 2011b)

During an interview just after the intervention commenced in Libya Hillary Clinton advocated the intervention decision by saying:

Imagine we were sitting here and Benghazi had been overrun, a city of 700,000 people, and tens of thousands of people had been slaughtered, hundreds of thousands had fled and, either with nowhere to go or overwhelming Egypt while it's in its own difficult transition. And we were sitting here, the cries would be, why did the United States not do anything? Why -- how could you stand by when, you know, France and the United Kingdom and other Europeans and the Arab League and your Arab partners were saying you've got to do something. (H. Clinton, 2011)

Similarly, Secretary of Defence Robert Gates answered a question asking why US intervened in Libya but not Syria by saying:

The engagement of the Arabs, the engagement of the Europeans, the general humanitarian question that was at stake. You've had revolutions on both the East and the West of Libya. Egypt and Tunisia. So you had a potentially significantly destabilizing event taking place in Libya that put at risk potentially the revolutions in both Tunisia and Egypt (Gates, 2011c).

During a Senate Armed Services Committee testimony on 29th March 2011 dual hatted US European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) drew historical parallels between Benghazi and the Srebrenica Massacre. He said, Benghazi looked as it was going to fall and potentially will have a similar scenario like Srebrenica, based on the statements of Qaddafi and his son. He highlighted the fact that the imminent possibility of a massive slaughter in Benghazi catalysed NATO decisions about intervention, coupled with its proximity to Europe, potential mass migration, and destabilisation in Egypt (Stavridis, 2011).

The clear objective put forward by the US in defending peaceful democratic change in the region and preventing mass killing of civilians and the displacement of people in the region required the use of both non-military and military intervention elements within the intervention spectrum to sustain US values and global moral leadership.

International Order

The elite perception that the US occupied a leading position in the international system and had a responsibility to enforce international law places an extra burden to act commensurate with that position. The primary challenges to the international order during the Libya and Syria conflicts were the relevance of the UN as a guarantor of peace and security, responsibility to protect as a developing norm and sustaining the

norms on chemical weapons. The basic ordering principle of international relations since 1648 has been the primacy of the sovereign state. The contemporary consensus requires UNSC authorisation for humanitarian intervention, the definition of which is “the threat or use of force by a state, group of states, or international organization primarily for the purpose of protecting the nationals of the target state from widespread deprivations of internationally recognized human rights” (Goodman, 2006).

However, the failures of the UNSC to act in Rwanda and Kosovo (in 1994 and 1999 respectively) had a major impact on normative debate about intervention for humanitarian purposes. In this respect, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS)’s report on “The Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) promoted the idea that sovereign states have the responsibility to protect their own citizens from massacre, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and starvation. If states are unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibility, or the state itself is the one perpetrating these atrocities against its own population, then the wider international community should authorise intervention (ICISS, 2001). That normative shift brings about flexibility for military intervention outside the scope of UNSC approval and in practice translates into a ‘responsibility to intervene’ for the international community to end the violence of intrastate conflicts (Woodward, 2007). So, R2P is perceived as justification for intervention outside of the UN framework in case UNSC permanent members exercise veto power to block resolution for intervention. The idea is to have an alternate tool in case the UNSC fails to act, in case of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

R2P conceives human rights violations as a threat to international peace and security, as declared in Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Intervention in another state for the purpose of protecting individuals against gross violations of human rights is seen

as legitimate and necessary (Bin Talal & Schwarz, 2013). R2P underlines that the state sovereignty cannot be viewed in absolutist terms as an obstacle to international action if states fail to protect their population (Cottey, 2008).

Interpretation and Analysis

For the Libya case, the episode encompasses the February to October 2011 timeframe, which corresponds with the time between the start of the uprising and the end of the NATO operation in the country. From the perspective of the '**security**' interest from the regional and global power struggle, Libya was, on the one hand, not supported by influential regional and global partners, which could have destabilised the region further. On the other hand, the conflict did not have a sectarian angle, unlike Syria. With regards to the proliferation of weapons and terrorism, the creation of ungoverned spaces in Libya and smuggling of weapons as a result of protracted conflict was a significant concern for the US. However, that exclusively took place after the intervention started and was completed. Even though Qaddafi had taken a firm stance against extremists in Libya and cooperated with the US on security matters before the Arab Spring, the destabilization caused by the civil war provided a window of opportunity for extremists. In preventing the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction, Qaddafi had cooperated with the US and destroyed a significant portion of its chemical weapon capability before the Libyan uprising. However, the residual capability and the delivery means posed risks in the region and was a source of concern for both European countries and the US. Finally, the flow of foreign workers and mercenaries from Libya back into their originating countries and refugees and immigrants moving into neighbouring (predominantly Egypt and Tunisia) and EU countries had substantial destabilising effects. Overall threat posed to US security

interests could be assessed to be 'medium', but that threat perception was augmented to '**high**' because of the European allies' heightened threat considerations due to Libya's proximity.

When it comes to the '**prosperity**' domain, while Libyan oil and gas was more important for European partners, a disruption of the global oil supply and a consequent rise in oil prices was significant concern for the US. However, that did not pose a direct threat to the US, so the overall threat posed by the Libyan conflict to US 'prosperity' interests was assessed to be '**medium**'.

When it comes to '**values**', the US strongly felt the need to be on the right side of history and support the establishment of democracy in Libya as part of long term strategy to decrease violent extremism in the region. A potential mass killing in Benghazi and risks of inaction would threaten the credibility of the global US moral leadership. So the overall threats to US values are assessed to be '**very high**' in Libya.

Finally, upholding international norms and particularly preventing the Qaddafi regime killing its own people was a primary driver in the context of the '**responsibility to protect**'. So, the threat to international norms was assessed to be '**very high**' in the Libya conflict.

	Threat to US Interests in Libya				
	Security-stability	Prosperity	Values	International Norm	Overall
Phase 1	High	Medium	Very High	Very High	High

Table 1 Threat to US Interests in Libya

So, because of a combination of shared security considerations with European partners and strong commitment for values and upholding international norms the

overall threat to US interests was high and the expected US foreign policy decision vis-à-vis Libya conflict was intervention against the Qaddafi regime. The evidence across the four domains confirm that a neorealist explanation focusing on national interest and threats to those interests holds, as the US intervened militarily in Libya conflict. This confirms the validity of H₁.

If this explanation were true across the cases, it would also need to explain the non-intervention in Syria. Consequently, in the non-intervention scenario in Syria we would expect to see a much lower US threat perception relative to Libya. If that is not the case and the threat perceptions were in fact high and very high, both in relation to the indicators and in comparison with Libya, then this will prove neorealism doesn't deliver a full explanation and the necessity for neoclassical explanations to fill the analytical gap.

4.1.2 Syria

The threats to US security interests in Syria will be analysed in a similar way to those in Libya by focusing on: power struggle; proliferation of weapons and terrorism; preventing the spread and use of WMDs; and the destabilising effect of refugees in the region. That will be followed by threats to prosperity, values and international order.

The multidimensional power struggle manifested itself in Syria and led to a Cold War era type of bloc structure; a Western alliance formulated on the basis of the Assad threat while a counter alliance was formed against the threat of a potential US intervention in Syria. That had been preceded by US troop withdrawals from Iraq in 2011, leading to further strengthening of a Shia front led by Iran. Russia and China, both of whom favoured limiting US influence in the Middle East, backed the Shia front while Turkey and Saudi Arabia also saw this as an opportunity to increase their sphere

of influence in the region. All those developments overlapped with US policy to pivot its attention to Asia-Pacific region because of China (Tziarras, 2015).

In this section I will focus on Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel and Russia as potential influencers of US policy in the region.

Iran

The most significant change in the region before the uprisings of the Arab Spring was the favourable environment created in the region for Iran after the collapse of hostile regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively. (Juneau, 2015,p.1,7)

Whether Iran has yet become a regional power or not is still debatable, however it is beyond doubt that it has increased its clout in the region over the years. Both the US military intervention in Afghanistan that ended the Taliban rule and the overthrow of Iran`s arch enemy Saddam Hussein resulted in an amplified Iranian influence in the region (Bardají, 2016). Morady argues that key to Iran`s success in becoming a regional power is down to it having access to nuclear weapon capability and does not see Iran`s geostrategic location, economic and military strength, and hydrocarbon energy resources alone as sufficient enough to bring about such an outcome (Morady, 2011).

After the toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Syrian-Iranian relations were strengthened as a result of shared concern at being the next target for regime change, as both countries were on the US “State Sponsors of Terrorism” list (Gelbart, 2010).

The replacement of a Sunni regime under Saddam Hussein with a Shia dominated government in Iraq resulted in a significant shift of power in the region at the expense of US and its regional allies. Dramatic expansion of Iranian power and

influence in the region coupled with its nuclear ambitions posed an existential threat to Israel and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)⁷ member countries. Iranian influence was also seen in Syria and Lebanon, where Iran has had close cooperation with Assad's regime and Hezbollah respectively (Kessler, 2008).

At the nascent phase of the Arab Spring uprisings, Iran was supportive of rebellions against the autocratic regimes in the Middle East calculating that toppling anti-Iranian regimes and reducing the US footprint in the region would translate into expanded Iranian influence. However, as the Syrian uprising started, Iran changed its rhetoric and provided full support to the Assad regime which strained Iranian relations with Arab League countries and Turkey (Bleek & Stein, 2012).

Iran has substantially influenced the conflict in Syria since its onset. Iranian armed forces and intelligence organisations have advised and trained Syrian security services, provided material and intelligence support, and mobilised its Shia proxies in Lebanon and Iraq in support of the Assad regime. These moves were of critical importance in helping Assad retain his grip on power, especially as Assad diverted regime resources to secure western Syria, and Damascus, and consequently lost ground in eastern and northern Syria during the summer of 2012. Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) forces and IRGC Quds Forces provided an advisory and assistance mission to consolidate Assad's power in central and southern Syria and supported Assad's counterinsurgency operations against armed opposition in order to restore control throughout the country. LH's intervention in Syria in February 2013, with direct combat support alongside Iranian forces, was also instrumental in

⁷ A political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gulf-Cooperation-Council>

sustaining the Syrian regime (Fullton, Holliday, & Wyer, 2013). As the unrestrained Iranian support to Syria against Sunni armed opposition groups portrayed the conflict more as a sectarian based struggle, Syria turned into a battle front between Shia and Sunni powers or proxies. Saudi Arabia led GCC countries who were anxious about increasing Iranian regional influence threw their full support behind the anti-regime opposition while the Iran-Iraq-LH axis supported Assad. As a consequence, a mirror image of divided regional powers was reflected in the divided opposition, with respective backers and their priorities that further protracted the conflict. Within that equation Iran could not risk leaving Syria under the control of any Sunni dominated pro-western rebels, nor to the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) at later stages (Akbarzadeh, 2015) which would significantly harm Iranian regional interests.

What makes the Assad regime so crucial for Iran? That question can be better explained within the broader Middle East context. It can be argued that Iran's major concern is not even the collapse of the Assad regime itself but more so its replacement with either a moderate or extremist Sunni regime allied with Saudi Arabia, which would staunchly oppose Iran and its Shi'a politics. An integral part of that concern is losing its major conduit for Iranian weapon and material support to Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has been reinforced by constant Syrian and Iranian support since the 2006 Lebanon conflict (Goodarzi, 2013). Iran also sees Syria as a counterweight against Sunni regimes in the region and even highly likely contemplated the possibility of the collapse of Assad and creation of an Alawite-led mini-state in western Syria (P. Jones, 2013), which would retain Iranian influence in the region and sustain its reach to LH. Maintaining LH links through Syria not only provides Iran leverage against Israel but also means Iran remains a major player in the region, with its indirect reach to the Mediterranean.

When LH participated in the Syrian conflict, Al Nusra Front and ISIL attacks inside Lebanon increased, the aim of which was to intimidate LH and put pressure on the Lebanese government and army to curb the involvement of LH. The car bombs and suicide attacks began in June 2013 targeting Beirut and Tripoli, mainly LH and Iranian targets, and continued in 2014, inflicting hundreds of casualties (US Department of State, 2014).

From the US perspective, at the nascent phase of the conflict, removing Syria, a strategic player in the anti-Western front in the Middle East, from 'axis of evil' would reduce regional Iranian power and influence. However, the red lines drawn by Russia and Iran aiming to ensure the survival of the Assad regime constituted very strong deterrence for the US and other western countries to get involved in Syria directly (Tziarras, 2015).

Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the US sided with the majority of Sunni states against Iran. However the recent developments in the region caused the US to reconsider the sectarian balance of power in the region and question the policy of Sunni support over the years (Interviewee 3, 2015). In particular, the ISIL treat that engulfed the whole region and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA), signed in Vienna in July of 2015 and which aimed to curtail Iran acquiring nuclear weapon capability, influenced Washington-Tehran relations (Devine, 2015) and resulted in a more cautious and balanced US response to Syria crisis.

Israel

The importance of Iran, Syria and LH cannot be fully comprehended without looking into the Israeli dimension. The situation in Syria affects US interests through the conflict's direct bearing on the security of the US's most important regional partner, Israel. Israel perceived the Arab Spring uprisings and status quo change in the Middle East through the collapse of Arab regimes as a significant threat to its own security and the US took the Israeli position seriously. Israel's threat perception was three-fold: the collapse of secular status quo governments who recognized Israel as a state; the emergence of religiously oriented parties as major political victors through democratic elections with a constituency deeply resentful against Israel and enthusiastic to change the status quo; and, lastly, a decreased US footprint in the Middle East and increasing cooperation among Arab countries (Morton & Shortt, 2012).

Israel was particularly concerned about the regional implications and change in the balance of power in the region that might potentially increase Saudi Arabia and/or Turkey's influence in Damascus and in the wider region or, more alarmingly, Muslim Brotherhood domination in Syria (Carpenter, 2013).

The presence of extremist groups, particularly in south western Syria, and the transfer of advanced weapon systems from Syria to Hezbollah, especially long range surface to surface missiles and rocket launchers, or advanced air defence systems were two other main security concerns for Israel during the Syrian conflict, which prompted Israel to conduct targeted air strikes on numerous occasions. However, Israel avoided taking sides and focused on protecting its security interests. Israel thought that a protracted conflict between its longstanding foe Assad and the opposition, which it deemed extremist-dominated, would weaken both sides and that that would serve its security interests better (T. Juneau, 2015). Exhaustion of all

regional state and non-state actors in Syria serves Israel's interests, which could lead to a partition along sectarian or ethnic lines and result in an unstable political system that posed no threat to any of its neighbours. In that respect, terrorism started helping the reformulation of the alliance structure in the region (Kahf, 2016)

Russia

With the US entrenched in Afghanistan and Iraq, proliferation of Russian advanced weapon systems and know-how transfer to Iran and Syria (ballistic missile technology, air defence systems, and combat aircraft) over the years solidified the alliance among those nations and changed the balance of capability regionally before the Arab Spring uprisings. That also provided Russia political leverage and reinforced the Russian client state status of Syria and Iran (Trofino & Nemets, 2009). Since the onset of the Syria conflict, external support provided by Russia and Iran was critical for regime stability and survival. Russia saw the power vacuums created in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 as an opportunity to come back into the game of foreign policy and geopolitics (Interviewee 7, 2015) Mordechai Chaziza described Russian and Chinese counterbalancing efforts as soft balancing, which aims to undermine and impose additional cost on US foreign policy choices. As both Russia and China was under the impression that the US violated the terms of the UNSC resolution 1973 on Libya, they threw their full support behind the Syrian regime to prevent another western intervention that would strengthen US hegemony and weaken Iran in the region (Chaziza, 2014). As the US's arch-rival, Russia's main effort revolved primarily around two fronts: providing diplomatic shield for Syria to prevent any type of military intervention from western powers and supplying the Assad regime with arms to turn

the tide on the battle ground in favour of the regime in its struggle against armed opposition groups.

In addition to Russia's firm stance at the UNSC against any action that threatens and aims to weaken the Syrian regime, Russia also disregarded an Arab League decision to impose sanctions and did not follow mainstream Arab criticism of the Assad regime (Allison, 2013). These two main issues differentiated the Russian posture in the Libya and Syria conflicts.

An important question to ask is why Russia placed greater importance on the survival of the Syrian regime relative to Libya and how these efforts affected the policy choices of the US? Russia's stance can be attributed primarily to geopolitical considerations and resistance against Western interventions.

US-led interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya led Russia to adopt a more active stance against any Western military interventions (Charap, 2013). Russia strongly condemned regime change in Libya, which was not covered under UNSC Resolution 1973. This was one of the factors that influenced Russia's policy towards the West's pursuits of regime change in Syria.

Russia opposes the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P) and the western interpretation of human rights, fearing that it was used as an excuse to change regimes in pursuit of geopolitical goals (Bagdonas, 2012).

Moreover, Russian support in the economic and military domain was also vital for the Syrian regime. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIRPI), Russia provided 48% of Syria's military hardware imports during 2006-2010, which mainly consisted of air defence systems and anti-ship missiles (Wezeman, 2013). Between 2007 and 2011 Russia's share was 78%, which points to a significant increase in 2011 (Bagdonas, 2012). Russia's constant support to arming

the Syrian regime since the outset of the conflict in 2011 helped Assad to sustain his hold on the country. In the energy sector, despite Syria's limited oil and gas resources, Russian oil and gas companies had taken part in the exploration of natural resources as well as the building of Syria's infrastructure (Allison, 2013; Bagdonas, 2012).

Other dimensions of Russian-Syrian cooperation are military privileges for Russian forces and intelligence sharing. The Tartus naval facilities on the Syrian coast and electronic eavesdropping post in Latakia gave Russia leverage to oversee any activity on the Mediterranean Sea, as well as providing it a base in the Middle East. The Tartus naval facility was primarily used by Russia for supply and maintenance purposes and enabled Russian fleets to refuel in the Mediterranean without returning to their Black Sea bases. Despite its limited support function, Tartus reinforced Russian geopolitical influence and geostrategic reach to the Middle East (Allison, 2013; Bagdonas, 2012). In addition, Tartus proved to be critical for Syria during the course of the conflict as it facilitated a constant flow of supplies to the regime. Russia took the opportunity to alter the security balance in Middle East by deploying substantial weapon and air defence systems into Syria since 30th September 2015, particularly to Latakia and Tartus (Weinberger, 2016). This provided Russia leverage to influence any future security and political arrangement for Syria. Since then, the US had to take Russian military presence in the region into account and at some occasions inform and coordinate with Russian security establishments before taking action in Syria. Russia reportedly provided Syria additional aircraft, air defence systems and anti-tank weapons after 2011 to intimidate any western intervention as part of a contract signed in May 2010 (Saunders, 2014; Reuters, 2010).

Russia's main concern for Syria was the potential repercussions of regime collapse in Syria: regional chaos, proliferation of weapons, and spread of transnational

religious extremist groups. Russia perceived the conflict in Syria between a secular state and opposition predominantly seeking a state based on religion. The involvement of Chechen fighters in the Syrian conflict was alarming for Russia. The Chechens did not fight against Qaddafi in Libya, as the conflict did not have a sectarian characteristic in terms of a Shia-Sunni struggle (Allison, 2013).

From the US perspective, while fighting against terrorism seemed to be a converging interest between Russia and the US, increasingly assertive Russian Middle East policy, particularly that of Syria, in conjunction with stiffening solidarity among Russia, Iran and Syria was perceived by the US to run counter to its interests in the region. On the other hand, Russia and the US mostly disagreed on which groups within the Syrian opposition to designate as terrorists, except for ISIL, and direct Russian military engagement on 30th September 2015 revealed the significance of Syria for Russia in the Middle East and, to a certain extent, turned it into the site of a 'proxy U.S.-Russian conflict' (Stent, 2016).

The Middle East and Eastern Europe are seen as significantly contested regions between Russia and the US. It can be argued that both power's struggle to control and protect the strategic regions of vital interests played a key role in crafting their strategies and policies in both Syria and later Ukraine (particularly Crimea). Russia and the US supported opposite sides in both conflicts, one supporting the current government forces versus the rebels, and vice versa. On the one hand, curbing growing Russian influence, preventing Iran gaining more clout and finally ensuring Israel's security seemed to be the vital interests of the US. On the other hand, the Russian-Iranian-Syrian alliance was viewed as a significant threat to Sunni dominated pro-US allies in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE. (Simura, 2015)

Since Vladimir Putin came to power, Russia has espoused a zero-sum game policy; Russia has focused on rebuilding Russia's power and influence on the global scene at the expense of that of the US. That mentality revealed itself recently in Ukraine and Syria. Russia sized the opportunity in Syrian conflict to use it as a spring board to return to the Middle East as a significant power player.(Cornell, 2016)

The axis formed by Russia, Syria, Iran and Hezbollah forces with the obvious intention of diminishing US influence in the region and inflicting unacceptable costs upon a potential US intervention in Syria posed a significant threat to the US. The capability component of the threat is represented by sophisticated military and the intelligence collection capabilities Iran and Russia brought to the alliance; Iranian expanding power and influence in the region with nuclear weapon ambition; Syrian regime's long-term efforts to increase its deterrence by reinforcing its air defence and ballistic missile systems, and chemical weapon capability; and LH's ability to reach the US's regional allies. In Syria, confronting the Syrian-Iranian-Russian-Hezbollah alliance was in the US interest in the beginning of the conflict before the potential cost of intervention increased as the conflict protracted. A similar military intervention enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria, which would require air strikes against key regime targets and a targeting of the Syrian Air Force, providing close air support, lethal and non-lethal weapons to moderate opposition armed groups could have led to a regime change in Syria.

Lebanon

As a consequence of long lasting sectarian civil war (1975-1990), delicate executive power-sharing arrangements distributed political offices by sect, and the electoral system adopted sectarian quotas at the district level in Lebanon. The

Lebanese political parties' constituency are predominantly comprised of their respective sectarian background as well (Cammett, 2013).

Based on a US Commission on International Religious Freedom report, the Lebanon population consisted of 28% Sunni Muslim, 28% Shia Muslim, 22% Maronite Christian, 8% Greek Orthodox Christian, 6% Druze and 4% Greek Catholic before the mass refugee flow post-2011 (Minority Rights Group International, 2008)

Lebanon feared that regime change in Syria would destabilize its fragile ethnic and sectarian balance. Therefore, it supported the Syrian regime and voted against the suspension of Syria's Arab League membership and an imposition of economic sanctions. However, Lebanese domestic political actors and society does not represent a unified stance against Syria conflict (Küçükkeleş, 2012). The demonstrations against Syria's long lasting influence in Lebanese political life and military presence in Lebanon, known as the Cedar Revolution, were triggered by Rafik Hariri's assassination on 14th February 2005. As a result Lebanese society was divided sharply into two major blocks: March 8, a pro-Syria alliance established by Shia Amal Movement, Hezbollah and Christian-based Free Patriotic Movement; and March 14, an anti-Syrian alliance comprising Sunni (Rafiq Hariri's Future Movement), Druze and Maronite political movements (Knio, 2013). A similar division was reflected at the regional and global level as Syria and Iran backed March 8, and Saudi Arabia and the United States supported March 14 (Al Jazeera, 2012).

Knio also highlights different structure-agency approaches that define the role of LH in Lebanon. The agency based approach perceives Hezbollah as a proxy client financed by Iran and logistically supported by Syria. On the other hand, a structure based approach makes a distinction between Hezbollah's military and political

branches and emphasises Lebanese socioeconomic roots and its constituency (Knio, 2013). That distinction proved to be important during the Syria conflict, since LH intended to strike a balance between two roles regarding its involvement in Syrian conflict.

LH provided direct combat support to the Syrian struggle against Sunni armed opposition groups. At least 2,000 LH fighters reportedly supported Assad forces to capture al-Qusayr, located at a strategic position along the Damascus, Homs coastal region (O`Bagy, 2013; Byman, 2014). In the summer of 2013, fighting between regime and opposition armed groups further concentrated on the Damascus-Homs supply route passing through Qalamoun. Hezbollah prioritised blocking logistic support from Lebanese Aarsal town, in the eastern Bekaa Valley, to armed opposition groups in Syrian Qalamoun region and at the same time secure the route for transfer of weapons from Syria into Lebanon (Nassief, 2013). Aarsal served as a crucial logistical support node for Syrian armed opposition in the struggle against the Assad regime (Daniels, 2014).

LH support to Syrian regime can be attributed to short term self-interest mainly aiming to control spill-over effects of conflict by sealing the borders and cutting the supply routes of rebels flowing back and forth between Lebanon and Syria. However, more importantly in the long term, LH took also into consideration the risks of losing its reliable regional ally Syria and potentially face a Sunni majority administration in Syria dissociated with Iran.

As LH participated in the conflict within Syria initially, ANF and ISIL attacks inside Lebanon increased, which aimed to intimidate LH involvement in the Syrian conflict and put more pressure on the Lebanese government and army to curb the involvement

of LH. The car bombs and suicide attacks began in June 2013, targeting LH and Iranian targets, mainly in Beirut and Tripoli, and continued in 2014 to inflict hundreds of casualties. (US Department of State, 2014)

The US had been concerned about the possible transfer of chemical weapons to LH before the Syrian chemical weapon disposal process. However, after the threat posed by chemical weapons has been diminished, the US and Lebanon, including LH, shared the threat perception that stemmed from the increasing ISIL and ANF threat. US policy to keep the delicate status quo in Lebanon intact converged with its policy to prevent Syria falling into the hands of religious extremist groups inspired by sectarian lines, which would affect Lebanon as well.

Iraq

Maliki's discrimination policies against the Sunni minority and Syrian Sunni-led armed opposition mainly encouraged al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to increase its attacks against Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Shiite neighbourhoods and Maliki's Sunni supporters (Katzman, 2013). As a result, a substantial increase in the number of civilian casualties was observed in Iraq after 2013.

In addition to Maliki's sectarian agenda, the prolonged armed conflict in Syria also contributed to a surge in the number of Sunni insurgency attacks in Iraq against Shia targets, further exacerbating an already volatile security situation and sectarian tension within the country. Iraq, with a population made up of 60%-65% Shia and 32%-37% Sunni (CIA, 2013), had experienced a two-fold spill over effect from Syria. First, Maliki government's support to the Assad regime and Iraqi Shia militias fighting in Syria, along with the Syrian regime and Iranian forces, made the Maliki administration and the Shia community a target for the Sunni insurgency. Secondly, the Iraqi Sunni

insurgency expanded its struggle from Iraq to Syria and, with the emergence of ISIL, both Iraq and Syria became a common battleground and focal point that attracted more foreign fighters from the region and elsewhere the world.

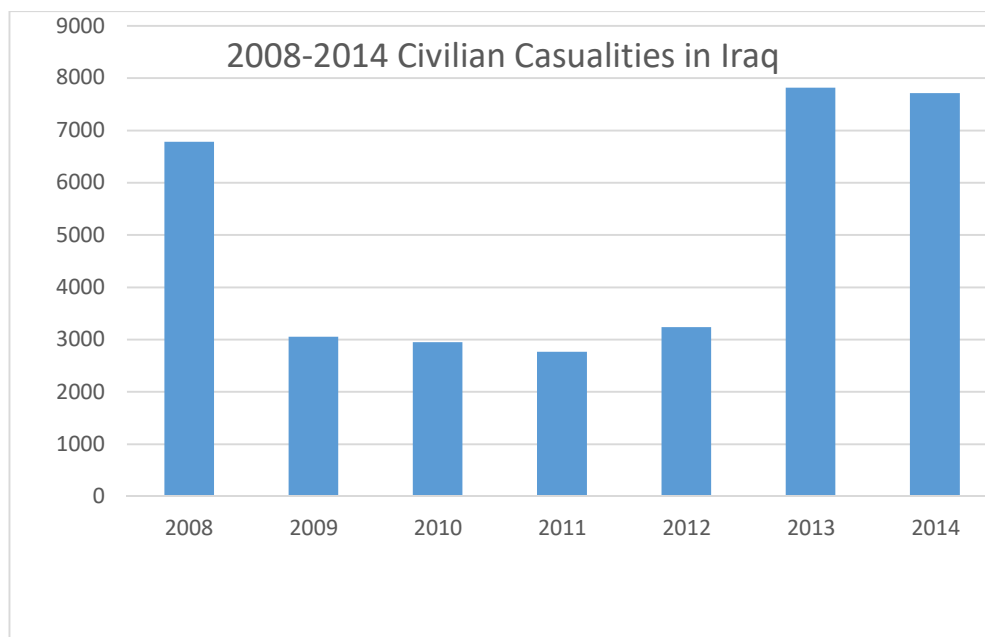


Figure 11 Civilian casualties between 2008 and 2014

Based on <http://www.uniraq.org/> data as of 1 October 2014

Iraqi Shia militias fighting in Syria were mainly from three groups: Asaib Ahl al-Haqq (AAH), Kataib Hezbollah (KH), and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS). AAH had 2000-3000 militias supported and organized by IRGC Qods Force and LH. KH and KSS were composed of 400 and 200 men respectively and reported to Qods Force (Knights, 2013).

Since the Iraqi government perceived a potential post-Assad Sunni-led government as a threat to its polarised society's ethno-sectarian baseline, it opposed economic sanctions targeting Syria proposed by the Arab League and abstained during the vote to suspend Syria's Arab league membership (Küçükkeleş, 2012).

The Shia-dominated Maliki government's sectarian based policies side-lining Sunni minority, coupled with poor governance and corruption, facilitated the Sunni insurgency gaining more traction in Iraq. In response to Iraq's role in the Syrian conflict and as a reflection of sectarian divide ISIL seized control in the western parts of Iraq in January 2014. (Byman, 2014)

This was followed by the seizure of Mosul in June 2014 by ISIL and rapid advance into Iraqi territory. Dodge attributes ISIL's success to flaws within the political system led by Maliki government (2014). Dodge proposes three preconditions for any given state to sustain its governance and explains that the Maliki government established in post-2003 failed in all three aspects. It failed: to build national capacity to deter and decapitate internal and external threats; develop and maintain infrastructural power to deliver government services and provide rule based and law enforced authority; and to foster ideological power that ties the population together, regardless of sectarian or social status under a unifying nationalist perspective (Dodge, 2014).

As US troops left Iraq in 2011 after 8 years of presence and a long lasting struggle against insurgency, the stability of Iraq seemed to be much more important than Syria for US considerations. That was manifested in the US refraining from use of direct military force against ISIL until the conflict spilled over into Iraq and ISIL gained control of vast territory in Iraq.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's primary goals during the Arab Spring uprisings were containing the instability from spreading to GCC monarchies, preserving the status quo in Middle East by preventing the fall of the monarchies, and, if regime change appears to be inevitable, then prevent pro-Iranian/Shia factions seizing the power that eventually would alter the regional balance of power. In Syria, Riyadh relinquished its 'maintain status quo' policy and perceived the uprising as an opportunity to dissociate Syria from Iran sphere of influence and replace Alawite/Shia led minority regime with the rule of the Syrian Sunni majority (Ennis & Momani, 2013).

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran interpreted the long lasting sectarian rivalry as a zero-sum game. In particular, increased Iranian influence in Iraq after the collapse of dominant minority Sunni regime and growing Hezbollah influence in Lebanon, with consistent support from Iran, deepened the rivalry in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia regarded Syria as an opportunity to roll back Iranian gains in the region (Küçükkeleş, 2012). Saudi Arabia also saw the Syria conflict as an opportunity to weaken LH and contain Iranian influence in Lebanon, as the majority of the weapon flow from Iran to Hezbollah has been reportedly through and facilitated by Syria (Manfreda, 2011).

Saudi Arabia was equally concerned about the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), as it was uncomfortable with Iranian influence in the region. In particular, the rise of MB affiliated and pro-democracy Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt and Al-Nahda Party in Tunisia into power aggrieved Saudi Arabia (Karon, 2011). GCC monarchies interpreted the shift as a threat to their reign, which also translated into a similar concern for the potential successor of Assad regime; exceptionally, Qatar was a proponent of MB within the Syrian political opposition (Hokayem, 2011).

As the Saud family have been in alliance with Wahhabi and Salafist clerics to gain legitimacy within the Saudi population, it supported Wahhabi armed opposition groups in Syria to propagate the ideology. So Syria turned into a proxy conflict where Saudi Arabia and Qatar armed and supported Sunni and Wahhabi groups and Iran backed the Syrian regime (Mabon, 2012). As the conflict protracted and extremist groups got the upper hand among the armed opposition, the kingdom shifted its support to predominantly more secular and nationalist, and less extreme, armed opposition groups, fearing the potential backlash of a proliferation of religious extremist movements in Syria into gulf monarchies (Byman, 2014).

Saudi Arabia's strategic alliance with the US and its influence among regional actors aligned with Western interests in the Middle East and is a significant factor for US calculations. It is reasonable that the US was as concerned as Saudi Arabia was about the spread of the unrest to GCC monarchies.

Saudi Arabia have been committed to the removal of Assad, more so at the nascent phase of the conflict, to counter Iran's influence in the region in relation to Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq (Devine, 2015). However, as ISIL started dominating the extremist spectrum of the armed groups and posing serious threat to GCC countries, Saudi Arabia's focus turned back to terrorism.

Qatar

Qatar, with its relatively small size and a population of only 2.1 million (of which only 15 % are citizens) (Blanchard, 2014), has disproportionate diplomatic relevance and influence in the Middle East and Africa. The financial capital surplus earned by its substantial gas and oil output, coupled with its endeavours to resolve regional problems by mediating between the parties and the Arab world's first 24-hour news channel, Al Jazeera, provided Qatar leverage in the diplomatic realm to influence

regional public opinion. This was particularly true in the context of the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria (Khatib, 2013). However, despite being politically active, Qatar's limited military capability meant it had to fine tune its policies to align them with those of the GCC, to balance its policies with those of Saudi Arabia's in the region and to seek security the protection of US in exchange for allowing major US bases and headquarters in Qatar.

Qatar's approach to the conflict in Syria has evolved over time, which is the case for most of the regional powers. Qatar initially promoted dialogue, however as the regime continued targeting civilians during 2012 and 2013 it took a more confrontational approach towards the Syrian regime (Blanchard, 2014) in parallel with the US, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Qatar's image as a mediator significantly changed with its intervention into the Libya and Syria conflicts in the economic, diplomatic and military domains, which saw it aid rebel groups by providing weapons and equipment, training and financial and logistic assistance. Qatar provided support to both political and armed Syrian opposition; it armed the Free Syrian Army on the one hand and successfully led the efforts in November 2012 to establish a more inclusive political opposition, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, in Doha on the other. The fact that Qatar took more prominent role in Syria and provided support to the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria strained its relations with Saudi Arabia (Khatib, 2013). In response, Saudi Arabia attempted to reign in both political and armed opposition in Syria by reinstating pro-Saudi leaders. The first Saudi-Qatar rivalry for leadership took place between pro-Qatar candidate Mustafa Sabbagh and pro-Saudi Arabia Ahmad al Jarba for the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces presidency, where Jarba defeated his opponent on 6th July

2013 and served until 12th July 2014 (Barnard, 2013). In February 2014 this was followed by the replacement of Free Syrian Army commander Selim Idris, seen as pro-Qatar, with Saudi backed Free Syrian Army field commander Abdullah al Bashir (Khatib, 2014).

Against the backdrop of leadership changes within the Syrian opposition, a significant transfer of authority took place within both Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Qatar emir, Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, ceded power to his western educated 34 year old son, Sheik Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, on 23rd July 2013 (Nordland, 2013). This was followed by the replacement of Qatar's dual hatted prime and foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, with two distinct figures (Bollier, 2013); on the Saudi side Prince Bandar bin Sultan was removed from his role as head of Saudi intelligence on 16th April 2014 (Black, 2014a) and was replaced with Prince Khalid bin Bandar on 1st July 2014 (Al Arabiya, 2014).

The change of key leaders who had been leading the respective Syrian policies of both countries since the outset of the conflict could be interpreted as an intended policy change for Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which were both criticized by the US (and in the Saudi case, internally too) for their Syrian policy, particularly with regards to the selection of armed opposition groups to support.

The fact that Qatar supported the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, and Syria with the prospect of broadening its political influence on those countries during post-transition period strained its relations with not only the rest of the GCC countries but also the US. As Saudi Arabia and the UAE designated the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization and perceived the organisation as an

existential threat to their dynastic rule, in March 2014 Saudi Arabia, UAE and additionally Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha (Khatib, 2014).

Even though the US was also concerned with Qatar's regional policy initiatives, an 11 billion US Dollar arms sales agreement signed in July 2014, and which included Patriot missile batteries, attack helicopters, and anti-tank missiles (Blanchard, 2014) could be a significant sign that the differences were resolved and an unveiled agreement were brokered.

In September 2014, seven senior MB figures were asked by Qatari officials to leave the country. Qatar also agreed to cease targeting the Egyptian government, led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, through its al-Jazeera broadcast channel (Black, 2014b). Egypt being the relatively significant factor, Qatar's support to Muslim Brotherhood in Middle East in general and more specifically in Syria and accusations regarding Qatar's alleged support to Salafi groups like Al Nusra Front in Syria could have been important factors that prompted pressure from multiple actors on Qatar and enabled the shift. Consequently, on 16 November 2014, just before the 35th GCC summit that took place in December 2014 in Doha, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain decided to return their ambassadors to Qatar, normalising relations (Al Omran, 2014).

Qatar used its financial capacity to foster the religiously oriented armed opposition groups for them to tip the balance against the Assad regime. Qatar is believed to have provided 400 million US Dollars to the opposition in Libya and 3 billion US Dollars in Syria (Akpınar, 2015)

The process that led to Qatar giving up its role as the lead organiser of the Syrian opposition (Hammond, 2014) seems to have far reaching consequences for the Syria conflict, as Qatar's role was taken by Saudi Arabia, which is more closely

scrutinised by US. However, rivalry between Qatar and Saudi Arabia as a result of diverging agendas, coupled with politically and militarily diverging support strategies exacerbated the division among the rebels competing for resources. Overall, resulting chaos turned into failure for armed opposition to fight against Assad and ISIL (Khatib, 2014).

Turkey

Turkey attempted to mediate between Qaddafi and the opposition in Libya to realise a ceasefire and positioned itself against a military intervention in Libya. At that time Turkey had 15 billion US Dollar worth of business in Libya, so it can be argued that Turkey could have been driven by its own interest in defining its position against the Libyan uprising. Turkey also tried to find common ground in Syria. As Turkey's arbitration efforts failed, Turkey relinquished its initial neutral position in Syria and shifted towards supporting the Syrian opposition against the Syrian regime (Akpınar, 2015).

Turkish-Syrian relations gradually developed after Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK)⁸, listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU, NATO, and US, had been deported from Syria after intensive Turkish pressure. The relationship prospered, especially under Turkey's 'zero problems with the neighbours' policy after 2001, leading to numerous accords, including a free-trade agreement (Barkey, 2012).

As the conflict started, Turkey continued communicating with both the Assad regime and the opposition in an effort to find a peaceful solution that could meet the

⁸ Kurdistan Workers' Party. Formed in 1978 and launched an armed struggle against the Turkish government to establish an independent Kurdish state within Turkey.

democratisation demands of the protestors gradually. However, Assad's reluctance to initiate reforms and continued brutal crackdown of civilians altered Turkey's stance against Assad regime. Turkey adopted sanctions on the Syrian regime and called on Assad to step down (Küçükkeleş, 2012). Turkey broke with the Syrian regime at a time when bilateral economic investments and relations were strong (Ennis & Momani, 2013). Turkey's policy change in August 2011 coincided with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain's decision to withdraw their ambassadors from Syria (Bleek & Stein, 2012) and US President Obama's call for Assad to step down, which reinforced the regional and global opposition against Assad regime.

Barkey attributes Turkey's policy change over Syria to three factors: displeasure at state official level stemming from Assad's reluctance to reform; the government's conviction that the Assad regime was about to collapse; and the belief that as brutal crackdown of opposition continued the more likely the conflict would morph into a protracted sectarian civil war, damaging Syrian social fabric and spilling into neighbouring countries, especially Iraq and Turkey (Barkey, 2012).

In that context, Ankara rallied to expedite the departure of the Assad regime to mitigate the damage to both Syria and the region. So, Ankara openly proposed creating a "buffer zone" inside Syria to protect refugees within Syrian territory on the Turkish border and hosted the Syrian National Council in Turkey as the political opposition meant to be legitimate representatives of the Syrian opposition and people (Karon, 2011).

Turkey followed a mediation role on three fronts: a mediation role which proved unsuccessful with the Assad regime; efforts to bring various opposition groups together to form more representative and inclusive framework; and international level

mediation to open up constructive engagement of regional and global actors (Aras, 2014).

The first acute tension between Syria and Turkey arose over the shooting down of a Turkish reconnaissance aircraft by a surface to air missile on 22nd June 2012 while it was flying over Mediterranean international airspace 15 minutes after it momentarily drifted into Syria's air space (The Telegraph, 2012). On 11th May 2013 two powerful car bombs killed at least 43 people in Reyhanli, a town near Turkey's border with Syria. The attackers reportedly belonged to an organisation linked to Assad's intelligence services (NYTimes, 2013). On 17th September 2013 a car bomb exploded on the Syrian side of the main Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Turkey, killing at least 7 people and wounding 20. The explosion in Bab al-Hawa took place a day after Turkish forces shot down a Syrian helicopter that had entered Turkey's airspace (Reuters, 2013).

Turkey also has perceived the presence of the Democratic Union Party (PYD)/ the People's Protection Units (YPG)⁹ in the northern part of Syria, where it meets the Turkish border, as a threat to its security. Turkey was particularly concerned that US weapons supplied to PYD/YPG forces in their fight against ISIL in Kobane could be later used against Turkey. It also believed that US-led coalition efforts to degrade and destruct ISIL without targeting the Assad regime, (which Turkey believes to be the root causes of the instability and rise of ISIL) would be counterproductive (Sly, 2014). Turkey prioritised removing the Assad regime, while the US strived to defeat ISIL first and foremost and prevent the fall of Iraq to ISIL control. The disagreement over the

⁹ The Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat-PYD) and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel-YPG).
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11198326/Who-are-the-Kurds-A-users-guide-to-Kurdish-politics.html>

priorities and goals led Turkey to decline US demands to use the Incirlik Base as a staging ground for operations against ISIL (Ratnam & Hudson, 2014).

Another sticking point between Turkey and the US was the establishment of a no-fly zone, similar to the one employed in the Libya conflict. The Obama administration consistently opposed establishing no-fly zone in Syria, initially and more profoundly at the nascent phase of the civil war and subsequently in the wake of chemical weapon attack by the Syrian regime in August 2013. The US's reluctance to establish no-fly zone, particularly after August 2013, led regional actors such as Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia to more strongly promote a 'no-fly zone' or a 'safe zone' in Syria (Kahf, 2016) and contributed to the increased civilian toll, further destruction of infrastructure and the lack of safety in the territories claimed by rebels (Lucas, 2016)

Another consequence of a lack of direct military action from the US after the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against civilians and the opposition was seen as a shift in support given by regional actors to more fundamentalist rebel groups. The Wilson Centre's Middle East Program Director, Henri J. Barkey, argues that the US's refusal to establish no-fly zones in Syria was one of the primary factors that led Turkish authorities to lean towards Islamic oriented opposition groups (Barkey, 2014) in parallel to the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The genuine Turkish ambition to establish a no-fly zone in Northern Syria is also a contradictory issue. On one hand, Ankara publicly attributed its demand for establishing a no-fly zone or buffer zone in Syria on the basis of 'humanitarian necessity', given that it would provide a safe area for displaced refugees and prevent the Syrian conflict further spill over into Turkey. However, on the other hand, some also argue that Turkey's real intention has been to

curb Kurdish groups in Northern Syria from seeking autonomy by controlling a continuous swath of territory (Beehner & Meibauer, 2016).

Initially Turkey prioritised overthrowing the Assad regime and strongly supported the FSA. However, as it proved difficult to topple Assad regime – largely because of the support given by Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and other Shia groups – Turkey allegedly turned a blind eye for a period to more extreme elements who were organising, recruiting and provisioning from inside Turkey. However, as ISIL became a direct threat to Turkey and for the region in the first half of 2015, Turkey felt compelled to tighten security on the border and restrict the free movement of extremists transiting the country towards Syria. Similarly, initially Turkey pursued an active policy to establish an internationally safeguarded and rebel-administered safe zone inside Syria (Strategic Comments, 2016) to support the rebel cause against the Assad regime. However, Turkey's motivation for a no-fly zone or safe zone changed over time from allowing Syrian rebels to prosper and self-administer, to relieving the pressure inside Turkey stemming from refugees and preventing the PYD establishing continuous land control in Northern Syria. The most profound dilemma Turkey faced after 6 years of Syrian civil war was the emergence PYD/YPG as a viable counterweight to ISIL and partner for the US on the ground. The empowerment of PYD/YPG and US support to this group also became the biggest source of confrontation between the US and Turkey.

Having looked into regional countries' political and security calculations vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts and its impact on US policy, the following section will focus on the impact of a proliferation of weapons and terrorism on US security interests. While a power struggle among regional and global actors exacerbated the instability in Syria, a proliferation of weapons and terrorism increased US threat

perceptions. The number of Salafi extremist fighters (in, say, the Al Nusra Front and ISIL) dramatically increased between 2010 and 2013. The proximity of extremist threat to US allies like Jordan, Turkey, Israel, and the European Union made the threat more prominent for the US (S. G. Jones, 2014)

The Al Nusra Front was established in late 2011 by Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI). The US designated the Al Nusra Front as a terrorist organization in December 2012. Throughout 2012, a group of Al Qaeda (AQ) veterans dubbed the 'Khorasan Group' reportedly began to arrive in Syria to plan international terror plots (Stanford, 2015a). US administration officials described the Khorasan Group as "a cell of Al Qaeda veterans plotting attacks against the US and Europe, most likely an attempt to blow up an airplane in flight" (Dilanian, 2014). In late September 2014, President Obama announced that the US had "conducted strikes to disrupt terror plots against the US and our allies by seasoned AQ operatives in Syria, known as the Khorasan Group" (Obama, 2014b).

AQI expanded into Syria and, in April 2013, the group changed its name to ISIL. The ISIL leadership declared the merger of the group with the Al Nusra Front. However, both AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and the Al Nusra Front leadership denied the merger. AQ officially refuted any connection with ISIL in February 2014. After seizing territory in Iraq and Syria, ISIL declared the establishment of a Caliphate on 29th June 2014 (Stanford, 2015b).

ISIL's battlefield successes and increasingly sectarian tone during the Syrian conflict created a conducive environment for the group to recruit Sunni militants from across the world. ISIL managed to control large territory in the east and north of Syria (Laub, 2016) , established a caliphate, controlled territory and attempted to exercise governance in a way that Al-Qaeda was unable (Holbrook, 2015). ISIL's capture of

weapons, munitions and equipment from Syrian and Iraqi military stocks and from other armed groups in Syria that had been armed by the Gulf States, the US and Turkey, were instrumental in ISIL gaining the upper hand among the armed groups in Syria (Amnesty International, 2015).

On 10th September 2014, President Obama underlined the threat posed by ISIL at the regional and global level when he said:

ISIL poses a threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, and the broader Middle East -- including American citizens, personnel and facilities. If left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region, including to the United States. ...Our Intelligence Community believes that thousands of foreigners -- including Europeans and some Americans -- have joined them in Syria and Iraq. Trained and battle-hardened, these fighters could try to return to their home countries and carry out deadly attacks (Obama, 2014g).

Joe Klein from Time magazine argues that defeating ISIL came to fore as a prioritised US national-security interest, which also necessitated keeping President Assad in power (Klein, 2015) in order to avoiding creating a further security void that could be exploited and filled by ISIL and other extremist groups.

In addition to the emergence of ISIL as a prominent extremist force in Syria, the establishment of a new coalition among the most powerful seven other Salafist factions in September 2013 aiming to establish a state governed under Sharia law in Syria (Szybala, 2013) was a significant blow to the Syrian National Coalition and Supreme Military Council. The fact that the new alliance declared they did not recognise the Syrian National Coalition and Supreme Military Council undermined the credibility and viability of political and military opposition (BBC News, 2013b).

In particular, ISIL and the AQ affiliated Al Nusra Front constituted a significant threat to the US, with their clear intention and capabilities to target US interests in the region and conduct attacks abroad through both battle hardened and indoctrinated foreign fighters returning to home countries and lone wolves. Countering global terrorism

has been the number one priority in US foreign policy since the 9/11 attacks, as it constitutes a direct threat to US citizens and interests. So, the expected US response to a growing terrorism threat in Libya and Syria since 2011 was to apply all elements of the intervention spectrum to counter extremism and terrorism in the region. The only element the US reserved so far has been boots on the ground in a combat role, even though multiple regional allies pledged to support potential US ground operations against ISIL. Instead of that option, the US preferred to support local proxies against ISIL through their train-advise-assist program conducted by Special Operation Forces, share intelligence, provide lethal and non-lethal weapons and equipment, conduct close air support, air strikes and strikes from sea based platforms coupled and undertake non-military intervention to undermine the extremist group's funding, recruitment and propaganda efforts.

Another dimension which came to the fore several times during the Syrian conflict was preventing the spread and use of WMDs. Before the conflict, Syria possessed more than 1,000 tons of chemical agents and precursor chemicals. This stockpile included the nerve agent, sarin mustard agent, and nerve agent VX (Blanchard, Humud, & Nikitin, 2014).

As the Obama administration saw mass Syrian chemical weapon stockpiles as a threat to its security interests and those of its allies` in the region, President Obama set the red line as `the transfer or the use of those weapons` in a press conference in August 2012.

That's an issue that doesn't just concern Syria; it concerns our close allies in the region, including Israel. It concerns us. We cannot have a situation where chemical or biological weapons are falling into the hands of the wrong people. We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. We have communicated in no uncertain terms with every player in the region

that that's a red line for us and that there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front or the use of chemical weapons (Obama, 2012c).

The Obama administration's chemical weapons red-line was necessitated by the security consequences of inaction, rather than the civilian casualties the use of these weapons would cause. This argument can be confirmed by looking at the proportion and the scale of casualties through conventional weapons and means as opposed to the tiny fraction of deaths caused by chemical weapon usage. The US primarily feared that the weapons could fall into the hands of terrorist groups and spread of chemical weapons in the region could destabilise the region by provoking greater refugee flows (Hamid, 2013)

The most prominent incident during the course of the conflict was the use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21st August 2013. The UN dedicated teams of experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Health Organization. Their report, issued on 13th September 2013, concluded that "chemical weapons have been used in the ongoing conflict between the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic", and that "surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent sarin were used in Ghouta area of Damascus" (United Nations, 2013).

Even though UK Prime Minister David Cameron had lost the vote for military action against President Assad on 29th August 2013 for using chemical weapons (Anthony, 2013), White House officials indicated that the US would proceed without British support, since Obama believed core US interests were at stake and that international norms regarding chemical weapon needed to be upheld (Stacey, Rigby, Aglionby, & McGregor, 2013).

In his speech on 31st August 2013, Obama called the attack an assault on human dignity and a danger to US national security. He also underscored that the attack undermined the global prohibition of chemical weapons, endangered allies like Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq and increased the risk of a further use of chemical weapons or those weapons ending up in the hands of terrorist groups (Obama, 2013f).

In his address to the nation on 10th September 2013 President Obama explained why he believed the US should take military action against Syrian regime:

The Assad regime will see no reason to stop using chemical weapons. As the ban against these weapons erodes, other tyrants will have no reason to think twice about acquiring poison gas, and using them. Over time, our troops would again face the prospect of chemical warfare on the battlefield. And it could be easier for terrorist organizations to obtain these weapons, and to use them to attack civilians. If fighting spills beyond Syria's borders, these weapons could threaten allies like Turkey, Jordan, and Israel. And a failure to stand against the use of chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction, and embolden Assad's ally, Iran -- which must decide whether to ignore international law by building a nuclear weapon, or to take a more peaceful path. Our ideals and principles, as well as our national security, are at stake in Syria, along with our leadership of a world where we seek to ensure that the worst weapons will never be used (Obama, 2013c).

When the Syrian regime crossed the 'red line' by using chemical weapons, the threat of military intervention was a real possibility. At that point an alternative option was presented when the US and Russia agreed to the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile. The same day Syria signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (Trapp, 2014). UNSC resolution 2118 was adopted on 27th September 2013 to ensure the transfer of Syria's chemical weapons to international control (UNSC 2118, 2013).

On 14th November 2013 the OPCW approved the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. The agents were transferred from storage facilities to the Syrian port of Latakia. From the port, Danish and Norwegian ships picked up the chemicals. The most dangerous compounds were transferred at an Italian port to Cape Ray, a US vessel equipped with field deployable hydrolysis systems (FDHS), to be

neutralised at sea. Less sensitive chemicals were shipped to commercial facilities in Finland, the UK and the US (Blanchard et al., 2014). However, the US publicly voiced its suspicions that the Assad regime kept a residual chemical weapon capability and accused Assad of using chlorine on many occasions, despite binding resolutions (T. Juneau, 2015).

The start of the dismantling process had almost coincided with Iranian President Hasan Rouhani's assuming office in August 2013. As Rouhani was known as a pragmatic reformist, a promising expectation to broker a deal with Iran to ensure it abandons nuclear weapon development ambition in exchange for sanctions relief emerged under P5+1 negotiations. The US did not want to endanger the negotiation process, which provided a golden opportunity to resolve long lasting problems with Iran by directly intervening in Syria and confronting Iran and Russia (Stevenson, 2014). The Obama administration opted to work with Russia on both the Iranian and Syrian problems so as to not jeopardize its chances of success, especially on the nuclear deal with Iran (Rugh, 2013).

While a lack of direct military intervention of the US against Syrian regime over the chemical weapon usage was largely interpreted as a failure to impose a clearly defined red line, some argued that using the threat of force accomplished the intended outcome of the red line itself. Derek Chollet, who served in the Obama Administration in the White House, State Department, and Pentagon, argued that through "coercive diplomacy", the Obama administration managed to address the threat from Syria's chemical weapons, the outcome intended by the red line which military power would not achieve (Chollet, 2016).

On the other hand, the nuclear talks that seemed to be progressing with Iran had no influence on Libya. However, in the case of Syria, because Iran was the main

backer of Assad, potential US involvement in Syria would make life very difficult for the Iranians, which could also threaten the success of the nuclear talks. So, the level of US support to the opposition could have been used by the US as a tool to pressure Iran into negotiations (Interviewee 3, 2015), or at least the risk of disrupting the whole process could have caused the US to refrain from taking direct action even after the use of chemical weapon.

The more sophisticated WMD programme Syria had, with various agents and multiple delivery means, meant that it was capable of reaching key US allies and some US facilities in the region. This constituted a significant threat to US interests. The Syrian regime crossed the red line drawn by the US by using chemical agents during the civil war on multiple occasions. Potential residual capability undeclared during the 2013 deal and the constant use of chlorine gas against the opposition and civilians still means that Syrian WMD capability is a threat to the region and US interests.

The level of threat posed by the Syrian chemical weapons program necessitated a direct military response from the US, including the use of Special Forces or other US forces in combat roles. However, potential regional implications and domestic constraints seem to have prevented the US following that path.

Lastly, the destabilising effect of a refugee inflow on neighbouring countries influenced regional calculations and had security knock-on effects. The civil war in Syria led to a humanitarian catastrophe and a refugee crisis. This was especially the case since the beginning of 2013 as the intensity of the conflict increased and many Syrians sought shelter outside of Syria (Beauchamp, 2015).

The overwhelming majority of those who have fled Syria ended up in five neighbouring countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2013). As of 3rd March 2016 the total number of Syrian refugees was

4.8 million (Egypt: 118,000, Iraq: 245,000, Turkey: 2,700,000, Lebanon: 1,067,000, Jordan 639,000) (UNHCR, 2016).

Europe's rising vulnerability to instability in North Africa and the Middle East compelled it to adopt a more assertive foreign policy (Sperling, 2016). According to a Migration Policy Institute report, more than 120,000 migrants and refugees departing from Libya, Tunisia, or Egypt arrived in Europe between January and September 2015 through the central Mediterranean Route (primarily Italy and Malta). On the other hand, more than 350,000 individuals, mainly from Syria, crossed from Turkey to Greece through the eastern Mediterranean route in the first nine months of 2015 (Banulescu-bogdan & Fratzke, 2015).

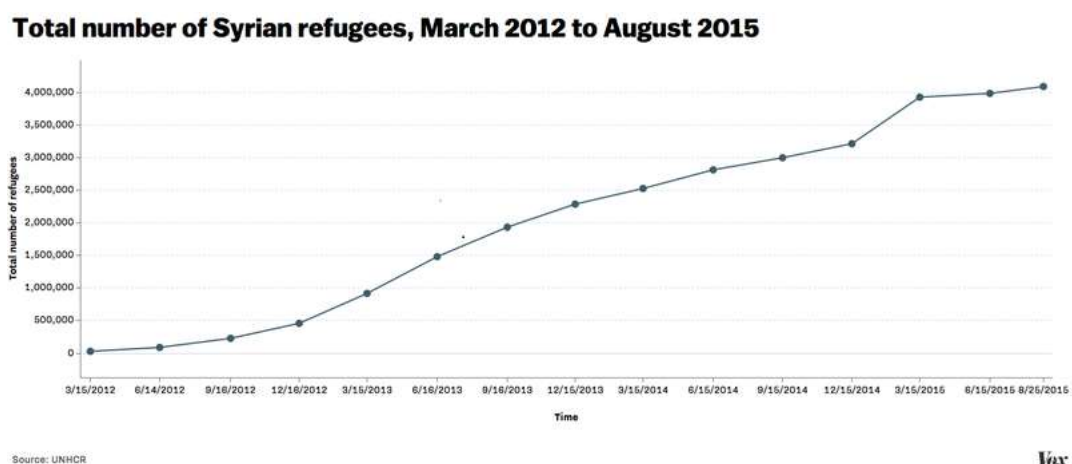


Figure 12 Number of Syrian Refugees, March 2012-August 2015

In his testimony to the US Senate Armed Services Committee on 1st March 2016, NATO Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, General Philip Breedlove, firmly argued that the Russian and Syrian regime was using the refugee crisis purposefully to “overwhelm” and “break” Europe’s cohesion and as a ‘weapon’, through targeting civilian centres (Holehouse, 2016). He said:

Together Russian and the Assad regime are deliberately weaponizing migration in an attempt to overwhelm European structures and break European resolve. Barrel bombs are designed to terrorize, get people out of their homes and get them on the road and make them someone else's problem. These indiscriminate weapons used by both Bashar al-Assad, and the non-precision use of weapons by the Russian forces, I can't find any other reason for them other than to cause refugees to be on the move and make them someone else's problem (Breedlove, 2016).

Similar views were articulated by US Senator John McCain in his speech at the Munich Security Conference. He defined Russian strategy as an attempt "to exacerbate the refugee crisis and use it as a weapon to divide the transatlantic alliance and undermine the European project" by increasing the flow of refugees towards Turkey and Europe (S. Jones, 2016). By November 2015, just a month after the Russian's direct military involvement (which started on the 30th September 2015) in Syria, the number of refugees leaving Syria for Europe had already increased by 26%, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees figures (Stent, 2016).

The refugees and immigrants fleeing from both the Libyan and Syrian conflicts and the wider regional instability constituted a significant threat to Europe. The numbers of refugees increased alongside a rise in the intensity of fighting on the ground and put pressure on neighbouring countries and the EU to find a quick fix to the refugee crisis. In Libya, quick enforcement of a no fly zone and targeting of Libyan armed forces was the expected US option to increase the security of Libyan people. Establishment of a no-fly zone could have helped protect the Syrian people within their borders. These options could have easily reduced both the number of refugees and also the number of civilian casualties. However, these options were not supported by the US.

Prosperity

US export and import figures to and from Syria were significantly lower compared to those with Libya. Even at a time when bilateral trade volume reached its peak in 2010, US exports and imports accounted for 503.3 million and 429.3 million USD respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).



Figure 13 U.S. trade in goods with Syria, US Census Bureau

In similar vein, US imports of crude oil and petroleum products from Syria in 2010 was approximately 3,188,000 Barrels (eia, 2015b), which corresponded to 0.06% of the US's total crude oil imports. US economic interests in Syria was not significant enough on its own to urge the US to take military action. The potential threat to oil and gas infrastructure in the region stemming from the protracted conflict in Syria and AQ and ISIL affiliated group's capturing and profiting from captured oil infrastructure

was a threat to the US interests. Particularly, ISIL captured and used oil fields in Syria and posed risk to energy transit routes and sources in the neighbouring states.

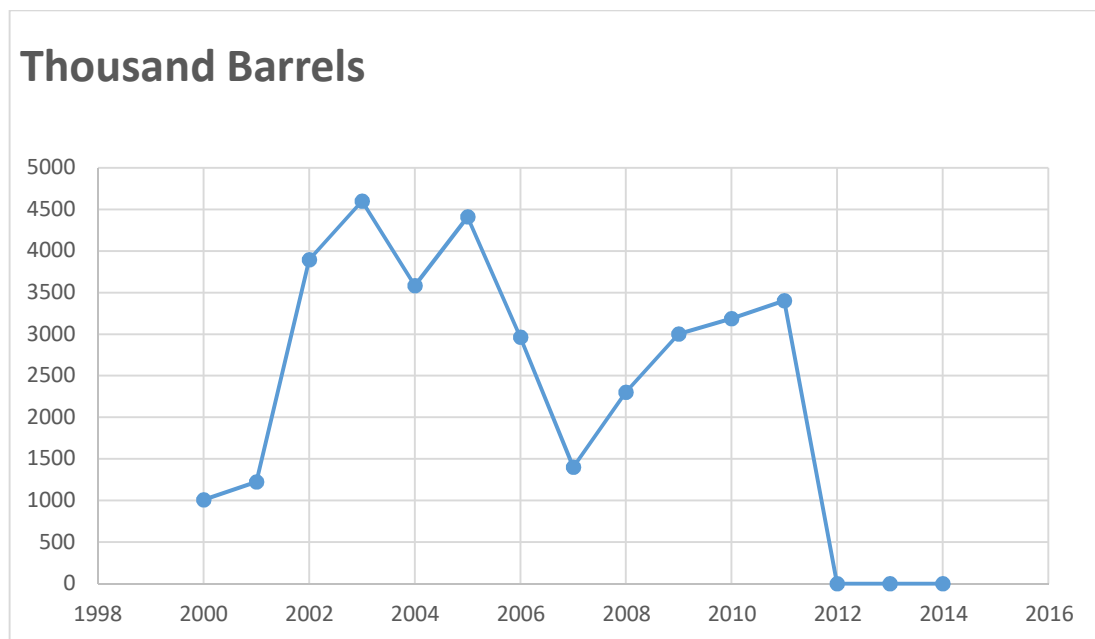


Figure 14 US Imports from Syria of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products, US Energy Information Administration

Values

President Obama underlined that the Arab Spring was a chance for the US to ‘pursue the world as it should be’ based on shared values. He said that, “the United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders...Our support for these principles is not a secondary interest.” (Goldberg, 2016)

The US administration saw the Arab Spring as an opportunity to bring stability and peace to the Middle East and North Africa by replacing long-time dictatorships with democratic institutions (Interviewee 7, 2015). President Obama also wanted to

capitalize on public support among the Middle East and North African populations for democratic change in the region (Interviewee 3, 2015).

As the Syrian conflict became militarised and the Syrian regime started using conventional weapon systems against the population and rebels in August 2011, the death toll started increasing dramatically. While there are different figures about the total death toll in Syria as a result of the civil conflict (because of the difficulties in tracking the actual figures) the highest estimated figure from the Syrian Centre for Policy Research is 470,000 (as of February 2016). 400,000 of the deaths are attributed directly to violence in Syria, while the remaining 70,000 are believed to come from the consequences of war such as the lack of adequate health services, medicine, shortage of food, clean water, sanitation and proper housing. In addition to the massive toll 45% of population have been displaced either as refugees (more than 4 million abroad) or internally displaced (6.36 million) (Black, 2016)

However, the US failed to respond in the Syrian conflict to protect civilians and support political and armed opposition in a decisive fashion in their effort to establish democracy, attain basic human rights and political and economic freedom. To prevent the mass killings of civilians in Syria, the enforcement of a no fly zone, targeting of Syrian long range ballistic missile capability, and decapitating the Syrian Air Force were the bare minimum responses expected from the US since the vast majority of civilian casualties were inflicted through air strikes. With regards to establishment of democracy in Syria, since the Assad regime stopped short of political reform the only option left was to support and prepare vetted political and armed opposition for regime change and post-conflict Syria. However, the intervening variables (which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters) seemed to have prevented the US from pursuing that option.

International Order

It can be argued that all the conditions that led to application of R2P in Libya were all valid in Syria. In particular, after the Assad regime started targeting civilians with conventional weapons and subsequently chemical weapons it was a direct threat to international order. During the discussions in the US Congress regarding the use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013, Democratic Senator Carl Levin underscored that failure to act against the use of chemical weapons would weaken the international prohibition on chemical weapons use and eventually lead to greater proliferation of these weapons and increase the potential of them falling into the hands of terrorists (Levin, 2013)

Democrat Party Senator Tim Kaine also believed that the US should act to uphold the most important international norm that weapons of mass destruction can't be used against civilians (Kaine, 2013). Republican Senator Charlie Dent highlighted two US national interests in Syria: limiting Iranian influence in the region and securing chemical weapons from both the Assad regime and extremist elements of the Syrian opposition (Dent, 2013).

Democratic Party Senator Barbara Boxer also mentioned that if the US fails to act in the face of chemical weapons usage against civilians, North Korea and Iran would be emboldened to pursue their nuclear weapon development, putting US troops and Israeli troops at risk (Boxer, 2013). Not only was the credibility of the US at stake as a consequence of inaction, but also that of the international community.

UNSC Resolution 2139, adopted on 22nd February 2014, demands all parties immediately cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs (UN Security Council, 2014).

During the discussions about UNSC Resolution 2235, which aimed to establish a mechanism to identify those using chemical weapons in Syria, on 7th August 2015 Samantha Power admitted that, despite previous efforts to end the use of chemical weapons in Syria — including the adoption of UNSC Resolutions 2118 in September 2013 (Scheduled Destruction of Syria’s Chemical Weapons) and 2209 in March 2015, (Security Council Condemns Use of Chlorine Gas as Weapon in Syria) — the attacks had continued (UNSCR 2235, 2015).

Both the Libya and Syria conflict met the criteria for the ‘responsibility to protect’ that would have justified US action. However, lack of action in Syria undermined the UN’s credibility as the guarantor of peace and security. Use of conventional armed forces, barrel bombs and chlorine gas intentionally against civilians and, in particular, clear breaches of the Chemical Weapons Convention by the Syrian regime (which was, then, also a violation of the US administration’s red line) necessitated military response.

Interpretation and Analysis

For the Syria case the analysis will be based on five distinct phases.

	Start	End
Phase 1	The onset of the Syrian demonstrations in March 2011	Mass killings of protestors by Syrian regime in August 2011
Phase 2	Mass killings of protestors by Syrian regime in August 2011	Emergence of united political and armed opposition in Nov/Dec 2012
Phase 3	Emergence of united political and armed opposition in Nov/Dec 2012	The use of chemical weapons by Syrian regime in August 2013
Phase 4	The use of chemical weapons by Syrian regime in August 2013	ISIL took control of vast swath of territory in Syria and declared caliphate in Summer 2014
Phase 5	ISIL took control of vast swath of territory in Syria and declared a caliphate in Summer 2014	Russia started building up military force inside Syria in support of Syrian operation in September 2015

Table 2 Five Phases of Syria Conflict

In the first phase of the Syrian conflict the prospect for a political solution was held by the US and regional allies such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia. However, with regards to '**security**' and stability, gradually increasing Iranian influence in the region on the basis of a sectarian agenda and shared threat perception between Iran and Syria against the US and Israel were against US security interests. The Syrian regime also had funnelled Iranian arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon and had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and materials, which posed threat to the US and regional allies. So, the threat to security and instability from the Syrian conflict for US interests was assessed to be '**high**'.

US economic interests in Syria were, on their own, not significant enough to urge the US to take military action. Neither bilateral trade nor energy were important factors for the US in the Syria context. Furthermore, at the nascent phase of the conflict the threat to energy transition routes that could have affected the flow of energy from Middle East was also not a source of a significant concern. So, the '**prosperity**' interest was assessed to be '**low**'

Even at the nascent phase of the conflict during the protests, the Syrian regime security forces opened fire, killed and imprisoned civilians. Long lasting human rights violations increasingly continued during the uprising. So, the US saw the regional uprisings as a chance to initiate a new beginning in the Middle East that could lead to democratic and accountable governments, which, in turn, could decrease violent extremism. So, the threat to '**values**' was assessed to be '**high**'.

As the protests gradually evolved into armed conflict a 'responsibility to protect' was articulated within the US administration and, in that regard, the Syria conflict was compared with that in Libya. As the regime was seen as the perpetrator

of atrocities against its own population, the US and wider international community saw that as a violation of the emerging norm. So, the threat posed to upholding **'international norms'** was assessed to be **'high'**.

In the second phase of the Syrian conflict, it became further militarised. With regards to security, Russia, Iran, and LH provided full support to the Syrian regime, whereas Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and much of the Gulf became heavily involved, because of the sectarian element in the Syria conflict. That increased the risks for intensified sectarian war and spill over effects in the region. So, the threat to **'security'** interest is assessed to be **'high'**

Potential spill over effects into neighbouring countries increased the threat to energy production and transition routes in the region. So, the **'prosperity'** interest was assessed to be **'medium'**.

The use of state violence and military force against the protesters and armed opposition intensified throughout 2011 and early 2012. The death toll started dramatically increasing in that time frame. So, the threat to US **'values'** is assessed to be **'high'**.

As the regime's use of conventional forces against the protestors and civilians increased, the number of casualties, refugees and internally displaced people increased. That urged action under the 'responsibility to protect'. So, the threat to upholding **'international norms'** interest was assessed to be **'High'**.

In the **third phase** of the conflict a united moderate opposition provided a golden opportunity for the US to support political and armed opposition and make a meaningful change on the ground. As the regime started losing ground to the armed opposition Hezbollah, alongside Iranian forces, increased direct combat support to sustain the Syrian regime. However, US perceptions about the potential extremist

danger in Syria started gaining more traction, particularly after the killing of the US Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, by armed militants in Benghazi (an attack which had a potential AQ connection). Concurrently, within the armed opposition, the Al Nusra Front and ISIL started becoming more prominent and attracting foreign fighters from all across the world, including Europe and the US. The increased sectarian tone and scaled up Russian and Iranian support also stimulated more foreign fighters to travel Syria. As a result of increased fighting among Syrian regime forces, western backed armed opposition, Al Nusra Front and ISIL the number of Syrian refugees, particularly since the beginning of 2013, escalated to a degree which was enough to destabilise the receiving states by stretching social-economic conditions. So the threat to the US's '**security**' interest was assessed to be '**high**'.

An increased extremist threat and potential spill over effects into neighbouring countries increased potential threat to energy production and transition routes in the region. So, the threat to the '**prosperity**' interest was assessed to be '**high**'.

Increased fighting among armed opposition groups, extremists groups, the regime and Hezbollah fighters led to a steep upsurge in the death toll and, with it, a fading in the prospects for political solution and a democratic Syria. So, the threat to '**values**' was assessed to be '**high**'.

As the regime indiscriminately employed weapons in populated areas, including shelling, aerial bombardment and the use of barrel bombs, the number of casualties, refugees, internally displaced people increased. That urged action under the 'responsibility to protect'; the inability of the UNSC to prevent mass killings and to ease humanitarian crisis also undermined the credibility of the UN. So the threat to upholding '**international norms**' assessed to be '**high**'.

In the fourth phase of the Syrian conflict, the chemical weapon threat and extremist groups dominating the opposition significantly changed the dynamics in Syria. As ISIL managed to control large swaths of territory, it created safe havens inside Syria. Al Nusra Front and ISIL started targeting LH and Iranian targets within Lebanon, which further increased the concern of spill-over effects in the region. Salafist factions united to establish a Syrian state governed under Sharia law and declared they did not recognise Syrian National Coalition and Supreme Military Council. That undermined the credibility and viability of moderate political and military opposition. The most prominent incident during the course of the conflict was the use of chemical weapons in Damascus, which killed more than a thousand civilians. President Obama saw core US security interests at stake. As the attack undermined the global prohibition of chemical weapons, increased risk of further use posed existential threat to US allies in the region (Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq) and increased the risks of chemical weapons ending up in the hands of terrorist groups. The start of Syrian chemical weapon dismantling process had almost coincided with preparations for increased negotiations with Iran to stop its nuclear weapon development program, which was another strategic US interest. So, the threat to US **'security'** interest was assessed to be **'very high'**.

Increased extremist threat and potential spill over effects into neighbouring countries, coupled with chemical weapon proliferation, maintained the potential threat to energy production and transition routes in the region. So, the threat to **'prosperity'** interest was assessed to be **'high'**.

An increased extremist threat and ISIL holding territory in Syria and imposing Sharia under its controlled zone directly threatened US values of free will and democracy. Threats against the members of other religions increased. More

importantly, red lines drawn by President Obama with regards to use of chemical weapons was crossed bluntly by the Syrian regime. Even after Syria agreed to dismantle its chemical weapon program, use of chlorine continued and employment of conventional weapons against the civilians increased, causing thousands of civilian casualties. So the threat to '**values**' was assessed to be '**very high**'.

The responsibility to protect, credibility of the UN and international norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons was challenged by the Syrian regime by using chemical weapons against civilians in Damascus. The failure by the US and international community to take immediate action to uphold the most important international norm that weapons of mass destruction can't be used against civilians would weaken the international prohibition on chemical weapons and pave the way for greater proliferation of these weapons. It would also increase the potential of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. Inaction would also embolden North Korea and Iran in their effort to pursue nuclear weapon development and thus put the US and Israeli troops at risk in the region. So the threat against holding '**international norms**' was assessed to be '**very high**'.

In the fifth phase of the Syrian conflict ISIL became the primary threat in Syria. After seizing further territory in Iraq and Syria, ISIL declared the establishment of a self-declared caliphate. Increased plans and calls for lone wolf attacks by both AQ and ISIL in Europe and the US, escalated the threat perception. Increased number of groups pledging allegiance to ISIL started conducting attacks in North Africa and the Middle East, inflicting mass casualties. The lack of prospects for a better future in Syria prompted a wave of refugees crossing over into Europe, which threatened the stability in those states and compelled European countries to adopt a more assertive

foreign policy vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict, impacting the US's position as well. So, the threat to **`security`** interests was assessed to be **`Very High`**.

Increased cross-border extremist threats in the region posed a significant threat to energy production and transition routes in the region. So, the prosperity interest was assessed to be **`high`**.

Expanded territory controlled by ISIL, their connection to Iraq and the establishment of self-declared caliphate continued threatening neighbouring countries and western values, particularly those concerning democratisation efforts. That was a significant direct threat to US values. So, the threat to US **`values`** was assessed to be **`very high`**.

As the Syrian regime continued to use chlorine despite signing a chemical weapon convention, the credibility of UN and international norms prohibiting the use of chemical weapons was further challenged by the Syrian regime, despite their legally binding obligations. So, the threat against upholding **`international norms`** was assessed to be **`very high`**.

	Threat to US Interests in Syria				
	Security-stability	Prosperity	Values	International Norm	Overall
Phase 1	High	Low	High	High	High
Phase 2	High	Medium	High	High	High
Phase 3	High	High	High	High	High
Phase 4	Very High	High	Very High	Very High	Very High
Phase 5	Very High	High	Very High	Very High	Very High

Table 3 Threat to US Interests in Syria

Looking into expected US foreign policy decisions for the Syrian conflict from the US perspective during the first three phases of the conflict, targeting the Assad regime

through both military and non-military intervention would serve its security interest, would reinforce democratisation efforts and help sustain the credibility of the US, UN and international norms aiming to protect basic human rights. Despite substantial threats to US interests in Syria during the first three episodes, the US stopped short of decisively engaging against the Assad regime, limited its response to sanctions, and provided very narrowly framed support to the rebels; it stopped short of providing lethal weapons of vital importance for them to confront the Assad regime's conventional army. That stance was contrary to neorealist expectations, thus disconfirming H₁¹⁰.

Even the use of chemical weapons by Assad regime in Syria at the beginning of fourth period, in breach of the red line clearly drawn by President Obama, did not significantly change US strategy against the Assad regime. That period overlapped with the emergence and empowerment of trans-regional extremist threats (particularly ISIL and AQ affiliated groups) targeting US citizens, regional US allies, international security, international prosperity, western values, and international norms. As a result, military intervention against extremist groups in Syria, rather than against the Syrian regime itself, became more important. Even though the Assad regime and ISIL posed a substantial, 'very high' threat to US interests, the US refrained from taking decisive action against both actors. That was contrary to neorealist expectations. On the one hand, the US opted to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons stockpile through diplomacy and used the threat of use of force to facilitate its US-Russia joint effort. On the other hand, instead of directly targeting ISIL in Syria with its own military means the US chose to support PYD/YPG forces in their confrontation with ISIL. The first US

¹⁰ H₁: The US FPE take a decision to intervene militarily first and foremost in response to substantial threats to US interests representing the expected option for the US.

airstrikes against ISIL were spared until 23rd September 2014. Finally, in the fifth episode, US focus turned to fighting against ISIL, which posed an existential threat to US interests. However, even though the US administration was aware that without boots on the ground it was almost impossible to defeat ISIL, the US refrained from sending US troops to the region in a combat role and instead used its strike capability. The US either directly targeted ISIL and AQ positions and facilities or directed its strikes in support of PYD/YPG led Syrian Democratic Forces¹¹ operations. That strategy serves to partially confirm H₁, however as the US interests were at stake and threat posed to those interests were very high, the expected US action was an all-out war against ISIL, including boots on the ground.

Having examined expected US foreign policy decisions for the Libyan and Syrian conflicts exclusively from the perspective of international incentives, key US interest and threats posed to those interest, it became evident that the US stopped short of adopting neorealist premises in the first place. While US interests in the Syrian case were high or very high, direct military action against the Syrian regime similar to that in the Libyan case did not materialise. That was also mostly true for US strategy against ISIL. This implies that international factors were not consequential in a causal sense in defining US foreign policy in Syria. That requires focusing the analyses on intervening variables, in line with neoclassical realist explanations, to understand other factors that altered US foreign policy decisions. In the next chapter the effort will focus on how and to what extent the intervening variables affected and impeded the optimal foreign policy choices the US administration followed (H₂).

¹¹ The Syrian Democratic Forces are an alliance of Kurdish PYD/YPG and Arab tribes.

Chapter 5 Intervening Variables

Having analysed the threats to US interests pertaining to the Libya and Syria conflicts and established expected US behaviour, this chapter will be devoted to the potential impact of four intervening variables on US decision making: the Obama Doctrine; US economic constraints; elite perception of the opposition in Libya and Syria; and Congressional dynamics and public opinion. Intervening variables act either to reinforce the expected US decision – and so influence the timing, form and the scale of the intervention – or, alternatively, act to divert US behaviour from its expected course. The aim of this chapter is to establish how far intervening variables can explain the concordance (and discrepancy) between expected and actual foreign policy behaviour. H₂ will be tested to understand if the analytical gap a pure neorealist perspective failed to fill could be sufficiently explained by a neoclassical realist outlook.

For reference:

- H₂: Domestic constraints (intervening variables) influence the form, timing, and scope of the intervention, and the rationale behind the deviation from expected intervention strategies can be explained by intervening variables.

5.1 Elite Ideology/Obama Doctrine

This part of the chapter firstly examines the contours of the Obama doctrine, and, secondly, considers how the basic tenets of the doctrine informed and contributed to the formulation of observed foreign policy behaviour in each episode for both the Libya and Syria cases. Embedded into the analysis are identified time periods, three salient turning points or catalytic moments (Qaddafi's threat to attack Benghazi, the August 2013 chemical weapon attack in Syria, and ISIL's beheadings of US citizens

in Syria). Associated US posturing will be analysed from the perspective of 'Elite Ideology' or, more colloquially, the 'Obama Doctrine'.

The elite ideology as an intervening variable encapsulates features of Obama Doctrine as a system of beliefs shaping the administration, particularly President Obama's, strategic perceptions with regards to intervention as a foreign policy tool. The president and his advisors enjoy primacy in determining foreign policy direction (Interviewee 3, 2015) as they constitute the American Foreign Policy Executive (FPE) (Lobell, 2009,p.56). So, getting into the details of their thinking and perceptions will be crucial to understand the Obama Doctrine, which was informed and shaped as a collective effort of FPE.

The principal tenets of the Obama Doctrine can be summarised as follows (Atlas, 2012; R. G. Kaufman, 2014; Stepak & Whitlark, 2012)

- Political and economic leadership, versus militarised dominance
- Reduced military presence overseas, and the redistribution of America's global military responsibilities to regional allies
- A greater focus on soft power to deal with international threats and the use of force as a last resort
- Use force to sustain US interests and American values
- Increased selectivity in the deployment and use of force, smaller military footprint abroad
- Use force multilaterally, proportionally, for limited goals, with limited means
- Use air power only with no or very limited "boots on the ground"
- Focus on unconventional threats particularly global terrorism.

Colin Dueck briefly summarises Obama Doctrine's stance against intervention as 'a more light-footed, cautious, multilateral, and low-cost approach toward US military interventions overseas' in order to focus on nation-building at home (Dueck, 2015, p.45). In broader terms, Dueck argues that President Obama had implicit grand strategy based on three pillars: focusing primarily on domestic transformational goals

on one hand and internationally retrenching America`s military presence overseas and accommodating international rivalries on the other in a way not to endanger the internal agenda (Dueck, 2015, p.2-3).

President Obama`s campaign policy speech on Iraq, delivered on the 15th July 2008, provides the initial blueprint of the Obama Doctrine as a foreign policy decision making framework with regards to US`s response to ongoing and emerging conflicts. President Obama reminded his audience that he had opposed going to war in Iraq and also declared his decision to redeploy US combat troops in Iraq by 2011 and keep only a residual force to target remnants of Al-Qaida and train and support the Iraqi Security Forces. President Obama argued that as a result of the Iraq War, thousands of American troops lost their lives, a trillion dollars had been spent, numerous allies were alienated and prominent emerging threats were neglected. He also particularly emphasised two main pillars of Obama Doctrine: using all elements of American power instead of exclusively relying on the US military as a foreign policy tool; and building and leading a coalition instead of alienating the US from the rest of world. President Obama also explained the five components of his foreign policy strategy to make America safer: “ending the war in Iraq responsibly; finishing the fight against Al Qaida and the Taliban; securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue states; achieving true energy security; and rebuilding alliances to meet the challenges of the 21st century”. (Obama, 2008a)

After Obama took office as US President in early 2009, he committed himself to repairing the US`s relationship with Muslim majority countries and ending the US military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. He expressed the details of his foreign policy strategy initially in his Cairo speech and then in the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) (Gerges, 2012).

President Obama delivered a key speech at Cairo University on 4th June 2009 during an event co-hosted by Al Azhar University. As the title of the speech, *'The New Beginning'*, suggested, the President endeavoured to convey his message to Muslims around the world that his administration would open a new page and act differently in its engagement with the Muslim world. "I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition," he said. President Obama made a distinction between the Afghanistan and Iraq interventions by stating that US involvement in the former was out of necessity while the latter was a war of choice. He stated that "...events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible. Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson: I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be." (Obama, 2009a). This reflects his dominant philosophy, which prioritises the use of non-military means to solve problems.

In his Nobel Prize speech on 10th December 2009 Obama referred to the 'just war' concept and stated that war can be justified if it is waged for self-defence, as a last resort, with proportional force and if it spares civilians from violence. With regards to international standards that govern the use of force he said "adhering to standards strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don't". He also referred to the slaughter of civilians by their own government, and civil wars engulfing an entire region and said "force can be justified on humanitarian grounds". As for global security, he stated that America cannot act alone and secure the peace. He highlighted the need for alternatives to violence to change the behaviour of nations that break

rules and laws. He also denoted the contrasts between realists and idealists and said that he rejects “a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose our values around the world”. He also said “No matter how callously defined, neither America’s interests -- nor the world’s -- are served by the denial of human aspirations”. (Obama, 2009b)

In the National Security Strategy (NSS), published in 2010, President Obama stated that his administration’s priority was renewing the US economy as the primary source of American power in the aftermath of 2008 economic recession. The document also highlighted that the adversaries of the US were trying to overextend US power in multiple domains and that the US would not succeed by stepping outside the currents of international cooperation (Obama, 2010). With regards to the use of force, President Obama defined the conditions under which the US ought to take military action. His binary classification of multilateral and unilateral action was based on the threat perception against US interests and security.

While the use of force is sometimes necessary, we will exhaust other options before war whenever we can, and carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against the costs and risks of inaction. When force is necessary, we will continue to do so in a way that reflects our values and strengthens our legitimacy, and we will seek broad international support, working with such institutions as NATO and the U.N. Security Council. The United States must reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend our nation and our interests, yet we will also seek to adhere to standards that govern the use of force. Doing so strengthens those who act in line with international standards, while isolating and weakening those who do not. We will also outline a clear mandate and specific objectives and thoroughly consider the consequences —intended and unintended—of our actions (Obama, 2010).

The NSS also called for a rebalancing of America’s global commitments away from Iraq and Afghanistan toward challenges the US was facing in Asia-Pacific region (Gerges, 2012).

At a Joint Press Conference President Obama held with President Aquino on 28th April 2014 in Manila, Philippines, President Obama was asked to explain 'the Obama Doctrine' as guiding principles for his foreign policy decisions regarding ongoing crisis. In his response, Obama underlined the prominent tenets of his doctrine as: deploy military forces wisely as a last resort when core US security interests are at stake, avoid casualties and financial cost. His remarks implicitly questioned the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and the outcome.

Typically, criticism of our foreign policy has been directed at the failure to use military force. And the question I think I would have is, why is it that everybody is so eager to use military force after we've just gone through a decade of war at enormous costs to our troops and to our budget? And what is it exactly that these critics think would have been accomplished? My job as Commander-in-Chief is to deploy military force as a last resort, and to deploy it wisely. And, frankly, most of the foreign policy commentators that have questioned our policies would go headlong into a bunch of military adventures that the American people had no interest in participating in and would not advance our core security interests (Obama, 2014d).

He used the Syria conflict as an example of this foreign policy perspective which focused on key US security interests. He said:

So if you look at Syria, for example, our interest is in helping the Syrian people, but nobody suggests that us being involved in a land war in Syria would necessarily accomplish this goal. And I would note that those who criticize our foreign policy with respect to Syria, they themselves say, no, no, no, we don't mean sending in troops. Well, what do you mean? Well, you should be assisting the opposition -- well, we're assisting the opposition. What else do you mean? Well, perhaps you should have taken a strike in Syria to get chemical weapons out of Syria. Well, it turns out we're getting chemical weapons out of Syria without having initiated a strike (Obama, 2014d).

Remarks by President Obama at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony on 28th May 2014 also delineated the fundamentals of Obama Doctrine with regards to the use of force. Obama stated his sensitivity about using US military power and suggested that the use of force should not be the only or primary means used in every instance by saying: "Just because we have the best

hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.” He made a clear distinction between the US right to take unilateral action when core US interests and security of US citizens and allies are threatened and issues of global concern that do not pose a direct threat to US (Obama, 2014e).

The United States will use military force, unilaterally if necessary, when our core interests demand it -- when our people are threatened, when our livelihoods are at stake, when the security of our allies is in danger. ...On the other hand, when issues of global concern do not pose a direct threat to the United States, when such issues are at stake -- when crises arise that stir our conscience or push the world in a more dangerous direction but do not directly threaten us -- then the threshold for military action must be higher. In such circumstances, we should not go it alone. Instead, we must mobilize allies and partners to take collective action. We have to broaden our tools to include diplomacy and development; sanctions and isolation; appeals to international law; and, if just, necessary and effective, multilateral military action (Obama, 2014e).

In his reference to the ongoing crisis in Syria President Obama described the issue as a conflict of global concern that does not pose direct threat to US. He stated that there was no easy military solution to the conflict and he justified his decision of not committing American troops to a sectarian war. He also mentioned his stance did not mean inaction and highlighted the role of international institutions such as NATO, the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF as force multipliers in reducing the need for unilateral American action (Obama, 2014e).

The indirect references to the main tenets of Obama Doctrine in his speeches on Libya and Syria conflicts also point to the desirability of multilateral US responses to global crises, more burden sharing with regional allies, limited intervention in scope and time, and putting no boots in harm's way.

A week after the protests started in eastern Libya, on 23rd February 2011 Obama stated that UN Security Council unanimously condemned the violence in Libya and the same message had been delivered by the “European Union, the Arab League, the

African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and many individual nations". He reassured that his administration was preparing a full range of options to respond to the crisis. He drew a distinction between actions the US could take unilaterally, those the US could coordinate with its allies and partner nations and those that could be carried out through multilateral institutions (Obama, 2011c).

On 25th February, Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, announced that mass killings, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture of protestors had reportedly escalated and that tanks, helicopters and military aircraft had been used indiscriminately killing or injuring possibly thousands (Spencer, 2011). On 26th February, the UN Security Council voted unanimously and adopted UNSC Resolution 1970 to impose sanctions on the Libyan regime. By this stage the UN reported that 1,000 people had died (BBC News, 2011a).

In her memoirs, then Secretary of State Clinton draws attention to a National Security Council meeting in the White House on 9 March 2011 about the potential US intervention in Libya and underlines the lack of appetite and division among President Obama's national security team for direct military intervention. Defence Secretary Gates firmly opposed intervention on the grounds that core national interests were not at stake in Libya. The Pentagon believed a no-fly zone would "unlikely be enough" to tip the balance in favour of rebels. UN Ambassador Susan Rice and National Security Council aide Samantha Power argued that the US had responsibility to protect civilians and prevent a massacre. (H. R. Clinton, 2015, 298-302) Similarly, Defence Secretary Gates memoirs reveal the division among foreign policy executives:.

"Biden, Donilon, Daley, Mullen, McDonough, Brennan, and Robert Gates urging caution about military involvement, and UN Ambassador Susan Rice and NSS staffers Ben Rhodes and Samantha Power urging aggressive US action to prevent an anticipated massacre of the rebels as Qaddafi fought to remain in power. In the final phase of the internal debate, Hillary threw her considerable

clout behind Rice, Rhode, and Power. I believed that what was happening in Libya was not a vital national interest of the US. (Gates, 2015,p.511)

In response to the Libyan security forces use of conventional military forces against protesters and the increasing number of civilian casualties, the Arab League called on the UNSC on 12th March 2011 to impose a 'no-fly zone' over Libya to protect civilians (Omorogbe, 2012). On 17th March 2011 the UNSC passed Resolution 1973, which authorized member states to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and establish a ban on all flights in the airspace (UN, 2011).

Defence Secretary Robert Gates notes that in a private conversation, President Obama said that "the Libyan military operation had been a 51-49 call for him". Gates also points out that the intervention was supposed to be a coordinated and joint operation, but French President Sarkozy sent aircraft several hours before the agreed start time. (Gates, 2015,p.519)

On 18th March 2011, President Obama reassured that the international community would enforce the no-fly zone through military action. He highlighted that the US would act as part of an international coalition, which included European and Arab partners. He said that "American leadership is essential, but that does not mean acting alone — it means shaping the conditions for the international community to act together.... this is precisely how the international community should work, as more nations bear both the responsibility and the cost of enforcing international law". He also reaffirmed that the US was not going to deploy ground troops into Libya (Obama, 2011a).

The first US attacks against the Qaddafi regime occurred on 19th March and consisted mostly of Tomahawk attacks against air defence systems, radar sites, missile systems, and communications centres around Tripoli, and the western cities

of Misurata and Sirte, in an effort to set the conditions for the no-fly zone implementation (NYTimes, 2011). US and UK cruise missiles fired from ships and submarines in the Mediterranean hit more than 20 Libyan air defence targets, firing more than 110 missiles, while French air attacks on 19 March focused on Libyan mechanized and motorised forces attacking rebel-held Benghazi (BBC News, 2011).

After the strikes started, Obama made clear that efforts to enforce a no-fly zone in Libya would be led by international partners and that the US would contribute with its distinctive capabilities, without deploying any US troops on the ground (Obama, 2011e).

On 28th March 2011 President Obama outlined why the US had responded to the Libya conflict. President Obama explained that the situation in Libya was a case where the safety of the US was not directly threatened, but its interests and values were, which brought about a responsibility to act. On the value domain he said:

It's true that America cannot use our military wherever repression occurs....In this particular country -Libya - at this particular moment, we were faced with the prospect of violence on a horrific scale. We had a unique ability to stop that violence: an international mandate for action, a broad coalition prepared to join us, the support of Arab countries, and a plea for help from the Libyan people themselves. We also had the ability to stop Qaddafi's forces in their tracks without putting American troops on the ground. (Obama, 2011d)

President Obama also reiterated that the burden of action in response to Libya type of crisis should not be America's alone. He said:

As we have in Libya, our task is instead to mobilize the international community for collective action. Because contrary to the claims of some, American leadership is not simply a matter of going it alone and bearing all of the burden ourselves. Real leadership creates the conditions and coalitions for others to step up as well; to work with allies and partners so that they bear their share of the burden and pay their share of the costs; and to see that the principles of justice and human dignity are upheld by all....In this effort, the United States has not acted alone. Instead, we have been joined by a strong and growing coalition. This includes our closest allies — nations like the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Denmark,

Norway, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Turkey — all of whom have fought by our sides for decades. And it includes Arab partners like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, who have chosen to meet their responsibilities to defend the Libyan people (Obama, 2011d).

On 20th September 2011 President Obama also emphasised the role of the international community in confronting global challenges at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Libya. He state that “this is how the international community should work in the 21st century -- more nations bearing the responsibility and the costs of meeting global challenges”(Obama, 2011g).

The interviews that Jeffrey Goldberg, editor in chief of *The Atlantic*, conducted with President Obama as he was nearing to the end of his presidency highlights the significant tenets of Obama Doctrine and how the Libya experience influenced President Obama`s future calculus with regards to the Syrian civil war. Goldberg defines Obama as a retrenchment president, pursuing a policy focusing on cutting the costs, risks and sharing the burden with allies. Goldberg provides first-hand account of Obama`s candid evaluation of the Libya intervention in 2011. Obama acknowledges that the intervention did not work and the country was drifted into a deeper chaos since then. Obama also outlines basic issues that shaped his foreign policy choices with regards to Libya: 1) the social order in Libya was broken down, 2) massive protests took place against Qaddafi, 3) tribal divisions were significant, 4) Benghazi was the focal point for the opposition, 5) Qaddafi was about to attack Benghazi exclaiming ‘We will kill them like rats.’ (Goldberg, 2016).

Goldberg also provides Obama`s discourse explaining why US intervened in Libya in a limited fashion.

The way I looked at it was that it would be our problem if, in fact, complete chaos and civil war broke out in Libya. But this is not so at the core of U.S. interests that it makes sense for us to unilaterally strike against the Qaddafi regime. At that point, you’ve got Europe and a number of Gulf countries who despise Qaddafi, or are concerned on a humanitarian basis, who are calling for action. ...But because this is not at the core of our interests, we

need to get a UN mandate; we need Europeans and Gulf countries to be actively involved in the coalition; we will apply the military capabilities that are unique to us, but we expect others to carry their weight. And we worked with our defense teams to ensure that we could execute a strategy without putting boots on the ground and without a long- term military commitment in Libya.

President Obama and his administration`s stance against the Syria conflict was not so different, particularly at the nascent phase of the conflict. After Syrian regime forces crushed protests in Hama in July 2011, killing up to 100 people (Black, 2011b), Hilary Clinton stated that “Assad has lost legitimacy, failed to deliver on the promises he has made, he is not indispensable and we have absolutely nothing invested in him remaining in power” (The Washington Post, 2011).

The Secretary of State`s statement was reinforced a month later on 18th August 2011 by Obama`s call for Assad to step down:

My administration is announcing unprecedented sanctions to deepen the financial isolation of the Assad regime and further disrupt its ability to finance a campaign of violence against the Syrian people. I have signed a new Executive Order requiring the immediate freeze of all assets of the Government of Syria subject to U.S. jurisdiction and prohibiting U.S. persons from engaging in any transaction involving the Government of Syria. This E.O. also bans U.S. imports of Syrian-origin, petroleum or petroleum products; prohibits U.S. persons from having any dealings in or related to Syria`s petroleum or petroleum products; and prohibits U.S. persons from operating or investing in Syria (Obama, 2011i).

However, the US administration was reluctant to take direct military action against the Syrian regime until the allegations emerged regarding the Syrian Armed Forces` use of chemical weapons. During a press conference on 30th April 2013 President Obama referred to use of chemical weapons in Syria by Assad regime as a `game-changer` that would lead him to reconsider the spectrum of options at his disposal to prevent further attacks and the dissemination of chemical weapons, which could threaten US security or the security of its allies in the region (Obama, 2013b).

When chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21st August 2013 were used, White House officials indicated that the US would act militarily against the Syrian regime, since Obama believed core US interests were at stake and countries violating international norms regarding chemical weapons needed to be held accountable (Stacey et al., 2013).

The National Security Council was posturing towards punitive strikes against the Assad regime and President Obama seemed to have inclined towards military action too in the wake of the attack. However, on 30th August 2013, a day after UK Prime Minister David Cameron lost a vote in Parliament to authorize participation in an allied strike against Syria, Obama decided to seek Congressional approval for military action. President Obama revealed his surprising decision to National Security Council members after a walk with White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough (Todd, 2013). Goldberg claims Denis McDonough warned President Obama about the risks of intervention while President Obama shared his own worries with regard to intervention: 1) Assad would place civilians as “human shields” around obvious targets, 2) Security concerns would prevent targeting directly chemical weapons, 3) Missile strikes would jeopardise UN inspectors on the ground, 4) Cameron failed to obtain consent of his parliament for military action in Syria, 5) A limited strike which will result in Assad’s survival would strengthen his hand, 6) Obama believed that the scope of executive power in national security domain was not limitless (Goldberg, 2016).

On 31st August 2013 Obama portrayed Assad’s use of chemical weapon against civilians in Syria as a national security danger. He vowed to take military action against Syrian regime targets on the condition that a mandate from the ‘American people’s representatives in Congress is gained. President Obama emphasised that there would be no boots on the ground and that military action would be limited in duration and

scope to deter and degrade the Assad regime's capability to carry out chemical weapon attack in the future (Obama, 2013e).

What influenced and shaped President Obama's thinking in the wake of the chemical weapon attack and what led him to forgo his decision to take military action against Assad regime is a crucial analytical puzzle. Goldberg partly attributes President Obama's refusal to follow the "the Washington playbook, which calls for militarily action against the Assad regime, to Obama's disposition regarding the Middle East and the perceived second or third order effects of a limited missile strike. Obama feared Assad and his allies would escalate the tension in response to a limited strike, which could have led to an all-out war against the Syrian regime similar to that in Iraq. Obama feared being dragged into this kind of situation. Obama believed American all-out involvement would make the situation in Syria worse, not better, and that a limited missile strike targeting airbases would be ineffectual and counterproductive. Instead, President Obama preferred eliminating the preponderance of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile: 'Obama was proud of doing something without war that could not have been achieved with war' (Goldberg, 2017).

In his 10th September 2013 speech, Obama announced his decision to postpone a congressional vote in order to pursue a diplomatic path with Russia to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons capability. He reiterated that he saw Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians as a threat to national security interests. He referred to potential threats to regional allies Turkey, Jordan, and Israel and mentioned that a failure to confront the use of chemical weapons would embolden Iran to ignore international law by building nuclear weapons. Another important point in Obama's speech to showcase why he was not planning regime change in Syria by force can be seen when he said "I don't think we should remove another dictator with force -- we

learned from Iraq that doing so makes us responsible for all that comes next". He explained his alternative military strategy should the diplomatic initiative with Russia to dismantle Syrian chemical weapon capability fail: "I will not put American boots on the ground in Syria. I will not pursue an open-ended action like Iraq or Afghanistan. I will not pursue a prolonged air campaign like Libya or Kosovo. This would be a targeted strike to achieve a clear objective: deterring the use of chemical weapons, and degrading Assad's capabilities" (Obama, 2013c). In practice, the Obama administration kept the limited use of force as a last resort while the main objective seemed to be the threat of action to compel the Assad regime to eliminate its chemical weapon programme.

President Obama's reaction to the chemical weapon attack confirms the validity of the influence of Obama Doctrine over his foreign policy choices. While the vast majority of his National Security Council members were advocating military action and the domestic and international public was ready for unilateral US military action President Obama resisted. His decision can be construed as a proof that basic tenets of Obama Doctrine of retrenchment and accommodation were consistently in play and were framing Obama's decisions regarding the civil wars. President Obama prioritised avoiding and reducing US international and military costs and commitments on the one hand and accommodated Russia through a deal to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons stockpile on the other.

Another major turning point in the Syrian conflict was US air strikes against ISIL targets in Syria on 23rd September 2014. US strikes were preceded initially by ISIL's capture of 60 villages in Northern Syria as ISIL was approaching a key town, Kobane, on the border, which caused an exodus of 45,000 Syrian Kurds into Turkey on 21st

September (The Guardian, 2014b) and before that by the beheading of two American journalist in Syria.

Upon the beheading of Jim Foley, a US Journalist operating in Syria, Obama avoided accepting explicitly that ISIL was at war with the US. His statement on 20th August 2014 reflects his ambivalence and reluctance to using force unilaterally. “They may claim out of expediency that they are at war with the United States or the West... The United States of America will continue to do what we must do to protect our people... When people harm Americans anywhere, we do what’s necessary to see that justice is done and we act against ISIL, standing alongside others. The people of Syria, whose story Jim Foley told, do not deserve to live under the shadow of a tyrant or terrorists... From governments and peoples across the Middle East, there has to be a common effort to extract this cancer so that it does not spread” (Obama, 2014c).

On 3rd September 2014, President Obama strongly condemned the beheading of a second American journalist, Steven Sotloff, by ISIL in Syria. “ ...like people around the world, Americans are repulsed by their barbarism. We will not be intimidated. Their horrific acts only unite us as a country to stiffen our resolve to take the fight against these terrorists.” (Obama, 2014a)

On 13th September 2014, in his weekly address, President Obama declared the boundaries of its strategy to target ISIL in Syria: “American military power is unmatched, but this can’t be America’s fight alone. And the best way to defeat a group like ISIL isn’t by sending large numbers of American combat forces to wage a ground war in the heart of the Middle East. That wouldn’t serve our interests. In fact, it would only risk fuelling extremism even more. What’s needed now is a targeted, relentless counterterrorism campaign against ISIL that combines American

air power, contributions from allies and partners, and more support to forces that are fighting these terrorists on the ground”(Obama, 2014j)

On 23rd September 2014, President Obama announced that the US had conducted its first anti-ISIL air operations in Syria with partners (namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, and Qatar). He also highlighted the fact that the US administration would ramp up its effort to train and equip the Syrian opposition to counteract ISIL. President Obama underlined that air strikes were part of broader campaign to target ISIL in both Iraq and Syria, along with supporting moderate opposition fighting against ISIL, cutting off ISIL’s financing, countering ISIL’s ideology and stopping the flow of fighters in and out of Syria (Obama, 2014f). While the US had been planning to initiate a concerted effort to target ISIL in Syria, the brutal killing of two US journalists in Syria served as a catalyst to expedite US plans for action. While the US had backed away from targeting the Assad regime in September 2013 in the wake of Syrian regime’s chemical attack, he was resolved to take action against ISIL as the group became a more direct threat to US interests and security. Nonetheless, President Obama’s overall strategy against ISIL was still in conformity with the basic parameters of the Obama Doctrine. While the intervention decision was taken on the basis of US security interests, the Obama Doctrine seemed to have led to limited US military action in Syria. The US military response was designed as a broad coalition effort rather than a unilateral action and it was limited to air airstrikes and support for the ground offensives of local forces.

Impact of Obama Doctrine

President Obama's decision for military intervention in Libya was predominantly framed by the threat posed to core US interests. President Obama was under the impression that those interests were not directly threatened significantly so unilateral intervention without UN mandate was not necessary. Instead a coalition of international forces from Europe and the Middle East under the auspices of a UN mandate would ensure that the US would share the responsibility and costs without a long-term US military commitment in Libya and without putting boots on the ground. In the Libya case the legitimacy of action through UN resolutions, regional and international support provided by the Arab League, the African Union, sharing the intervention responsibilities with NATO and regional partners, and the preclusion of deploying 'boots on the ground' in a combat role were all in line with Obama Doctrine.

For the Syria case during the first three episodes of the conflict, even though US interests and values were seriously threatened by the Syrian regime and the ongoing civil conflict, the lack of broad international support for action against the Syrian regime and the potential risk of a protracted US entanglement were all factors that affected the US response. The risk of a long term US commitment in Syria akin to that in Iraq and Afghanistan was also an important factor in US considerations. President Obama's significant concerns with regards to 'retrenchment' prevented him from taking direct military action against the Syria regime; his understanding was that any direct military involvement would require long-term US commitment and give rise to direct confrontation with Russia and Iran, which is in contrast with the Obama Doctrine's 'accommodating rivalries' principle.

In the fourth episode of the Syrian conflict, where the US would have been expected to take direct military action against the Syrian regime in the aftermath of the

chemical weapon attack, the US sought a diplomatic solution with Russia, a position in line with the Obama doctrine's use of military force as a last resort. Even before the diplomatic deal struck between Russia and US to eliminate Syria's chemical weapon stockpile, the threat of force Obama declared was framed as a limited strike in scope and duration against military bases used by Assad regime to deliver chemical weapons. The primary aim was to avoid being dragged into an all-out war against the Syrian regime (i.e. retrenchment) and to avoid provoking Russian and Iranian action, which would escalate the tension further in the region (i.e. accommodating rivalries).

However, as the ISIL threat begun to pose a direct threat to the region and US interests in the fifth episode, international support for action and the willingness of regional and Western allies to share the responsibility and burden were instrumental for the US taking direct military action against ISIL and increasing efforts to empower local forces in their fight against ISIL. The beheading of two American journalist and the likelihood of the massacre of Syrian Kurds living in the villages on the Turkish-Syrian border by ISIL prompted US military action. However, Obama categorically rejected the idea of sending large numbers of American combat forces to Syria, as he believed that it would fuel extremism in the region and not serve US interests. Instead, he embarked upon his long-term strategy of targeting ISIL in multiple domains in Syria by expanding airstrikes into ISIL targets in Syria and including allies into the operation. President Obama did not hesitate in targeting ISIL in Syria, as it was a common threat to the world, including Russia and Iran.

In conclusion, in both the Libya and Syria cases, President Obama attempted to exhaust other options before military intervention. When intervention was deemed necessary, the Obama doctrine seemed to have informed and set the limits of foreign policy behaviour as a continuous and always applied framework. Sharing the burden

with regional and international actors rather than acting alone, rallying international institutions for action, pursuing a limited intervention strategy in scope and time in support of local forces without deploying US ground combatant troops constituted the general framework for US action.

It is imperative to look at the intervening variables collectively to be able to understand why the US refrained from direct military action in the first three episodes of the Syrian conflict against the Syrian regime and also the fourth episode against ISIL as a deflection from expected US behaviour. It was contrary to the expected US behaviour to wait until ISIL announced its caliphate in June 2014 for military action, since the group had started operating in Syria as of April 2013 and had captured area.

5.2 US Economic Constraints

This section considers the influence of economic considerations on US foreign policy choices vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts. Economic constraints would be expected to impact upon the form and the scale of intervention.

The 2008 global financial crisis affected the US economy substantially, culminating in a sharp decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by adversely impacting output, consumption, and investment (Labonte, 2010). The 2008 global financial crisis reduced the fiscal resources available to the US. Coupled with the multiple security challenges which it was confronted with, in particular Afghanistan and Iraq, this gave rise to a “light footprint” strategy in order to compensate for overstretched US military capability. This approach represented a shift from relying on massive military force to accomplish national security objectives to one which relied on a small number of specialised military forces abroad to support both air strikes and local forces (Luján, 2013). In 2012 Defence Strategic Guidance, President Obama also

emphasised that US would no longer conduct large-scale stability operations like Iraq and Afghanistan (Obama, 2012d).

One of the primary drivers of the Obama Doctrine was the president's determination, declared in August 2011, to reduce the defence budget by 500 billion USD over the following decade, mainly by downsizing the US military and eventually limiting defence spending to below three percent of GDP. These cuts encompassed various procurement programmes, entailed the closure of military bases, particularly in Europe, and would entail the demobilisation of some 100,000 military personnel by 2017 (R. G. Kaufman, 2014; Stepak & Whitlark, 2012)

In the 2008 Presidential election campaign, President Obama had constantly accused the Bush administration of mismanaging the US economy during the 2008 global economic crisis and of pursuing misguided policies in both Iraq and Afghanistan (Jost, 2009). In that context, the interplay between these two dimensions and their collective role in shaping Obama's foreign policy approach for Libya and Syria conflicts will be considered as an intervening variable. Specifically, the intervening variable of economic constraints covers the impact of the 2008 recession, the state of the US economy before 2011, the cost of war against the backdrop of protracted nation building efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the impact of defence budget cuts on US foreign policy choices in Libya and Syria.

The 2008-2009 recession was seen as the most severe economic crisis since the 1930s great depression. As a result of a steep decline in output, consumption, and investment, real GDP fell 5.1% (680 billion USD) in the second half of 2009. The unemployment rate went up to 10.1% in October 2009 (from 4.6% in 2007); Approximately 7 million people were put out of work during the recession in the US (Elwell, 2013; Labonte, 2010). In later years, before the 2012 presidential elections,

President Obama referred back to 2008-2009 and noted that the US economy had contracted by 9% and lost four million jobs before he was sworn in and another four million jobs in three months after he was sworn in (Obama, 2011b).

President Obama's 13th October 2008 speech in Toledo, Ohio was dedicated to his plan to overcome the economic crisis. He particularly underlined the increasing unemployment trend. He said: "We've already lost three-quarters of a million jobs this year, and some experts say that unemployment may rise to 8% by the end of next year" (Obama, 2008b). The election of Barack Obama as president in 2008 was widely seen as an electoral response to economic crisis (Bartels, 2013).

As the economic indicators got worse, the costly, long-lasting American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were questioned widely. In his February 2009 speech President Obama outlined his recovery plan aimed at putting the economy back on track by creating jobs and affordable housing, reinstating lending systems, bringing the deficit down, and investing in energy, health care, and education. Obama promised the upcoming budget for the first time would include the full cost of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan (Obama, 2009c).

A Harvard Kennedy School research paper published in 2013 estimates the cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars to US up until 2013 to be between 4 to 6 trillion US. This figure includes long-term social and economic costs, replenishment of worn-out equipment, medical care, disability and compensation expenses. The research also suggested that the Iraq and Afghanistan wars had added 2 trillion USD to the national debt, accounting for 20% of the debt accumulated between 2001 and 2012 (Bilmes, 2013). In addition to the economic costs, the fact that 6,700 American service members lost their lives and additional 51,000 were wounded in the two wars was a serious concern for the US administration (Shlapak, 2015).

Before and during the Libya intervention the financial cost of US involvement was frequently debated in the US Congress, most of the time by drawing parallels to the Afghan and Iraq interventions. During the no-fly zone discussions in US Congress hearings before the intervention in Libya, Republican House of Representatives member Ron Paul noted that the US lost 4,500 military personnel, while over 30,000 suffered severe injuries in Iraq over the last ten years. He warned that if the US were to enforce a no-fly zone it would eventually lead to a full-scale war and an additional budgetary burden (Ron Paul, 2011).

Just after the US military intervention in Libya, President Obama was criticised by both Republican and Democrat members of the Congress on the grounds that the US faced no threat to its national security and had no strategic interests in Libya. New Mexico Republican House of Representatives member Steve Pearce cautioned that the intervention would put further pressure on an already strained budget and would contribute to the national debt reaching 15 trillion US Dollars. He argued that these resources should be funnelled to job creation in the US instead (Pearce, 2011). Another Republican House of Representative member, Tim Johnson, highlighted that defence spending had reached 700 billion a year, of which an important portion was earmarked for the Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya wars (Johnson, 2011).

Democratic House of Representative member from California, Lynn Woolsey, drew attention to a potential 1 billion USD additional burden to taxpayers as the cost of US intervention in Libya. She referred to the 7 billion USD a month cost of prolonged US military presence in Afghanistan and its negative influence on domestic welfare programs (Woolsey, 2011).

Democratic House member Brad Sherman even suggested that the 30 billion USD worth Libyan assets invested in US that were seized as part of the sanctions

applied should be used to fund US military intervention instead of using money collected from American taxpayers, claiming that the weekly cost was billions of US Dollars (Sherman, 2011).

Republican House member John Duncan criticised unaffordable permanent wars by stating that the Appropriations Defence Subcommittee had approved 119 billion USD for wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Duncan suggested that the money should be spent on defending against real threats rather than nation building abroad. Within this framework, Duncan described the Libya intervention as useless and suggested that rebuilding the US and coping with the 14 trillion USD debt instead was more important (Duncan, 2011).

Republican House member Dan Burton also criticised the fact that in excess of 1 billion USD of taxpayer money was being spent on the Libya intervention at a time when budget deficit was close to 1.5 trillion USD and total debt stood at over 14 trillion (Burton, 2011a).

The impact of economic crisis and the cost of entrenched US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan prompted defence cuts within the US administration. President Barack Obama announced a defence strategy in 2012, which mandated cutting defence spending gradually over the next ten years as part of reductions to federal spending. Obama underlined the fact that the US defence budget had grown at an extraordinary pace since 9/11 as a result of long-term nation-building commitments that required large military footprints in Iraq and Afghanistan over extended periods. He explained that his strategy was to maintain the superiority of US military power by keeping leaner but agile, flexible conventional ground forces with slowly growing defence budget over a ten year period (Obama, 2012b).

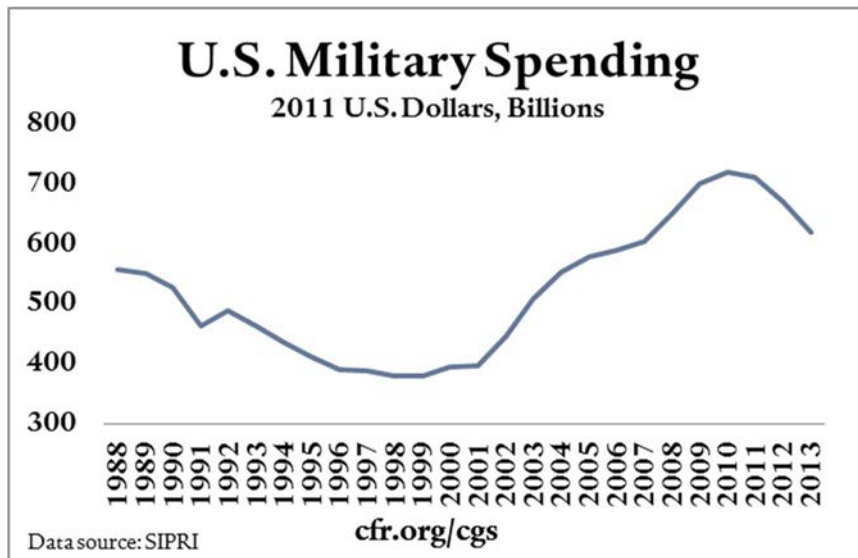


Figure 15 US Military Spending in Years

Source: Walker, D. (2014). Trends in U.S. Military Spending, 15 July 2014. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.cfr.org/defense-budget/trends-us-military-spending/p28855>

Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta presented the defence strategy as a strategic turning point, precipitated by two concurrent wars and the large increase in defence spending. Panetta reiterated that the US was facing a very serious deficit and debt problem and a reduction of defence spending by 487 billion US Dollars over 10 years was part of fiscal responsibility. However, he also said that the crisis provided the US military with the opportunity to adapt a new environment, one that required rapidly deployable, smaller and leaner US joint forces. He also pointed out rebalancing US global posturing by increasing presence and power projection in Asia- Pacific. After the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences the Army and Marine Corps no longer would need to be sized to support large-scale, long-term stability operations. Instead the resources earmarked for special operations forces, Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance and unmanned systems, space and mobilisation capabilities would be increased (Panetta, 2012).

In addition to 450 billion US Dollar cuts over a decade which corresponds to 8 percent of the Pentagon's base budget a further 500 billion in cuts articulated within the administration, caused concerns among national security commentators (Bumiller & Shanker, 2012). In that context critics questioned whether the US could afford to open a third front in Libya and sustain it militarily over an extended period. Particularly as US B-2 stealth planes dropped bombs in Libya and 200 cruise missiles launched from submarines in the Mediterranean during the first week of Libya operations, the possibility of extended campaign costing additional billions of US Dollars was a source of concern. However, as NATO quickly assumed responsibility for the enforcement of no-fly zone the burden was shared by others. The US military provided mostly force multipliers like aerial refuelling tankers, electronic jamming, and ISR assets (Baron, 2011).

Even though the foreign policy decisions are made by the President and his Foreign Policy Executives the influence of opposition within Democrat Party and from Republican Party members cannot be disregarded. Despite the fact that saying intervention would have been very costly can very well be an excuse for not wanting to do it for other reasons, they might limit the leeway US decision makers have.

During the Congressional discussions on Libya, Democrat member of the US House of Representatives Dennis Kucinich quoted the long-term costs of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars to the US as 0.5 trillion and 3 trillion USD respectively and criticised extended Libya intervention at a time when the government was deep in debt (Kucinich, 2011).

Republican member of the US Senate, Marco Rubio, touched upon defence budget cuts in his foreign policy speech delivered at the Jesse Helms Centre on 13th September 2011. He stated that defence budget accounted for 20% of the federal

budget and substantial cuts in the defence budget would have devastating effects on national defence. Senator Rubio reminded that Secretary of Defence Gates had already cut 300 billion worth of procurement programmes in 2009 and 2010 and that the President and Congressional leaders had agreed on another 350 billion to be cut from the defence budget over the next ten years. He also speculated that total defence budget cuts could reach up to 1 trillion USD over ten years (Rubio, 2011)

The cost of war discussions resurfaced with Syria, but only after the US decided to take action against the Syrian Armed Forces' use of chemical weapons in Syria in September 2013. Republican member of the House of Representatives, Mo Brooks, argued that the US should not spend US resources by intervening in the Syrian civil war. He argued that such an intervention would undermine the US economy and national security by increasing debt, as well as potential additional defence layoffs and furloughs (Brooks, 2013)

During the discussions on the 10th September 2013 about authorising the limited and specified use of US Armed Forces against Syria, the Democrat member of the Senate from Vermont, Bernie Sanders, raised his objection to US intervention in Syria and stated the administration should focus first on the US's socio-economic problems. He referred to unemployment figures and said that the unemployment rate was 14% (as opposed to officially declared 7.4%) that youth unemployment was 20% and that black youth unemployment was 40% (Sanders, 2013) This approach is in line with Obama Doctrine that prioritises diverting more resources to domestic agenda.

Republican member of the US Senate James Inhofe also criticised the drastic defence budget cuts, 487 billion USD during the previous four-years, with austerity measures requiring automatic spending cuts of another 1.5 trillion, and said that the cuts reduced readiness of the US military and degraded the capabilities to a level

where meeting national security requirements had become challenging. He specifically alluded to sixteen Air Force combat flying squadrons being grounded for 3 months, the naval fleet being reduced to historically low levels, ground forces being cut by more than 100,000 personnel, and many US Department of Defence civilian employees been furloughed (Inhofe, 2013).

The common theme that arose from the interviews conducted for this research was that the US's costly experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan had an impact on its calculations regarding the Libya and Syria conflicts. However, the US administration would not hesitate to act militarily whenever their key security interests were at stake (Interviewee 2, 2015; Juneau, 2016). So, the economic constraints seem to have influenced the means applied rather than whether to intervene or not; different intervention options bring about varying costs to US (Interviewee 3, 2015).

Another significant theme that was repeatedly brought forward during the interviews was that potential military engagement by the US against the Syrian regime would have most certainly gone beyond the expense of Afghanistan and Iraq, because of the multiple actors involved and, in particular, the conventional threat coming from Iran and Russia and with much more sophisticated militaries, and asymmetric difficulties coming from non-state actors within Syria. That would require a long term commitment, which would bring with it a substantial fiscal burden (Interviewee 4, 2015).

In summary, the Obama administration inherited an economy heavily crippled by the great recession and, as part of its recovery plan, initiated large-scale defence spending cuts. The particular cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars influenced how the US perceived the Libya and Syria conflicts in financial terms. Despite the fact that intervention or non-intervention decisions are not principally made taking into

consideration solely economic constraints, the financial cost of intervention was a source of concern for the administration, leading to the selection of less costly options like conducting air strikes in support of local proxies versus relying on large US military force on the ground. The US administration followed a cautious policy not to repeat what they saw as mistakes of the Bush administration. In Libya the US preferred to be part of a coalition effort to enforce a no-fly zone and target regime forces and the military through air power, mostly relying on other coalition countries and NATO. The high financial costs and casualties inflicted by the Afghanistan and Iraq wars also led US to put no-boots-on the ground and not pursue a direct military intervention strategy that would eventually require a nation building effort. In the case of Syria, the conflict and its potential regional implications were so complex that the US did not want to risk another Afghanistan or Iraq type situation (or worse) by targeting Assad and depleting limited resources. Even after the ISIL threat emerged and grew and even after US journalists were beheaded, the US response was based by and large on less costly options like air strikes and providing training, weapons and close air support to vetted rebel groups fighting ISIL.

5.3 Libya/Syrian Opposition and the US Elite Perception

This section examines the composition, ideology and end state objectives of political and armed opposition during the Arab Spring era in Libya and Syria within a historical context. It also considers how the US administration perceived these opposition groups and how such perceptions could have impacted upon US decision-making in the form, scale and timing of support provided to the opposition groups.

Before considering the details of the Libya and Syria cases it could be useful to have a look at the principal parameters of opposition support. Findley and Teo

empirically analyse the connection between strategic and geopolitical interests and decisions to intervene into ongoing civil conflicts. They claim that the interests attributed to a conflict necessitates siding with whichever party (government or opposition) best supports the potential intervener's interests (Findley & Teo, 2006).

Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham attribute the decision over whether to support the government or particular rebel groups during civil wars and the specific type of support provided to two criteria: the ability of rebel groups to challenge the target regime; and the degree of congruence in preferences between the supporter and the opposing groups for the future of the country (Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham, 2011).

Retrospective analysis of the literature on intervention in civil wars by Regan also highlights the importance of a systematic examination of the goals of interveners and the motivation of rebels (Regan, 2010). So, in practice, two dimensions, the capacity and capability of the opposition to propose a viable alternative to a current regime and the congruence in the worldview and preferences of those groups relative to the intervener, seem to serve as important factors during the intervention decision making process.

Before looking into composition, capabilities and ideologies of rebels who played a significant role during the uprising against Qaddafi and Assad regimes, historical opposition in both countries will be briefly probed in the next section.

Libyan Opposition in Historical Perspective

Qaddafi has historically perceived any type of opposition with ideological, political, regional and tribal motives as a threat to the regime. However, opposition with Islamic orientation was considered an existential threat and taken more seriously

by Qaddafi. After the military coup in 1969, Qaddafi initially targeted the Sanusi religious establishment, which was primarily based throughout Cyrenaica. However, the threat from the Muslim Brotherhood was considered far greater than the Sanusi-inspired opposition since it was deemed to pose a direct challenge to the regime's alleged Islamic credentials. The Qaddafi regime successfully neutralized religiously motivated opposition through repression and, in the long run, by integrating Islam as an underpinning, legitimizing feature. Qaddafi adapted a religious vision to consolidate the Islamic unity rhetoric based mainly on Arab nationalism as being the core ideology (Joffe, 1988). `The Jamahiriya system` was outlined by Qaddafi in his 1975 *Green Book* as a middle way between capitalist democracies and single-party socialist states, with a blend of elements from pan-Arabism, socialism, and Islam (Bell, Anthony & Witter, 2011). Overall a portion of Libyan opposition can be considered a by-product of the violence wielded against religious opposition in historical perspective, which was coupled with conflicting ideological, political, regional and tribal motives (Ogbonnaya, 2013).

The Muslim Brotherhood

The first cadre of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Libya consists of MB members who fled a crackdown in Egypt in 1949 and took refuge in Benghazi, hosted by king Idris al-Senussi (Ashour, 2012). Following the 1969 coup, led by Qaddafi, all political organisations and opposition groups were disbanded in 1972, including MB. In 1973 and 1998 hundreds of MB members and activists were arrested; several reportedly died in custody. Following trials in 2001 and 2002, two prominent MB leaders were sentenced to death and over 70 were convicted to life in prison. As part of the

reconciliation initiative the Libyan administration introduced retrial processes for the imprisoned MB members in 2005 and 2006, which led to the release of the remaining 84 captive members (Blanchard, 2011). On 21st August 2007, Saif al-Islam Qaddafi publicised a new reform package, which espoused the expansion of political freedoms, as part of the continuation of reconciliation efforts. During the course of the dialogue process, MB played a prominent role as a mediator, thus facilitating the dialog between the Qaddafi regime and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group whose members suffered long term sentence in prison (Doha Institute, 2011).

The Libyan MB supported the Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) from the onset and some of its main figures took part in the body. MB members also established the Justice and Construction Party on 3rd March 2012, a nationalist party with an Islamic reference (Ashour, 2012), and MB emerged as the most organized political force in the early stages of post-revolution Libya.

Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)

The LIFG is a Salafist faction established by Libyans who participated in the fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The group led an insurgency based mainly in eastern Libya and attempted to overthrow the Qaddafi regime in the 1990s (Doha Institute, 2011). The group reportedly perpetrated three failed assassination plots against Qaddafi. During the confrontation, 165 Libyan officials and military servicemen were killed (Ashour, 2012). However, LIFG's struggle against Qaddafi proved unsuccessful; Libyan armed forces and security agencies heavily clamped down on the faction and arrested a large group (Doha Institute, 2011).

The US froze the LIFG's assets in the US in September 2001, and officially designated the LIFG as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in December 2004 (Blanchard, 2011). Following the dialogue and reconciliation process initiated in 2005, the Libyan regime and LIFG struck an agreement at the end of 2010 in which LIFG leaders renounced violence and advocated tolerance of other ideologies and religions (Ashour, 2012). Over 200 LIFG members were released, followed by the final 110 LIFG members, at the outset of the 2011 uprising. The group declared a reorganisation under the name of the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (LIMC), pursuing a non-violent political activism (Blanchard, 2011).

Libyan Opposition groups in exile

Opposition groups in exile were critically important for Libya simply because the regime did not allow for any opposition inside the country. The only option was to team up and collaborate with opposition in exile. Opposition groups in exile held the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition (NCLO) in July 2005 in London, calling for the relinquishing of Qaddafi's power, formation of a transitional government and establishment of a democratic state. These groups included the National Libyan Salvation Front (NLSF), the National Alliance, the Libyan National Movement (LNM), the Libyan Movement for Change and Reform, the Islamist Rally, and the Republican Rally for Democracy and Justice. A follow-up meeting was held in March 2008 (again, in London), wherein the commitment articulated in the first conference for a free, democratic and constitutional Libya was reinforced. The NCLO reportedly was instrumental in organizing the 'Day of Rage' in Libya on 17th February 2011 that turned into a full scale uprising against Qaddafi (Blanchard, 2011).

The most prominent of these groups was the NLSF. This group was launched from Sudan by an ex-Libyan official in 1981. Its agenda was centred on opposition to the dictatorial regime and it sought a transition to a constitutional democracy. NLSF's first armed uprising against Qaddafi in 1984 ended up with Qaddafi's regime publicly hanging eight of its members. Later, the NLSF abandoned its plans to overthrow Qaddafi through military means and joined the NCLO in 2005 to seek a political transition. NLSF's last major gathering was held in the United States in 2007 (Jacop, 2011).

Syrian Opposition in Historical Perspective

The core drivers of Syrian unrest are largely centred on a broader sense of socio-economic inequality, poor governance, unemployment, favouritism, systematic corruption and injustice faced by large segments of the Syrian population since the early 1980s (Tashjian, 2012).

There have been three mainstream ideological strands that played a crucial role among both political and armed opposition by influencing their perspective on democracy, freedom and pluralism during the revolution: nationalism and secularism; the Muslim Brotherhood; and Salafism.

Secular Nationalists

The secular nationalist opposition and rebel groups who advocated a secular, liberal and democratic state were the main driver of the uprising at the beginning of the conflict. In particular, the Free Syrian Army's founders were secular-minded military officers who had defected from the Syrian Army at the outset of the revolution (Ostovar & Mccants, 2013).

The first recent wave of intense anti-Assad opposition and activism had come just after the death of Hafez al-Assad on 10th June 2000, what later became known as the “Damascus Spring”, and called primarily for political, legal, and economic reforms and, more specifically, the establishment of multiparty democracy and the lifting of the 1963 State of Emergency. The Assad regime announced tentative reformist measures which later were withdrawn in the name of national unity. The most notable amnesty was the release of hundreds of political prisoners after the closing of Mezze prison in November 2000 (Carnegie Centre, 2012b). The prison was seen as a symbol of the regime’s brutality. Assad’s initiative to improve the relationship with the opposition saw the number of political prisoners reduced from a peak of around 4,000 (in 1993) to between 300 and 1,000 (Landis & Pace, 2007).

Seif, Riad al-Turk, Secretary General of the Syrian Communist Party between 1973 and 2005, attempted to establish a new political party, the Movement for Social Peace. However, together with a number of other leading figures from the movement, he was arrested and charged on 1 September 2001 with “attempting to change the constitution by illegal means”. The regime once again oppressed opposition, with arrests and threats ensuring, and by the end of 2002 the ‘Damascus Spring’ movement lost its momentum. Some members of the ‘Damascus Spring’ later participated in the second and third wave opposition movements against Assad’s regime, known as the 2005 Damascus Declaration and 2011 uprising respectively (Carnegie Centre, 2012b)

The second wave of forging and revitalising a common alliance against the Assad regime came after the Cedar revolution, which caused the withdrawal of Syrian forces in Lebanon. Leaders from Islamic, Arab nationalist, Kurdish, and leftist movements struggled to compromise on the principles of democracy and freedom against the

repressive regime in 2005 (Landis & Pace, 2007). On 16th October 2005, opposition figures and political parties issued the Damascus Declaration and denounced the Syrian regime as being “authoritarian, totalitarian, and cliquish” (Bagy, 2012).

The declaration primarily called for establishment of a democratic regime through: peaceful and gradual change based on dialogue, tolerance, respect of the beliefs, culture, and the special characteristics of others; granting freedom to individuals, groups, and minorities to express themselves and exercise their cultural and linguistic rights; suspending emergency law and Emergency Law 49¹², lifting the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood movement; and releasing all political prisoners (SyriaComment, 2005).

Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria had been politically active from 1946 until 1963 when the Baath Party came to power and banned the group's activities. In 1979, the Combatant Vanguard defected from the Brotherhood to take up arms against the regime; the group killed eighty-three Alawite student officers at the military school in Aleppo (Carnegie Centre, 2012c).

In 1980, the Assad regime imprisoned about 550 Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) members and executed them in their cells under the pretext that they plotted to assassinate Assad. The regime used violence as a tool to maintain its rule, most strikingly during the Hama massacre of February 1982 (Sayigh, 2013), wherein the army, in an attempt to clamp down on rebels, reportedly committed collective

¹² Syria's emergency law was introduced after the 1963 coup d'état that brought the Baath Party to power. It restricts public gatherings and the free movement of individuals, it allows government agents to arrest "suspects or people who threaten security," it authorizes the monitoring of personal communications and it legalizes media censorship.
<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2061730,00.html>

punishment against the local people, killing roughly 20,000 people. As a result, SMB was drawn out of Syria and spent the last three decades in exile to reorganize before it played an important role in the 2011 uprising (Tashjian, 2012).

On March 25, 2012, the Syria Muslim Brotherhood issued the `State-for-All Commitment Charter` in which it outlined the commitments and prospects for the future of post-Assad Syria. The group pledged to establish pluralism and democracy in a civil constitutional State, with equality for all citizens, and with full respect for human rights and freedoms. The Charter was proposed as “common denominators for a new social contract”, to re-establish “peace and harmony between all segments and religious, sectarian, ethnic, political and intellectual trends of Syrian society.” (Ikhwanweb, 2012)

The Syrian MB`s political ideology called for a secular state inspired and guided by the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. MB was politically influential after the revolution and had one quarter of the Syrian National Council (SNC) seats. SNC also retained one third of the seats in the successor political opposition coalition, The National Coalition for the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, which led to sustainment of MB dominance and influence in SNC (Ostovar & Mccants, 2013).

Salafism¹³

The spread of Salafi ideas in Syria was impeded by the systematic prosecution and detention of its members by the Assad regime over the course of a number of

¹³ `Salaf` means "predecessors" referring to the first three generations of Muslims: Prophet Muhammad and his companions; their successors; and the successors of the successors. Salafism seeks to "purify" Islam of Western influence and digressions from the true Islam. Salafists see the salvation of Muslim majority countries in full compliance to the way the first three generation lived. Salafists define Islam as anything that was explicitly condoned by Prophet Muhammad and that was upheld by his first three generations of Sunni followers. (For further information visit <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/what-is-salafism>).

years. During the revolution, the Salafi presence in Syria noticeably propagated and developed more into an armed resistance as the regime started exerting excessive use of force against the protesters. As long as the intrastate conflict protracted and the regime was responsible for mass civilian casualties, both local armed resistance and the influx of battle hardened and experienced foreign fighters increased (Rumman, 2013).

Salafi rebel groups espouse the idea that Islam should become 'the sole source of law and cultural identity' in Syria. However, the Salafis differ among themselves over how to achieve this goal; some groups advocate for a transnational 'Islamic State' established through armed struggle and reject democratic process; other groups seek to establish an 'Islamic State' in Syria through political processes that involve all Syrian citizens (Ostovar & Mccants, 2013).

Having briefly touched upon the historical opposition baseline in Libya and Syria, the following section will focus on the capability and ideology of political and armed opposition that emerged during the Arab Spring in respective conflicts.

Formation of Libyan National Transitional Council and Armed Opposition

In the wake of successful revolutions that toppled long lasting regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, the initial protests started in eastern Libya in mid-February 2011. The arrest of lawyer and human rights advocate Fathi Terbil on 15th February 2011 in Benghazi changed the course of the demonstrations and instigated large-scale protests (Ayhan, 2011).

On 15th February, security forces used tear gas and batons to disperse the protesters in Benghazi, injuring 14 and possibly killing 1. On 17th February, thousands of protestors were on the street and escalating violence and the use of live ammunition

by Qaddafi security forces led to the killing of 24 protestors. In that phase, the government's opponents were not organised and acted primarily as individual citizens against the regime. However the capture of Benghazi on 20th February changed the course of the uprising (Johnston, 2012). In addition to the escalation of mass killings, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture of protestors, the use of tanks, helicopters and military aircraft indiscriminately killing or injuring possibly thousands on 25 February 2011, reported by Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Spencer, 2011), urged the protestors to take arms and fight against the Qaddafi regime. So, Qaddafi's repressive crack down on the protestors turned an uprising initiated by youth activists into an armed rebellion joined by a cross-section of the Libyan society (Pack, 2011).

UNSC Resolution 1970 was adopted on 26th February and condemned the use of lethal force against protestors in Libya and imposed sanctions, weapons, asset freezes, and travel bans (UN, 2011a). As the protestors and rebels consolidated their gains in eastern Libya an interim governing body, The National Transitional Council (NTC), was formed in Benghazi on 27th February 2011 (Brahimi, 2011) and officially declared its foundation on 5th March 2011. An executive body was formed on 23rd March 2011. The goal of the NTC was to "remove Qaddafi from power and establish a unified, democratic, and free Libya that respects universal human rights principles." (Book, 2012)

The NTC promised to steer Libya during the interim period until the country was liberated from Qaddafi's oppressive regime and hold free elections to draft a constitution for Libya. NTC placed itself as the only legitimate body to represent the Libyan people and state. The council comprised of defectors, returning exiles and public representatives (Temehu, 2011). The NTC was set up with 31 representatives

from various cities, towns, and regions liberated by the rebels in order to refute the perception that the revolution was eastern-dominated. The Chief of the NTC, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, was Qaddafi's justice minister prior to his defection (Dunt, 2011).

With the establishment of the NTC, defected reformist regime technocrats and diplomats, along with representatives from a wide range of factions of the opposition, all came together. The fact that grassroots committees were established in eastern Libya and selected town notables endorsed NTC consolidated its legitimacy and mandate (Pack, 2011).

Even though NTC was based in eastern Libya, it attempted to encompass all strata of Libyan society to include religious groups, Qaddafi regime defectors, Libyans who spent the majority of their life abroad and who held dual citizenship, and members from cities outside of Benghazi. The youth movement, on the other hand, who initiated the uprising, was composed of young, urban, middle-class citizens, students and civil society organizations (Tempelhof & Omar, 2012).

On 15th July 2011, five months after the uprising started and after more than thirty other countries recognized NTC, the US officially recognised NTC as Libya's legitimate government (Barany, 2011). US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the US recognized NTC "as the legitimate governing authority" in Libya. Clinton articulated the assurances given by NTC that were instrumental for US policy change as "the promise to pursue a process of democratic reform that is inclusive both geographically and politically, to uphold Libya's international obligations and to disburse funds in a transparent manner to address the humanitarian and other needs of the Libyan people" (CNN, 2011).

US recognition was of critical importance and enabled the rebels access to the Libyan regime's frozen assets. UNSC Resolution 1970, dated 26th February 2011,

stipulated that 'all member states shall freeze without delay all funds, other financial assets and economic resources on their territories' which are owned or controlled by Qaddafi and his five children (UN, 2011a). In that context, the U.S. Treasury Department had seized approximately 30 billion US Dollars (USD) (S. Kaufman, 2011).

David Cohen, the Treasury's acting undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence said that "this is the largest blocking under any sanctions program ever" in American history. Treasury officials declared that some of the assets frozen belonged to Libya's central bank and its sovereign-wealth fund, the Libyan Investment Authority. These two assets are accepted by US as being directly controlled by Qaddafi, signifying a broad interpretation of UNSC Resolution 1970. The Central Bank of Libya and the sovereign-wealth fund were believed to have over 100 billion and 70 billion USD respectively in foreign-currency reserves world-wide (Solomon & Johnson, 2011).

The cautious approach taken by the US to recognise NTC can be partially explained by a lack of information and a scepticism on the part of the US administration regarding the identities, capabilities, intentions and goals of armed and political opposition leaders and groups.

As Qaddafi responded to the protestors by using 'parallel elite and paramilitary forces' led by his relatives, rather than the regular army, which had been deliberately weakened by the regime over the years, the divide in Libyan military structure translated into a divided response from the military as well. It was mainly the army units in and around eastern cities like Benghazi, Tobruk (Barany, 2011) and al-Bayda that provided the rebels the initially limited military capabilities they needed to fight against the regime. Suleiman Mahmoud, a senior army general in Tobruk, who joined

the rebel forces (Black, 2011a), suggested in an interview with BBC Newsnight's Tim Whewell on 30th March 2011 that the number of defected Libyan military personnel numbered a few thousand (Mahmoud, 2011). So, contrary to Tunisia and Egypt, the military in Libya did not side with the protestors as a whole and the lack of unified military structure served as an advantage for the regime at the nascent phase of the conflict (Brahimi, 2011).

Jason Pack categorises three different rebel groups fighting against Qaddafi at the early beginning of the conflict. The first group was comprised of former professional Libyan army soldiers and officers who defected en masse in mid-February, mostly from eastern Libya. These included the units led by Abdel Fatah Younis, who became the commander in chief of the rebel forces after resigning on 22 February as Qaddafi's interior minister. These units are believed to have retained their organisational structure and numbered around 1,000 troops. The second group was composed of volunteers, who were ordinary civilians with different occupational backgrounds with no or little military experience and training. The third category were rebels with an Islamic orientation, coming from cities like Darnah. Some of these were returned Libyan fighters from earlier conflicts who also took part in the establishment of LIFG (Pack, 2011).

The general perception of the rebels at the beginning of the conflict was that they represented a broad cross-section of Libyan society. Large and organized units coordinated their effort with the NTC, and among the radical elements within the rebel groups, only a few of them were believed to pose a threat (Tempelhof & Omar, 2012).

During an interview in *Al Bayda* with the Dailybeast's Fadel Lamen on 12th March 2011, Libyan National Council Chief Mustafa Abdul Jalil said: "There is no place for al Qaeda in Libya, now or in the future. The Libyan people are moderate Muslims

and do not subscribe to these extremist ideologies. Libya is and will be a moderate Muslim country where democracy and rule of law will be supreme. The Libyan people suffered so much for over 41 years from Qaddafi's extremist ideology and will not replace it with anything but democracy and the rule of law" (Lamen, 2011).

On 14th March 2011, John McCain, the US Senator from Arizona who ran as Republican Presidential nominee in the 2008 US Presidential election, together with Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, put together a resolution that called for official recognition of Libya's NTC in Libya and imposed a no-fly zone over Libya. In his speech to Congress Senator McCain criticised those who claim that the US cannot support the opposition on the grounds that the administration does not know who the opposition is. He said "They have been organized for weeks. Their senior leaders consist of longstanding critics of Qaddafi as well as officials who recently broke with his regime. They even have a Web site". Senator McCain also stated that sanctions and humanitarian aid were not enough and, on the top of imposing no fly zone, the US should share intelligence with the opposition, help them develop command and control capability, provide technical assistance and security and jam Qaddafi's communications and television channel (McCain, 2011c). The support provided by an influential opposition party member was significant for US administration calculations.

Senator Lieberman also underlined that the US did not have to choose between US friendly secular dictatorships and religious extremist regimes antagonistic to the US. He portrayed the Arab Spring as an opportunity that provided the US administration a third way, i.e. democracy. He characterised the opposition in Libya as seeking change for peaceful democratic revolution, political freedom, universal human rights, economic opportunity and a modern world rather than extremism (Joe Lieberman, 2011).

During a briefing on 28th March 2011 to reporters on operations in Libya, Vice Admiral William Gortney, Director of the Joint Staff, answered a question about the opposition. He reassured that the US administration was not talking with the opposition. He said “we would like a much better understanding of the opposition. We don’t have it. It does matter to us and we are trying to fill in those knowledge gaps. We are not in direct support of the opposition, we are not coordinating with the opposition. Clearly the opposition is not well organised and it is not a very robust organisation” (Gortney, 2011).

On 29th March 2011 then NATO Supreme Allied Commander of Europe and at the same time US-European Commander, James Stavridis, testified to Senate Armed Services Committee on US operations in Libya. He said:

We are examining very closely the content, composition, the personality, who are the leaders of these opposition forces. The intelligence I am receiving at this point makes me feel that the leadership that I am seeing are responsible men and women who are struggling against Colonel Qaddafi. We have seen flickers in the intelligence of potential Al-Qaida, Hezbollah, we have seen different things. But at this point I don’t have detail sufficient to say that there is a significant Al-Qaida presence or any other terrorist presence in and among these folks (Stavridis, 2011).

On 29 March 2011, Senator McCain reiterated that the US ambassador to the UN suggested that the US may provide arms to the Libyan rebels and reiterated his backing to any effort to support Libyan rebels in order to tilt the balance of power in their favour against Qaddafi forces. He refuted Al-Qaida’s influence among the rebels and assured that the rebels largely pledged their support to the NTC, which he saw as representative of tribes and communities across Libya. He said “if these moderate, democratic forces do not succeed in Libya, we know exactly who would fill the void: the radicals and the ideologues” (McCain, 2011b)

During his testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on Operation

Odyssey Dawn and US Military Operations in Libya on 31st March 2011, Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged that the US administration lacks clarity about the Libyan opposition. He said:

Other than handful of leaders we don't have much visibility into those who have risen against Qaddafi. But I think that in a way, speaking of opposition is a misnomer. Because it is very disparate, scattered, and probably each element has its own agenda. Each of those towns that rose up in the west where resistance has been quelled, basically did so on their own. You didn't see people going one town to the next to share the fight. Frankly, that is one of the problems that those who rebelled against Qaddafi is facing lack of command and control and lack of organisation. So I would say there are multiple agendas, very disparate elements across the country engaged in this. And at this point we don't have a lot of visibility into those. We may not know much about the opposition or the rebels but we know a great deal about Qaddafi (Gates, 2011a)

During the same hearing, Joint Chief Chairman Mike Mullen responded to a question about whether US was planning to arm the rebels in Libya:

We know a few of the Libyan opposition leaders but there is whole a lot we don't know. We certainly are not looking at options from not doing it or doing it. There is a fairly standard way to do this: train and equip that we are familiar with. But I will also repeat what the Secretary said we are not the only ones that are familiar with this. There are plenty of countries who have the ability, the arms and the skill sets to be able to do this. There is insignificant discussion right now, but no decision has been made to do that (Mullen, 2011).

On 30th March 2011, during discussions in the US Congress, former Republican Nevada Senator, John Ensign, criticised the Obama administration's support for the rebels without knowing who they are and what their ideology is (Ensign, 2011). Republican US Congress Representative from Texas, Louie Gohmert, questioned who would replace Qaddafi when he is toppled and drew attention to al Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood in Libya. Congressman. Gohmert portrayed Muslim Brotherhood

in Libya as the most probable successor to Qaddafi. However, he added that it was not in line with US interests. The congressman drew parallels between Libya and Egypt, where he argued that US support to toppling Mubarak was a serious mistake and advocated that Mubarak posed a threat neither to the US nor Israel, contrary to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt that replaced him (Gohmert, 2011).

In Libya, eastern regions historically represented the most rebellious opposition groups, including Muslim Brotherhood in Libya but also some militant groups based in and around Benghazi, Derna, and Ajdabia (Pargeter, 2009). Charles Levinson of the *Wall Street Journal* interviewed Libyan fighters at the early stages of the uprising who had fought against US invasion in Afghanistan and at the time were among the rebels confronting Qaddafi. He observed on 2nd April 2011 that “Islamist leaders and their contingent of followers represent a relatively small minority within the rebel cause. They have served the rebels' secular leadership with little friction. Their discipline and fighting experience is badly needed by the rebels' ragtag army” (Levinson, 2011).

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, a Republican from Michigan, stated on 3rd April 2011 that the Libyan opposition lacks coordination and the US administration does not have sufficient intelligence on who the rebels are. He reminded that in the recent past, potential al-Qaeda elements in Libya sent fighters to Iraq in an effort to counter the US presence. However, he reaffirmed his view that it does not necessarily mean that Al-Qaeda has a majority or influence in the country. Congressman Rogers underlined the administration's concern about the rebels by saying “we don't arm people that we don't know who they are and if they're going to use those weapons against civilians or maybe us in the future” and justified US involvement in Libya as an effort to support people seeking liberty so that the succeeding governments in the region would be less hostile to the US (Rogers, 2011b)

On 8th April 2011 Senator McCain refuted the allegations that Al-Qaida has traction within the Libyan opposition and reiterated his view that the Libyan opposition was struggling for political freedom, economic opportunity, and justice against an oppressive, repressive and brutal regime. However, he also highlighted the danger posed if Libya goes through a protracted stalemate. He argued that, in this case, al-Qaida forces would infiltrate and gain power (McCain, 2011a).

John Boehner, a Republican Representative from Ohio, sponsored House Resolution 292 on 3rd June 2011, which reprimanded President Obama for not seeking authorization from Congress for military action in Libya, and called on the president to submit a report to Congress clarifying and justifying the US mission in Libya. Among the 21 questions asked were three regarding: the composition, representativeness and political agenda of the NTC; the relationship between NTC, the Muslim Brotherhood, LIFG, Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah or other groups who are against the US interests; and any weapon acquired and used by those groups. During the discussions in Congress on 3rd June 2011, Mike Turner, a Republican Representative for Ohio, referred to Secretary Gates' suggestion that the US administration knows very little about the Libyan opposition and the rebels. Congressman Turner also emphasised the lack of knowledge with regards to the rebel's geopolitical views vis à vis their neighbours and the US, their commitment to domestic diversity, their ideology, their preferred form of government, and their commitment to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Libya (Berman, 2011).

During Congressional discussions on 24th June 2011 regarding House Resolution 2278, which aimed to limit funding for US support to the Libya operation, Republican Representative Dan Burton of Indiana was also sceptical about the opposition and rebel groups in Libya. He argued that:

We don't know if it's the Muslim Brotherhood, we don't know if it's al Qaeda—now we do know there are al Qaeda operatives that came from Afghanistan fighting with the rebels in Libya; are we supporting al Qaeda? Are we supporting the Muslim Brotherhood? The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has opened up the border—or the Government of Egypt, whatever that is right now—has opened up the border between Egypt and Gaza, which provides a mechanism for weapons to get into Gaza to fire on Israel. So before we start supporting a rebel movement and going after somebody like Qaddafi, we ought to find out who we're for (Burton, 2011b).

During the same session Democrat Representative from Washington Adam Smith dismissed the idea that the US administration does not know who the opposition is and stated that Benghazi was neither controlled by Muslim Brotherhood nor al Qaeda, instead arguing that was controlled by a Libyan representative government that deserved support (A. Smith, 2011).

Even after the Qaddafi regime was toppled, NTC leadership felt the need to relieve public opinion about the composition of the opposition of the rebels. Mahmoud Jibril, NTC Interim Prime Minister of Libya gave an interview to the BBC World News' Hardtalk program presenter Stephen Sackur on 23rd Oct 2011 in Jordan, during which he said:

The Libyan society is a moderate society by the very nature of Islam. It is a moderate Islam, Maliki sect, Maliki doctrine. I think Malikis are moderate by the very nature. This is not to say that other streams of thought are excluded from the process. The cabinet we had, 16 people including myself, four of them are Muslim Brotherhood (Jibril, 2011).

Similarly, former Libyan National Transitional Council Finance Minister Ali Tarhouni gave a speech at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on 5th January 2012, during which he reiterated his conviction that the Libyan society is ready to build a democratic state from the revolution since Libya has moderate version of Islam without sectarian biases or any problem with Shia. Tarhouni also tried to comfort

those in the international community concerned about the composition and world view of the revolutionaries in Libya by saying:

Most of these revolutionaries are not military people. They are regular citizens that allegedly carry guns like thousands of people that I knew. Carried gun and went for fight to liberate their country. They are teachers, physicians, workers, you name it. The only organised group in Libya is Muslim Brotherhood. They are small group, very small group actually, as far as we know. But they are organised and well-funded. There are some other initiatives by elites here and there. But considering the political spectrum the elites do not have grassroots support (Tarhouni, 2012).

In conclusion, just after the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions, the Libyan revolution was broadly seen by the US administration as part of a regional aspiration for an open and liberal society, democracy, and jobs. The general perception of the opposition was that it represented a broad cross-section of the Libyan society, organised behind the political opposition led by NTC.

However, as the conflict evolved, the US administration's scepticism about who would replace Qaddafi and a potential AL Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood take over in Libya led to a cautious stance and the US refrained from decisively and directly supporting rebel groups.

As the Libyan conflict unfolded, several identified lessons seemed to have impacted on US calculations vis-à-vis Syria. Firstly, as Qaddafi was toppled the expectation was that the opposition would establish a viable governing structure. However, shortly after the regime collapsed different factions started fighting each other for power. That reinforced the general belief that overthrowing the incumbent regime was not enough for sustained stability and security without keeping sizable boots on the ground, which the US administration was reluctant to do. Secondly, severely weakened or toppled regimes led to the emergence of ungoverned spaces,

which were exploited by subnational armed groups with their own agenda and then terrorist groups undermining capacity building efforts.

The Evolution of the Syrian Opposition

Islamic groups' historical repression and the sectarian side-lining policy of the Assad regime was instrumental in urging some groups to take arms against the regime, since they believed that the prospect for tangible, peaceful reform was hopeless during the Arab Spring. As the revolution turned into an intrastate conflict, support provided to the warring factions by the rival regional and international actors prolonged the conflict, fuelling the rise of numerous armed opposition groups (Badoura, 2014).

While various political and armed opposition groups in Syria shared an immediate goal to topple the Assad regime at the nascent phase of the conflict, they had conflicting ideas on what kind of political order should replace the current system. Especially main groups' diverging opinions on the role of religion in a post-Assad state further divided both the opposition and their external resource providers as well (Ostovar & McCants, 2013).

The formation and evolution of the political and armed opposition in Syria during the Arab Spring uprising was categorised by Asaad Al-Saleh and Loren White into three phases. In the first, grassroots opposition groups were established at the village or neighbourhood, city or district, and national level. At the village and neighbourhood levels were Local Coordinating Councils (LCC) and youth activists; at the city and district levels were Revolutionary Councils, consisting of prominent local intellectuals and businessmen; at the national level was the Syrian National Council (SNC), formed to politically confront the regime. The second phase was the militarisation of the

conflict and formation of the FSA in July 2011 in response to mounting regime aggression and its use of tanks, artillery, helicopters, and military aircrafts against protesters. The regime's increased brutality essentially further militarised the opposition and marginalised political opposition groups. The third phase represented the increasing influence of extremist groups at the expense of FSA among the armed opposition groups, which undermined the credibility of moderate groups in Syria (Al-saleh & White, 2013) and practically urged them to cooperate locally with hardliner groups in the absence of decisive support and increasing Syrian regime and ISIL pressure.

A day before US led intervention started in Libya, the protests against the arrests and long-time detainment of the school children on 18th March were the first example of large-scale demonstrations in Syria against the government. The students had been imprisoned and allegedly tortured in late February 2011 on the grounds that they sprayed the graffiti on the school wall that reads "the people want to topple the regime." During the protests, police opened fire and killed at least four protesters (Sterling, 2012). Initial US administration response to the Syrian crisis was measured, as Assad promised to make the necessary reforms demanded by protesters. However, as the peaceful demonstrations transformed into clashes with the security forces as a result of dissatisfaction of the protestors with the reform pledges, the US administration also changed its rhetoric gradually.

On 29th March 2011, the US Secretary of State called on Assad to timely implement the reforms demanded by the Syrian people, starting with the elimination of emergency law (US Department of State, 2011). The Assad regime passed the law on 20th April 2011 to lift the emergency law and in a stroke, had suspended a policy that had been in place for almost four decades (BBC, 2011b).

On 19th May 2011, President Obama underlined that the Syrian regime chose to mass murder and arrest its citizens, which resulted in US sanctions. Obama also called on Assad to initiate a “serious dialogue to advance a democratic transition” and presented Assad two options: “lead the transition, or get out of the way” (Obama, 2011f).

Daraa city was followed by the crush of protests in Hama in July 2011, with tanks killing up to 100 people (Black, 2011b). The attacks carried out on the 12th July 2011 by pro-Assad groups that targeted US and French embassies was also instrumental in so much as it altered US rhetoric and stance against the Syrian regime (BBC, 2011a). Over the Hama incidence, Hilary Clinton stated that “Assad has lost legitimacy, failed to deliver on the promises he has made, he is not indispensable and we have absolutely nothing invested in him remaining in power” (The Washington Post, 2011).

Michel Kilo, a Syrian Christian and a prominent opposition figure, suggested that the regime prioritised the sustainment of its existence and intentionally aimed to transform the peaceful demonstration, demanding reform into armed action by adopting a security solution option rather than reforming. He claims the notion of armed and unarmed opposition would give the regime a justification to suppress any uprising against the regime. He also underscored the strategy adopted by Assad regime served to transform “struggle for freedom, justice and equality into sectarian infighting” and led to religious extremists attempting to “take the leadership of the street out of the hands of those who can mainly be described as modernist and belonging to civil society, as well as circles within the regime itself who are inclined to reform” (Kilo, 2011). In that context, the regime-backed Shabihha militia, composed exclusively of members of the Nusayri sect, were predominantly responsible for most

of the violence (Phillips, 2012), which in turn urged some of the peaceful protesters to take up arms for self-defence.

The Secretary of State's tacit declaration of a shift in US policy against the Assad regime was reinforced a month later on 18th August 2011 by US President Obama's call for Assad to step down, five months after the conflict started. This official statement marked a change in US policy, which had up until then been urging the Assad regime to lead a democratic transition for Syrian people. President Obama also ordered expanded sanctions targeting Assad, Syria's intelligence and security establishment (Ukman & Liz, 2011) and the freezing of all Syrian assets in the US, banned imports of Syrian oil and barred American citizens from having any business dealings with the Syrian government (Myers, 2011). President Obama also reinforced his position regarding the Assad regime by saying:

The United States cannot and will not impose this transition upon Syria. It is up to the Syrian people to choose their own leaders, and we have heard their strong desire that there not be foreign intervention in their movement. What the US will support is an effort to bring about a Syria that is democratic, just, and inclusive for all Syrians. We will support this outcome by pressuring President Assad to get out of the way of this transition, and standing up for the universal rights of the Syrian people along with others in the international community (Obama, 2011h).

Activists living in exile, mostly well-educated and western-oriented elites and intellectuals, with nationalist/secularist background or affiliated with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood established officially Syrian National Council (SNC) as the main political opposition against Assad regime on 02 October 2011 in Istanbul to lead the efforts. Some key figures had taken part in both the Damascus Spring and Damascus Declaration process (Bagy, 2012). SNC was composed of nationalists, secularists and religiously motivated groups and was thus similar to Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC) (Nicoll & Johnstone, 2011).

Stratfor's analysis of the Syrian opposition at the early stages of the conflict highlighted three stumbling blocks for the SNC. Firstly, a lack of unified opposition that the international community could recognize as the alternative to the Assad regime, and disparate rebel groups in Libya pledging loyalty to the Libyan NTC until the regime collapsed. Secondly, geographically, Syrian armed groups lacked safe havens, unlike Libyan rebels, who initially operated in the east of Libya. Thirdly, while there were *en masse* defections, including by senior officers, at the beginning of Libyan uprising, a limited number of defections in Syria only came months later (Stratfor, 2011).

Michael Weiss and Hannah Stuart's report on the Syrian opposition quoted Ammar Abdulhamid, Western spokesperson for the opposition when he said that "less than a third" of the opposition were religiously oriented and "can neither be excluded from nor dominate the Syrian opposition" (Weiss & Stuart, 2011)

At the early stages of the uprising there were conflicting views regarding the support for the opposition amongst US Congress members and as to whether the US should support the opposition for a regime change. On the one hand, Joseph Lieberman, US Senator from Connecticut, raised his criticism against those who were sceptical about the opposition when he said "we know enough about the opposition to know that it cannot be worse than Assad and will be much better" (Joseph Lieberman, 2011). On the other hand Adam Schiff, a Democratic Party member of the US House of Representatives from California, articulated his deep concern for a potential large scale violence between Sunni, Shia, Alawi, Muslim, Christian, and Druze population in Syria (similar to the situation in Lebanon) if the Assad regime fell (Adam Schiff, 2011). In fact, while the majority of Sunnis in Syria supported armed opposition groups, a preponderance of Alawite, Christians and Druze communities aligned with the Assad regime (Talmon, 2013).

In addition to the ideological background of the opposition, a lack of central leadership was another concern regarding the Syrian opposition. Nir Rosen, who spent time with fighters in late 2011 and early 2012, stated there was no central leadership to the armed resistance and that the majority of the armed groups were civilians who took up arms, as opposed to the general conviction that the defectors from the Syrian Army constituted the vast majority of them. He also underlined the fact that the influence of the Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood ideologies was insignificant in Syria among the rebels (Nir, 2012).

The concerns regarding the worldview of the opposition had also an impact upon the US military leadership's judgement regarding the arming of the opposition. During a CNN interview on 19th February 2012 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, said:

It's premature to take a decision to arm the opposition movement in Syria, because I would challenge anyone to clearly identify for me the opposition movement in Syria at this point. You know, there's indications that Al Qaeda is involved and that they're interested in supporting the opposition. And until we're a lot clearer about, you know, who they are and what they are, I think it would be premature to talk about arming them (Dempsey, 2012).

On 24th February 2012, the first meeting of the "Friends of Syria" conference was held in Tunis. More than 60 countries and representatives from Western and Arab countries convened to discuss the worsening situation in Syria. The Friends of Syria Group recognised the SNC as a 'legitimate representative of Syrians seeking peaceful democratic change' and pledged to increase practical support for the Syrian opposition (Gov.uk, 2012).

SNC had opposed a violent uprising at the nascent phase of the upheaval, seeking instead to find a political solution. However, in March 2012 it formed a Ministry of

Defence to amalgamate the armed opposition under the SNC flag (Ostovar & Mccants, 2013).

Even though the SNC attempted to secure wider representation from all political, ethnic and sectarian groups, the international community was frustrated by infighting within the SNC, its deficiency to persuade other opposition groups to merge with it, a and lack of meaningful support and participation from the Alawites, Druze, Ismailis, and Turkmen community and only limited support from Christians (Sharp & Blanchard, 2012a). The second point of criticism was the perception about the Muslim Brotherhood's effective clout over the SNC. This perception was an essential factor that raised concern among Western countries and limited the organization's influence in Syria (Bagy, 2012).

The emergence of the Al Nusra Front in January 2012 as the most effective rebel force complicated the picture for the US even further. During Congressional hearing in March 2012, Republican Representative from Indiana Dan Burton referred to the assessment of the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper' about al Qaeda's presence among armed opposition groups in Syria. He warned "...we better be careful before we start making a regime change there that al Qaeda doesn't take over or have a big influence in Syria that will cause problems for the United States, our ally Israel, and others in the Middle East later on" (Burton, 2012).

Another prominent faction in Syria were the Kurds. At the beginning of Syrian uprising Syrian Kurds were divided into two main blocs, the Kurdish National Council (KNC), a coalition of 15 smaller parties sponsored by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), founded in 2003 and closely affiliated with the PKK. Essentially, both blocs espoused the same goal to establish autonomy similar to Iraqi KRG. To realise that goal KNC aligned itself to the SNC,

whereas the PYD preferred to struggle to place Kurds as a neutral third force in Syria. In mid-July 2012 Iraqi KRG President Massoud Barzani facilitated negotiation between the two main blocs, culminating in the Erbil Agreement, which called for KNC and PYD to administer Syria's Kurdish areas through the 'Kurdish Supreme Council', a governing body equally represented by the KNC and PYD (Caves, 2012). However, the PYD and Kurdish National Council have co-operation seldomly (T. Lister, 2012), mostly because of the PYD's military dominance through the People's Protection Unit (YPG), a Kurdish militia that provides security in most of Syria's Kurdish controlled areas (Caves, 2012).

In July 2012, Syrian security forces relinquished control of several Kurdish towns in the north to PYD (T. Lister, 2012). That manoeuvre led the Assad government to divert its heavy weapons and fighting force against the Sunni-led armed opposition. (Arango, 2012) .

In her memoirs, Secretary of State Clinton points out that US top military officials were persistently reluctant to get involved in Syria and brought forward the difficulty of imposing a Libya-style no-fly zone in Syria. She suggested that the difficult stem in the advance air defence systems in place. Clinton also admits that in mid-August 2012, CIA Director David Petraeus presented a plan to arm and train a moderate opposition in order to build up a partner that could do enough to convince Assad and his backers that a military victory was impossible. So, the primary US objective was not forming a force strong enough to defeat the regime; "However the President thought the US needed more time to evaluate the Syrian opposition before escalating commitment so decided not to take significant further step of arming the rebels." (H. R. Clinton, 2015, p.392)

In late 2012 as Assad forces were gradually losing the control of Damascus, Hezbollah from Lebanon, Iranian proxy militia groups in Iraq Asa'ib Ahl al Haq and Kata'ib Hezbollah, and Iranian Revolutionary Guards were deployed into Syria to turn the tide in favour of the Assad regime (Chulov, 2014a). Hezbollah fighters in Syria, were instrumental at the later stages of the conflict in reclaiming the strategically important town of Qusayr, located six miles from the Lebanese-Syrian border (Nikitin, Feickert, & Kerr, 2013).

In November 2012, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the SNC would no longer be viewed as the leader of the Syrian opposition and called for the formation of a more inclusive opposition. In response to increasing pressure from the international community, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was established in November 2012 in Doha, Qatar as a new coalition that would embrace all segments of the society (BBC News, 2013a).

On 7th December 2012, in order to unite and consolidate the authority over various armed groups, rebel leaders from all across Syria elected a 30-member unified command and control committee, the Supreme Military Council. Six members from each five "fronts" in Syria (Northern, Eastern, Western, Central and Southern) were represented in the 30 member council (Bagy, 2013).

On 1th December 2012, during an interview with ABC's Barbara Walters, President Obama was asked whether he planned to recognize the Syrian opposition and give them some legitimacy. President Obama said:

We've made a decision that the Syrian Opposition Coalition is now inclusive enough, is reflective and representative enough of the Syrian population that we consider them the legitimate representative of the Syrian people in opposition to the Assad regime and so we will provide them recognition and obviously, with that recognition comes responsibilities. There is a small element of those who oppose the Assad regime that are in

fact affiliated with Al Qaeda in Iraq and we have designated them Al Nusra as a terrorist organisation. We are going to make clear to distinguish between those elements of the opposition (Obama, 2012a).

The new coalition for the first time included representation from the Local Coordination Committees of Syria and key internal opposition groups within Syria. The National Coalition also had the support of the FSA. The primary objective was to establish a group that would gain more widespread international and internal recognition thanks to greater representation from minority groups and groups operating inside the country. This was seen as a precondition for increased financial and material support to the opposition (Carnegie Centre, 2012a).

SNC's primacy was challenged by the National Coordination Committee (NCC), formed as a Syrian based alliance and consisting of representatives from leftist, Kurdish and individuals associated with the 2005 Damascus Declaration in June 2011 (Sharp & Blanchard, 2012). It was an alliance of 16 left-wing parties, three Kurdish political parties, and independent political and youth activists (BBC News, 2013a). Some of the members of NCC were wary of the Islamic background of some of the SNC's members. Unlike the SNC, the NCC was open to negotiation and a political settlement with the Assad regime. While the NCC acknowledged the FSA as an essential part of the revolution, it rejected foreign arm transfer to the FSA or any form of foreign military intervention (BBC News, 2013a).

Given that the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was established and acknowledged by a considerable international community in November 2012, and that the Supreme Military Council of the FSA was empowered in December 2012, potentially filling the gap in military domain, it was the high time to consolidate and unify the political and armed opposition. However, the US's

recognition of the newly established, more inclusive political and armed opposition did not lead to a strong commitment to empower armed opposition to a degree that could tilt the balance on the ground.

Obama's reluctance to provide direct military assistance to the Syrian opposition is based essentially on the potential danger that sophisticated American weapons sent into Syria could fall into the wrong hands – particularly those of the Al Nusra Front – and be used against American interests. The US designated the Al Nusra Front as a terrorist entity in December 2012, due to its reported Al Qaeda affiliation. The US complained on the one hand about the divided nature of the opposition and its lack of a unified command and control that could facilitate transfer of US support and, on the other, about the existence of religious extremist groups among the armed opposition (Rugh, 2013).

US Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin, a Democrat from Michigan, reinforced these issues during the testimony of US Regional Commanders where he said:

The administration has showed some real caution about getting more deeply involved militarily, in terms of supplying arms, particularly to the opposition in Syria. I think the fear has been that we want to make sure who those arms are getting to first of all. Secondly when Assad falls there needs to be in place, ready to be put in place by the Syrian some kind of an interim government which would avoid chaos and anarchy in Syria so that it does not fall apart, it doesn't disintegrate (Levin, 2013).

US Secretary of State John F. Kerry announced on 28th February 2013 that the US would provide only non-lethal aid, including food, medicine, and training assistance through the SMC of the FSA. That was a critical shift in US policy given that the US for the first time publicly committed itself to support armed opposition (Bagy, 2013). Around that time, Free Syrian Army Commander General Selim Idris's publicity also

increased as he visited Brussels on 6th March 2013 and attended a meeting organised by Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). During that meeting Gen. Idris stated that the Free Syrian Army was established by civilians and military personnel who defected from the army to protect civilians from Syrian Armed Forces and Shabbiha militia. He summarised FSA goals as: respect for freedom of speech and religion; democracy; equality among Syrian citizens; the defence of minorities; and opposing any type of extremism. He underlined the need for humanitarian support (largely in the form of food and medicine) to liberated areas and more weapons and ammunition (particularly anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles) to stop the regime from killing and destroying of Syrian infrastructure. Gen. Idris also articulated that the Al Nusra Front accounted for 2-3% of all armed opposition groups in Syria, comprising roughly of 5000 fighters (Idriss, 2013).

The leader of the Al Nusra Front, Abu Muhammad al-Julani, announced on 10th April 2013 the group's allegiance to the leader of Al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The statement came after the Islamic State of Iraq released an audio message announcing the extension of its 'Islamic State' into al-Sham (the Levant) (Alaaldin, 2013). That was a significant turning point in Syrian conflict.

In April 2013 Al-Baghdadi expanded the area of operation beyond the borders of Iraq to encompass initially Syria and rebranded the organisation under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant. Al-Baghdadi's effort to merge with Al Nusra Front was declined by both Al Nusra Front and Al-Qaida's Senior Leadership. The Al Nusra Front leader denied the unification of his group with ISIL and proclaimed his allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the successor to Osama bin Laden in Al-Qaeda. Later, al-Zawahiri formally announced the dissociation of Al-Qaeda's senior leadership from ISIL (Gulmohamad, 2014). As the conflict protracted and increasingly presented itself

as a sectarian one, the foreign fighter flow gradually increased. In 2013 there were as many as 1,000 individual armed rebel groups, each of which fell somewhere on the spectrum from religious extremist ideology to secular (Kelley, 2013).

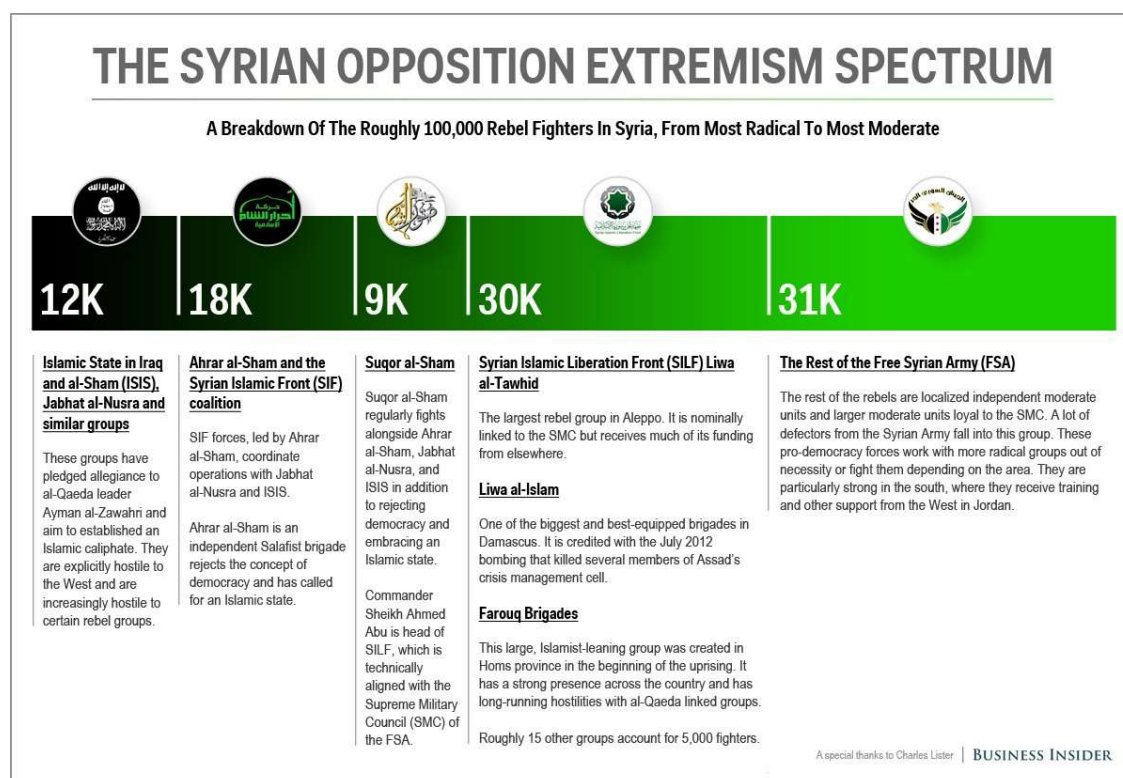


Figure 16 Syrian Opposition Extremism Spectrum as of September 2013

Source: Michael Kelley/Business Insider, (Kelley, 2013)

These foreign fighters became a very crucial issue both for the balance of power in Syria and also their potential to pose threat to their home countries. The International Centre for Study of Radicalization (ICSR) report on foreign fighters in Syria and estimated that from late 2011 to 10th December 2013 between 3,300 (low estimate) and 11,000 (high estimate) individuals from 74 nations went to Syria to fight against the Assad government. Even if the highest estimate turns out to be true, at that time the “foreign contingent” did not represent more than 10 per cent of the armed opposition, which is thought to number more than 100,000 fighters (ICSR, 2013).

Charles Lister puts the number in Syria and Iraq as of April 2015 at between 22,000 and 30,000, from 100 countries. Lister's account of the increasing number of foreign fighters in the Syria conflict suggest that the numbers over the years rose from 700-1,400 in mid-2012 to 6,000 in August 2013 (C. Lister, 2015).

In that context, the armed opposition at that time can be classified into three categories, according to their motives and post-Assad regime prospects: 1) secular, liberals, leftist nationalists who see the fighting as a national struggle against an authoritarian corrupt regime, 2) religious/conservative nationalists seeking to topple the Assad regime and establish a state based on Islamic principles that is not imposed on society, and 3) religious extremists espousing the establishment of a transnational caliphate and the implementation of a strict interpretation of Sharia law (initially encompassing the Levant) that does not tolerate minorities and other sects and beliefs.

In May 2013, during a US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing regarding the Syrian Transition Support Act of 2013, Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez and Ranking Member Bob Corker introduced bipartisan legislation that aimed to authorise limited lethal and increased non-lethal assistance to vetted elements of the Syrian opposition. Republican Senator Rand Paul raised his concern that it was impossible to know who the US's friends are among the rebel groups, referring to statements of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey. Senator Paul also warned that supported rebels could turn against the US in the future and also might target the 1-2 million Christians living in Syria, who have been largely protected by the Assad regime. He also alluded to the risk of arming groups allied with AQ, or arms winding up in the hands of AQ linked groups (Rand Paul, 2013).

In response to a question from Eliot L. Engel in testimony before the Armed

Services Committee Gen. Dempsey responded with a letter dated 19 August 2013 in which he highlighted the complexity of the situation and the opposition in Syria:

We can destroy the Syrian Air Force. The loss of Assad's Air Force would negate his ability to attack the opposition forces from the air, but would also escalate and potentially further commit the United States to the conflict. Stated another way, it would not be militarily decisive, but it would decisively commit us to the conflict. In a variety of ways, the use of U.S. military force can change the military balance, but it cannot resolve the underlying and historic ethnic, religious, and tribal issues that are fuelling this conflict. Syria today is not about choosing between two sides but rather about choosing one among many sides. It is my belief that the side we choose must be ready to promote their interests and ours when the balance shifts in their favour. Today, they are not. The crisis in Syria is tragic and complex. It is a deeply rooted, long term conflict among multiple factions, and violent struggles for power will continue after Assad's rule ends (Dempsey, 2013a).

During the hearing at the Committee of Foreign Relations, organised to weigh the Obama administration's response regarding whether US should take action or not in the wake of a chemical weapons attack in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21st August 2013, US Secretary of State John Kerry opposed the idea that al-Qaeda or extremists are majority among the opposition. Kerry said:

There are about 70,000 to 100,000 oppositionists. About somewhere maybe 15 to 25 percent might be in one group or another who are what we would deem to be bad guys. There are many different groups and sometimes they are fighting each other. The general belief, there is a real moderate opposition that exists. General Idris is running the military arm of that. And our allies in this effort, our friends, from the Saudis, to the Emiratis to the Qataris and others, are now in a disciplined way funnelling assistance through General Idris. And the moderate opposition is getting stronger as a result of that. The reason for supporting the moderate opposition is to have a buttress against those folks who, if Syria continues to move in the direction it has been going, if there is an implosion, they will be strengthened, there will be more of them (Kerry, 2013).

However, Gen. Dempsey separated support to the opposition from acting in a limited way to deter and degrade the Assad regime from using chemical weapons. He reiterated his conviction that the US should not use military force in support of the opposition to tip the balance of power against regime. He said, "I remain cautious about taking the opposition's role here in the civil war, with the understanding that the ultimate transition will come and can come through a negotiated settlement, a political resolution, not a military one". He pointed towards the uncertainty regarding "when that support ends and how much it has to grow over time". Instead he supported the idea of empowering the opposition by training and equipping them, but not by becoming their 'military arm' (Dempsey, 2013b). On the other hand, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel highlighted the groups under General Idris who are endeavouring for a free and inclusive Syria (Hagel, 2013).

During the US Congressional hearings on 10th September 2013, Republican Representative Paul Gosar also raised his concerns about the presence of al Qaeda affiliated opposition fighting against the Assad regime. He said, "it cannot be said that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. In this dangerous civil war, the enemy of our enemy is still and will always be our enemy" (Gosar, 2013). Democratic Representative Brian Higgins portrayed the Syrian conflict as "a brutal battle between two bad sides for control" rather than one between democracy and freedom. He said "Assad is a brutal dictator, for certain; but the opposition's best fighters are al-Qaeda and Islamic extremists bent on creating an Islamic state in Syria" (Higgins, 2013)

Texan Republican Senator John Cornyn referred to the killing in Benghazi of the US Ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, and several embassy personnel by terrorists potentially linked to Al Qaeda. He accused the US administration of having no post-Qaddafi plan and pointed out that a limited operation without putting U.S.

boots on the ground failed in Libya. He essentially opposed a limited operation that would allow the Assad regime remain in power (Kaine, 2013). In a similar vein, Republican Representative Tom McClintock from California put forward his scepticism about the moderate opposition phenomenon in Syria and drew a parallel between Libya and Syria in that context. He said “we’re told that al Qaeda’s not more than a fourth of our new coalition and that the rest are moderates. Well, we were told the same thing about Libya” (McClintock, 2013).

President Obama also supported the case for limited punitive military intervention against the Assad regime by stating that inaction would play into al Qaeda’s hand by conveying the message that the US does nothing to protect innocent civilians against chemical weapons attacks (Obama, 2013b). However, President Obama opted to pursue a diplomatic path limited to the elimination the Syrian chemical weapon stockpile rather than taking punitive action against the Syrian regime. His main concern with a post-Assad Syria was about potential successors. As we saw above, he raised his concern by saying “I don’t think we should remove another dictator with force -- we learned from Iraq that doing so makes us responsible for all that comes next” (Obama, 2013d). This was a concerned reference to some of Assad’s extremist opponents, who would be eager to play a prominent role in a post-Assad era.

Republican US Representative Charlie Dent from Pennsylvania mentioned that the Christian Syrian population in his community were scared about potential atrocities by al Qaeda affiliated groups against Christians in Syria. He also talked about a Syrian village where the Aramaic language is spoken, the language that Jesus Christ spoke, and suggested that the history of the Christian tradition was at risk (Fortenberry, 2013).

Democratic Senator Tom Udall from New Mexico also opposed military intervention to degrade Syria's chemical weapon capability on the grounds that even limited military intervention against Assad's regime could tilt the balance too far in favour of opposition groups, some of whom (primarily Al Qaeda affiliated groups) do not 'share US values' (Udall, 2013). Even though the US administration made it clear that any potential US action against the Syrian regime would be limited to degrading Syrian chemical weapons capabilities, the perception that it could tilt the balance of power at the expense of the Assad regime was significant. So, let alone toppling the Assad regime, some politicians, even from the Democratic Party, opposed punitive action against the Assad regime.

In November 2013, seven armed opposition groups declared that they had formed the largest rebel alliance and had an estimated 45,000 fighters to "topple the Assad regime completely and build an Islamic state". They portrayed the new front as an "independent political, military and social formation". The Islamic Front withdrew from the SMC's command in December 2013 and seized the Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Turkey in the North West of Syria from SMC-aligned forces after driving them out of their bases and capturing arms depots. That development prompted the US to suspend 'non-lethal' assistance for rebel groups in northern Syria (BBC News, 2013a).

On 20th March 2014, the US Ambassador to Syria between 2010 and 2014, Robert Ford, said in a speech at the Wilson Centre said "the opposition in Syria have a vision of Syria that for most part, I am leaving aside Al Qaeda elements, even some of the even hard liner Islamist they are not trying to impose an Islamic State although they are certainly going to advocate for one. There is a difference between advocating and imposing" (Ford, 2014b). On 3rd June 2014, during an interview with CNN's

Christiane Amanpour, the Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria put forward his dissatisfaction with the US administration's lack of commitment to the moderate opposition and underscored that letting down those groups would culminate in extremist groups gaining the upper hand on the ground. He explained what difference decisive US support to the opposition would make by saying:

Had there been more military assistance and logistical assistance even this like cash, two things would have happened differently: number one the opposition would have probably been able to gain more ground couple of years ago more quickly, and been able to go to a negotiating table in a much stronger position. The regime would have been much weaker. And the second thing is the ability of Al Qaida and Islamist extremist groups to recruit away from the moderates would have been less and we would have had less extremism problem in Syria now had there been more assistance provided to the moderate forces even a year or two years ago would have made big difference.(Ford, 2014a)

After ISIL took control of areas, both in Iraq and Syria, it declared the establishment of so called 'Islamic State' in late June 2014. As the conflicts in Syria and Iraq were entwined, US President Barack Obama requested 500 million USD from Congress to ramp up the assistance to vetted rebel groups in Syria in their fight against ISIL. (Pollack, 2014)

In his 7th August 2014 speech, Obama announced that he authorized targeted airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq. His justification was based on two factors: the advances of ISIL near Erbil, where the American consulate sits and where American military personnel advise Iraqi forces; and ISIL's savage treatment of religious minorities, including Christians and Yezidis (Obama, 2014h). The first US airstrikes against ISIL targets took place on 8th August 2014 in Iraq; these were portrayed as a necessary step to secure its personnel based in a joint operation centre in Erbil that was used to

co-ordinate defences with Peshmerga fighters' efforts to secure Yezidi refugees trapped on Mount Sinjar escaping from ISIL (Roberts & Ackerman, 2014).

In his 10th September 2014 speech, Obama declared that US airstrikes would be expanded into Syria to target ISIL. His reference to ramped up military assistance to the Syrian opposition in Syria again was within context of the fight against ISIL. He specifically mentioned that in the fight against ISIL, the US cannot rely on the Assad regime that has, he said, lost legitimacy. President Obama prioritised strengthening the opposition to counterbalance ISIL and simultaneously pursue a political solution for Syria conflict (Obama, 2014i).

The US strikes in Syria started on 23rd September 2014. The US staged strikes against ISIL strongholds in north-eastern Syria, initiated with Tomahawk missiles launched from the sea and followed by air strikes inside Syria. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan was also involved in the initial airstrikes (Sciutto, Castillo, & Yan, 2014).

As ISIL sieged Kobani in northern part of Syria and increased its attacks in September 2014, the fight between PYD/YPG and ISIL intensified. When Kobani's fall seemed imminent and potential for mass killings increased, US provided air support and Kurdistan's Regional Government in Iraq provided fighters with heavy weaponry to defend the city. ISIL was completely pushed back and forced to withdraw from Kobani on 27th January 2015 (Gunes & Lowe, 2015). A second major offensive against ISIL aimed to capture Tel Abyad in order to connect Cezire and Kobani cantons in Northern Syria. The offensive started in May 2015 and was supported by US air strikes to ISIL targets that ended on 14th June 2015, culminating in the capture of the city by PYD/YPG forces (Acun, 2015)

During a panel discussion on 14th September 2015 held by the SETA Foundation at Washington D.C entitled, 'A Tale Four Augusts: Obama's Syria Policy', Robert Ford, ex-Syrian Ambassador, criticised the US administration's policy over Syria because, he said, it failed to act on the grounds of 'civilian protection'. He suggested that the US had the ability to intervene at minimal risk and make definitive changes on the ground:

I came to the conclusion there was precious little interest at White House in coming up with a strategy that would implement the President's words of August 18, 2011, that Bashar al-Assad should step aside. Look now at the policy implications of what Basher al-Assad's virtually unopposed program of collective punishment has given rise to. We have got ISIS in Syria enjoying a safe haven from which in June 2014 attacked and absorbed major parts of Iraq. This is one of the consequences. Every time a barrel bomb is dropped on a civil residential neighbourhood, it is a victory for ISIS. It enables the so called Caliph's recruitment program in Syria and around the world. As the US pursues, the President's definition of the mission, degrade and destroy ISIL there is a gaping hole in our strategy. It is a gaping hole that has everything to do with the Syrian side of this equation (Ford, 2015).

During a press conference on 2nd October 2015, President Obama made clear that his Syria strategy does not involve directly targeting the Syrian regime and prioritised the fight against ISIL and a diplomatic solution for Syrian intra-state conflict instead. He stated:

What we have learned over the last 10, 12, 13 years is that unless we can get the parties on the ground to agree to live together in some fashion, then no amount of U.S. military engagement will solve the problem. And we will find ourselves either doing just a little bit and not making a difference, and losing credibility that way, or finding ourselves drawn in deeper and deeper into a situation that we can't sustain. But we're not going to make Syria into a proxy war between the United States and Russia. That would be bad strategy on our part. This is a battle between Russia, Iran, and Assad against the overwhelming majority of the Syrian people. Our battle is with ISIL, and our battle is with the entire international community to resolve the conflict in a way that can end the bloodshed and end the refugee crisis, and allow people to be at home,

work, grow food, shelter their children, send those kids to school (Obama, 2015c).

In September 2015, “moderate” rebel group Division 30, trained and armed by the US to fight against ISIL, reportedly surrendered to the Al Nusra Front in northern Aleppo after they entered to Syria. In doing so, they were reported to have handed over all their US provided weapons (Bulos, 2015). Following this incident, President Obama acknowledged that the US administration could not find a way to help moderate opposition on the ground. He argued that even though Congress allocated 500 million dollars to train and equip 5,000 opposition members to fight against ISIL, this program failed after 50 US trained rebels either were killed or defected to extremist groups. He reassured that as long as Assad remains in power it is difficult to get moderate opposition to focus their attention on ISIL (Obama, 2015b).

More than a year after the first air strike in Syria, the White House shifted its strategy in Syria and White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest announced on 30th October 2015 that the US President Obama made a decision to send fewer than 50 Special operation forces into northern Syria on a "train, advise and assist mission" to opposition groups that have made territorial gains against ISIL. (Engel, Welker, & Vinograd, 2015)

The opposition referred to by the White House Press Secretary were the YPG/PYD dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), formed in North Eastern Syria on 15th October 2015 following a visit by US officials to northern Syria in early October 2015. The YPG has partnered with the US and Western air power since the Kobani siege – the US even air-dropped 50 tonnes of arms and ammunition to those groups – and then drove ISIL forces east across a large swath of territory and subsequently united the Jazira and Kobane cantons into a single unit (Spyer, 2015).

Insights gained from the interviews conducted also shed light on US administration's concerns with regards to the opposition in Libya and Syria. The main concern the US had in both the Libya and Syria conflicts seems to have focused on who the administration should back in a complicated civil war setting among warring factions with differing capacities, sizes and ideologies. The administration's scepticism in this regard was more prevalent in Syria, where some of the groups fighting against the Assad regime were seen as much anti-American as they were anti-Assad. So, the US response to both conflicts presents a similar tendency to take a more sober response and refrain from full-fledged backing of any rebel group decisively if the potential exists that some of those backed groups could turn against the US in the long term. In Syria the US did not want to go in and back groups which did not have compatible interests and which were divided along so many different lines. The US administration didn't want a repeat of the scenario in Afghanistan, where the US armed the 'mujahidin' for the sake of pushing back the Soviets and later found some of those groups had turned against the US. The lessons learned in Libya also influenced how the US positioned itself in Syria with regards to the opposition as the conflict became protracted and unresolved. The outcomes of the Libya experience seemed to help inform US actions or, more importantly, *lack* of actions and provided part of the justification not to get more involved in Syria (Interviewee 4, 2015). That could partially explain why the US involvement in Syria did not involve a strong commitment to the opposition (Interviewee 8, 2015).

Another lesson identified by the US administration from the experience in Libya could be the fact that without sizeable boots on the ground to provide post conflict security and stability, overthrowing the incumbent regime was not enough for sustained stability and security. On the other hand, it is true that the US did put more

than 150,000 coalition troops into Iraq and even then could not secure the country. So, with its complexity, the Syria case was almost certain to have a more significant demand for the post conflict security and capacity building measures (Interviewee 7, 2015). This was intimidating for the US administration.

More importantly, when the time came to form the post Qaddafi government the rebels indirectly supported by the US started fighting each other. As a result, the US administration approached the Syrian opposition with significant suspicion from the outset. A general conviction, one that still stands, was that the Syrian opposition is too divided, corrupt, weak, and disorganised to defeat either Assad or ISIL and form a viable post-Assad alternative and rebuild Syria (Thomas Juneau, 2016).

On the other hand, the Libyan revolution was seen more like those in Egypt and Tunisia in so much as they were led by young people seeking democracy, a liberal society, and jobs. In the case of Syria, though, the general perception was that the uprising was a Sunni revolt against an Alawite regime (Interviewee 2, 2015).

The situation in Syria was much more complicated than that in Libya. In Syria it started with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and then soldiers from the FSA started leaving FSA and joining or creating new groups. While in the beginning the main objective was to overthrow Assad, as the conflict protracted different groups started to pursue their own goals. For example, ISIL's goal to establish the 'Islamic caliphate' was a fundamentally different one to that of the FSA, which was to overthrow Assad and establish a democratic regime. (Tziarras, 2015)

When the Syrian revolution initially started there was a strong cadre of young people who were out in the streets demanding democracy and freedom. However, the sectarian element became an increasing factor in Syria as the conflict continued. The US administration handled the Syrian conflict cautiously; in a sense this caution in

supporting moderate elements may have caused and helped precipitate the situation where extremists were able to take control. “The more control the extremists got the more cautious President Obama got, and the more Al Assad could see that as a weapon” to play with (Interviewee 3, 2015).

As a result of the Arab Spring uprisings, weakened and in some cases overthrown autocracies in the region led to the emergence of ungoverned spaces that were exploited by extremists (Interviewee 8, 2015). This potentially affected the way US characterised the situation in Syria.

Impact of Opposition Groups

The capacity, capability and the congruence in worldview and end state objectives of the opposition groups provide the baseline for contextualising US choices regarding the Syria conflict.

In Libya, the US administration by and large saw the uprising representing a broad cross-section of the Libyan society and collectively supportive of the political body, the National Transitional Council. The capacity and capability of the rebel groups was not significant enough to counter the military units loyal to Qaddafi regime. However, most of the rebels concentrated in eastern Libya and operational support provided by the US and the other coalition forces helped them tilt the balance in their favour. Nevertheless, the US administration was meticulous in crafting its strategy to support the rebels, as there was a constant scepticism about some elements within Libyan rebels. The general perception was that the majority of the opposition consisted of moderate forces from defected professional Libyan soldiers and ordinary civilians who took up arms after the conflict started. However, battle hardened fighters experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan with Islamic orientation were the third group in

the Libyan civil war. The number of fighters in that group and their ideology and end state objectives were source of concern for some US Foreign Policy Executives and high-ranking military officials, including Joint Chief of Staff, Mike Mullen. This scepticism seems to have influenced the means used to by the US in supporting the rebels and the scale of support provide; there was a fear that once Qaddafi was gone some rebels could turn against the US. So, the US purposefully supported the rebels to the point at which they could topple the Qaddafi regime but avoided empowering them to a degree they could not pose threat to US interests in the region. In the first episode of the Syrian conflict, which lasted until August 2011, the opposition lacked military capability and mainly sought more freedom and democracy through government led reform. Before the mass killings of civilians by the Assad regime before August 2011, the opposition was motivated by political aspirations. The political opposition groups also rejected the idea of external intervention to the uprising in that time frame. At that stage the opposition mainly had a peaceful political agenda, and it is difficult to talk about organised armed opposition. So, the US response was along the line of pressuring the Assad regime through sanctions for reform.

During the second episode, which lasted until between November and December 2012, the political and armed opposition was divided and could not garner enough support from the outside world to develop substantial capacity or capability to be able to pose a viable threat and alternative to the regime. In that period, the SNC struggled to gain meaningful support and participation from the broader cross-section of the community, particularly minority groups. In addition, the rebels lacked safe havens in which to thrive and operate against the regime. While the Obama administration took a firm stance against the Assad regime, the means wielded against the Assad regime were not commensurate with the idea of tilting the balance in favour of moderate

opposition groups. Lack of central leadership and infighting among political and armed opposition groups were the primary deficiencies that negatively influenced the overall capability and capacity of the FSA to become a viable actor. Ideologically, the influence of Muslim Brotherhood in FSA and some extremist elements were source of concern for the US administration, even though the majority of the FSA were defectors, mostly secular Syrian army soldiers. On the other hand, the emergence of the Al Nusra Front as the most effective rebel force dedicated to toppling Assad regime, which started attracting foreign fighters and external support from countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, complicated the picture for the US even further. The US administration thus felt the need to handle the Syrian conflict cautiously. Another turning point in Syria that coincided with that time period was the PYD and YPG's relinquishing of control in Kurdish majority towns in Northern Syria to the Assad regime. That move elevated the PYD and YPG to the major players in the Syrian conflict.

In the third episode, which ended in August 2013, the Assad regime was supported by Hezbollah, Iranian forces and some other Shia elements from Iraq, and political and armed opposition in Syria, which united and started acting in a concerted manner. The political and armed opposition in Syria managed to consolidate their cohesion in that time frame to counter emerging threat. In that time frame, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was established to embrace all segments of the society and to consolidate its authority over the Supreme Military Council. That was a golden opportunity for the US to support the internationally recognised Syrian opposition as the political and armed opposition for the first time and included representation from the local population, key internal opposition groups within Syria and the FSA. However, constant scepticism similar to that the US administration had in Libya prevented it taking decisive action in support of the Syrian

opposition. The US administration stopped short of providing the most needed heavy weapons, like anti-tank and aircraft missiles, to the Syrian opposition that would help change the balance of power on the ground and stop Assad regime targeting civilians and opposition groups significantly. The US limited support to non-lethal aid, including food, medicine, and training assistance through the SMC of the FSA. The perception within the US administration was that a large proportion of the opposition had been pushed to the more extremist side of the spectrum. The scepticism became more prevalent during that episode that some of the groups fighting against the Assad regime were anti-American as much as they were anti-Assad. So, the US's reluctance to provide lethal weapon to rebel groups was based essentially on the potential danger that sophisticated American weapons sent into Syria falling into the wrong hands and being used against American interests, particularly by the Al Nusra Front. The US designated the Al Nusra Front as a terrorist entity on 11th December 2012 due to its reported Al Qaeda affiliation. From that point on it was inconceivable for the US administration to provide any kind of direct and indirect support to that and any associated group, especially considering the lessons learned from Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan. Another dimension the US seemed to take into consideration was the general recognition that the Syrian uprising revealed itself as a Sunni uprising against a very narrowly based Alawite regime and that the Syria conflict might be a lot less idealistic and likely a lot less secular.

The fourth period in the Syrian conflict was the most significant period with regards to threats that emerged both from the Assad regime and from ISIL. The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in August 2013 on the one hand and the rise of the threat from ISIL and other Salafist groups on the other made it difficult for the US administration to take decisive action against both. ISIL and AQ affiliated

groups constituted the majority of the influential armed groups in Syria, eclipsing the capability and capacity of FSA, which is widely accepted to be a group of moderate fighters. The conflict in Syria was starting to be conceived as a war between the devil and the deep blue sea; a brutal dictator on one side and an extremist dominated opposition on the other. From that point on, the US's priority was more about degrading ISIL's capability and shrinking its area of control in the region and thus the administration's effort focused on empowering anti-ISIL groups. The most convenient alternative from the US perspective was PYD/YPG Kurdish forces exclusively focused on fighting against ISIL to protect the area under their control. The group had a secular mind-set, which was also seen as a panacea against the growing clout of the religiously oriented and extremist groups in Syria. General Dempsey acknowledged that the US had the capability to neutralise the Assad regime's Air Force, but underlined that it would increase the US's commitment. He warned that the groups who would potentially take over governance in post-Assad Syria would not promote both the US and their own interests. Groups with an Islamic orientation and some extremist groups started to receive more external support and gained further advantage over moderate groups.

It looks like the US strategy was staggered in a way that prioritised more imminent and direct ISIL threats and delayed confronting the Assad regime for later stages. The US administration's understanding seems to be that if Assad goes, the balance would tilt in favour of more extremist groups, contrary to US interests in the region. While the US's reluctance to support moderate opposition groups urged regional actors to increase their support for more extremist groups, which were more capable of confronting the Assad regime, extremist group's gaining the upper hand also led to a more ambivalent and scaled down support to opposition groups. The

transition of fighters from moderate groups to more extremist groups (with more funding and capability) increased. The US was not sure if the moderate groups would consistently subscribe to mutual interests without allying with extremist groups out of a convenience of interests in the complicated war environment.

Finally, the fifth episode was marked by the steadfast expansion of ISIL and further marginalisation of the moderate opposition. As PYD and YPG forces pushed ISIL back and seized territory, the US sustained air strikes in support PYD and YPG forces. As ISIL expanded further into the north of Syria and beheaded two US journalists, the US responded with strikes from sea and air based platforms, avoiding boots on the ground. Instead, the US administration increased its support to PYD and YPG. PYD and YPG forces were both capable and ideologically less dangerous from the US administration's perspective, which facilitated increased and direct support. The Obama administration even sent special operation forces into northern Syria under a "train, advise and assist mission" in their fight against ISIL. The US administration was disappointed though, as some moderate groups trained and equipped by the US to fight against ISIL defected to extremist groups in Syria. This also provided justification to shift the majority of support towards PYD and YPG dominated Syrian Democratic Forces. The US was also determined not to turn the Syrian civil war into a proxy war between US and Russia. Instead, the ISIL threat became a common enemy where they could cooperate, or at least de-conflict their military operations and support PYD and YPG forces as a common ally against ISIL.

5.4 The Impact of the Public Opinion on US Interventions in Libya and Syria

The previous section discussed the Obama Doctrine, economic constraints, and US elite perception as intervening variables vis-à-vis political and armed opposition in

Libya and Syria. This section is devoted to the potential influence of US public opinion on intervention decisions for both conflicts. So, the question is how and to what extent could public opinion have influenced the form, timing and the scale of intervention options over the intervention spectrum.

Before looking into US public opinion and potential influence on US foreign policy choices vis-à-vis the Libya and Syria conflicts it is worthwhile to probe the elements of US public opinion and the associated literature. Donald C. Blaisdell argues that various domestic pressure groups interact with the political parties, the formal organs of government (the president as the chief of foreign policy, Congress, and the bureaucracy, including the military) to impinge upon particular foreign policy decision. Given that policy makers are highly sensitive to public opinion, domestic pressure groups endeavour to influence both the public and government. The use of the press and the divide among the members of the Congress provides pressure groups the opportunity to influence specific foreign policy choices (Blaisdell, 1958).

Sparrow argues that with regards to the public opinion, polls could be misleading, due to the selective process in determining the questions and what to report, and instead the author attributes more definitive influence over the President's perception to the media and Congress. Sparrow also emphasises the media's role in shaping public opinion, 'the media's framing capacity'.

Another dimension of the changing nature of the media and its role in constructing social knowledge is noteworthy; the printed press and broadcasting media has recently been more profoundly supplemented by internet enabled web sites, blogs, and discussion forums (Sparrow, 2008), including social media accounts (Facebook, twitter etc.). These provide a more levelled playing field and opportunity for ordinary individuals to influence public opinion. Nevertheless, these distinct

subcategories of media requires detailed analysis in order to understand their contribution in the aggregate influence on public opinion. For instance, Habel posits argues that preferences of leading media editorial pages over policy decisions and the public was negligible. (Habel, 2012)

The source of public opinion is schematized by Powlick in a way where elites, news media, elected representatives, interest groups, and the general or mass public affect one another in shaping foreign policy. The research results highlight the relative importance of the interplay and linkage between news media and elected representatives. Politicians consider the media's `priming` and `framing` roles as important in raising public awareness to particular issues and in framing the issues in the desired direction. Meanwhile, they also act as delegates of those who elected them and voice their views. (Powlick, 1995)

Civil society is defined by Carothers as the organisations and associations that exist out of state and which encompass interest groups like NGOs, labour unions, professional associations, religious, ethnic and social groups. Virtual civil society, created over internet and where members interact within a network, is complementary to civil society (Carothers, 1999). John W. Masland focuses on intervention and non-intervention as a foreign policy choice and the impact of pressure groups within a pacifist versus war context. He alludes to two types of pressure groups, with reference to the methods used and abused: those trying to stimulate public opinion; and those directly engaging with government. While continuous publicity through the media is used to stimulate public opinion, personal contacts with Congress members and administration are used as a means to influence foreign policy. The two-track approaches complement each other in mobilising public opinion towards a particular

demand and setting the conditions to pressure government to take action at a particular time (Masland, 1942).

Harold H. Sprout makes a distinction between official and unofficial pressure groups. Unofficial pressure groups manipulate public opinion to put pressure on Congress, White House or political parties. Congress serves as an official pressure group through its legislative power and its members' constant interaction with the White House and public over policy decisions requiring executive action. Political parties also exploit international issues as a means to fight domestic politics (Sprout, 1935).

Patrick J Haney and Walt Vanderbush also examines the role of ethnic interest groups in US foreign policy. The American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is presented as an exceptional example and labelled as "the most effective ethnic/foreign policy lobby on Capitol Hill", particularly with regards to US foreign policy in the Middle East. Haney and Vanderbush proposes that ethnic interest groups are more successful in influencing Congress than affecting executive power (Haney & Vanderbush, 1999).

Public opinion is also closely scrutinised by politicians and approval and disapproval rates regarding US military action abroad can serve as either obstacles or catalysts for governments when making final decision (Moss, 2012). Richard C. Eichenberg's research on US Public Opinion and the use of military force between 1981 and 2005 concludes that the US public supports less risky military actions (for example, air strike versus a commitment of troops), multilateral action as opposed to unilateral US intervention and restraining adversaries versus intervening in internal conflicts or civil wars (Eichenberg, 2005). So, probing how the US public perceived US involvement in Libya and Syria conflicts and comparing public support with previous

similar conflicts could contribute to understanding the internal dynamics of decision making.

Even though there exists a multitude of pressure groups, two main channels exist through which all these groups influence the foreign policy decisions of the US administration: congressional actors or dynamics and public opinion. So, regardless of the driving shadow actor behind a particular foreign policy behaviour, be it Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), minority ethnic groups, or economic interest groups, the interaction among the executive (President), legislature (Congress) and public opinion seems to have the potential to influence government action (Moss, 2012).

The constitutional freedom of action provided to President to commit troops to combat operations and sustaining that commitment is another dimension in the domestic political context. The War Power Resolution Act, passed in 1973, intended to limit President's war authority as given by the Constitution. The resolution required the President to gain Congressional authorisation within 60 days and, in an emergency, within 90 days after a military operation in a foreign territory commenced. The resolution also requires the President to notify Congress within 48 hours after the onset of the operation (Hendrickson, 2013). Analysing how the War Power Resolution Act and Congress influenced or limited the Obama administration in the Libya intervention and searching for the repercussions for Syrian foreign policy choices seem to be important.

In his article, 'Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy', Norrin M. Ripsman also emphasises the interplay among public opinion, the legislature, which can veto the government's policy agenda, the media, which can mould public opinion,

and organised interest groups, which can provide an electoral pay-off that can collectively influence the foreign policy (Ripsman, 2009, p.170,171,185).

Finally, as Jason W Davidson suggests, governments attempt to minimize electoral losses by getting the public or opposition party or coalition backing for the intervention (Davidson, 2013). In that context, cross-party dynamics and the impact of the electoral cycle on public opinion and President Obama`s foreign policy choices requires particular attention.

William Quandt divides the electoral cycle for US Presidents into four phases: the first year is defined as an experimental term for the President and top advisors to gain experience in foreign policy; during the second and part of the third year the President deals with the complexities of foreign policy; during the rest of third year and the last year, as the election year approaches, the president either rushes for success, with a tendency to abandon controversial and costly foreign policy with the desire not to lose the support of constituencies; during the second term the first and second year are the best time frames for taking foreign policy initiatives, while at some point in the third or fourth year the "lame duck" phenomenon emerges. Loss of control over one or both houses of Congress is also something the President takes into consideration (Quandt, 1986).

Election Dates	House of Representatives Elections*	Senate Elections**	Presidential Elections***	Senate Majority	House Majority
08-Nov-16	√	√	√		
04-Nov-14	√	√		Republican	Republican
06-Nov-12	√	√	√	Democrat	Republican
02-Nov-10	√	√		Democrat	Republican
04-Nov-08	√	√	√	Democrat	Democrat
* 435 Members of House of Representatives stand for re-election every two years					
** 100 Senators serve six year terms. Elections are staggered. Every two years a third of Senators run for re-election. Each state is represented by two senators					
*** Presidential elections take place every four years. The public *don't vote directly for their choice of president. Instead an electoral college system is used. Each state is allocated a number of electors; they will make the final choice. A state has the same number of electors as it has senators and representatives. 538 (435 representatives, 100 senators and 3 electors from District of Colombia) electors chose a ticket (for both president and vice president)					
Source: The official YouTube channel for the UK Parliament, US Elections -- How do they work?, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRu_JcarCDY					

Table 4 US Electoral Cycle and Election System

It is challenging to define a measure of influence of public opinion over foreign policy decisions and gauge how much the administration takes public opinion into account when making intervention decisions. However, looking into the correlation between public opinion and foreign policy decisions with regards to the forms of intervention has the potential to shed light on any link between public opinion and pursued intervention options.

In the interviews conducted by the author, there was a consensus of a negative influence of the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences on public opinion regarding new military entanglements. The majority of the interviewees (except for the three out of nine) thought that public opinion is completely irrelevant or of secondary importance for the US administration; public opinion is widely considered as being 'good to have' in support of their preferred action, or something to justify inaction or something that can be shaped in the direction the administration deems necessary. However, there was also consensus among the interviewees that the US administration takes public

opinion into consideration in conjunction with Congressional dynamics and the electoral cycle. So, the power of the opposition in the Senate and House of Representatives, the associated election year in US electoral cycle, coupled with general US public opinion could have the potential to influence the US administration's calculations interactively.

In this section I will highlight some of the key arguments which may help identify key elements of the processes that led to certain US policy decisions in the context of Libya and Syria.

In the US political scene, the US public is expected to support their political party's decision with regards to any intervention, and oppose other party's choices. During the Arab Spring even some of Democrats, along with the Republicans, were sceptical about taking direct military action against the Assad regime. However, as ISIL emerged as a brutal actor, conservative media outlets helped in shaping public opinion towards military action (Interviewee 7, 2015)

Thomas Juneau considers public opinion as a tool for the US administration to justify their decision in support of or against intervention. Juneau sees US public opinion as a driver of decisions not to intervene, but thinks it was secondary in taking a military intervention decision. Juneau also highlighted that non-interventionism was an integral part of President Obama's electoral commitment, which was relaxed against the ISIL threat as the US Congress reached a consensus to target the group and wider US public supported that policy shift (Thomas Juneau, 2016). To change public opinion the administration talks to the public, conveys their messages through the press, and seeks to build coalitions among politicians by communicating with constituents and Congressional members simultaneously (Interviewee 8, 2015).

With that in mind, congressional and public speeches from key actors during both conflicts, the way they influenced groups' efforts to shape public opinion in a particular direction and, subsequently, the degree to which those endeavours reflected on public opinion polls constitute the primary source of the analysis that follows.

Other important themes regarding the US public's conviction about the Libya and Syrian conflicts were: firstly, that the Libya intervention would be easy and short, as opposed to Syria; secondly, Libya was very isolated and didn't have the same sort of alliances that Syria had protecting it (Interviewee 4, 2015). So a potential Syria intervention was seen as a more dangerous conflict, involving more complexity and threat potential. It was also seen as entrenching the US deeper into a convoluted Middle East conflict, which would cost a lot of money without tangible results to help improve the US's security or position in the world (Interviewee 2, 2015).

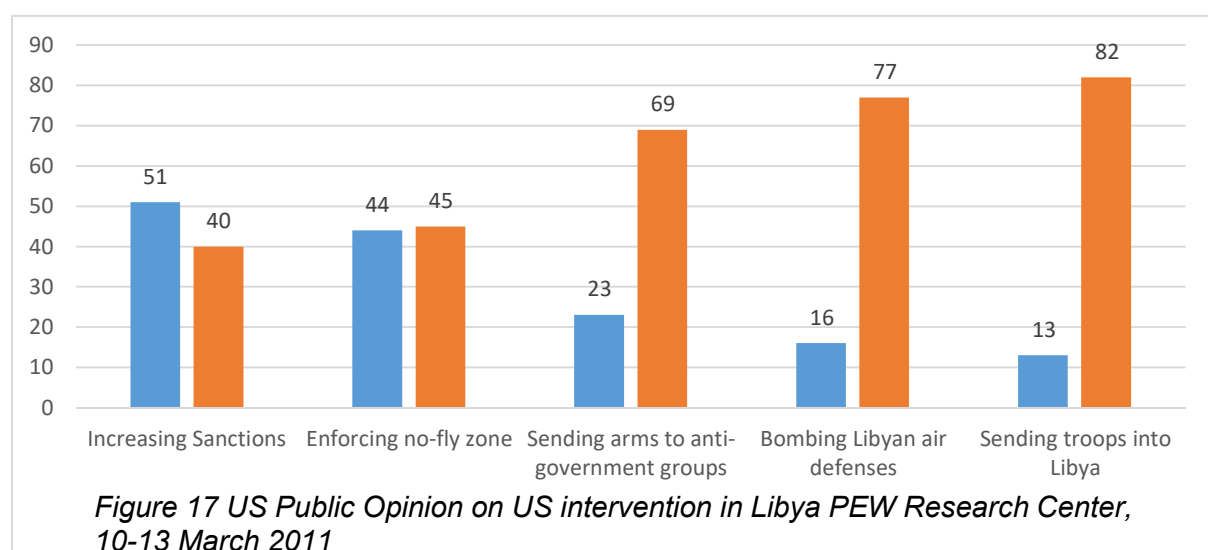
Having looked at key themes from the interviews, the following section will be dedicated to the analysis of the potential interplay among the composition of the Congress, electoral cycle, public opinion, and US intervention decisions vis-à-vis Libya and Syria. It is expected that the impact of those dynamics would be limited when the key security interests were at stake, but would weigh in more when other interests gain prominence or in case of a lower security threat environment for the US and its citizens.

LIBYA

The Libya conflict started in the beginning of President Obama's third year of Presidency and at a time when the Democratic Party held the majority in the Senate, whereas he has just lost the majority to Republicans in the House of Representatives in the wake of the November 2010 elections. In that context public opinion, along with

the position taken by the Republican Party vis-à-vis the Libyan conflict appears to be an important element of President Obama's calculations. To be able to understand how cross party dynamics and public opinion collectively could have had an impact on foreign policy decisions I will look into the Libya conflict from the start of the public protests against the Libyan regime, followed by the civilian casualties that emerged along with the formation of Libyan Transitional Council, and the intervention period that lasted until NATO operation ended seven months later at the end of October 2011. It is important to note that the announcement of victory in Libya came just before a presidential election year, which could have facilitated President Obama to explain to voters why the US got involved in the Libyan conflict.

The immediate US response to the Libyan regime's crackdown on protestors was to close its embassy in Tripoli on 25th February and impose unilateral sanctions against the Libyan regime, including assets freeze and travel bans (Cooper & Landler, 2011). Just before the US military intervention the US public opinion was divided over enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya but was overwhelmingly united against sending arms to rebels and deploying US ground troops. The national survey conducted by the



Pew Research Centre between 10th to 13th March, a week before the US, France and UK-led strikes started, showed public scepticism about the US's involvement in Libya at large. Only a narrow majority (51%) supported increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions. The public was divided over the idea of enforcing no fly zone (44% in favour, 45% opposed), while the vast majority opposed sending arms to anti-government rebel groups (69%), bombing Libyan air defence systems (77%), and sending ground troops to fight against Libyan regime forces (82%) (Pew Research Center, 2011b).

While public opinion appeared to be divided over enforcing a no-fly zone, Republican Senator John McCain put together (with Senator Joe Lieberman) on 14th March 2011 a Senate resolution that called for the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya (McCain, 2011c). Support for no-fly zone led by an influential Republican Senator could be interpreted as part of public opinion formation in support of US intervention in Libya.

As the Organisation of the Islamic Conference released a statement supporting a no-fly zone over Libya on 8th March 2011, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab League called on the UNSC to impose a no-fly zone on 8th and 12th March 2011 respectively, and UNSC Resolution 1973 was endorsed on 17th March 2011. Alongside these developments, US public opinion appeared to have shifted significantly in favour of limited military involvement. A poll conducted by CNN and Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) between 18th and 20th March 2011 – just as the strikes started – revealed decisive support in favour of establishing of no fly zone (70%), but a majority opposed deploying ground troops into Libya (70%). On the other hand, public support to airstrikes targeting the Libyan regime forces was 54%. CNN Polling Director Keating Holland also highlighted the fact that Republican support for

a no-fly zone was stronger than that of Democrats and Independents, and Republicans were more likely to support air strikes disassociated with the no-fly zone (CNN/ORC, 2011b).

if we consider historical examples of multiple recent US interventions, the political party to which the President of the time belongs normally rallies stronger support for intervention relative to the opposition; Democratic President Bill Clinton's Bosnia intervention had been supported largely by Democrats while the Republicans overwhelmingly opposed and Republican President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq had been largely supported by Republicans, while the Democrats were largely against it (Interviewee 7, 2015). However, in the Libya case, stronger Republican support for intervention presented an anomaly. Alas, the fact that Republicans were more enthusiastic about stronger US military involvement in Libya seems to have strengthened President Obama's position.

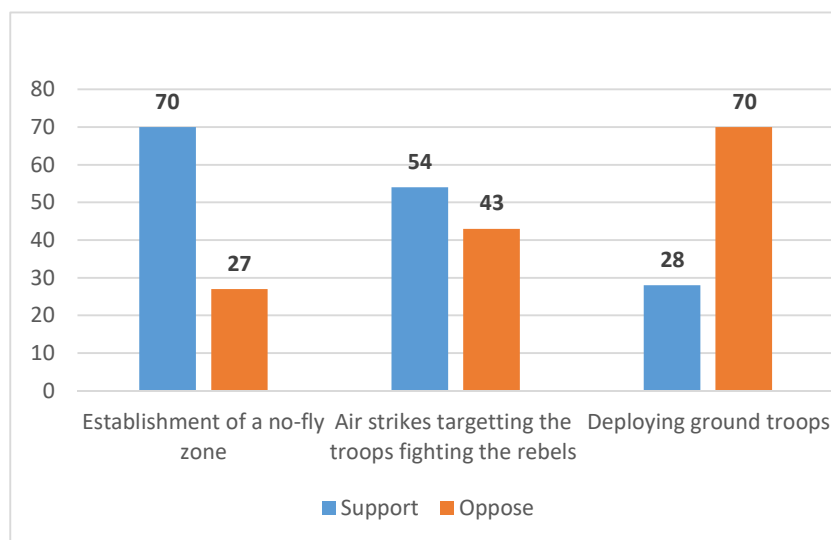


Figure 18 US Public Support to Libya Intervention, CNN/ORC Poll, 18-20 March 2011

On the other hand, according to another poll conducted on 21st March 2011 by Gallup, which did not differentiate between establishment of no-fly zone and targeting

regime forces (unlike the CNN/ORC poll), only 47% of the respondents approved ongoing US military action against Libya, while 37% disapproved. According to historical Gallup data, 47% was still the lowest approval rate for US military intervention among the last ten recent interventions. (Jeffery M. Jones, 2011). Like the CNN/ORC poll results, the Gallup poll also showed that Republicans were ostensibly more supportive of military action in Libya.

Approval of Prior U.S. Military Actions

Country/Region	Dates	% Approve	% Disapprove
Libya	Mar 21, 2011	47	37
Iraq	Mar 20, 2003	76	20
Afghanistan	Oct 7, 2001	90	5
Kosovo/The Balkans	Apr 30-May 2, 1999	51	45
Afghanistan and Sudan	Aug 20, 1998	66	19
Haiti	Sep 23-25, 1994	54	45
Somalia	Jun 18-21, 1993	65	23
Iraq	Jan 13, 1993	83	9
Libya	Apr 17-18, 1986	71	21
Grenada	Oct 26-27, 1983	53	34

Table 5 Approval Rates for US Military Interventions, Gallup Poll, 21 March 2011

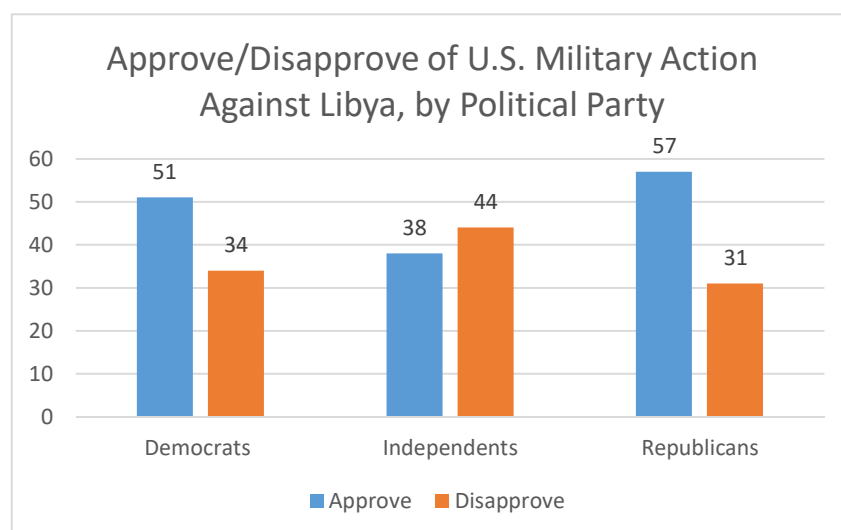


Figure 19 Support for US Military Action in Libya, by Political Party, Gallup Poll, 21 March 2011

Even though the initial strikes intended to protect civilians, public opinion polls included questions regarding support for regime change starting from the early days

of strikes enforcing the no-fly zone. According to a poll conducted by Reuters/Ipsos three days after the US-led bombing campaign, 79% of the public agreed that the US and allies should remove the Qaddafi regime. These findings were similar to those in a CNN poll released on 22nd March 2011, which found that 77% supported removing Qaddafi from power. In accordance with Reuters/Ipsos survey, 60% was in favour of military action in Libya, 39% opposed strikes and only 7% supported deploying US ground troops in combat role to Libya (Reuters/Ipsos Survey, 2011).

A PEW Research Center survey conducted between 24th and 27th March 2011 showed modest support (47%) for US airstrikes in Libya (Pew Research Center, 2011a). We can again see that Republicans were slightly more enthusiastic and supportive of airstrikes against Libyan regime targets relative to Democrats and Independents.

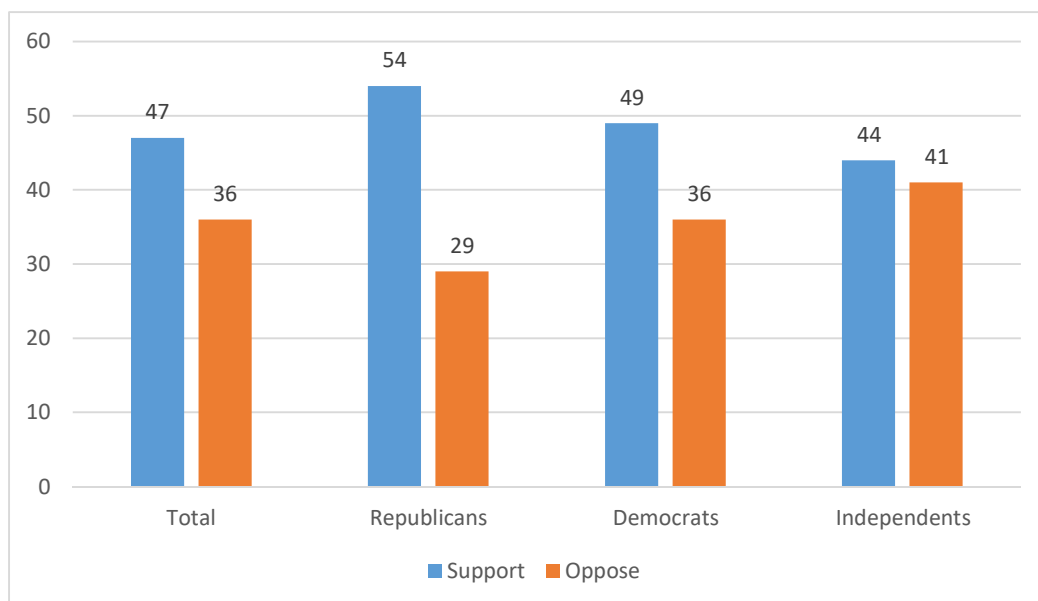


Figure 20 PEW Research Center, 24-27 March 2011 The US Public Support to US Conducting Airstrikes in Libya

According to a CNN/ORC poll conducted between the 9th and 10th April 2011 and released on 14th April 2011, a slim majority supported military action against the Libyan regime and sending arms to anti-government rebel groups, while the vast

majority opposed sending US ground troops into Libya should NATO air and missile strikes turn out to be ineffective. There was also waning support for seeking regime change, and 55% of the US public did not think US national interests were at stake in Libya (CNN/ORC, 2011c). The national interest theme also became a significant component of the arguments put forward by anti-interventionists both in public and in Congress.

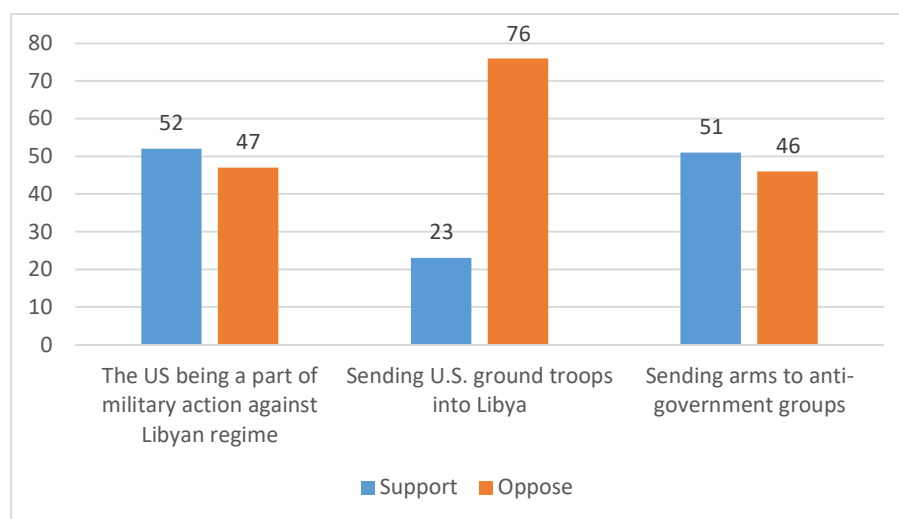


Figure 21 US Public Support for Libya Intervention, CNN/ORC Poll, 9-10 April 2011

According to a CNN/ORC poll conducted between 24th and 26th May 2011 and released on 31st May 2011, public support to the limited use of military force by the US in Libya as part of the NATO mission was 54%, with 43% opposed (CNN/ORC, 2011a). However, just a month later, a Gallup poll conducted on 24th June 2011 revealed that already relatively low public support was further fading away. Compared to the 21st March 2011 poll, approval for US military action in Libya had dropped by 8%. The poll suggests that the most significant shift took place among Republicans, where support shifted from an approval of 39% to 57%, whereas Democrat support was largely stable (Jeffrey M. Jones, 2011). Gradually declining support for US military involvement in Libya in Republican circles seems to be as a result of protracted intervention without

tangible results and an opportunity to confront a Democratic presidential candidate for the upcoming 2012 election.

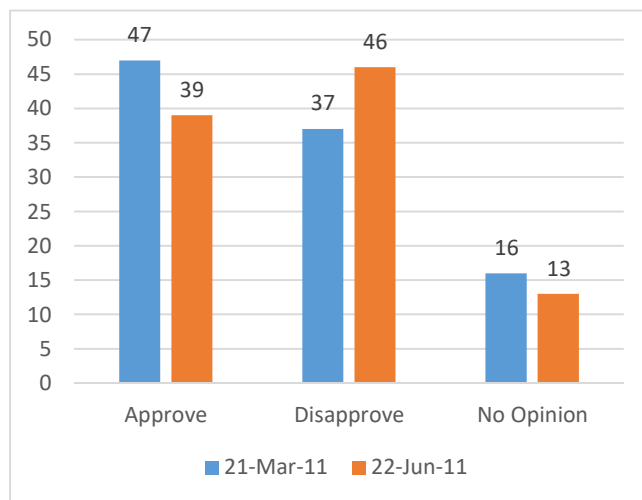


Figure 22 Public Support to US military actions against Libya, Gallup Poll, 22 June 2011

Approve/Disapprove of U.S. Military Action Against Libya, by Political Party

	March 2011	June 2011	Change (pct. pts.)
REPUBLICANS			
Approve	57%	39%	-18
Disapprove	31%	47%	+16
INDEPENDENTS			
Approve	38%	31%	-7
Disapprove	44%	52%	+8
DEMOCRATS			
Approve	51%	54%	+3
Disapprove	34%	35%	+1

GALLUP

Figure 23 US Public Support for Libya Intervention, by Political Party

Even though the public support for military intervention into Libya was low before the intervention, it increased after military action started. Since a limited

intervention strategy composed of sanctions, enforcing a no-fly zone, a naval blockade, and targeting regime forces from sea and air based platforms was seen relatively risk free and with high expectation of success, it was easy for the US administration to disregard public opinion to some extent in Libya. Moreover, Republican support for, in particular, enforcing a no-fly zone and stronger US military involvement in Libya encouraged President Obama to take action. A limited response to the Libya conflict can also be interpreted as a compromise and a sensible position taken by Obama administration given that it balanced reluctant public opinion. On the other hand, regional and international support for intervention, President Obama's reassurances vis-à-vis limited, multilateral (encompassing regional Arab countries as well), and a no-boots on the ground approach in line with his doctrine, a swift intervention decision and the idea of preventing mass civilian casualties in Libya made it difficult for the public and the Congress to stand firmly against intervention. However, very strong US public opinion, which consistently opposed providing support to rebels and sending ground troops into Libya, was in line with the Obama administration's policy.

SYRIA

Support for US military involvement in the Syrian conflict had been consistently low over the course of the conflict against the Syrian regime in support of the rebels. The most significant shift took place after an August 2013 chemical weapon attack by the Syrian regime, which resulted in the elimination of a Syrian regime chemical weapon stockpile. From that moment on the threat posed by ISIL came to the forefront and public support for military action against ISIL, even the idea of sending ground troops, gradually increased over time, culminating in direct US airstrikes against ISIL

targets.

Five time periods, representing four significant shifts, will be analysed to understand the impact of public opinion over intervention decisions along with the evolving threat perception. The first time period starts with the onset of the Syrian demonstrations and spans until the start of mass killings of protestors by the Syrian regime in August 2011. This time frame corresponds to the ongoing Libya intervention and reform pledges from the Syrian regime along with increasing civilian casualties. The US and regional actors like Saudi Arabia and Turkey also believed in that period that a peaceful solution in Syria was probable. According to a poll conducted by the University of Maryland between 1st and 5th April 2011 designed to understand the US public opinion regarding the Arab Spring uprisings, the results revealed that two thirds of the US public believed that the US should take a neutral position, 26% supported demonstrators while only 4% sided with the government (Telhamy & Kull, 2011). That was just two weeks after the Libyan intervention started, which showed the reluctance of the US public for another entanglement in Middle East. That did not change throughout the first time period as the US administration opted to find a political solution while using variety of sanctions as leverage to push the Assad regime for reform and to pressure him to stop targeting civilians.

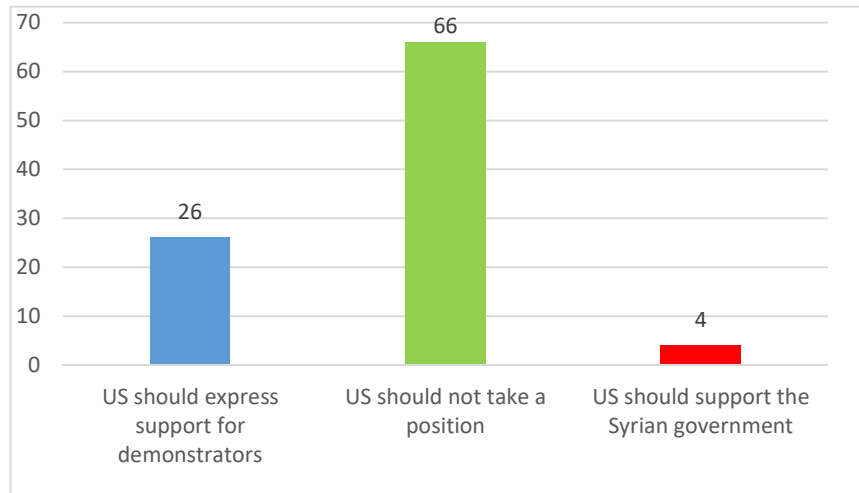


Figure 24 University of Maryland, the US Public Opinion on Syrian Uprising, 1-5 Apr 2011

The second period started with the mass killings perpetrated by the Syrian regime, which was condemned by the US administration. The US called for Assad to step down in order to open the way for a negotiated settlement of the conflict. That time frame also coincided with the militarisation of the Syrian opposition. The end of that period was marked by emergence of a united political and armed opposition, which provided an opportunity for the US to offer support against the Syrian regime. On the other hand, this time period was also the Presidential election year, which could have prevented the US administration to take substantial risks. The changing dynamics inside Syria did not translate into decisive US intervention into the conflict, which was reflected also by the public opinion polls. According to a CNN/ORC poll conducted between 10th and 13th February 2012, in response to a question about whether the US has a responsibility to do something about the fighting in Syria, the vast majority (73%) of the public believed that the US did not have responsibility (CNN/ORC, 2012b).

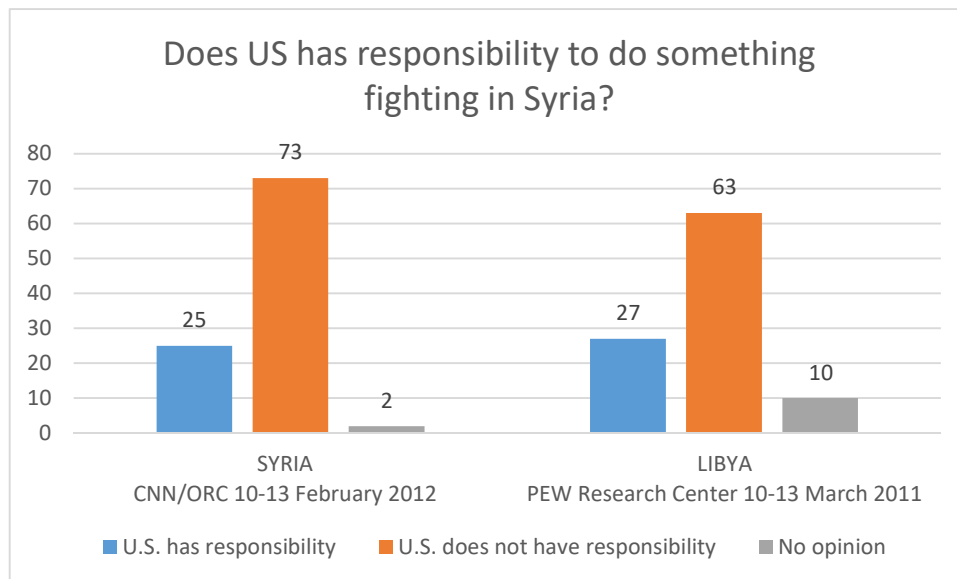


Figure 25 US Public Opinion about the US Responsibility in Syria Conflict

Firm public opinion against military intervention in Syria prevailed across crossing party lines, even as the conditions surrounding the Syrian conflict evolved over time. A CNN/ORC poll from 7th June 2012 showed that 57% of Democrats and 58% of Republicans (and 61% of the overall US public) still believed that the US should play no role in an attempt to halt the conflict in Syria (CNN/ORC, 2012a).

Another poll conducted by the University of Maryland between 27th September and 2nd October 2012 also looked into US public opinion about various potential US intervention options in Syria. The poll results revealed that the majority of the US public, by a wide margin, was in favour of increasing diplomatic and economic sanctions (60%) and enforcing a no-fly zone (59%) over Syria. However, a greater majority also continued to oppose sending arms to Syrian rebel groups (67%), bombing Syrian air defence systems (68%), and sending US ground troops into Syria (77%) (Telhamy & Kull, 2012). Substantial US public support for enforcing a no-fly zone is important to note, given that it was also supported by regional actors and Syrian opposition, but it did not come to fruition as the implementation of a no-fly zone would automatically require the targeting of regime air defence systems and air force

assets, meaning a deeper US commitment than Obama was prepared to make.

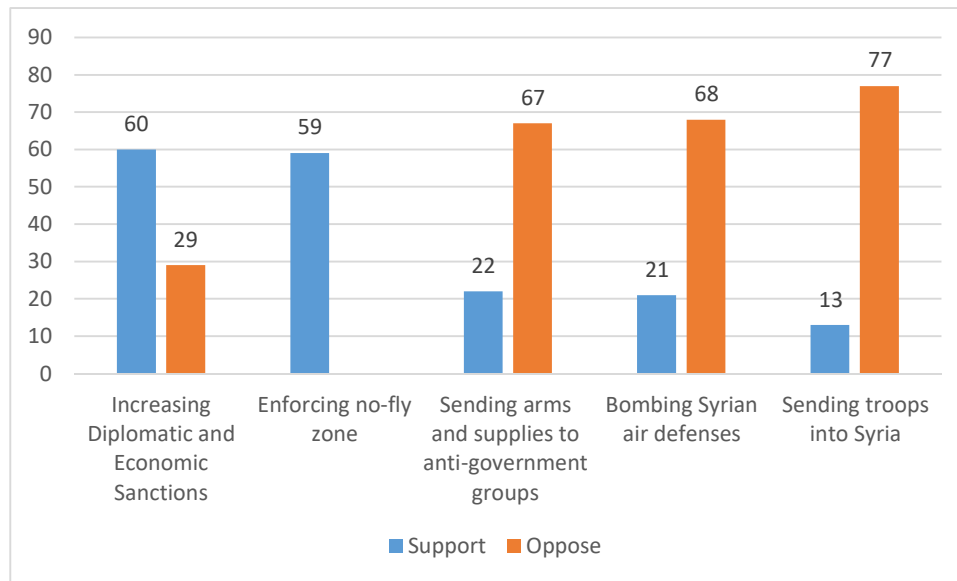


Figure 26 University of Maryland, the US Public Opinion on Potential Actions in Syria, 08 October 2012

The third period started with the formation of a relatively unified political opposition which also started scrutinising military efforts and which resulted in recognition from numerous international and regional actors. That time period also corresponded with the first year of President Obama's second term, which, as we saw above, is considered the best time for a President to take foreign policy initiative. However, during that time period the US administration only provided limited non-lethal aid to selected rebel groups, which was ineffective in tilting the balance. The administration did not concede to demands for enforcing no-fly zone. The end of third period was marked by the chemical weapons attacks conducted by the Syrian regime against rebel held areas that also affected civilians. During that period, even though the US public was fully aware that the Syrian conflict would not end through non-military intervention means, cross-party opposition to the US getting involved militarily remained.

According to a Gallup poll conducted on 28th May 2013, 68% of the US public opposed US military action in Syria, even if diplomatic and economic efforts failed.

Even though there were relatively more decisive differences across parties in the percentage who believed that economic and diplomatic efforts can resolve the Syrian conflict, overall the US public, by a wide margin (58%), believed non-military means could not resolve the conflict (Jeffrey M. Jones, 2013).

Should U.S. Use Military Force to Attempt to End Syrian Civil War, by Subgroup

	Yes, should %	No, should not %	No opinion %
All Americans	24	68	8
Democrat	20	72	8
Independent	23	70	8
Republican	31	64	5

Figure 27 US Public Opinion about the Use of Force in Syria to End the Conflict, by Political Party, Gallup Poll, 28 May 2013

Belief That Economic and Diplomatic Efforts Can Resolve Syrian Conflict, by Subgroup

	Yes, can %	No, cannot %	No opinion %
All Americans	27	58	16
Democrat	37	47	17
Independent	25	62	13
Republican	16	71	12

Figure 28 US Public Opinion about the Influence of Economic and Diplomatic Efforts to Resolve Syrian Conflict, by Political Party, Gallup Poll, 28 May 2013

The start of the fourth period was marked by the use of chemical weapons and lasted until the ISIL took control of vast swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. Even though President Obama had declared that the use of chemical weapons would cross the "red line", corroborated chemical attack that struck opposition controlled Ghouta, Syria on 21st August 2013 with rockets containing the chemical agent sarin did not alter widespread US public opinion that the US should avoid military involvement in Syria.

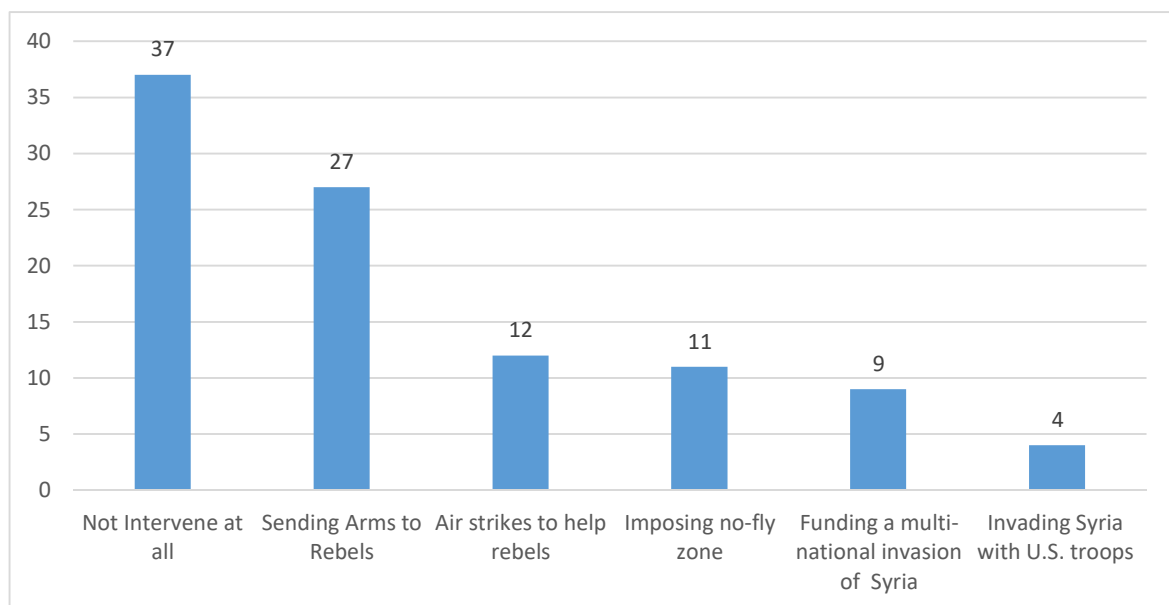


Figure 29 The US Public Support to range of Options against Chemical Weapon Attacks, 24 Aug 13

According to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released on 24th August 2015, the most popular option from the range of options Obama was considering in the aftermath of chemical attack was still non-intervention in Syria (37%), followed by 'offer military aid to vetted rebel groups' (27%). Exceedingly less popular options were 'airstrikes against Syrian regime forces in support of armed opposition' (12%), 'imposing a no-fly zone' (11%) to practically nullify the Syrian Air Force, 'sending multinational ground troops to invade Syria' (9%), and 'sending only US ground troops to invade Syria' (4%) (Wroughton, 2013).

Another poll conducted by Post-ABC after chemical weapon attack was released on 3rd September 2013. The poll results showed only a nominal increase in

support for punitive airstrikes (36%) against the Assad regime, while a vast majority also still opposed supplying weapons to Syrian rebels (70%) (Post-ABC Poll, 2013)

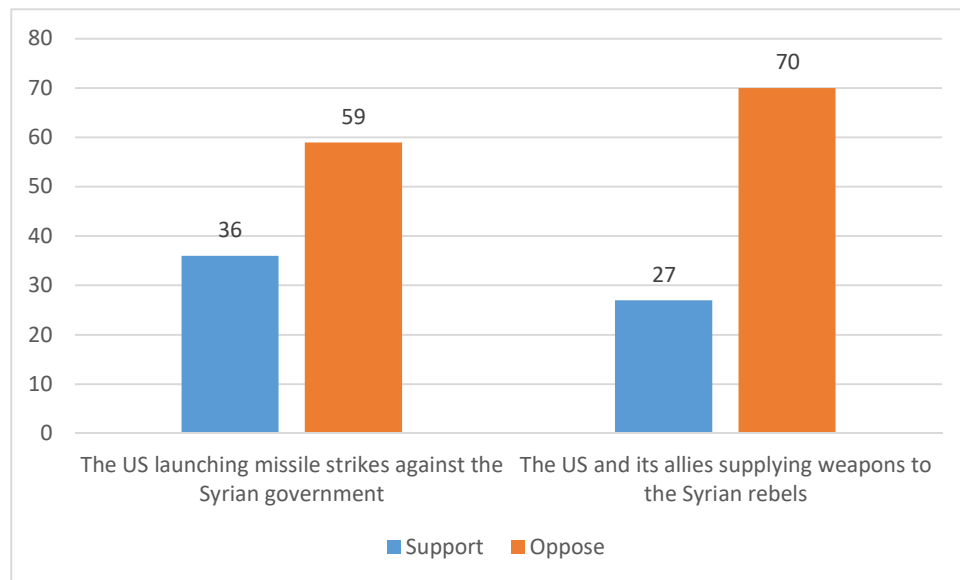


Figure 30 US Public Support for Missile Strikes and Supplying Weapons to Rebels, Post-ABC Poll, 3 September 2013

A Gallup survey conducted between 3rd and 4th September and published on 6th September 2013 also revealed similar results and compared support for US military action in Syria with that of recent conflicts (Dugan, 2013). Despite the fact that a repeatedly drawn red line was crossed by the anti-US Syrian regime, low levels of public support was noteworthy, especially when compared to previous US interventions in Iraq (2003), Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Iraq (1991). More importantly, the support for US military strikes against the Syrian regime among Democratic Party supporters was relatively low (45% in favour and 43% opposed). Surprisingly, Republican support for punitive strikes against the Assad regime was much lower compared to Libya, where the Republicans had advocated enforcing no-fly zone more strongly than Democrats.

Views on Proposed U.S. Military Actions Before Commencement of Such Actions

Country/Region	Polling dates	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
		%	%	%
Syria	Sep 3-4, 2013	36	51	13
Iraq	Mar 14-15, 2003	64	33	3
Afghanistan	Oct 5-6, 2001	82	14	4
Kosovo/The Balkans	Feb 19-21, 1999	43	45	12
Iraq/Persian Gulf	Jan 11-13, 1991	55	38	4

GALLUP®

Figure 31 US Public Support for Proposed Interventions before Commencement of Such Actions

Support for Potential U.S. Military Strike Against Syria

	Favor	Oppose
	%	%
Democrats	45	43
Independents	34	53
Republicans	31	58

Figure 32 Support for Potential US Military Intervention after Chemical Weapon attack in Syria, by Political Parties, Gallup Survey 3-4 September

According to a CNN/ORC poll conducted between 6th and 8th September and released on 9th September 2013, which examined the potential impact of US Congressional approval for military action on public opinion, the decision to be taken by Congress would have an indecisive impact on public opinion.

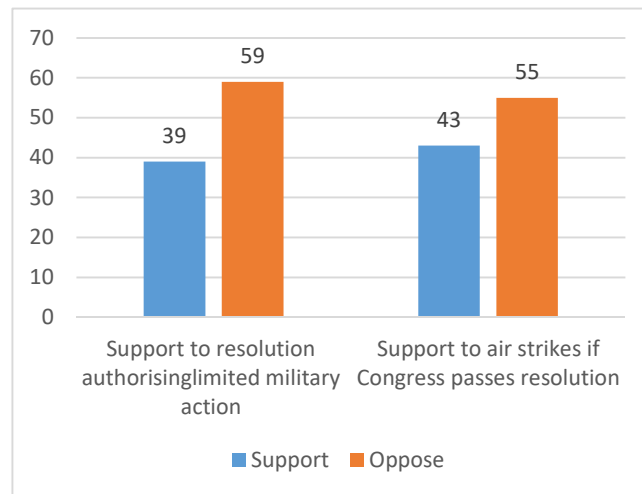


Figure 33 Potential Impact of US Congress Passing a Resolution Authorising Military intervention in Syria after Chemical Weapon Attack, CNN/ORC Poll, 09 September 2013

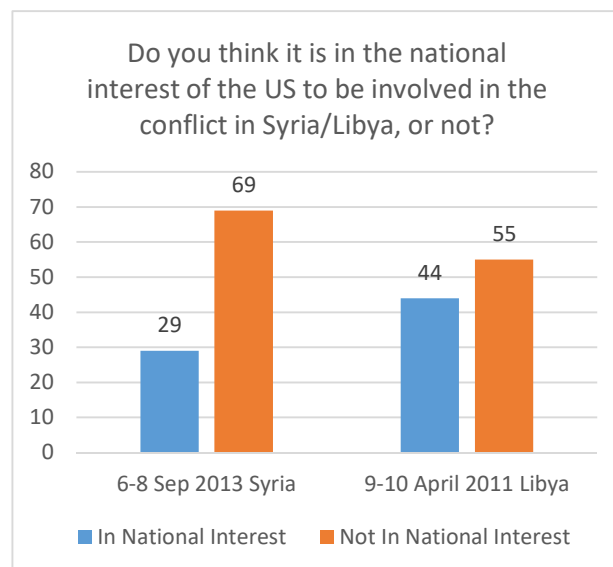


Figure 34 US Public Opinion on whether it is in US Interests to be involved in Libya and Syria Conflicts

A hypothetical question about the US Congress potentially passing a resolution that would authorise military action for 60 to 90 days and bar the use of the US troops in a combat role in Syria increased support for limited air strikes against Syrian regime by only 4%. This also shows consistent US public reluctance to be involved in the Syrian conflict. The majority of the public (69%) also did think getting more involved in the Syrian conflict was in the US national interests (CNN/ORC, 2013). Even though

President Obama set the threshold for intervention where US ideals and principles and national security were at stake at the same time, and chemical weapon usage in Syria fell under that category (Obama, 2013a), that did not translate into military intervention.

Another survey conducted by the PEW Research Centre compared weekly results between 29th August and 1st September and between 4th and 8th September 2013 and shows the fluidity of public opinion. 14% undecided respondents seemed to have shifted to the opposing side, since the percentage of public that opposed to US airstrikes against Syrian regime increased to 63% from 48% in only a week (Pew Research Center, 2013). The disapproval to airstrikes in this poll also reflected cross-party opposition; Republicans and Independents portrayed a more anti-interventionist.

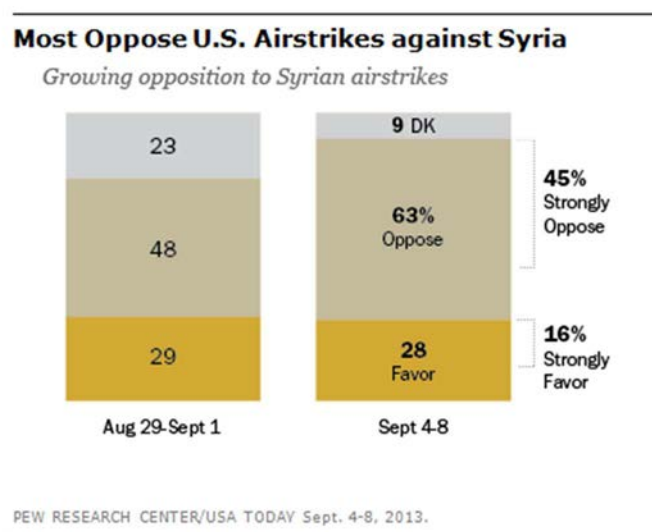


Figure 35 US Public Support for Airstrikes in against Syrian Regime, PEW Research Center, 4-8 September 2013

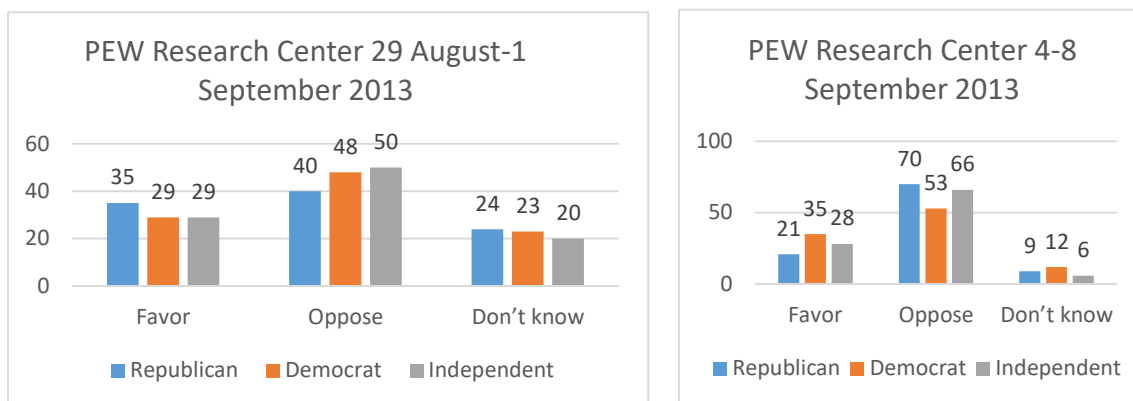


Figure 36 Cross Party Support for Airstrikes against Syrian Regime post Chemical Weapon attack, PEW Research Centre

When the Obama administration was preparing to seek Congressional approval for limited airstrikes to degrade Syrian chemical weapon capabilities, one of the most influential lobbying groups, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), formally called on the US Congress to approve the airstrikes in Syria. In a statement its website on 3rd September 2013, AIPAC urged Congress to grant the President the authority ‘to protect America’s national security interests’ on two main grounds: first, the civilized world should not tolerate use of chemical weapons, particularly against civilians; secondly, upholding international norms to prevent a further proliferation of unconventional weapons in Middle East and, for the most part, preventing Iran attaining nuclear weapons capability (AIPAC, 2013). It was noteworthy to see AIPAC taking a definite position in support of intervention given that it had not publicly lobbied for intervention against the Assad regime up until that point.

The Syrian conflict and potential US intervention was seriously discussed for the first time in US Congress just after the chemical weapon attack, whereupon President Obama publicly declared that the US would take punitive action. During the discussions, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives raised their

bi-partisan concerns for a potential US intervention by citing their constituents' reluctance. In the Senate debate on Senate Joint Resolution (S.J. Res.) 21 on 9th September 2013, Dan Coats, a Republican Senator from Indiana, talked about his visit to his constituents and the calls and e-mails he received regarding US potential involvement in Syria over the previous week. He mentioned that the vast majority of Indiana residents opposed to any US military engagement in Syria, citing 12 years of unsuccessful efforts in the Middle East that were unsuccessful in attaining meaningful results and which failed to contribute to the US national security interests, but instead resulted in increased violence, chaos, and disintegration (Coats, 2013). Barbara Ann Mikulski, Democratic Party Senator from Maryland also articulated her constituents' views, expressed to her during face to face interactions, phone calls or through e-mails. She said that Marylanders overwhelmingly opposed military intervention in Syria (Mikulski, 2013).

On the following day, 10th September 2013, during Congressional discussions, Republican Congressman from Nebraska Jeff Fortenberry raised his objection to unilateral US intervention in Syria, highlighting potential further destabilisation and other unintended consequences. He also stated that the majority of his constituents expressed remarkable concern about the potential for US military intervention (Fortenberry, 2013). Republican Congressman from Texas Kenny Marchant also mentioned that his constituents were deeply sceptical and concerned about what would be achieved in Syria through military intervention (Marchant, 2013).

During the continued Senate discussions on 10th September 2013 over authorizing the limited and specified use of US Armed Forces against Syria, Bernie Sanders, US Senator from Vermont, stated that approximately "95% of the thousands of e-mails and phone calls" his office had received were against US military

intervention in Syria and he shared his view that there was no state in the US who supports intervention. He also drew attention to the across-the-board consensus that had developed among the vast majority of “Democrats, Republicans, Independents and also progressives, conservatives, moderates” against a third military intervention in the Middle East in 12 years. He explained why he thinks the US public felt so strongly against military involvement in Syria; he said that after 12 years of protracted entanglement in Iraq and Afghanistan, which inflicted thousands of US casualties and led to loss of huge amount of money at the expense of domestic requirements, stability and democracy have not been accomplished yet. In conclusion, he suggested the US administration pay attention to US citizen`s needs and choices (Sanders, 2013).

During the same discussions, Tom Udall, a Democratic Senator from New Mexico echoed the sentiments of New Mexicans and said that the US public believed a limited strike would not deter Assad and would instead bring about the necessity of greater direct US involvement and commitment to the conflict. Senator Udall acknowledged that officials should not always follow what the public polls indicate when making important decisions; however, he also said that he shared the widespread public view that that US administration should exhaust political, diplomatic, and economic options first before taking military action (Udall, 2013). Another Democratic Party Senator from Maryland, Ben Cardin, reflected his constituents` concerns that the consequences of Iraqi intervention might also be the case Syria, i.e. an ineffective, protracted, long-term and large-scale commitment where the US did not have national security interest at stake (Cardin, 2013).

President Obama also acknowledged in his `Address to the Nation on Syria` on 10th September 2013 the fact that after the toll of Iraq and Afghanistan interventions, even a limited intervention in Syria would not be popular. President Obama reiterated

his commitment to work to end the wars and concentrate on socio-economic rebuilding efforts at home (Obama, 2013d). It was a recurrent theme in the interviews that the author conducted that the public, having in mind what happened in Afghanistan and Iraq, would not steadfastly support another intervention in Middle East (Tziarras, 2015) So, recent intervention experiences rendered US public largely disinterested and fearful about getting more involved in the Middle East. That put pressure on the President and Congress (Interviewee 3, 2015)

On 11th September 2013, Republican Congressman Mo Brooks from Alabama reinforced the fact that there was not public support to attack Syria. Mr. Brooks stated that the US public opposed attacking Syria by a two-to-one ratio. Mr. Brooks referred to the 1,267 of 1,272 citizens from Alabama's 5th District who contacted his office who were opposed attacking Syria; only 5 were in support (Brooks, 2013).

Despite the fact that the chemical weapon attack provided enough legitimacy and rationale itself for military intervention by the US, public and congressional opposition to military intervention seems to be significant enough to be taken into consideration by the US administration. That also coincided with two significant developments: ISIL emerged as a significant cross-regional threat in summer 2013 and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who postured himself being open to dialog on Iran's nuclear weapon development program, assumed office in August 2013 in Iran. Having dismantled Syrian chemical weapon capabilities and stockpiles, the US threat perception shifted and prioritised degrading and destroying ISIL in Syria and Iraq instead.

The fifth period started with ISIL seizing control of territory in Iraq and Syria, followed by its declaration of a caliphate on 29th June 2014. The US carried out the first airstrikes against ISIL targets on 8th August 2014 in Iraq and expanded the

airstrikes into Syria on 23rd September 2014 in the aftermath of beheading of US journalists there by ISIL. As the administration shifted the top priority objective, public opinion also evolved.

After the release of videos showing the beheading of two American journalists, James Foley and Steven Joel Sotloff, American public opinion shifted significantly in favour of US military intervention (Kearn, 2014). The video of James Foley was released on 20th August 2014, during which the executioner threatened the life of another American journalist, Steven Joel Sotloff, if President Barack Obama doesn't end airstrikes against ISIL (Carter, 2014). Subsequently, a similar video surfaced online on 2nd September 2014 displaying the decapitation of Steven Joel Sotloff (Miller, 2014).

As a reflection, a Post-ABC poll published on 9th September 2014 showed widespread support for striking ISIL, both in Iraq and Syria. The support for the US airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq was 71%, while backing for expanding the air strikes against ISIL strongholds in Syria was 65 % (Post-ABC Poll, 2014).

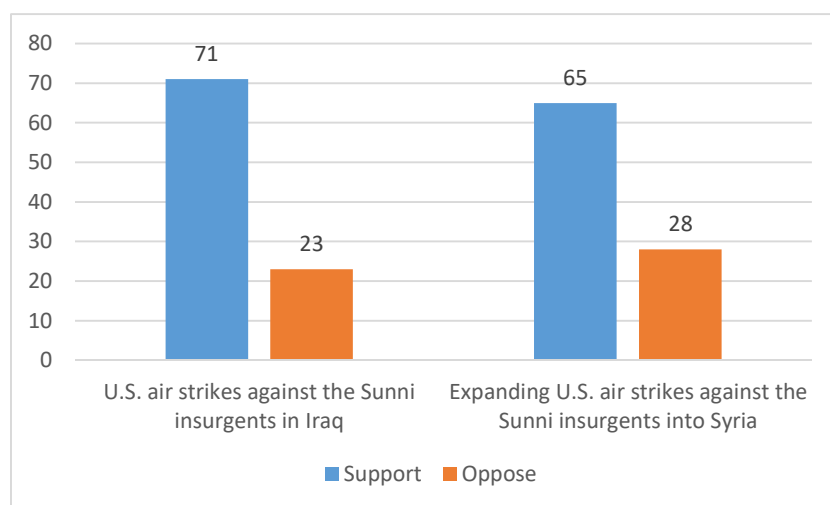


Figure 37 Public Support to US Airstrikes against ISIL

On 23rd September 2014, President Obama highlighted the support provided by bipartisan majorities in Congress for airstrikes against ISIL in Syria and ramping up the US effort to train and equip the Syrian opposition to counterbalance ISIL and the Assad regime (Obama, 2014f)

Another poll conducted by CNN/ORC between 25th and 28th September 2014 and released on 29th September 2014, just after airstrikes targeting ISIL in Syria, started showed wider support for airstrikes against ISIL in Syria and Iraq (73%) while emphasizing persistent public opposition to sending ground troops (60%), even if they were directed against ISIL. The US public also appeared to still be unenthusiastic about providing weapons and military training to rebel groups fighting against ISIL (42% supported while 54% opposed). On the other, hand 91% of the public perceived ISIL as a serious threat to the US (CNN/ORC, 2014).

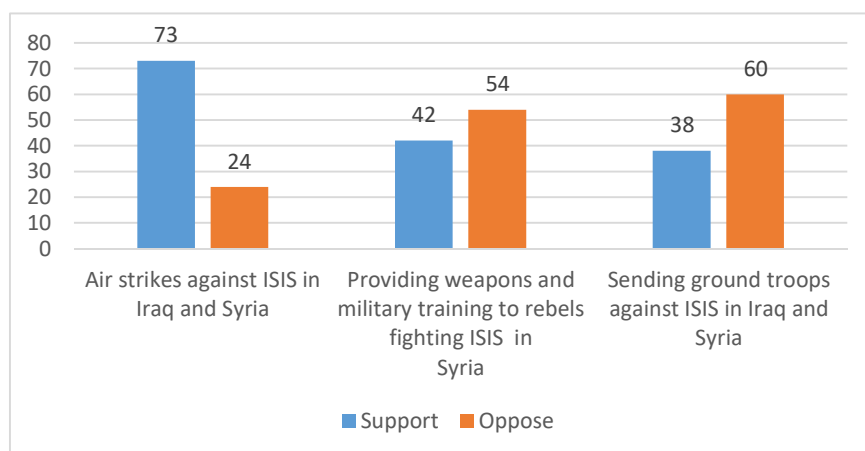


Figure 38 US Public Support for Various types of Intervention Means against ISIL, CNN/ORC Poll, 25-28 September 2014

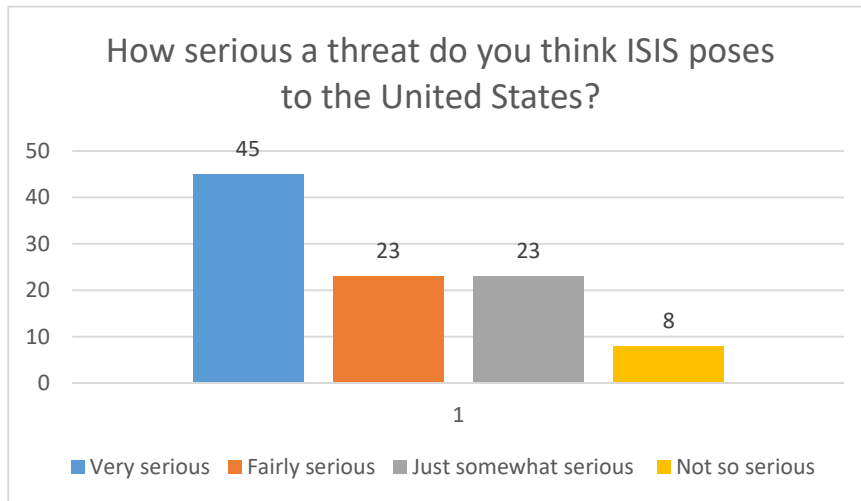


Figure 39 US Public Opinion about the level of threat ISIL Poses to the US, CNN/ORC Poll, 25-28 September 2014

A poll conducted between 14th and 17th October 2015 by CNN/ORC also revealed further increasing threat perceptions against ISIL among the US public. The percentage of the public who thought ISIL posed a very serious threat to the US was 70%, up from 45% in September 2014 (CNN/ORC, 2015a).

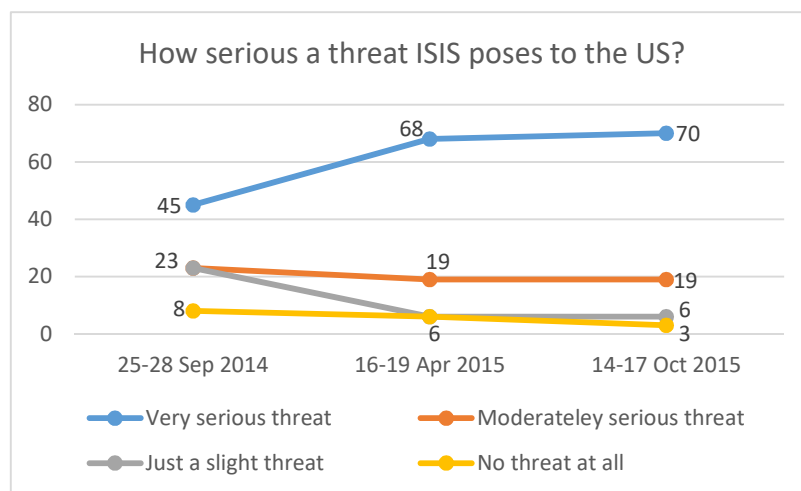


Figure 40 Evolving US Public Opinion regarding the threat posed by ISIL to the US, CNN/ORC Poll

According to another poll conducted by CNN/ORC between 27th November and 1st December 2015 and released on 6th December 2015, more than a year after ISIL declared its so called caliphate, US public support for sending ground troops against

ISIL in Iraq and Syria reached its highest level since 2014, with 53% supporting such a move (CNN/ORC, 2015b). The US sent US Special Operation Forces into Syria to train and equip YPD-led Syrian Democratic Forces, alongside close air support and airstrikes against ISIL targets.

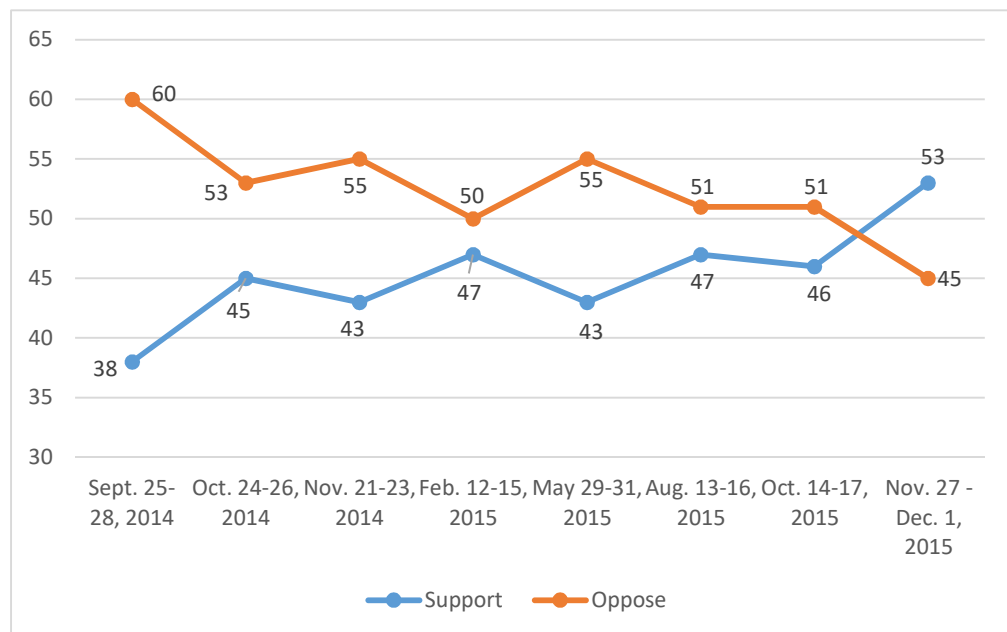


Figure 41 US public Support to Sending Ground Troops into Combat Operations against ISIL, CNN/ORC Poll

Non-interventionism was the most supported option in public vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict since the public at large did not consider the Syrian conflict and the regime as a threat to US and its security interests. So, any form of intervention was not supported by the public and the US administration also limited its involvement in Syria by imposing sanctions and providing non-lethal equipment to vetted rebel groups. The predominant public opinion opposing any form of military intervention in Syria prevailed across party lines, even though the US public was aware that the Syrian conflict would not end through non-military means. Even the Syrian regime violating red lines repeatedly drawn by President Obama did not shift public opinion to support military action. Starting from the beginning of 2012, the Libya intervention was

also perceived by the public as a failure. This influenced the public's positioning vis à vis the Syria conflict. Despite intervention that toppled Qaddafi, the regime sustained instability, leading to a growth in uncontrolled spaces and terrorism in Libya and raised concerns of a similar pattern in Syria. The paradigm shift took place after ISIL emerged as a serious cross regional threat and the US public overwhelmingly perceived ISIL as a serious threat to the US. In that context, public opinion rapidly changed in favour of intervention against ISIL, which brought about airstrikes against ISIL targets. The US administration and public came to the same point after the emergence of ISIL. President Obama also increased funding to train and equip vetted opposition fighters with sophisticated weapons to counter ISIL. Even sending ground troops, which is the most unwanted intervention form, was gradually seen as a viable option among the US public to counter the ISIL threat.

Chapter 6 Comparative Analysis of Libya and Syria Cases

Having examined independent, intervening and dependent variables in the previous chapters, this chapter is devoted to comparing Libya and Syria cases through checking the distinct processes that led to particular US foreign policy choices. The process-tracing method provides opportunity to identify the drivers and establish the causal chain between the independent variable (threat to US interests vis-à-vis Libya and Syria conflicts) and the dependent variable (US Foreign Policy Behaviour). The intermediate steps identified in the process will help make inferences about the sequence of events leading up to particular forms of intervention and establish potential causal mechanisms. The method is useful for both conducting within-case and cross case analysis because it allows for a comparison of the discernable similarities and differences of the elements of the causal chains. As part of the NCR theoretical framework, the intervening variables will also serve as part of the causal chain to explain the way the conflicts escalated and subsequently led to particular US responses.

Thus, process tracing requires analysis of the cases retrospectively from the outcome to potential causal mechanisms in play, the outcome being particular non-military and military intervention means (i.e. the intervention spectrum) applied by the US administration during the course of the conflicts.

Libya

Firstly, before examining the interaction among independent, intervening and dependent variables, the US's historical relationship with Libya and Syria provides the baseline understanding of the perceptions guiding US foreign policy executive officials'

thinking. The recent history of bilateral Libya-US relations brings into prominence two primary issues: multiple US military confrontations and targeted air strikes in Libya during the period of strained relationship in 1970s and 1980s; and suspected links between the Libyan regime and terrorist organisations throughout the world. Nevertheless, the Qaddafi regime's cooperation on counterterrorism post 9/11 and efforts in complying with Chemical Weapon Conventions paved the way for the normalisation of bilateral relations and the eventually US's removal of Libya from the state sponsor of terrorism list. However, the notion that the Libyan regime was promoting terrorism lingered in the psyche of the American people because of numerous incidents that the regime had been involved throughout the world, most prominently the Pam Am Flight explosion at Lockerbie. So, when the Libyan uprising started, Qaddafi's anti-US rhetoric and historical references to the Libyan regime's ties to terrorism were vivid and resonated deeply within the administration and the public. This potentially had an impact on US policy choices.

Secondly, and more importantly, taking into consideration the threats to US interests regarding the Libya conflict under the interest categories outlined in the US National Security Strategy document (Security, Prosperity, Values, and International Norms), the threats to US values and upholding international norms turned out to be the key driver of US military intervention in Libya, followed by security and less so prosperity concerns. The analysis of threats to US interests based on intention and capability criteria were detailed in Chapter 4.

With regards to US values and international norms, the US administration saw the Libya uprising as part of region-wide aspirations, preceded by Tunisia and Egypt, for freedom and establishment of democratic institutions. The US expectation was that the transformation would supposedly serve a long term strategy to curb instability

in the Middle East and North Africa and decrease violent extremism in the region by replacing dictatorships with accountable, elected administrations. On the other hand, the US strongly felt the need to be on the right side of the history, as the Libyan uprising was presented as a democratic revolution of the Libyan people against an autocratic regime. In addition to the pursuit of democracy, allowing the mass killing of civilians would threaten the credibility of US moral leadership on the world stage and undermine the emerging norm of a 'responsibility to protect'. On the other hand, the UN's inability to stop state violence against its citizens would embolden other autocratic regimes to resort to state violence against protestors and undermine the UN's credibility and role in ensuring global peace and security. Since the US attributed significant importance to NATO as an organisation, and showed solidarity with NATO partners, the fact that Britain and France had vital interests at stake in Libya and previously had supported US led efforts in Afghanistan (Britain supported the intervention in Iraq too) meant that Libya was seen as being in line with US interests as well.

With regards to security interests from the regional and global perspective, Libya lacked meaningful support from global or regional powers, which could have threatened destabilising the North Africa region further. The destabilisation induced by the protracted civil war itself would also provide a window of opportunity for Al Qaeda and related groups to exploit the vulnerabilities in the region. Considering Libya's proximity to Europe and its geostrategic position overseeing the Mediterranean Sea and as a gateway to North Africa, the risk of Libya turning into a failed state as a result of protracted conflict would provide terrorist groups safe heaven to operate and would render Libya a main hub along the transit route for migrants and the trafficking of arms from Africa. The security of residual chemical agents and delivery means in Libya and

their potential seizure by extremist groups was also a source of concern for both Europe and the US. The protracted conflict would drive more people to Libya's borders as refugees or immigrants attempt to move into neighbouring and EU countries. This could further destabilise the region and pose substantial threat to regional security. The refugee flow and security related spill over affects into Tunisia and Egypt would also undermine the transition processes, rendering those countries and the region more vulnerable to security challenges.

In the domain of 'prosperity', some European nations were dependant on Libyan oil and gas. However, this wasn't the case in the US. However, the potential negative impact of protracted conflict and instability in Libya on global oil supply, security of energy transit routes, and the consequent rise in oil prices was a source of concern for the US. The US has a general interest in stable markets in oil supplies to stabilise the prices at home.

While the 'high' threat perception to US interests defined the contours of US intervention, the intervening variables (Obama Doctrine, economic constraints, US elite perceptions regarding the Libyan and Syrian Opposition, public opinion) influenced the scope and the form of intervention.

The most important tenet of the Obama Doctrine appears to be 'exhausting other options before use of military force'. In the Libya case, the US exercised diplomatic pressure by closing its embassy and publicly condemning Libyan regime, which was followed by an arms embargo, economic sanctions and travel restrictions to the key regime figures to change Qaddafi regime's stance against the protestors. That was immediately followed by enforcing a no fly zone and conducting air strikes against regime targets.

The second important aspect is 'building and leading broad coalition and sharing responsibility and financial burden with partners and local allies'. The US led a broad coalition, including primarily UK, France and Arab partners in the nascent phase of the intervention, but this was later expanded to include NATO.

The third aspect, 'ensuring legitimacy for action', was ensured through UN resolutions and getting the support and consent of the Arab League for military action against the regime. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference support for no-fly zone over Libya and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab League's calls on the UNSC to impose a no-fly zone were followed by UNSC Resolution 1973.

The fourth tenet could be articulated as 'defining clear mandate and specific objectives' rather than fighting for an open ended conflict that would turn into nation building, as happened in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the nascent phase of the conflict the US's initially declared aim was to protect the Libyan people from regime aggression. However, as the mandate to impose no-fly zone was broadly interpreted, the US led coalition choice of targets indicated that the US administration aimed to weaken the regime to a level that could tilt the balance on the ground and culminate in regime change in Libya.

From an economic constraints perspective, the Libya and Syria conflicts took place in the aftermath of 2008 recession, which heavily crippled the US economy and consequently resulted in substantial defence spending cuts. The experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, which the Obama administration viewed as mistake on the part of the Bush administration, influenced the way the US perceived the Libya and Syria conflicts, particularly from the perspective of the potential cost of war. So, the limited role US took within the multilateral coalition reduced the initial financial cost of intervention, attaching fewer direct responsibilities to the US for the post-conflict Libya.

The estimated cost of US intervention in Libya was around one billion USD, which is extremely low compared to US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, where cost estimates vary from between 4 to 6 trillion USD, including long term costs. On the other hand, taking into consideration the potential financial burden Libya would place on the US and wider international community in the post-conflict era, Libyan oil resources and existing frozen economic assets and funds outside Libya amounting to hundreds of billion dollars were a reliable source of funding to compensate capacity building efforts.

Elite perception regarding the Libyan opposition, who would eventually be the alternative to the Qaddafi regime, also played a role in the US calculations. The protests that started on 15th February 2011 in Benghazi as unorganised protests led by individuals turned into armed conflict as protestors captured Benghazi on 20th February 2011 and Qaddafi regime resorted to pitting conventional forces against the protestors and inflicting civilian casualties on 25th February 2011. As the protestors took arms to fight the regime, in the space of two weeks the uprising morphed into an intra-state conflict. It was mainly army units in eastern cities that provided the rebels with the initial military capability needed to confront the regime forces. At the early stages the rebel groups were composed of deserted professional army soldiers, ordinary civilians, and religiously oriented and battle hardened ex-fighters. However, all these groups accepted coordinating their efforts with the National Transitional Council (NTC) until the regime was toppled.

As the protestors and the rebels consolidated their power in eastern Libya, the NTC was formed as an interim governing body at the very early stages of the conflict and gained acceptance by broad cross-section of the society. However, it took 5 months for the US administration to officially recognise NTC, which it eventually did

on 15th July 2011. The main reason for the cautious approach taken by the US administration can be partially explained by the potential perceived influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya over NTC and Al Qaeda affiliated groups benefitting from the US actions in Libya. That was a result of primary US objectives to make sure succeeding governments would not be hostile to the US and not to inadvertently support or provide safe heaven to terrorist groups.

Nevertheless, the dominant US perception vis-à-vis the Libyan opposition at early stages was that it was part of a regional struggle for Libyan democracy and rule of law following the examples of Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions and a broad cross-section of the Libyan society supported the political opposition led by NTC.

It is also important to take into consideration US public opinion, along with cross party and Congressional dynamics within the US foreign policy making cycle. Firstly, even though a week before the intervention the US public support for enforcing no fly zone in Libya was low (44% in favour), it increased swiftly just after the military action started (70%). Since a limited intervention strategy was seen as relatively risk free and was perceived to have a high likelihood of success, it was easy for the US administration to take the intervention decision. Secondly, as the Libyan conflict started at a time when the Republican Party gained a majority in the House of Representatives, the Republican Party's position appeared to be more important for President Obama calculations. Relatively stronger Republican Party support compared to Democrats in favour of enforcing no-fly zone and even extended air strikes disassociated with the no-fly zone strengthened the Obama administration's position for action. Thirdly, just after the intervention started the vast majority of the US public was also in favour of regime change in Libya and at the same time strongly resisted sending arms to the opposition, or putting US boots on the ground in a combat

role, thus shaping the boundaries of US action in Libya. Finally, regional and international support for enforcing a no-fly zone, coupled with President Obama's strong commitment for a limited and multilateral intervention strategy ruling out deployment of US forces in combat role in line with his doctrine, and very quick turnaround for intervention decision to prevent mass civilian casualties in Libya rendered opposing intervention difficult for the US public and the Congress.

Syria

Looking at the US-Syria historical bilateral relationship and threats to US interests, the main contentious issue between the US and Syria had been the Syrian regime's confrontation with Israel and its support for anti-Israeli groups, which led to US administration putting Syria into State Sponsor of Terrorism list in 1979. After the US's Iraq invasion in 2003, Syria and Iran shared a similar threat perception against the US, which led them to further their collaboration to fuel insurgency in Iraq against US forces and establish a facilitation network through its porous border with Iraq. Continuous Syrian cooperation with Iran and support to Hezbollah as a transit route for Iranian arms transfers and suspected Syrian regime complicity in the killing of the Lebanese Prime Minister in 2005, who had been critically opposing Syrian troop presence and influence in Lebanon, were other important issues that hindered the normalisation of the bilateral relations. So, before the Arab Spring, contrary to the US's positively trending bilateral relations with Qaddafi regime, US-Syria relations could be characterised as being historically strained.

Since the Syrian conflict evolved gradually in a much slower fashion compared to Libya conflict, the analysis of the characteristics of the Syrian conflict thoroughly it

was done using 5 phases, discussed in Chapter 4. That helped reflect on evolving US interests and associated strategies and responses that required shifts and adaptations.

The `high` threat perception the US had vis-à-vis the Syria conflict in the first, second and the third phases required US military intervention against the Syria regime. Eventually, when the ISIL threat became prominent in the fourth and fifth phases and overall threat perception was `very high`, the US felt obliged to act against ISIL.

In the first phase of the Syrian conflict the US, along with Turkey and Saudi Arabia, pushed for a diplomatic solution to the conflict. However, increasing Iranian influence in the region and shared Iranian and Syrian threat perception against the US and Israel, the Syrian regime`s constant support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Syrian chemical weapons posed threats to US interests in the region. At the top of security interests at the nascent phase of the conflict was the Syrian regime`s oppression of protestors, which violated basic human rights and ran against US interests.

In the second phase, the Syrian conflict was militarised and gained a more sectarian tone as Russia, Iran, and Lebanese Hezbollah aligned with the Syrian regime, while the US, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and numerous European nations supported the Sunni majority opposition. As the use of state violence with conventional military force against the protesters and armed opposition intensified throughout 2011 and early 2012, the number of casualties, refugees and internally displaced people increased dramatically.

In the third phase of the conflict, political and armed opposition increased its inclusiveness and cohesion, which helped inflict heavy losses to the regime and enabled the opposition to capture territory from the regime. In response, Hezbollah

increased its support to Syrian regime in a combat role, along with Iranian forces. As the fighting and the regime's indiscriminate use of shelling and air strikes (particularly barrel bombs) increased, the number of casualties, refugees, and internally displaced people became more acute and thus became a chronic problem.

In the fourth phase of the Syrian conflict the chemical weapon threat posed by the Syrian regime and extremist groups dominating the armed opposition significantly changed the dynamics of the US policy. ISIL controlled large swaths of territory inside Syria and some Salafist factions united to establish Sharia law, which undermined the credibility and viability of moderate political and military opposition. The use of chemical weapons in Damascus, which killed more than a thousand civilians, undermined the global prohibition of chemical weapons and increased the risk of further employment of those weapons against the US by state and non-state actors. The Syrian chemical weapon dismantling process that was agreed in the aftermath of the attack overlapped with preparations to broker a deal with Iran to stop its nuclear weapon development program under P5+1 negotiations. While the US regarded Syria as being free of chemical weapons, it placed seemingly more importance to preventing Iran acquiring nuclear weapons capability, which showed the priority of US interests in the region. On the other hand, the extremist threat stemming from ISIL increased as the group started imposing Sharia law within its controlled zone and targeted other religions in the region.

In the fifth phase of the Syrian conflict, ISIL became the primary threat in Syria and for the wider international community. Increases in the number of terrorist groups pledging allegiance to ISIL, coupled with AQ and ISIL's call for lone wolf attacks in Europe and the US, escalated the threat perception. Increased violence

and decreased the prospects for a better future as waves of refugees crossed over into Europe.

Considering negative trending US-Syria relations and the high level threats posed by the regime and the protracted conflict in Syria during the first three phases of the conflict, targeting the Assad regime through non-military and military intervention means seemed to be the optimal option for the US. That would primarily serve US security interests and would help reinforce democratisation efforts in line with US values. The credibility of the US, UN and international norms would be better protected by targeting the Syrian regime. In particular, providing offensive or lethal weapons that could tilt the balance on the ground, establishing buffer zone and no-fly zone, providing close air support to moderate rebels and targeting key Syrian regime offensive capabilities would have better served US interest. However, the US preferred to seek a diplomatic solution in the first phase of the conflict and used non-military means. Even as Iranian and Russian involvement to sustain the Assad regime increased and the number of refugees and civilian deaths started to rise, the US only provided non-lethal assistance to the opposition.

The chemical weapon deal with Syria overlapped with the extremist groups' becoming a more serious threat to US interests in the region. Particularly in the fourth and fifth episodes of the conflict, the US started seeing ISIL as a homeland security threat. Thus, the US prioritised targeting ISIL as opposed to Assad. As a consequence, providing offensive or lethal weapons to groups fighting ISIL and Al Nusra Front, directly targeting ISIL targets and supporting rebel's offensives against ISIL and even putting boots on the ground to eliminate an existential threat to the US and its allies in the region became the most viable option for the US. The US started air strikes and eventually provided lethal weapons to vetted groups fighting ISIL and deployed special

operation forces to northern Syria to train and assist YPG led Syrian Democratic Forces.

To better understand the way the Obama Doctrine could have factored into and influenced the intervention decisions in the Syria case, `exhausting other options before use of military force` should be dealt with in two distinct episodes: before and after the chemical weapon attack that took place in August 2013 and, in parallel, the emergence of ISIL as a prominent actor in Syria. Before that turning point, the US exercised almost all non-military intervention means in Syria against the Assad regime and there was no indication that US was aiming to become involved in Syria through military intervention against the Assad regime. However, as ISIL and AQ related terrorism became more of a concern for the US than the Assad regime, the US administration prioritised direct military intervention and supporting those groups that fight against ISIL.

The second important aspect of Obama Doctrine is `building and leading a broad coalition and sharing responsibility and financial burden with partners and local allies`. Again before the chemical weapon attack in August 2013 and the emergence of ISIL as a prominent actor in Syria, the US mainly led efforts to find a political solution to the ongoing fight. Unlike Libya, there has been lack of consensus at different levels and, for distinct reasons, among global and regional actors when it comes to targeting the Assad regime. However, the US administration showed its reluctance to target the Assad regime, even after a serious chemical weapon attack in defiance of US red lines and international law, and at the same time emergence of ISIL changed the calculations. The US easily managed to build and lead an anti-ISIL coalition with the support of European and regional allies.

The third aspect of the Obama Doctrine is 'ensuring legitimacy for action'. For the first episode, unlike Libya, there has never been consensus among UNSC members to take any kind of military action against the Assad regime. Even the political opposition in Syria opposed outside military intervention at the nascent phase of the conflict, which was the case for the Arab League as well. During the second and third phases, instead of reaching a consensus to act against Syrian regime, the rift between the opposing sides supporting different factions were deepened. It was only after the emergence of ISIL that legitimacy for action was a non-issue.

Finally, the last part of Obama Doctrine refers to 'defining a clear mandate and specific objectives'. At the nascent phase of the conflict the US administration was ambivalent about the objectives, or at least about the means used to make sure declared objectives were met. The US administration prioritised a political solution to the conflict and publicly put forward removing Assad from the administration as a US policy and priority. That presented a contradiction, since the Assad regime was reluctant to make concessions and the US was not ready to take action to force Assad out of the administration in Syria. Conversely as the ISIL threat emerged, the US administration defined clearly the objective to degrade and destroy ISIL.

In addition to general concerns regarding the cost of intervention, particularly in the Middle East considering the complexity of the Syrian conflict and multitude of actors involved, the US calculated that a potential military engagement against the Syrian regime would incur costs similar to those in the Afghanistan and Iraq interventions. So, the US administration did not want to risk depleting limited resources through a US commitment to a protracted conflict where limited intervention was perceived as impractical. Furthermore, the Syrian regime would need substantial

external support to rebuild the war torn country as it lacked meaningful financial resources.

Another intervening variable, elite perception vis-à-vis the Syrian opposition, seemed to be more important in the Syria case for US foreign policy considerations. First of all, as the Libyan conflict unfolded, some lessons identified associated with the opposition seemed to have impacted upon US calculations pertaining to the Syria conflict: overthrowing the regime without keeping sizable boots on the ground in Libya led to chaos, where different factions started fighting each other for power; lack of a functioning regime and state institutions resulted in the emergence of ungoverned spaces readily exploited by terrorist groups; democratic process does not always lead to a preferred composition in government, as the US administration was deeply sceptical about the Muslim Brotherhood take over in Libya.

When it comes to the Syria conflict, which started with the protests on 18th March 2011, grassroots political opposition groups had been established before the conflict was militarised. Local Coordinating Councils and youth activists at village and local level, Revolutionary Councils led by intellectuals and businessmen at city and district level, and finally at national level the Syrian National Council constituted the political opposition. As an initial response on 29th March 2011, the US administration called on Assad to implement the reforms demanded by Syrian people. So in the first episode of the Syrian conflict, which lasted until August 2011, the opposition was asking for more freedom through government led reforms and lacked military capability. The US response was in line with Syrian society's demands and saw it pressure the Assad regime diplomatically and by imposing sanctions. However, in response to the regime's use of conventional weapons against protestors and the killing of civilians, the Syrian opposition took up arms to fight against the regime's

militarisation, which led to the establishment of the Free Syrian Army in July 2011. That was followed by President Obama's call for Assad to step down, which presented a strategic shift in US policy in Syria. That was contrary to what the US previously had pursued to reach a political transformation with Assad.

Several factors concerning the Syrian opposition influenced the position taken by the US at the nascent phase of the conflict. Firstly, unlike Libya, the Syrian opposition opposed any foreign intervention and sought for a reform through negotiation in the beginning of the conflict. Secondly, unlike Libya, where rebel groups pledged loyalty to Libyan NTC, in Syria a lack of unified opposition undermined the support from the US and the international community. The Syrian National Coalition was established 7 months after the protests as the main political opposition in exile on 2nd October 2011 whereas the Libyan NTC was established two weeks after the initial protests. While the majority of Sunnis in Syria supported the opposition, the majority of the Alawite, Christian and Druze minority aligned with the Assad regime as they feared large scale sectarian violence against minority communities. So, the SNC was seen as non-inclusive by the US and international community. Syrian Kurds presented a divided posture in their stance against the SNC, the KNC aligned itself with SNC while the PYD remained neutral until July 2012 when Syrian security forces relinquished control of several towns in the north to PYD. Taking into consideration the fact that the minorities in Syria account for 40% of the population, their stance was important for US calculations. Thirdly, Syrian armed groups lacked safe heavens, unlike Libyan rebel groups who controlled and operated in the eastern Libya. Finally, a limited number of Syrian Army defections occurred, compared to en masse defections in the eastern Libya.

During the second episode, from August 2011 until November to December 2012, the political and armed opposition was divided and lacked capability to be able to pose a substantial threat to the regime. The SNC failed to gain support from the minorities and a cross section of the Syrian society. On the other hand, as the Al Nusra Front became the most effective rebel force and because of its potential affiliation to AQ at that time, US's concerns regarding the composition of the Syrian opposition increased. The US's Joint Chief of Staff presented the existence of Al Qaida elements among the opposition in Syria in early 2012 as justification for the US decision not to arm the opposition. Furthermore, the killing of the US Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, by armed militants in Benghazi with potential AQ connections on 11th September 2012 reinforced the US's fear regarding the extremist danger in Syria. That resulted in the US administration becoming more cautious about its support to the Syrian opposition, which also hindered the ability of moderate elements to become more capable and precipitated the situation where extremists gained the upper hand on the ground.

In the third episode between November and December 2012 and August 2013, the Syrian political and armed opposition consolidated their cohesion, however the US administration regarded a large portion of the opposition as extremists. That meant that the US was reluctant to hand over sophisticated lethal weapons to armed opposition, taking into consideration the risk of those weapons falling into the hands of extremists groups, particularly the Al Nusra Front, which was designated as a terrorist entity by the US administration in December 2012. When ISIL started operating in Syria in April 2013 and the conflict increasingly took on a more sectarian tone, the foreign fighter issue also became prominent. The concern regarding weapons falling into the hands extremists was reinforced when Islamic Front seized

arms depots from moderate opposition groups in the North West of Syria in December 2013. The US responded to that situation by temporarily suspending lethal and even "non-lethal" assistance to the armed opposition.

In the fourth episode between August 2013 and June 2014, ISIL and other Salafist groups became more prominent among the Syrian opposition. Thus, the US administration started seeing the conflict as one between two evils, ISIL and the Syrian regime, and saw the Syrian regime as lesser of the two. That was a significant turning point when the US administration's number one priority in Syria became degrading ISIL's capability and empowering anti-ISIL groups in Syria, primarily the YPG forces.

Finally, in the fifth episode, ISIL expanded its area of control, which further marginalised the moderate opposition. The US started conducting air strikes against ISIL in support of PYD/YPG forces as the US administration saw those forces as capable and ideologically less dangerous and who could seize and hold territory from ISIL. As the Obama Doctrine ruled out deploying US soldiers to the conflict zone in combat roles for military intervention purposes, finding viable local actors to serve as ground forces was a necessity in Syria in the fight against ISIL. The Obama administration provided arms and ammunition to YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in North Eastern Syria and also sent special operation forces to train and advise those forces. This was something the US administration had been refraining to do since the start of the conflict against the Assad regime.

Lastly, considering US public opinion and the congressional dynamics, strong and consistent opposition to any form of US military intervention against the Syrian regime crossed party lines in the US. US public support for US military intervention against Syrian regime had been persistently very low over the course of the conflict. During the first three phases of the conflict, before the ISIL threat became prominent,

the US administration refrained from militarily involving into the conflict and only chose to impose sanctions and to provide limited amounts of non-lethal equipment to vetted rebel groups. Even the 21 August 2013 chemical weapon attack did not alter the low trending US public support for military action against the Syrian regime. However, as the elimination of Syrian regime chemical weapon stockpile in the aftermath of the attacks overlapped with the emergence of ISIL as a substantial threat to the US and the wider regional and international community, the majority of the US public started to back decisive military action against ISIL. That was followed by airstrikes against ISIL targets and increased funding to train and equip vetted opposition groups with lethal weapons to counter ISIL. Even the idea of deploying US ground troops into Syria became gradually seen as a more viable option among the US public.

The start of the Syrian conflict overlapped with the Libya intervention and the US public showed reluctance for concurrent entanglement in Middle East; two thirds of US public believed US should take a neutral position in Syria. The second episode of the Syrian conflict coincided with the Presidential election year, keeping the administration away from taking substantial risks. Increasing mass killings by the Syrian regime only led to increasing US public and regional support for enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria, which did not gain traction within the administration. The third period was President Obama's first year in his second term, deemed to be the best time for US presidents to make major foreign policy decisions. However, the US administration was limited in its offering non-lethal aid to selected rebel groups and refrained from enforcing a no-fly zone or providing lethal weapons to the opposition. Even after the 21st August 2013 chemical weapon attack, support for US military strikes against the Syrian regime among Democratic and Republican Party supporters was relatively low compared to Libya, where the Republicans had advocated enforcing a no-fly zone more strongly

than Democrats. For the first time during the Syrian conflict potential US intervention was seriously discussed in Congress after the President publicly declared that the US would take punitive action in response to the chemical weapon attack. However, during the Congressional discussions, bi-partisan concerns were raised for a potential US intervention by citing constituents' reluctance. On the top of public reluctance for intervention, two significant developments seem to have played a substantial role in preventing a direct military action against the Syrian regime: ISIL emerged as a serious cross-regional threat in summer 2013; and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani assumed office in August 2013, which was perceived as a chance for an Iranian nuclear weapon deal. Under those circumstances, after dismantling the majority of Syrian chemical weapon capability and stockpile, the US prioritised degrading and destroying ISIL in Syria and Iraq and was reluctant to risk Iranian nuclear negotiations by taking direct action against Iran and Russia's closest ally in the region.

In the final episode, the US expanded the airstrikes into Syria on 23rd September 2014, just after the release of videos showing the beheading of US journalists in Syria by ISIL. After that incident, US public opinion shifted significantly in favour of US airstrikes against ISIL. In late 2015, US public support to sending ground troops against ISIL in Syria reached a majority first time, with 53% supporting such a move.

Conclusion

In particular, it is more reasonable to compare the first episodes of both conflicts in order to understand the dynamics behind US calculations for intervention and non-intervention. The Libyan conflict started and evolved quickly before it turned into a civil war between the Qaddafi regime and rebels. The protests in Libya started on 15th February 2011 and in a week the Qaddafi regime started targeting protestors with

conventional weapons, leading to indiscriminate killings. On 26th February the UN Security Council voted unanimously and adopted UNSC Resolution 1970 to impose sanctions against the Libyan regime. The Arab League called on the UNSC on 12th March 2011 to impose a no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians. On 17th March 2011 the UNSC passed Resolution 1973, which authorized member states to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and establish a ban on all flights in the airspace. The first US attacks against the Qaddafi regime occurred on 19th March to set the conditions for the no-fly zone implementation. As the Organisation of the Islamic Conference released a statement supporting a no-fly zone over Libya on 8th March 2011, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab League called on the UNSC to impose a no-fly zone on 8th and 12th March 2011 respectively; UNSC Resolution 1973 was endorsed on 17th March 2011 and US public opinion appeared to have shifted significantly in favour of limited military involvement.

President Obama and his administration's stance with regards to the Syria conflict was not so much different, particularly at the nascent phase of the conflict. A day before the US-led intervention started in Libya, large-scale demonstrations took place in Syria on 18th March 2011 against the government. However, contrary to the Qaddafi regime, the Syrian regime espoused a more conciliatory strategy to subside the protests by pledging political reform. The Assad regime passed a law on 20 April 2011 to lift the emergency law that had suspended most constitutional protections for almost four decades. However, the regime stopped short of making substantial changes to allow a broader cross section of the society to have a level playing field in political and economic domain and, in response, the protests continued and gradually grew. After the crush of protests in Hama in July 2011 with tanks by Syrian regime forces, killing up to 100 people, the US rhetoric urging political reform was replaced

with call for Assad to step down. Unlike the Libya case, Russia opposed any sanctions against the Syrian regime and even the political opposition in Syria and the Arab League opposed outside military intervention at the nascent phase of the conflict. So, the lack of support for US intervention from within the Syrian opposition, Arab countries and the Russia-Iran block was a significant difference between Libya and Syria cases.

Overall, different elements of the causal chain between two cases identified and outlined below are believed to have had an impact on US foreign policy choices with regards to Libya and Syria.

The Syria conflict started at a time when the US, together with western and regional allies, initiated the enforcement of a no-fly zone over Libya. The US administration and public was not ready for multiple engagements in the Middle East and North Africa. Thus, during the first 4 months of the Syrian conflict the US, along with Turkey and Saudi Arabia, had been in dialog with the Syrian regime to push for a diplomatic solution to the unfolding conflict, since the regime promised to reform while the Qaddafi regime severed all ties with the rest of the world in a very short time, leaving no prospect for reform.

The Syria uprising was seen by the US administration more of a case of retribution and sectarian struggle aiming to end a minority regime, whereas the Libyan uprising was perceived as a Libyan society's struggle for democracy. While a broad cross-section of the Libyan society supported the revolution against the Qaddafi regime, it was mostly the case that the Sunnis in Syria supported the Syrian opposition and the majority of Alawite, Christian and Druze minority aligned with the Assad regime. Additionally, the Kurds presented a fractured stance against the opposition, which in drifted closer to the Assad regime for practical reasons that served their interests.

The political and armed opposition in Libya rallied behind the National Transitional Council, which gained acceptance from the broad cross-section of the society to topple the Qaddafi regime at the early stages of the conflict, while in Syria it took a while to pull together political and armed opposition groups and it did not last long before they had major disagreements. The initial aim in Syria was the reform of Assad regime rather than directly toppling it.

Whereas the Libyan regime was isolated, the Syrian regime has been decisively supported economically, politically, and militarily since the start of the conflict, mainly by Iran and Russia. The US considered the extreme complexity of a potential intervention in Syria, given Iranian and Russian support.

The UK and France were ready to act against Libya, as they felt their key interests were at stake. Even if the US had resisted the intervention, these two countries seem to have planned to target the Libyan regime. In addition to a lack of similar commitment from other EU partners during the course of the Syrian conflict, international and regional consensus has not been reached for enforcing a no fly zone in Syria or taking any kind of military action against the Syrian regime.

Unlike Libya, there has not been consensus among UNSC members to take any kind of military action against the Assad regime and, even at the nascent phase of the conflict, the political opposition in Syria also opposed outside military intervention.

The impact of energy related issues were negligible in the Syria case, whereas the impact of a protracted conflict in Libya on energy security and the stability of oil prices was important for the US and the EU.

The EU felt directly threatened by developments in Libya, whereas in the Syria case, at least before the refugee issue started and the emergence of ISIL as a global

threat, the Syria conflict was not seen as a direct threat to EU and, to an extent, the US.

The estimated cost of Libyan intervention was extremely low compared to a potential US involvement in Syria against the Syrian regime, as Iran and Russia were ready to back the regime and inflict additional costs on potential US involvement. In addition, the Libyan regime had its own financial resources to rebuild the country in the post-conflict era; this was missing in Syria.

The rebels captured and consolidated their power in the eastern part of Libya, which allowed them to operate and coordinate their efforts against the regime in the West. That kind of geographical separation did not happen in Syria.

A limited intervention in Libya was seen as risk free and easy to accomplish at low cost. However, the convoluted nature of the Syrian conflict and the complexity of alliances at global, regional and local level brought about too many risks for the US.

The vast majority of the US public, both Republicans and Democrats, opposed military action against the Syrian regime, whereas in the Libya case the Republicans were staunch advocates of a no-fly zone and further air strikes targeting the Qaddafi regime. Overall, US public support for military intervention against the Syrian regime was consistently much lower than that of Libya.

Potential spill over effects of the Syrian conflict on the region, particularly to Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, were much more significant compared to limited impact of the Libya conflict to those and other US allies in the region. On the other hand, the Syrian conflict's impact on Egypt and Tunisia were limited when compared to Libya.

In Libya, the extremist threat, particularly that posed by AQ and ISIL, became more of an issue after the intervention and once the regime was toppled. In Syria, the protracted conflict and lack of decisive intervention and support to moderate groups brought about a conducive environment for ungoverned spaces, easy flow of fighters and weapons which led to the emergence of AQ and ISIL affiliated groups, who seized large swaths of territory and undermined the credibility of the moderate groups.

The US had to take into consideration other regional priorities while dealing with Syria, such as preventing an Iranian nuclear weapon development program and its relations with Russia, since it was part of P5+1 initiative, while in Libya Iran and Russia had limited leverage.

Unlike Libya, where en masse defections in the eastern part of the country took place, only a limited number of Syrian Army defections were observed. Furthermore, a lack of safe heavens similar to those the Libyan rebels controlled and operated from in the eastern part of the country rendered Syrian rebel's struggle more difficult.

Even at the early stages of the conflict, potential AQ affiliated groups` gaining more influence among the Syrian armed opposition groups was a source of significant concern, whereas this issue only became more of an issue in Libya after the killing of US Ambassador by potentially AQ affiliated groups on the anniversary of 9/11 attacks.

In-fighting among the rebel groups took place after the Qaddafi regime was toppled in Libya, while in Syria that started at an early stage in the absence of direct military intervention.

Finally, within the Syria case itself, the first episode can be characterised by its 'wait and see' nature from the US perspective as the Assad regime pledged to reform and the US administration only resorted to non-military intervention means to push for

change. The second and, in particular, third period that ended with the chemical weapon attack presented an opportunity for the US to use different means of military-intervention against the Syrian regime, which was thwarted for the reasons explained above. Finally, during the fourth and fifth episodes of the Syrian conflict, the ISIL threat emerged and all US priorities shifted towards extremist threat, leading to the military-intervention. The US was compelled to accept the continuation of Assad regime, since the removal of the regime was seen to benefit ISIL.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The central and overarching question this PhD sought to address was 'what are the dynamics behind the US foreign policy choices vis-à-vis Libya and Syria internationalised intra-state conflicts?' and, more specifically, 'what were the components of the processes that led to the selection of different set of elements from the intervention spectrum at different time and scales during the Libya and Syria conflicts'. In order to address the research question, NCR was employed as the theoretical framework, incorporating independent variables (in the form of threats to US interests vis-à-vis Libya and Syria conflicts) and intervening variables (in the form of elite Ideology/the Obama Doctrine, US economic constraints, US elite perception of the opposition in Libya and Syria, Congressional dynamics and public opinion) at the system and unit level respectively. The variation in the dependent variable, which represents US foreign policy choices or outcomes, is broken down to non-intervention, non-military intervention and military intervention with specific sub elements.

In order to test the rigor and explanatory power of the theoretical framework, the following hypothesis were identified:

- H₁: The US FPE take a decision to intervene militarily first and foremost in response to substantial threats to US interests representing the expected option for the US.
- H₂: Domestic constraints (intervening variables) influence the form, timing, and scope of the intervention, and the rationale behind the deviation from expected intervention strategies can be explained by intervening variables.

To test NCR theory, in the previous chapters NCR and the expected outcome of the theory was explained and, finally, the cases were explored to uncover any congruence between expectation and observation is present. The neorealist driven optimal or expected outcomes (i.e. an increased level of intervention as the threat increases) are anticipated, to be conditioned by the intervening variables or, alternatively, if the optimal or expected foreign policy decisions are not adhered to, then the intervening variables should be able to explain the rationale behind the deflection.

The research has contributed to the development of NCR as a theory of foreign policy analysis by thoroughly applying it to two case studies. The analytical examination of these cases reveals the fact that pure neorealism fall short of explaining US foreign policy in both Libya and Syria. US security interests in Libya, along with a commitment for 'values' and 'upholding international norms', resulted in a 'high' US FPE threat perception and, in line with the expectation, US FPE decided to militarily intervene against the Qaddafi regime. So, the neorealist explanation, focusing on national interest and threats to those interests explain is in congruence with observed foreign policy decisions. Therefore, it is safe to argue that H₁ holds for Libya case.

However, testing for type 1 Congruence (comparison to typical values) between expected and observed foreign policy decisions requires conformity of both cases for the theory to be valid. So, pure neorealism needs to explain the non-intervention in Syria; H₁ could only be confirmed if there were lower US threat perceptions in Syria compared to Libya. The analytical examination suggests that US threat perceptions were in fact at high and very high levels in Syria. The incongruence between expected and observed foreign policy decisions in Syria and the contradiction between Libya

and Syria cases proves the deficiency of neorealism as a theory of foreign policy analysis. This, in turn, gives NCR the opportunity to fill the analytical gap by incorporating intervening variables.

The expected US response in Syrian conflict during the first three phases of the conflict was to target Assad regime through both military and non-military means. However, contrary to neorealist expectations, the US stopped short of decisively engaging against the Assad, thus regime disconfirming H_1 . Even in the fourth period, which overlapped with the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime and the emergence and empowerment of a trans-regional extremist threat, the US refrained from taking decisive action against both the Assad regime and extremist groups, even though they posed a substantial (very high) threat to US interests. Instead, the US prioritised eliminating Syria's chemical weapons stockpile and supporting PYD and YPG forces in their confrontations with ISIL. The first US airstrikes against ISIL took place in the fifth episode, on 23rd September 2014, and from that point on the US concentrated all its efforts on fighting against ISIL, which it deemed to be an existential threat to US interests. Nevertheless, the US refrained from sending US troops to the region in a combat role, which would increase the chance of defeating ISIL in a shorter time span. Instead, the US targeted ISIL and AQ positions through air strikes in support of PYD/YPG led Syrian Democratic Forces operations. As the threat posed by ISIL to US interests was very high, the neorealist expectation was an all-out war against ISIL, including boots on the ground.

It appears then that in all five episodes of the Syrian conflict the US stopped short of meeting neorealist expectations. While the threats to US interests in the Syrian case were all high and very high, direct military action against the Syrian regime did not materialise. That necessitated looking into the role of intervening variables, in line with

neoclassical realist explanations, to clarify the reasons for the deviation from neorealist expectations.

Whether the analytical gap could be sufficiently filled by an NCR perspective has been tested by analysing how the intervening variables affected the US foreign policy choices and the extent to which they could explain the deviation from expected foreign policy choices (H₂).

In the Libya case, President Obama's decision for military intervention was predominantly framed by the threat posed to core US interests. However, the Obama Doctrine seemed to have influenced the form and the scope of the intervention. President Obama ruled out unilateral intervention without a UN mandate and opted for a multinational force to share responsibility and costs. The primary motivation was shying away from putting boots on the ground to prevent a highly probable knock on effect of a long-term US commitment in Libya. Even after the Qaddafi regime was toppled, the US and international community refrained from assigning peace keeping force in Libya, which was a necessity for creating the conditions for lasting 'positive peace'.

While the intervention or non-intervention decision in Libya was not made by solely considering economic constraints, the financial cost of intervention seemed to have factored in tailoring less costly intervention options like air strikes in support of local proxies. The US preferred to be part of a coalition effort to enforce a no-fly zone in Libya and, without putting any US troops in combat role in Libya, the US administration refrained from any costly nation-building effort.

While the Obama Doctrine framed the way the Obama administration implemented its intervention strategy, the capabilities of the opposition groups and their perceived worldview also affected US choices. The US administration

operationally supported rebel groups in Libya to tilt the balance against the Qaddafi regime, however a constant scepticism regarding extremist connection of some groups within Libyan rebels limited the means used by US in supporting the rebels and the scale of support provided. The fear was that once Qaddafi was gone, rebels could turn against the US.

Public support for military intervention in Libya was low before the intervention. However, low-risk limited military intervention with no boots on the ground in combat role and Republican support for enforcing no-fly zone urged Obama to disregard reluctant public opinion. While the public and Congress became supportive of a limited intervention to impose a no-fly zone, strong US public opinion against providing heavy weaponry to rebels and sending US ground troops into Libya determined the boundaries of the intervention strategy in Libya.

We can conclude that the intervention decision for Libya was predominantly taken out of US strategic interests and threats to those interests (H_1), and that the intervening variables influenced and limited the scope of the military intervention (H_2). This confirms both hypotheses.

The analytic examination of five distinct episodes of the Syrian conflict (i.e. multiple within-case comparisons) helped to check whether Type 2 Congruence holds among episodes. For the Syria case, during the first three episodes of the conflict the US did not intervene militarily, even though US interests and values were seriously threatened by the Syrian regime and the ongoing civil conflict,. The principle tenets of the Obama Doctrine seemed to have played an important role in making decisions regarding Syria. The lack of broad international support for military action against the Syrian regime, the potential risk of a long term US commitment in Syria and concerns about a direct confrontation with Russia and Iran in contrast to the Obama Doctrine's

`retrenchment` and `accommodating rivalries` principles respectively played a significant role. In the beginning of the fourth episode, just after the Syrian chemical weapon attack, the US struck a deal with Russia to eliminate Syria`s chemical weapon stockpile and used the threat of force as a last resort, in line with the Obama Doctrine. Again, the motivation was to avoid an all-out war against the Syrian regime (retrenchment) and to avoid provoking Russia and Iran (accommodating rivalries). However, as ISIL posed a direct threat to the region and US interests in the fourth and the fifth episode, the US decided to take direct military action. This decision was facilitated by increased international support for action and a readiness to share the responsibility and the cost of burden with regional and Western allies. The US first and foremost increased its efforts in empowering local forces in their fight against ISIL. However, even after the beheading of two American journalists and the impending massacre of Syrian Kurds on the Turkish-Syrian border by ISIL, the US military response was limited. Obama clearly opposed sending American combat forces into Syria and crafted a long term struggle against ISIL by expanding airstrikes into ISIL targets in Syria with allies.

From the economic constraints perspective, President Obama feared that the complex nature of the Syrian conflict would drag the US into a quagmire which would be even more costly than Afghanistan and Iraq and which would thus deplete resources that could be spend for at home. Even after the ISIL threat, the US stuck to less costly intervention options such as air strikes and providing training, weapons and close air support to vetted rebel groups fighting against ISIL. From that perspective, on a limited scale, economic constraints had an influence on the forms of military intervention.

With regards to perceptions regarding the opposition in Syria, in the first episode of the Syrian conflict by August 2011, the opposition was politically aspiring to force the Assad regime to reform and pursued mainly a peaceful political agenda, rejected the idea of external intervention, and lacked organised military capability. The US and regional allies also prioritised pressuring the Assad regime for reform through sanctions. During the second episode that lasted until November and December 2012, while Obama administration took a firm stance against the Assad regime, the means wielded against the Assad regime were not commensurate with the idea of tilting the balance in favour of moderate opposition groups. A lack of central leadership and infighting among political and armed opposition groups were the primary deficiencies that negatively influenced the overall capability and capacity of the FSA to become a viable actor. Ideologically, the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the FSA and some extremist elements were source of concern for the US administration. Furthermore, the Al Nusra Front emerged as the most effective rebel force dedicated to toppling the Assad regime, and started attracting foreign fighters and external support from regional countries. That complicated the picture for the US even further. The US administration urged constraint before supporting any Syrian opposition groups. In the third episode, which ended in August 2013, the Assad regime was supported by Hezbollah, Iranian forces and some other Shia elements from Iraq. Due to the emerging threat, the political and armed opposition in Syria consolidated their cohesion in that time frame. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was establishment to embrace all segments of society and to consolidate its authority over Supreme Military Council. However, constant scepticism, similar that which the US administration had in Libya, prevented the US taking decisive action in support of the Syrian opposition. The US administration stopped short of

providing the most needed heavy weapons like anti-tank and aircraft missiles to the Syrian opposition, which would have significantly helped change the balance of power on the ground and stop the Assad regime targeting civilians and opposition groups. The US limited its support to non-lethal aid, including food, medicine, and training assistance through the SMC of the FSA. The fourth period in the Syrian conflict was the most significant period with regards to threats that emerged, both from the Assad regime and the ISIL. The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in August 2013 on one hand and the rise of the threat from ISIL and other Salafist groups on the other made it difficult for the US administration to take decisive action against both. The US prioritised empowering anti-ISIL groups, primarily PYD and YPG forces, which were exclusively focused on fighting against ISIL to protect the area under their control. The group had a secular mind-set, which was also seen as a panacea against the growing clout of the religiously oriented and extremist groups in Syria. Finally, the fifth episode was marked by the steadfast expansion of ISIL and further marginalisation of the moderate opposition. As PYD/YPG forces pushed ISIL back and seized territory, the US sustained air strikes in support of PY and /YPG led Syrian Democratic Forces.

So, in the first episode of the conflict, the political nature of the opposition in Syria rendered any military intervention unnecessary and as the conflict turned into a military confrontation in the second episode, the US urged constraint to support the opposition, which lacked cohesion and capacity to represent a viable alternative to the regime. The suspicion surrounding the ideological composition of the opposition was deepened at the third stage, as the extremist groups became more powerful and attracted significant numbers of fighters and funds. In the fourth episode, the rise of ISIL and other Salafist groups urged the US to counter the threat by supporting PYD

and YPG forces fighting against ISIL and, finally, as ISIL directly threatened US interests, the US directed US and coalition air power against ISIL targets along with supporting the PYD and YPG led Syrian Democratic Forces.

From the perspective of public opinion and Congressional dynamics, since the outset of the conflict to the end of the fifth term, the US public and the majority of the US Congress across party lines espoused a non-interventionist approach towards the Syrian regime. Even the use of chemical weapons by the regime did not shift the public opinion towards military action. Furthermore, as of early 2012, the Libya intervention was seen as a failure and this perception seemed to have influenced US public opinion against intervention in Syria. However, as ISIL emerged as a serious threat to the US interests regionally and globally, public opinion rapidly changed in favour of intervention against ISIL, which was followed by airstrikes and increased funding to train and equip vetted opposition fighters to counter ISIL. The US public even started to support the idea of sending ground troops to Syria in a combat role to counter the ISIL threat.

In conclusion, the intervening variables in general and particularly the Obama Doctrine and the perception regarding the opposition in Syria seemed to have affected the form and the scope of the intervention options chosen by the US administration and the intervening variables sufficiently explain the analytical gap left unfilled by the neorealist perspective. This means that NCR is a viable theory for foreign policy analysis because H₂ has been confirmed for both the Libya and Syria cases.

With regards to the distinct interpretation of NCR, the Libya case confirms the semi-orthodox interpretation of NCR, which considers external drivers as the primary driver of intervention decisions and domestic constraints as a secondary influence in determining the form and the scale of intervention. The US response to Syria confirms the orthodox interpretation of NCR, which posits that domestic constraints interfere when states diverge from the incentives of the international system.

As a conclusion, NCR has proven to be a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand the rationale behind the suboptimal foreign policy choices of a state in a way that deviates from neorealist premises. The analytical results also reinforce the idea that it is problematic to explain foreign policy decisions exclusively from the perspective of a balance against power or threat without considering the impact of intervening variables.

There are two main strands in NCR with regards to their choices of independent variable, the original version (coined by Gideon Rose), which employs 'relative material power and position of a state in international system' and a revised version, tailored for military intervention decisions, (coined by Colin Dueck) which starts the analysis by looking at national interests and associated threats to those interests. Initially, this research started the analysis of the cases by employing 'balance of power' as an independent variable, however it was problematic to establish the basic parameters of the US's foreign policy decisions from the perspective of pure balance of power at regional or global level in conjunction with the Libya and Syria cases. On the other hand, Colin Dueck's framework proved useful to analyse and establish optimal and expected intervention decisions and was subsequently used as a benchmark to measure the impact of intervening variables.

Analysing the cases by employing process tracing techniques also helped identify different elements of the causal chain between the cases and within the Syria case at the five distinct episodes that led to particular foreign policy outcomes. The use of the congruence methodology to test theory was also a powerful tool as it was employed in conjunction with the process tracing and thus provided insight with regards to observed foreign policy outcomes.

As to the enquiry about whether NCR is a distinct theory in itself or a logical extension of neorealism, the results of this research suggest that NCR is a theory of foreign policy analysis employed to explain foreign policies of individual states and to identify the combination of relevant factors of particular case, as opposed to international relations theory which aim to explain the whole system in which states operate. The research also reinforces the importance of political leaders and elite interpretation and perception of national interests and threats to those interests, through which systemic incentives and constraints are filtered.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

NCR's parsimony is limited to the selection of a set of intervening variables, which cannot account for every aspect of the underlying dynamics behind foreign policy. However, a balance needs to be struck to have a solid ground for the generalizability of the findings. From the perspective of Alexander L. George's "building block" approach (George, 1985), future research may focus on other cases of US intervention or the interventions of other powers in these and other cases with a similar theoretical and analytic perspective. This will contribute to establishing generalizations on the phenomenon of the internationalization of intrastate conflicts. The comparison of foreign policy decisions made by the Obama and Trump

administrations vis-à-vis Libya and Syria conflicts can enrich the analytical baseline and allow for further inferences about the applicability of NCR in foreign policy analysis.

As to the methodological limitations, it was problematic to reach and conduct interviews with the US Foreign Policy Executives, including Libyan and Syrian ambassadors, who should have played an important role in shaping and executing US foreign policy choices in the two conflicts. This limitation was partially mitigated by the use of primary sources, such as Presidential Speeches, Congressional testimony of the US Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defence and top Generals, memoirs of key Foreign Policy Executives and speeches of former ambassadors. Nevertheless, the thesis would be analytically more powerful if it was possible to get to the FPE's perceptions and thoughts about the dynamics that are missing from first-hand accounts. On the other hand, talking to the decision-makers themselves is not necessarily unproblematic, as they bring their own biases and agendas.

In future research, U.S. strategic interests need to be redefined and new variables measuring this concept need to be found as those interests are adjusted on the basis of a changing world and changing leadership perceptions.

Analytically, future research may also include the rise of ISIL in Libya, the associated US response, and Russian military build-up in Syria and its consequences. In particular, the post Arab Spring second civil war in Libya that started in 2014 among rival factions seeking political power and territory requires further analysis.

The impact of different intervention strategies on post-conflict state building and reconstruction efforts can be explored more in detail to establish sustainable peace and stability.

The US Foreign Policy of Tomorrow

The theoretical framework and the empirical findings of the thesis allow for some predictions with regard to US foreign policy choices pertaining to emerging conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa.

A cross party consensus to limit the US's direct military involvement in Middle East and Africa, which was deeply supported by the US public, seems to prevail regardless of the administration in the near future. However, persistent restrained approaches when core US security interests and values are threatened will highly likely undermine US global standing vis-à-vis regional and global rivals.

While the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences led to a more cautious US policy with regards to nation building efforts with huge numbers of combatant forces on the ground, the Libya and Syria intra-state conflicts will compel the US to decisively tackle the root causes of the future conflicts and not to create power vacuums for terrorist groups before weakening or toppling autocratic regimes.

The US struggle to diminish cross national and cross regional terrorism and the WMD threat in the Middle East and North Africa will continue to be a priority for US security considerations. Besides, a proliferation of the terrorist threat in the region targeting US interests will highly likely compel the US to reconsider long term alliance structures and rivalries in the region, starting with its stance against Iran. The US might reconsider its long-lasting pro-Sunni stance in the region and eventually Iran could potentially be a partner in the fight against AQ and ISIL affiliated groups.

The areas where ISIL holds territory, such as Libya, are highly likely be subject to similar military intervention by US-led coalition to that in Syria and Iraq, beyond the targeted strikes that have been occurring there since the beginning of 2016.

As the US is reluctant to use its own troops on the ground in a combat role, the US will depend more on local proxies, which in turn will constrain US policies in conflicts in the near future. A strategy of non-military intervention also could be costly for the US, as this might undermine the US's ability to influence the course of the conflicts, resulting in numerous threats growing and spilling over internationally.

Finally, while the Libya intervention revealed the fact that intervention does not always end civil wars or resolve deep rooted factional differences, it signified the utility of the R2P norm to mitigate violence against civilians. However, the lack of a sustained and credible US commitment in Syria, where all the necessary preconditions for R2P had been met, undermined potential R2P applications by the US in the future.

In the long run, the US administration's deflection away from optimal intervention strategies might encourage regional and global rivals to fill the void and harm US interests. The Syrian Kurds gained significant political power and they have built up a considerable military that has been supported by the US. Pro-US PYD and YPG in Syria will aim to carve out a second Kurdish autonomous zone in the Middle East, which will have further complications.

Overall the US will highly likely have to deal with the outcomes of both Libya and Syria conflicts in the long term. The strained relations between rival political and military factions in Libya on the one hand and the ISIL threat on the other will urge the US to commit more resources to address the problems. For the Syria conflict, the growing influence of Russia, along with Iran in the Middle East, further destabilisation of Syria, which reinforce the notion that a divided Syria could be a viable option, the Kurds emerging as an influential actor in the Middle East, and the increased tone of sectarianism and infighting in Middle east will be the main contentious issues for US policy calculations.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Questions

Question 1:

Why do you think US responded differently in the Libya and Syria conflicts?

Question 2:

How do you think regional and global balance of power and balance of influence considerations affected US decisions for Libya and Syria against the backdrop of the rapid collapse of the pro-western Tunisian and Egyptian Governments in early 2011?

Question 3:

What were the US interests in Libya and Syria that were at stake before and during Arab Spring uprisings?

Question 4:

How do you think US economic constraints affected the way the US intervened into Libya and Syria conflicts?

Question 5:

How do you think the Obama Doctrine factored in the US decision for intervention (Bearing in mind the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences)?

Question 6:

How do you think the US elite perceived the Libyan and Syrian regime and their oppositions (from the outset of the conflict in 2011 until NATO operations ended in Libya in September 2013 and just after the Chemical weapon attack in Syria) and the conditions surrounding the conflict?

Question 7:

How do you think Congressional dynamics and public opinion affected US elites' decisions for Libya and Syria intervention?

Question 8

How would you prioritise the importance of variables (independent and intervening variables) or the sequencing of variables that led to a particular foreign policy choices in Libya and Syria?

Appendix 2 Revised Interview Questions

Question 1:

Why do you think US responded differently in the Libya and Syria conflicts?

Question 2:

What were the US interests in Libya and Syria that were at stake before and during Arab Spring uprisings? What kind of foreign policy choices (intervention strategies) did US interests (security, prosperity, values, and upholding international norms) dictate in Libya and Syria?

Question 3:

How do you think US economic constraints affected the way US intervened in Libya and Syria?

Question 4:

How do you think Obama Doctrine factored in the US decision for intervention?

Question 5:

How do you think the US elite perceived the Libyan and Syrian opposition and how did this influenced the way the US responded?

Question 6:

How do you think Congressional dynamics and public opinion effected US elites' decisions for Libya and Syria intervention?

Appendix 3 Interviewee List

No	Name	Organisation/Position	Nationality	Means of Interview	Interview Date
1	Dr. Zenonas Tziarras	University of Nicosia, Cyprus	Cypriot	Skype	15-May-15
2	NATO Analyst	Africa SME	USA	Face to face	09-Jul-15
3	NATO Analyst	Middle East SME	USA	face to face	10-Jul-15
4	NATO Analyst	Libya and Africa SME	USA	Face to face	27-Aug-15
5	Ex-Diplomat, PhD Student	University of Birmingham-Syria SME	Syria	face to face	04-Sep-15
6	Jason Pack	Researcher of Libyan History in Cambridge University and President of LibyaAnalysis.com	USA	Skype	01-Oct-15
7	NATO Analyst	Middle East SME	USA	Skype	17-Oct-15
8	US Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East and North Africa	Middle East SME	USA	Skype	06-Nov-15
9	Thomas Juneau	University of Ottawa	Canada	Skype	07-Apr-16
10	Prof. Steve Yetiv	Old Dominion University, Norfolk	USA	E-mail	09-May-15

Bibliography

- Aberbach, J. D., & Rockman, B. A. (2002). Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews. *Political Science and Politics*, 35(4), 673–676.
- Acun, C. (2015). *Kuzey Suriye ' de PYD Kuşatı*. Retrieved from http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150630181805_kuzey-suriyede-pyd-kusagi-pdf.pdf
- Adam Schiff. (2011). Congressional Record- Syria's Bloody Spring, 7 July 2011. *Congressional Record-House*. US Congressional Record- House. <http://doi.org/10.1097/00017285-197507000-00018>
- AIPAC. (2013). AIPAC Statement on Syria Resolution, 03 September 2013. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Retrieved from <http://www.aipac.org/learn/resources/aipac-publications/publication?pubpath=PolicyPolitics/Press/AIPAC Statements/2013/09/AIPAC STATEMENT ON SYRIA RESOLUTION>
- Akbarzadeh, S. (2015). Iran and Daesh: The Case of a Reluctant Shia Power. *Middle East Policy*, 22(3), 44–54. <http://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12142>
- Akpınar, P. (2015). Mediation as a Foreign Policy Tool in the Arab Spring: Turkey, Qatar and Iran. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 17(3), 252–268. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2015.1063270>
- Al-saleh, A., & White, L. (2013). *Dissecting an Evolving Conflict : The Syrian Uprising and the Future of the Country*. Retrieved from [http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Report_DissectingUnfldngCrisis_normal_\(1\).pdf](http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Report_DissectingUnfldngCrisis_normal_(1).pdf)
- Alaaldin, R. (2013). The Rise of al-Nusra, 12 April 2013. RUSI. Retrieved from https://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C5167D05802F5A/#.VBn-t_15Nic [Accessed 17 September 2014]
- Al Arabiya. (2014). Saudi Arabia names new intelligence chief. Al Arabiya. Retrieved from <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/01/Prince-Khalid-bin-Bandar-appointed-as-head-of-Saudi-intelligence-.html> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Al Omran, A. (2014). Saudi, U.A.E. and Bahraini Ambassadors to Return to Qatar, Ending Rift. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-uae-and-bahraini-ambassadors-to-return-to-qatar-ending-rift-1416228182> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Allison, R. (2013). Russia and Syria : explaining alignment with a regime in crisis. *International Affairs*, 89(4), 795–823.
- Amnesty International. (2015). Taking Stock: The Arming of Islamic State. Retrieved from https://www.es.amnesty.org/uploads/media/Taking_Stock_The_arming_of_IS.pdf.pdf
- Anthony, F. (2013). British Prime Minister David Cameron loses parliamentary vote, 29 August 2013. The Washington Post. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/british-prime-minister-david-cameron-loses-parliamentary-vote-on-syrian-military-strike/2013/08/29/4fabb080-10f7-11e3-bdf6-e4fc677d94a1_story.html [Accessed 04 December 2014]
- Arango, T. (2012). Kurds to Pursue More Autonomy in a Fallen Syria. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/29/world/middleeast/kurds-to-pursue-more-autonomy-in-a-fallen-syria.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [Accessed 03 September 2014]

- Aras, B. (2014). Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy Revisited. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16(4), 404–418. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2014.938451>
- Ashour, O. (2012). *Libyan Islamists Unpacked: Rise, Transformation, and Future*, Brookings Doha Center [Online]. Retrieved from [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/5/02 libya ashour/omar ashour policy briefing english.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/5/02_libya_ashour/omar_ashour_policy_briefing_english.pdf) [Accessed 10 August 2014]
- Atlas, P. M. (2012). U.S. Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring: Balancing Values and Interests. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 21(2), 353–385.
- Aubone, A. (2013). Explaining US unilateral military intervention in civil conflicts: A review of the literature. *International Politics*, 50(2), 278–302.
- Ayhan, V. (2011). Libyan Uprising and International Intervention:NATO's Mission and Libya's Gridlock. *Alternative Politics*, 3(3), 490–508.
- Badoura, S. (2014). The Breakdown of the Syrian Opposition Movement, 1–11.
- Bagdonas, A. (2012). Russia ' s Interests in the Syrian Conflict : *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*, July, 55–77.
- Bagy, E. O. (2012). *Syria's Political Opposition*, Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report 4, April 2012.
- Bagy, E. O. (2013). *The Free Syrian Army*, Institute of the Study of War, March 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The-Free-Syrian-Army-24MAR.pdf> [Accessed 28 Aug 2014]
- Bahgat, G. (2008). Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Case of Libya. *International Relations*, 22(1), 105–126. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0047117807087245>
- Balde, A. (2011). Libyans, Black-Africans and Gaddafi's divisive power struggle, 8 March 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.afrik-news.com/article19079.html>
- Banulescu-bogdan, N., & Fratzke, S. (2015). Europe's Migration Crisis in Context: Why Now and What Next?, 24 September 2015. *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/europe-migration-crisis-context-why-now-and-what-next>
- Barak, E. (2007). Between Reality and Secrecy : Israel ' s Freedom of Navigation through the Straits of Tiran , 1956-1967. *The Middle East Journal*, 61(4), 657–679.
- Barany, Z. (2011). Comparing the Arab Revolts. *Journal of Democracy (JoD)*, 22(4), 28–39.
- Bardaji, R. L. (2016). Religion, power and chaos in the Middle East. *European View*, 15(1), 87–95. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-016-0391-9>
- Barkey, H. J. (2012). Turkish–Iranian Competition after the Arab Spring. *Survival*, 54(6), 139–162. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.749639>
- Barkey, H. J. (2014). Turkey ' s Syria Predicament. *Middle Eastern Security, the US Pivot and the Rise of ISIS*, 5571(December), 99–122. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19445571.2014.995940>
- Barnard, A. (2013). Trying to End Rifts, Syria Opposition in Exile Elects President, 6 July 2013. New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/07/world/middleeast/trying-to-end-rifts-syria-opposition-in-exile-elects-president.html?_r=0 [Accesed 22 December 2014]
- Baron, K. (2011). For the U.S., War Against Qaddafi Cost Relatively Little: \$1.1 Billion.

- Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/10/for-the-us-war-against-qaddafi-cost-relatively-little-11-billion/247133/>
- Bartell, D. L., & Gray, D. H. (2012). Conflict in Syria and the Opportunity to Reduce Iran ' s Regional Influence and Iran ' s Threat to the International Community. *Global Security Studies*, 3(4), 136–147.
- Bartels, L. M. (2013). Evaluating the Effects of the Great Recession. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 650(November 2013), 6–24. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0002716213500454>
- BBC. (2011a). BBC News - Syria Assad no longer legitimate, says Clinton, 12 July 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14115762> [Accessed 04 December 2014]
- BBC. (2011b). Syria protests Assad to lift state of emergency, 20 April 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13134322> [Accessed 04 December 2014]
- BBC News. (2011a). Libya UN Security Council votes sanctions on Gaddafi, 27 February 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12589434> [Accessed 15 September 2014]
- BBC News. (2011b). Libya US, UK and France attack Gaddafi forces. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12796972>
- BBC News. (2013a). Guide to the Syrian opposition. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24403003> [Accessed 29 August 2014]
- BBC News. (2013b). Islamist rebels in Syria reject National Coalition - BBC News, 25 September 2013. BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24239779>
- Beauchamp, Z. (2015). The Syrian Refugee Crisis, 5 September 2015. Vox News. Retrieved from <http://www.vox.com/2015/9/5/9265621/syrian-refugee-charts>
- Beehner, L., & Meibauer, G. (2016). The Futility of Buffer Zones in International Politics. *Orbis*, 60(2), 248–265. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2016.01.004>
- Bell, Anthony & Witter, D. (2011). The Libyan Revolution Roots of Rebellion. Institute for the Study of War. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/libyan-revolution-part-i-roots-rebellion>
- Bennett, A., & Checkel, J. T. (2014). Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices. In *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bennett, A., Lepgold, J., & Unger, D. (1994). Burden-sharing in the Persian Gulf War. *International Organization*, 48(1), 39–75.
- Berman, H. L. (2011). Congressional Record H. Res. 292 Discussions — House, 3 June 2011. *Congressional Record-House*. Congressional Records-House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/03/CREC-2011-06-03-pt1-PgH3998.pdf>
- Bilmes, L. J. (2013). The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan : How Wartime Spending Decisions Will Constrain Future National Security Budgets. *HKS Faculty Research Working Paper*, 1–22. <http://doi.org/http://www.epsjournal.org.uk>
- Bin Talal, E. H., & Schwarz, R. (2013). The Responsibility to Protect and the Arab World: An Emerging International Norm? *Contemporary Security Policy*, 34(1), 1–15. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2013.771026>

- Black, I. (2011a). Libya_ Defections leave Muammar Gaddafi isolated in Tripoli bolthole, 23 February 2011. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/23/muammar-gaddafi-libya-tripoli-uprising>
- Black, I. (2011b). Syria 100 die in crackdown as Assad sends in his tanks, 01 August 2011. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/31/syria-hama-crackdown-tanks-protests> [Accessed 17 September 2011]
- Black, I. (2014a). End of an era as Prince Bandar departs Saudi intelligence post, 16 April 2014. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/16/prince-bandar-saudi-intelligence-syria> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Black, I. (2014b). Qatar-Gulf deal forces expulsion of Muslim Brotherhood leaders, 16 September 2014. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/16/qatar-orders-expulsion-exiled-egyptian-muslim-brotherhood-leaders> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Black, I. (2016). Report on Syria conflict finds 11.5% of population killed or injured, 11 February 2016. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/11/report-on-syria-conflict-finds-115-of-population-killed-or-injured>
- Blaisdell, D. C. (1958). Pressure Groups, Foreign Policies, and International Politics. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 319(1), 149–157. <http://doi.org/10.1177/000271625831900117>
- Blanchard, C. M. (2011). *Libya : Unrest and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service, 29 March 2011 [Online]. Retrieved from <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/159788.pdf> [Accessed 11 August 2014]
- Blanchard, C. M. (2014). *Qatar : Background and U . S . Relations*, 04 November 2014.
- Blanchard, C. M., Humud, C. E., & Nikitin, M. B. D. (2014). *Armed Conflict in Syria : Overview and U . S . Response*.
- Blanchard, C. M., & Zanotti, J. (2011). *Libya : Background and U . S . Relations*.
- Bleek, P. C., & Stein, A. (2012). Turkey and America Face Iran. *Survival*, 54(2), 27–38. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.672701>
- Bollier, S. (2013). Can Qatar replace its renaissance man, 26 June 2013. Al Jazeera. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/06/201362613431469150.html> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Book, T. E. (2012). *NATO ' S AIR WAR IN LIBYA : A TEMPLATE FOR FUTURE AMERICAN OPERATIONS*. Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Retrieved from <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a562888.pdf>
- Bosco, R. M. (2009). The Assassination of Rafik Hariri: Foreign Policy Perspectives. *International Political Science Review*, 30(4), 349–361. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0192512109342521>
- Boxer, B. (2013). Authorizing the Limited and Specified Use of US Armed Forces against Syria, 10 September 2013. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgS6312-2.pdf>
- Brahimi, A. (2011). Libya's Revolution. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 16(4), 605–624. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2011.630880>

- Brands, H. W. (1987). Decisions on American Armed Intervention : Lebanon , Dominican Republic , and Grenada. *Political Science Quarterly*, 102(4), 607–624.
- Breedlove, P. (2016). General Breedlove , Senate Armed Services Committee Transcript, 01 Mar 2016, 1–57. Retrieved from <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/document/35171/general-breedlove-senate-armed-services-committee-transcript>
- Brooks, M. (2013). *Mo Brooks of Alabama Voting NO on Attacking Syria, 11 September 2013*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/11/CREC-2013-09-11-pt1-PgH5480.pdf>
- Bulos, N. (2015). US-trained Division 30 rebels “betray US and hand weapons over to al-Qaeda”’s affiliate in Syria’, 22 September 2015. Telegraph. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11882195/US-trained-Division-30-rebels-betrayed-US-and-hand-weapons-over-to-al-Qaedas-affiliate-in-Syria.html>
- Bumiller, E., & Shanker, T. (2012). Panetta to Offer Strategy for Cutting Military Budget. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/us/pentagon-to-present-vision-of-reduced-military.html?_r=0
- Burton, D. (2011a). *American Involvement in Libya, 22 June 2011*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/22/CREC-2011-06-22-pt1-PgH4452.pdf>
- Burton, D. (2011b). Congressional Record_ House Resolution 2278 — House, 24 June 2011. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/24/CREC-2011-06-24-pt1-PgH4550-2.pdf>
- Burton, D. (2012). Congressional Record — House_ Tyrants and Despots. *US Congressional Record, 08 March 2012*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2012/03/08/CREC-2012-03-08-pt1-PgH1293.pdf>
- Busch, N. E., & Pilat, J. F. (2013). Disarming Libya ? A reassessment after the Arab Spring. *International Affairs*, 89(2), 451–475.
- Byman, D. (2005). Confronting Syrian-Backed Terrorism. *The Washington Quarterly*, 28(3), 99–113.
- Byman, D. (2014). Sectarianism Afflicts the New Middle East. *Survival*, 56(1), 79–100. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.882157>
- Cammett, M. (2013). The Syrian Conflict’s Impact on Lebanese Politics, United States Institute of Peace, 16 November 2013.
- Canadian Council for Refugees. (2013). Canadian immigration responses to the Syrian crisis, October 2013. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/en/syrian-crisis-backgrounder>
- Cardin, B. (2013). Authorizing the Limited and Specified Use of US Armed Forces against Syria, 10 September 2013. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgS6312-2.pdf>
- Carnegie Centre. (2012a). National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, CarnegieMiddle East Centre. Retrieved from <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50628> [Accessed 28 Aug 2014]
- Carnegie Centre. (2012b). *The Damascus Spring-Carnegie Middle East Center*.
- Carnegie Centre. (2012c). The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Carnegie Middle East Center.

- Carothers, T. (1999). Civil Society. *Foreign Policy*, 18–29.
- Carpenter, T. G. (2013). Tangled Web: The Syrian Civil War and Its Implications. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 24(1), 1–11. <http://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-2018988>
- Carter, C. J. (2014). Video shows ISIS beheading U.S. journalist James Foley, 20 August 2014. CNN. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/19/world/meast/isis-james-foley/>
- Caves, J. (2012). *Syrian Kurds and the Democratic Union Party (PYD)*, *Institute For the Study of War*, 6 December 2012. Retrieved from https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_SyrianKurds.pdf [Accessed 01 September 2014]
- Chang, Y. M., & Sanders, S. (2009). Raising the Cost of Rebellion: the Role of Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflict. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 20(3), 149–169.
- Chaziza, M. (2014). Soft Balancing Strategy in the Middle East: Chinese and Russian Vetoes in the United Nations Security Council in the Syria Crisis. *China Report*, 50(3), 243–258. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0009445514534126>
- ChinaAfricaRealstory.com. (2011). China's Oil Imports From Libya, 23 March 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.chinaafricarealstory.com/2011/03/chinas-oil-imports-from-libya.html>
- Chivvis, C. S., & Liepman, A. (2013). *North Africa's Menace AQIM's Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response*. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR415/RAND_RR415.pdf
- Chollet, D. (2016). Obama's Red Line, Revisited. Politico Magazine. Retrieved from <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/obama-syria-foreign-policy-red-line-revisited-214059>
- Chulov, M. (2014a). Controlled by Iran, the deadly militia recruiting Iraq's men to die in Syria, 14 March 2014. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria> [Accessed 18 September 2014]
- Chulov, M. (2014b). Rafik Hariri assassination trial of Hezbollah suspects begin, 16 January 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/16/rafik-hariri-assassination-trial-hezbollah-suspects> [Accessed 23 October 2014]
- CIA. (2013). The World Factbook Iraq. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>
- Cladi, L., & Webber, M. (2011). Italian foreign policy in the post-cold war period: a neoclassical realist approach. *European Security*, 20(2), 205–219. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2011.565052>
- Clinton, H. (2011). "This Week" Transcript_Target Libya_ Hillary Clinton, Robert Gates interview with Jake Tapper, 27 March 2011. ABC News. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-hillary-clinton-robert-gates-donald-rumsfeld/story?id=13232096>
- Clinton, H. (2013). Senate Hearing Benghazi Consulate Attack, 23 January 2013. C-SPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?310496-1/senate-hearing-benghazi-consulate-attack&start=3990>
- Clinton, H. R. (2015). *Hard Choices* (2nd ed.). London: Simon & Schuster.

- CNN. (2011). U.S. recognizes Libyan rebels' authority [Online]. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/07/15/libya.us.recognition/> [Accessed 10 August 2014]
- CNN/ORC. (2011a). *CNN/ORC Poll on Libya*. Retrieved from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2011/images/05/31/rel9e.pdf>
- CNN/ORC. (2011b). Most support no fly zone in Libya but not ground troops – 18-20 March 2011. CNN Political Ticker - CNN. Retrieved from <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/03/21/cnn-poll-most-support-no-fly-zone-in-libya-but-not-ground-troops/>
- CNN/ORC. (2011c). Small majority favor US involvement in Syria, 14 April 2011. CNN. Retrieved from <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/04/14/cnn-poll-small-majority-favor-u-s-involvement-in-libya/>
- CNN/ORC. (2012a). Majority of Americans oppose US intervention in Syria, 07 June 2012. CNN. Retrieved from <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/07/cnn-poll-majority-of-americans-oppose-us-intervention-in-syria/>
- CNN/ORC. (2012b). US responsibility in Syria, 14 February 2012. CNN. Retrieved from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2012/images/02/14/rel2d.pdf>
- CNN/ORC. (2013). CNN/ORC Poll on Syria, 09 September 2013. CNN. Retrieved from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2013/images/09/09/6a.poll.syria.pdf>
- CNN/ORC. (2014). CNN/ORC Poll, 29 September 2014. CNN. Retrieved from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2014/images/09/29/orc.poll.pdf>
- CNN/ORC. (2015a). CNN/ORC Poll, 21 October 2015. CNN. Retrieved from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2015/images/10/21/rel11d.-.obama,.isis,.gun.control.pdf>
- CNN/ORC. (2015b). CNN/ORC Poll, 06 December 2015. CNN. Retrieved from <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2015/images/12/06/rel12d.-.obama.isis.pdf>
- Coats, D. (2013). Authorizing the Limited and Specified Use of US Armed Forces against Syria, Discussions over S.J. Res., 09 September 2013. US Congressional Record-Senate. <http://doi.org/10.1097/00017285-197507000-00018>
- Cooper, H., & Landler, M. (2011). U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Libya in Wake of Crackdown, 25 February 2011. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/26/world/middleeast/26diplomacy.html?_r=0
- Cornell, S. E. (2016). The fallacy of “compartmentalisation”: the West and Russia from Ukraine to Syria. *European View*, 15(1), 97–109. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-016-0400-z>
- Cottey, A. (2008). Beyond Humanitarian Intervention: The New Politics of Peacekeeping and Intervention. *Contemporary Politics*, 14(4), 429–446.
- Dalacoura, K. (2012). The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East : political change and geopolitical implications. *International Affairs*, 88(1), 63–79.
- Daniels, G. (2014). Aarsal Lebanon's Gateway to the Syrian Conflict, Institute for Study of War, 01 January 2014. Retrieved from <http://iswsyria.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/aarsal-lebanons-gateway-to-syrian.html#!/2013/12/aarsal-lebanons-gateway-to-syrian.html>
- Davenport, K. (2014). Chronology of Libya's Disarmament and Relations with the United States. Arms Control Association. Retrieved from <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/LibyaChronology> [Accessed 07 November 2014]

- Davidson, J. W. (2011). *America's Allies and War* (First edit). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Davidson, J. W. (2013). France, Britain and the intervention in Libya: an integrated analysis. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26(2), 310–329.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.784573>
- Dempsey, M. (2012). Fareed Zakaria_ The Global Public Square, Interview with Gen. Martin Dempsey, 19 February 2012. CNN. Retrieved from
<http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1202/19/fzgps.01.html>
- Dempsey, M. (2013a). Letter from Martin Dempsey to Eliot Engel, 19 August 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.loufisher.org/docs/syria/dempsey.pdf>
- Dempsey, M. (2013b). Syria: Weighing the Obama Administration's Response, Committee of Foreign Relations Hearing, 04 September 2013. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20130904/101265/HHRG-113-FA00-Transcript-20130904.pdf>
- Dent, C. (2013). Potential US Involvement in Syria. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgH5467.pdf>
- Der Spiegel. (2011). Berlin La Belle Disco Bombings: Victims Request Damages from Frozen Gadhafi Assets, 22 April 2011. Der Spiegel. Retrieved from
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/berlin-la-belle-disco-bombings-victims-request-damages-from-frozen-gadhafi-assets-a-758702.html> [Accessed 21 October 2014]
- Derouen, K. R., & Sobek, D. (2004). The Dynamics of Civil War Duration and Outcome. *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(3), 303–320.
- Devine, J. (2015). Iran versus ISIL. *Insight Turkey*, 17(2), 21–34.
- Dilanian, K. (2014). Khorasan Group_ Obama opens a new front against Al Qaeda, 24 September 2014. CSMonitor. Retrieved from <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Latest-News-Wires/2014/0924/Khorasan-Group-Obama-opens-a-new-front-against-Al-Qaeda-video>
- Ditz, J. (2013). Foreign Fighters Flock to Sinai for Libyan Arms Auctions, 26 February 2013. Retrieved from <http://news.antiwar.com/2013/02/26/foreign-fighters-flock-to-sinai-for-libyan-arms-auctions/>
- Dodge, T. (2014). Can Iraq Be Saved? *Survival*, 56(5), 7–20.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.962795>
- Doha Institute. (2011). *Western Military Intervention and the Future of Libya, March 2011*.
- Doornbos, Harald and Moussa, J. (2013, November 24). Comrades in arms How Libya sends weapons to Syria's rebels, 10 July 2013. *Foreignpolicy*, 339(nov24 2).
<http://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b5022>
- Drysdale, A. (1992). Syria and Iraq - The Geopathology of a Relationship. *GeoJournal*, 28(3), 347–355.
- Dueck, C. (2009). Neoclassical realism and the national interest: presidents, domestic politics, and major military interventions. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy* (First, pp. 139–169). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dueck, C. (2015a). *The Obama Doctrine* (First). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dueck, C. (2015b). *The Obama Doctrine, American Grand Strategy Today*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dugan, A. (2013). U.S. Support for Action in Syria Is Low vs. Past Conflicts, 06 September 2013. Gallup Poll. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/164282/support-syria-action-lower-past-conflicts.aspx> [Accessed 31 January 2015]
- Duncan, J. (2011). *Americans have spending fatigue, 02 June 2011*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/02/CREC-2011-06-02-pt1-PgH3922-2.pdf>
- Dunne, T., & Schmidt, B. C. (2014). Realism. In J. Baylis, S. Smith, & P. Owens (Eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics* (Sixth Edit). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dunt, I. (2011). Analysis: Who are the Libya rebels? [Online]. Retrieved from <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2011/08/23/analysis-who-are-the-libya-rebels> [Accessed 10 August 2014]
- Edwards, A. (2013). Edwards_Neoclassical_realist_analysis_2013-2, (January).
- eia. (2015a). US Imports from Libya of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products. US Energy Information Administration. Retrieved from <http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=p&s=mttimly1&f=a>
- eia. (2015b). US Imports from Syria of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products. US Energy Information Administration. Retrieved from <http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=P&s=MTTIMUSSY1&f=M>
- Eichenberg, R. C. (2005). Victory Has Many Friends: U.S. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force, 1981-2005. *International Security*, 30(1), 140–177.
- Elwell, C. K. (2013). Economic Recovery : Sustaining U . S . Economic Growth in a Post-Crisis Economy. *Congressional Research Service*.
- Embassy of US. (2014). Embassy of the United States Tripoli, Libya. Retrieved from <http://libya.usembassy.gov/about.html> [Accessed 06 November 2014]
- Engel, R., Welker, K., & Vinograd, C. (2015). U.S. to Deploy Special Operations Forces in Syria, 30 October 2015. NBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/u-s-deploy-special-operations-forces-syria-official-n454506>
- Ennis, C. A., & Momani, B. (2013). Shaping the Middle East in the Midst of the Arab Uprisings: Turkish and Saudi foreign policy strategies. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(6), 1127–1144. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.802503>
- Ensign, J. (2011). Congressional Record Discussions on Libya— Senate. *US Congressional Record*, 30 March 2011. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/30/CREC-2011-03-30-pt1-PgS1951.pdf>
- Evera, S. Van. (1997). *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Feinstein, D. (2012). Senate Resolution 551, 12 September 2012. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2012/09/12/CREC-2012-09-12-pt1-PgS6285.pdf>
- Findley, M. G., & Teo, T. K. (2006). Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars : An Actor-Centric Approach. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(4), 828–837.

- Flood, D. H. (2012). Between Islamization and Secession : The Contest for. *CTC Sentinel*, 5(7), 1–6.
- Ford, R. (2014a). Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford: I could no longer “defend the American policy”, 3 June 2014. CNN. Retrieved from <http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2014/06/03/former-u-s-ambassador-to-syria-i-could-no-longer-defend-the-american-policy-robert-ford/>
- Ford, R. (2014b). The Future of Syria_ A Conversation with Robert Ford, 20 March 2014. Wilson Center. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyZQCbl_2kI
- Ford, R. (2015). A Tale of Four Augusts_ Obama’s Syria Policy, 14 September 2015. SETA Foundation at Washington D.C. Retrieved from <http://setadc.org/a-tale-of-four-augusts-obamas-syria-policy-2/>
- Fordham, B. O. (2008). Power or plenty? Economic interests, security concerns, and American intervention. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, 737–758. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00524.x>
- Fordham, B. O. (2009). The limits of neoclassical realism: additive and interactive approaches to explaining foreign policy preferences. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fortenberry, J. (2013). Potential US Involvement in Syria, 10 September 2013. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgH5467.pdf>
- Fullton, W., Holliday, J., & Wyer, S. (2013). *Iranian Strategy in Syria, May 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/IranianStrategyinSyria-1MAY.pdf> [Accessed 05 October 2014]
- Gates, R. (2011a). Gates - U.S. lacks visibility into Libyan rebels, 31 March 2011. CBS News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/gates-us-lacks-visibility-into-libyan-rebels/>
- Gates, R. (2011b). The House Armed Services Committee testimony on Operation Odyssey Dawn and US Military Operations in Libya, 31 March 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTvYbRII4-Q>
- Gates, R. (2011c). “This Week” Transcript_ Taret Libya_ Hillary Clinton, Robert Gates interview with Jake Tapper, 27 March 2011. ABC News. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-hillary-clinton-robert-gates-donald-rumsfeld/story?id=13232096>
- Gates, R. (2015). *Duty Memoirs of a Secretary at War*. London: WH Allen.
- Gelbart, J. (2010). The Iran-Syria Axis: A Critical Investigation. *Stanford Journal of International Relations*, XII(1), 37–42. Retrieved from https://web.stanford.edu/group/sjir/12-1/fall10-final_5.pdf [Accessed 06 October 2014]
- George, A. L. (1985). The Method of structured, Focused Comparison. In *Case Studies and Theory Development in The Social Sciences* (Vol. 2, pp. 21–58).
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.
- Gerges, F. A. (2012). The “Obama Doctrine” in the Middle East. *Policy Brief, October*. Retrieved from http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Brief_Duke_1015.pdf

- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a Case Study and What is it Good for? *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341–354. <http://doi.org/10.1126/science.151.3712.868>
- Gohmert, L. (2011). Congressional Record_What is so special about Libya? *US Congressional Record*, 30 March 2011. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/30/CREC-2011-03-30-pt1-PgH2095-2.pdf>
- Gold, Z. (2013). *SINAI SECURITY : Opportunities for Unlikely Cooperation Among Egypt , Israel and Hamas*, SABAN Centre for Middle East Policy, 30 October 2013. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/10/22_sinai_egypt_israel_hamas_gold/22_sinai_hamas_egypt_israel_gold.pdf
- Goldberg, J. (2016). President Obama’s Interview With Jeffrey Goldberg on Syria and Foreign Policy. The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>
- Goldberg, J. (2017). The Obama Doctrine, R.I.P. The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/the-obama-doctrine-rip/522276/>
- Goodarzi, J. M. (2013). Syria and Iran : Alliance Cooperation in a Changing Regional Environment. *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, 4(2), 31–54.
- Goodman, R. (2006). Humanitarian Intervention and The Pretexts for War. *The American Journal of International Law*, 100(107).
- Gordon, P. (2015). Washington Journal Philip Gordon, The Middle East is Falling Apart, 10 June 2015. C-SPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?326411-5/washington-journal-philip-gordon-us-middle-east-policy>
- Gortney, W. (2011). Military Operations Libya, Joint Staff briefed reporters on operations in Libya, 28 March 2011. CSPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?298708-1/military-operations-libya&start=939>
- Gosar, P. (2013). Congressional Record-Use of Military Force in Syria, 10 September 2013. *Congressional Record*. US Congressional Record- House. <http://doi.org/10.1097/00017285-197507000-00018>
- Gov.uk. (2012). Chairman’s Conclusions of Friends of Syria meeting. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chairmans-conclusions-of-friends-of-syria-meeting> [Accessed 27 August 2014]
- Graham, L. (2011). US Senate Discussions on Libya, 5 July 2011. US Congressional Record-Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/07/05/CREC-2011-07-05-pt1-PgS4319.pdf>
- Guerlain, P. (2014). Obama’s Foreign Policy: “Smart Power,” Realism and Cynicism. *Society*, 51, 482–491. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-014-9814-x>
- Gulmohamad, Z. K. (2014). The Rise and Fall of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (Levant) ISIS. *Global Security Studies*, 5(2). Retrieved from [http://www.globalsecuritystudies.com/Gulmonhamad ISIS AG.pdf](http://www.globalsecuritystudies.com/Gulmonhamad%20ISIS%20AG.pdf) [Accesed 29 August 2014]
- Gunes, C., & Lowe, R. (2015). *The Impact of the Syrian War on Kurdish Politics Across the Middle East*. Retrieved from https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150723_SyriaKurdsGunesLowe.pdf
- Gutfeld, A., & Zumbrennen, C. R. (2013). From Nickel Grass to Desert Storm : The

- Transformation of US Intervention Capabilities in the Middle East. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(4), 623–644. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2013.798312>
- Gwertzman, B. (1981). US Reports Shooting Down 2 Libya Jets that Attacked F-14s over Mediterrane, 20 August 1981. New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/20/world/us-reports-shooting-down-2-libya-jets-that-attacked-f-14-s-over-mediterrane.html?pagewanted=1> [Accessed 06 November 2014]
- Habel, P. D. (2012). Following the Opinion Leaders? The Dynamics of Influence Among Media Opinion, the Public, and Politicians. *Political Communication*, 29(3), 257–277. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2012.694986>
- Hagel, C. (2013). Syria: Weighing the Obama Administration's Response, Committee of Foreign Relations Hearing, 04 September 2013. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20130904/101265/HHRG-113-FA00-Transcript-20130904.pdf>
- Hamid, S. (2013). The Blurry Red Line, 26 April 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/why-is-there-a-red-line-on-chemical-weapons-but-not-on-70-000-deaths/275328/>
- Haney, P. J., & Vanderbush, W. (1999). The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Cuban American National Foundation. *International Studies Quarterly*, 43(2), 341–361. <http://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00123>
- Hendrickson, R. C. (2013). Libya and American war powers: war-making decisions in the United States. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 25(2), 175–189. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2013.765397>
- Higgins, B. (2013). Congressional Record-Use of Military Force in Syria, 10 September 2013. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgH5440-7.pdf>
- Hokayem, E. (2011). The Gulf States and Syria. United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PB_116.pdf [Accessed 11 October 2014]
- Holbrook, D. (2015). Al-Qaeda and the Rise of ISIS. *Survival*, 57(2), 93–104. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1026070>
- Holehouse, M. (2016). Nato chief Vladimir Putin “weaponising” refugee crisis to “break” Europe, 2 March 2016. Telegraph. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/12180073/Nato-chief-Vladimir-Putin-weaponising-refugee-crisis-to-break-Europe.html>
- Hughes, G. (2008). Britain, the Transatlantic Alliance, and the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 10(2), 3–40.
- Huth, P. K. (1998). Major Power Intervention in International Crises, 1918-1988. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42(6), 744–770. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022002798042006004>
- ICISS. (2001). 'The Responsibility to Protect', *Report of International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, December 2001.
- Idriss, S. (2013). ALDE Open Meeting with top Syrian Opposition General, 06 Marh 2013. Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe- ALDE. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfXwXNuyvLI>
- Ikhwanweb. (2012). Syria Muslim Brotherhood Issues Post-Assad State-for-All Commitment Charter. Retrieved from <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=29851> [Accessed 30 August 2014]

- Inhofe, J. (2013). *Syria, 9 September 2013*. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/09/CREC-2013-09-09-pt1-PgS6289.pdf>
- Interviewee 2. (2015). Author Interview with NATO Africa/Libya Expert, 09 July 2015.
- Interviewee 3. (2015). Author Interview with NATO Middle East/Syria Expert, 10 July 2015.
- Interviewee 4. (2015). Author Interview with NATO Africa/Libya Expert, 27 August 2015.
- Interviewee 7. (2015). Author Interview with NATO Middle East Expert, 17 October 2015.
- Interviewee 8. (2015). Author Interview with a NATO Member Country Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East and North Africa, 06 November 2015.
- ISCR. (2013). ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans, 17 December 2013, The International Centre for Study of Radicalization. Retrieved from <http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans/>
- Jacop, J. (2011). Who are the real Libyan opposition [Online], International Business Times, 28 March 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/who-are-real-libyan-opposition-277421> [Accessed 12 August 2014]
- Jervis, R. (2009). Unipolarity. *World Politics*, 61(1), 188–213. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109000070>
- Jibril, M. (2011). Mahmoud Jibril NTC Interim Prime Minister of Libya, 23 October 2011. BBC World News, Hardtalk. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bl4AMUa4X_E
- Joffe, G. (1988). Islamic Opposition in Libya. *Third World Quarterly*, 10(2), 615–631.
- Johnson, T. (2011). *Libya War Powers Resolution*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/03/CREC-2011-06-03-pt1-PgH4010.pdf>
- Johnston, K. A. (2012). Transformation of Conflict Status in Libya. *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, 17(1), 81–115.
- Jones, J. M. (2011). Americans Approve of Military Action Against Libya, 47% to 37%, 21 March 2011. *Gallup Politics*. Gallup Poll. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/146738/Americans-Approve-Military-Action-Against-Libya.aspx>
- Jones, J. M. (2011). Americans Shift to More Negative View of Libya Military Action. *Gallup*. Gallup Poll. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/148196/Americans-Shift-Negative-View-Libya-Military-Action.aspx>
- Jones, J. M. (2013). Americans Oppose U.S. Military Involvement in Syria, 31 May 2013. Gallup Poll. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/162854/americans-oppose-military-involvement-syria.aspx>
- Jones, P. (2013). Hope and Disappointment: Iran and the Arab Spring. *Survival*, 55(4), 73–84. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2013.823033>
- Jones, S. (2016). Russia accused of “weaponising” Syria refugees. Financial Times. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/7a9feb9a-d327-11e5-8887-98e7feb46f27>
- Jones, S. G. (2014). *A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qa’ida and Other Salafi Jihadists*. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR600/RR637/RAND_RR637.pdf

- Joscelyn, T. (2014). UN recognizes ties between Ansar al Sharia in Libya, al Qaeda _ The Long War Journal, 19 November 2014. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/11/un_designates_ansar.php
- Jost, K. (2009). The Obama Presidency. *CQ Researcher*, 277–309. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/31933_12.pdf
- Juneau, T. (2015). *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy* (Edition 1). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Juneau, T. (2015). The civil war in Syria and Canada's containment policy. *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 70, 471–488. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0020702015584581>
- Juneau, T. (2016). Author Interview with Assistant Professor , University of Ottawa, Faculty of Social Sciences Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, former Middle East analyst at Canadian Department of National Defence, 07 April 2016.
- Kahf, A. (2016). Geopolitical Realignments around Syria : Threats and Opportunities. *Insight Turkey*, 18(2), 21–30.
- Kaine, T. (2013). Congressional Record — Senate_Syria. *US Congressional Record*, 11 September 2013. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/11/CREC-2013-09-11-pt1-PgS6340.pdf>
- Karon, T. (2011). The Syria Game of Thrones Turkey vs Iran vs. the Saudis in Battle to Shape a Rebellion's Outcome, 16 November 2011. Time. Retrieved from <http://world.time.com/2011/11/16/the-syria-game-of-thrones-turkey-vs-iran-vs-the-saudis-in-battle-to-shape-a-rebellions-outcome/> [Accessed 12 October 2014]
- Katzman, K. (2013). *Iraq : Politics , Governance , and Human Rights*, 14 November 2013, *CRS Report for Congress*. Retrieved from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf>
- Kaufman, R. G. (2014). Prudence and the Obama Doctrine. *Orbis*, 58(3), 441–459. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2014.05.009>
- Kaufman, S. (2011). U.S. Recognizes TNC as Libya's "Legitimate Governing Authority" [Online]. Retrieved from <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2011/07/20110715134850nehpets8.203387e-04.html#axzz39xjA873s> [Accessed 10 August 2014]
- Kearn, D. W. (2014). Attacking ISIS: Military Force, U.S. Public Opinion and the Long War on Terrorism, 23 September 2014. Huffingtonpost. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-w-kearn/attacking-the-islamic-sta_b_5868712.html
- Kelley, M. (2013). The Most Accurate Breakdown Of The Syrian Rebels, Business Insider, 19 September 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/graphic-the-most-accurate-breakdown-of-the-syrian-rebels-2013-9>
- Kerry, J. (2013). Syria: Weighing the Obama Administration's Response, Committee of Foreign Relations Hearing, 04 September 2013. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20130904/101265/HHRG-113-FA00-Transcript-20130904.pdf>
- Kessler, G. (2008). Fix This Middle Eastern Mess. *The Washington Quarterly*, 31(4), 135–142. <http://doi.org/10.1162/wash.2008.31.4.135>
- Khatib, L. (2013). Qatar ' s foreign policy : the limits of pragmatism. *International Affairs*,

- 89(2), 417–431.
- Khatib, L. (2014). *Qatar and the recalibration of power in the gulf, September 2014*.
- Kilo, M. (2011). Syria... the road to where? *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 4(4), 431–444. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2011.630884>
- Kitchen, N. (2010). Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation. *Review of International Studies*, 36(1), 117–143. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210509990532>
- Klein, J. (2015). Iran Could Be a Surprising American Ally as Chaos Grows in Syria. Time. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4065963/syria-iran-could-be-a-surprising-american-ally/>
- Knights, M. (2013). Iran's Foreign Legion The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria, 27 June 2013, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-foreign-legion-the-role-of-iraqi-shiite-militias-in-syria>
- Knio, K. (2013). Structure, Agency And Hezbollah: a Morphogenetic View. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), 856–872. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.800741>
- Kreutz, J. (2010). How and When Armed Conflicts End: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(2), 243–250.
- Kucinich, D. (2011). *Defeat Authorization for War in Libya, 24 June 2011*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/24/CREC-2011-06-24-pt1-PgH4531-7.pdf>
- Küçükkeleş, M. (2012). *Arab League 's Syrian Policy*.
- Labonte, M. (2010). The 2007-2009 recession: Similarities to and differences from the past. *Congressional Research Service*. Retrieved from http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/123984/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/5e1f2a00-9f38-4dbb-b6a4-779eaf57cb40/en/150756.pdf
- Laird, R. F. (1984). Soviet Arms Trade with the Noncommunist Third World. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 35(3), 196–213.
- Lamen, F. (2011). Libyan Rebel Leader Mustafa Abdul Jalil Pleas For No Fly Zone In Exclusive Interview on 12 March 2011. The Daily Beast. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/03/14/libyan-rebel-leader-mustafa-abdul-jalil-pleas-for-no-fly-zone-in-exclusive-interview.html>
- Landis, J., & Pace, J. (2007). The Syrian Opposition. *The Washington Quarterly*, 30(1), 45–68. <http://doi.org/10.1162/wash.2006-07.30.1.45>
- Larémont, R. R. (2011). Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel. *African Security*, 4(4), 242–268. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2011.628630>
- Laub, Z. (2016). Islamic State (ISIS). -Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state/p14811>
- Levin, C. (2013). US Regional Commanders Testify FY2014 Defense, US Armed Services Committee, 19 March 2013. C-SPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?311599-1/regional-commanders-testify-fy2014-defense-request&start=7725>
- Levinson, C. (2011). Ex-Mujahedeen Help Lead Libyan Rebels, 2 April 2011. *Middle East*. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from

- <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703712504576237042432212406>
- Lewin, C. (2013). Senate Discussions on Syria, 17 September 2013. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/17/CREC-2013-09-17-pt1-PgS6482-2.pdf>
- Lieberman, J. (2011). Congressional Record Discussions on Syria— Senate. *US Congressional Record*, 14 April 2011. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/04/14/CREC-2011-04-14-pt1-PgS2491.pdf>
- Lieberman, J. (2011). US Congressional Record Discussions on Libya, 14 March 2011. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/14/CREC-2011-03-14-pt1-PgS1579.pdf>
- Lister, C. (2015). *Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Teintegration?* (Vol. August). Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/08/13-foreign-fighters-lister/en-fighters-web.pdf>
- Lister, T. (2012). Kurds' ambitions add explosive element to Syria equation, 14 August 2012. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/14/world/meast/syria-kurds/> [Accessed 03 September 2014]
- Lobell, S. E. (2009). Threat assesment, the state, and foreign policy: a neoclassical realist model. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lobell, S. E., Ripsman, N. M., & Taliaferro, J. W. (2009). Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lockyer, A. (2011). Foreign intervention and warfare in civil wars. *Review of International Studies*, 37(5), 2337–2364. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001488>
- Lucas, S. (2016). A Beginner's Guide to Syria's Civil War. *Political Insight*, (April), 12–15.
- Luján, F. M. (2013). *Light Footprints The Future of American Military Intervention*. Washington. Retrieved from http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/CNAS_LightFootprint_VoicesFromTheField_Lujan.pdf
- Lutz, M. (2014). Is Lebanon's special tribunal a turning point in international law, 11 April 2014. Al Jazeera America.
- Lyall, J. (2014). Process Tracing, Causal Inference, and Civil War. In A. Bennett & J. T. Checkel (Eds.), *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ma'oz, M. (1999). FROM CONFLICT TO PEACE ? ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND THE. *Middle East Journal*, 53(3), 393–416.
- Mabon, S. (2012). Kingdom in Crisis? The Arab Spring and Instability in Saudi Arabia. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 33(3), 530–553. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2012.727683>
- Mahmoud, S. (2011). Libyan rebel commander Suleiman Mahmoud_ "We need help", 30 March 2011. BBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12916076>

- Manfreda, P. (2011). Why Saudi Arabia Supports the Syrian Opposition. Retrieved from <http://middleeast.about.com/od/syria/a/Saudi-Arabia-And-Syrian-Uprising.htm> [Accessed 12 October 2014]
- Mann, J. (2013). Syria, Precipitator of the Six Day War. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(4), 547–562. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2013.798306>
- Marchant, K. (2013). Oppose Military Action in Syria, 10 September 2013. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=CREC>
- Marsh, K. (2014). “Leading from behind”: neoclassical realism and operation Odyssey Dawn. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 30(2), 120–132. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2014.894295>
- Masland, J. W. (1942). Pressure Groups and American Foreign Policy. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 6(1), 115–122.
- Mccain, J. (2011a). Congressional Record Discussions on Libya— Senate. *US Congressional Record*, 08 April 2011. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/04/08/CREC-2011-04-08-pt1-PgS2305.pdf>
- Mccain, J. (2011b). Congressional Record on Libya— Senate. *US Congressional Record*, 29 March 2011. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/29/CREC-2011-03-29-pt1-PgS1921.pdf>
- Mccain, J. (2011c). US Congressional Record _Discussions on Libya. *US Congressional Record*, 14 March 2011. <http://doi.org/10.1097/00017285-197507000-00018>
- Mccain, J. (2012). US Senate Discussions on Syria, 5 March 2012. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2012/03/05/CREC-2012-03-05-pt1-PgS1377-2.pdf>
- Mccain, J. (2013). Senate Hearing Benghazi Consulate Attack, 23 January 2013. C-SPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?310496-1/senate-hearing-benghazi-consulate-attack&start=3990>
- Mcclintock, T. (2013). Congressional Record-The War on Syria, 10 September 2013. *Congressional Record*. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgH5437-5.pdf>
- Menon, R. (1982). The Soviet Union, the Arms Trade and the Third World. *Soviet Studies*, 34(3), 377–396.
- Mikulski, B. A. (2013). Authorizing the Limited and Specified Use of US Armed Forces against Syria, Discussions over S.J. Res., 09 September 2013. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/09/CREC-2013-09-09-pt1-PgS6273-7.pdf>
- Miller, G. (2014). U.S. confirms authenticity of second journalist beheading video, 03 September 2014. Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/islamic-state-claims-to-have-beheaded-american-journalist-steven-sotloff/2014/09/02/ae5e8ffa-32c3-11e4-9e92-0899b306bba_story.html
- Minority Rights Group International. (2008). Lebanon Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5058>
- Morady, F. (2011). Iran ambitious for regional supremacy: the great powers, geopolitics and energy resources. *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 7(1), 75–94.

- <http://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2011.587332>
- Morton, J. S., & Shortt, N. (2012). The Arab Spring: Implications for Israeli Security. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 23(3), 34–51. <http://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-1703444>
- Moss, K. B. (2012). War Powers and the Atlantic Divide. *Orbis*, 56(2), 289–307. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2012.01.011>
- Mowles, C. (1986). The Israeli Occupation of South Lebanon. *Third World Quarterly*, 8(4), 1351–1366.
- Mullen, M. (2011). The House Armed Services Committee met to receive testimony on Operation Odyssey Dawn and US Military Operations in Libya, 31 March 2011. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTvYbRII4-Q>
- Mullenbach, M. J., & Matthews, G. P. (2008). Deciding to Intervene: An Analysis of International and Domestic Influences on United States Interventions in Intrastate Disputes. *International Interactions*, 34(1), 25–52. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03050620701878835>
- Myers, S. L. (2011). U.S. and Allies Say Syria Leader Must Step Down, 18 August 2011. New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/19/world/middleeast/19diplo.html?pagewanted=all>
- Nassief, I. (2013). Hezbollah and the fight for control in Qalamoun, Institute for the Study of War, 26 November 2013. Retrieved from http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_HezbollahQalamoun_1.pdf
- Nicoll, A., & Johnstone, S. (2011). Signs of civil war in Syria. *Strategic Comments*, 17(8), 1–3. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2011.640033>
- Nikitin, M. B., Feickert, A., & Kerr, P. K. (2013). *Syria 's Chemical Weapons : Issues for Congress*.
- Nir, R. (2012). Q&A: Nir Rosen on Syria's armed opposition, 13 February 2012. Al Jazeera. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/02/201221315020166516.html>
- Nordland, R. (2013). In Surprise, Emir of Qatar Plans to Abdicate, Handing Power to Son, 24 June 2013. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/25/world/middleeast/qatar-transfer-of-power.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2& [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- NYTimes. (2011). Allies Open Air Assault on Qaddafi's Forces in Libya, 20 March 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/world/africa/20libya.html?pagewanted=all>
- NYTimes. (2013). Car Bombings Kill Dozens in Center of Turkish Town Near the Syrian Border, 11 May 2013. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/12/world/middleeast/bombings-in-turkish-border-town.html?_r=0
- O'Bagy, E. (2013). *The fall of al-Qusayr*, Institute for the Study of War, 6 June 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-update-fall-al-qusayr>
- Obama, B. (2008a). Iraq War Policy Speech at the Reagan Building 15 July 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamairaqwarreaganbui>

lding.htm

Obama, B. (2008b). The Economic Crisis and the Middle Class—October 13, 2008.

Retrieved from

<http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/campaign2008/obama/10.13.08.html>

Obama, B. (2009a). Remarks by the President at Cairo University. The White House.

Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>

Obama, B. (2009b). Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, 10

December 2009, Oslo. *Secretary*. The White House. Retrieved from

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>

Obama, B. (2009c). Remarks of President Barack Obama -- Address to Joint Session of Congress. The White House. Retrieved from

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress%5Cnhttp://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative-in-Warren-MI/)

[Congress%5Cnhttp://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative-in-Warren-MI/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative-in-Warren-MI/)

Obama, B. (2010). *National Security Strategy*. The White House. The White House.

Obama, B. (2011a). Address on Libya_18 March 2011. Retrieved from

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamalibyawarning.htm>

Obama, B. (2011b). Interview with President Obama, 11 December 2011. CBS News.

Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/interview-with-president-obama-the-full-transcript/5/>

Obama, B. (2011c). President Obama Speaks on the Turmoil in Libya: “This Violence Must Stop.” The White House. Retrieved from

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/02/23/president-obama-speaks-turmoil-libya-violence-must-stop>

Obama, B. (2011d). Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya 28 March

2011. The White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>

Obama, B. (2011e). Remarks by the President on Libya_19 March 2011. The White House.

Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/19/remarks-president-libya>

Obama, B. (2011f). Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa, 19 May

2011. White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa>

Obama, B. (2011g). Speech on United Nations Meeting on Libya_20 September 2011.

Retrieved from

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamaunlibya.htm>

Obama, B. (2011h). “The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President

Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way.”, 18 August 2011. *The White House Blog*.

White House. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/08/18/president-obama-future-syria-must-be-determined-its-people-president-bashar-al-assad>

Obama, B. (2011i). “The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President

- Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way.” 18 August 2011. *The White House Blog*. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/08/18/president-obama-future-syria-must-be-determined-its-people-president-bashar-al-assad>
- Obama, B. (2012a). President Obama Discusses Syrian Violence in Interview Video with Barbara Walters, 11 December 2012. ABC News. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/president-obama-discusses-syrian-violence-interview-17938608>
- Obama, B. (2012b). Remarks by the President on the Defense Strategic Review, 5 January 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/05/remarks-president-defense-strategic-review>
- Obama, B. (2012c). Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps, James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, 20 August 2012. White House. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps>
- Obama, B. (2012d). *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*.
- Obama, B. (2013a). American Ideals, National Security At Stake In Syrian Crisis _ The Two-Way. National Public Radio-NPR. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2013/09/10/221154902/live-blog-obama-addresses-the-nation-on-syria>
- Obama, B. (2013b). Press Conference on Syria and Sundry Topics_30 April 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamasyriaetapresser.htm>
- Obama, B. (2013c). Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria, 10 September 2013. White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>
- Obama, B. (2013d). Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria The White House, 10 September 2013. White House. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria> [Accessed 03 February 2015]
- Obama, B. (2013e). Statement by the President on Syria | The White House. The White House. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria>
- Obama, B. (2013f). Statement by the President on Syria The White House, 31 August 2013. White House. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria> [Accessed 03 February 2015]
- Obama, B. (2014a). After Beheading of Steven Sotloff, Obama Pledges to Punish ISIS, 3 September 2014. The New York Times. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/world/middleeast/steven-sotloff-isis-execution.html?_r=0
- Obama, B. (2014b). Obama Announces Airstrikes Against Khorasan Group, 23 September 2014. Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <http://www.wsj.com/video/obama-announces-airstrikes-against-khorasan-group/D3A972F8-3155-4FF8-8E07-F686720DA2CA.html>
- Obama, B. (2014c). President Obama Delivers a Statement on the Murder of James Foley. The White House. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VP15qu_eAaQ
- Obama, B. (2014d). President Obama Holds a Press Conference with President Aquino of the

- Philippines. The White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/04/28/president-obama-holds-press-conference-president-aquino-philippine#transcript>
- Obama, B. (2014e). Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony. The White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony>
- Obama, B. (2014f). Statement by the President on Airstrikes in Syria, 23 September 2014. White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/23/statement-president-airstrikes-syria>
- Obama, B. (2014g). Statement by the President on ISIL, 10 September 2014. *The White House*. White House. <http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Obama, B. (2014h). Statement by the President The White House, 07 August 2014. White House. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/07/statement-president> [Accessed 01 February 2015]
- Obama, B. (2014i). Transcript President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism, 10 September 2014. CNN. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/10/politics/transcript-obama-syria-isis-speech/> [Accessed 01 February 2014]
- Obama, B. (2014j). Weekly Address_ We Will Degrade and Destroy ISIL _ whitehouse. The White House. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/13/weekly-address-we-will-degrade-and-destroy-isil>
- Obama, B. (2015a). National Security Strategy - 2015. The White House. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf
- Obama, B. (2015b). President Obama- CBS News Steve Kroft questions President Obama, 11 October 2015. CBS News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/president-obama-60-minutes-syria-isis-2016-presidential-race/>
- Obama, B. (2015c). Press Conference by the President, 2 October 2015. The White House. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/02/press-conference-president>
- Ogbonnaya, U. M. (2013). Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya: A Comparative Analysis of Causes and Determinants. *Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 12(3).
- Ogunbadejo, O. (1986). Qaddafi and Africa's International Relations. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24(1), 33–68. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00006741>
- Ohaegbulam, F. U. (2000). U.S. Measures against Libya since the Explosion of Pan Am Flight 103. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 11(1), 111–135.
- Omorogbe, E. Y. (2012). the African Union, Responsibility To Protect and the Libyan Crisis. *Netherlands International Law Review*, 59(2), 141–163. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0165070X12000150>
- Onea, T. (2012). Putting the “Classical” in Neoclassical Realism: Neoclassical Realist Theories and US Expansion in the Post-Cold War. *International Relations*, 26(2), 139–164. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0047117811430674>
- OPCW. (2012). OPCW Inspectors Verify Newly Declared Chemical Weapons Materials in Lib. Retrieved from <http://www.opcw.org/the-opcw-and-libya/opcw-inspectors-verify->

- newly-declared-chemical-weapons-materials-in-libya/ [Accessed 07 November 2014]
- OPCW. (2013). Libya Facts and Figures. Retrieved from <http://www.opcw.org/the-opcw-and-libya/libya-facts-and-figures/> [Accessed 07 November 2014]
- Ostovar, A., & McCants, W. (2013). *The Rebel Alliance Why Syria 's Armed Opposition Has Failed to Unify*, CNA Strategic Studies. Retrieved from <http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/DRM-2013-U-004125-1REV.pdf>
- Ostrom, C. W., & Job, B. L. (1986). The President and the Political Use of Force. *The American Political Science Review*, 80(2), 541–566.
- Pack, J. (2011). The Two Faces of Libya's Rebels, 5 April 2011. Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/04/05/the-two-faces-of-libyas-rebels-2/>
- Pack, J. (2015). Author interview with Jason Pack, Researcher of Libyan History in Cambridge University and President of LibyaAnalysis.com, 01 October 2015.
- Panetta, L. (2012). President Obama's Media Briefing on the Defense Strategic Guidance. Retrieved from <http://www.jcs.mil/Media/Speeches/tabid/3890/Article/571845/president-obamas-media-briefing-on-the-defense-strategic-guidance.aspx>
- Pargeter, A. (2009). Localism and radicalization in North Africa: local factors and the development of political Islam in Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. *International Affairs*, 85(5), 1031–1044. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2009.00845.x>
- Paul, R. (2011). *No-Fly Zone a challenge to the war powers resolution*, 10 March 2011. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/10/CREC-2011-03-10-pt1-PgH1671.pdf>
- Paul, R. (2013). The U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on the Syrian Transition Support Act of 2013. You tube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBbfYzx46Nw>
- Pearce, S. (2011). *Concerns about Libya*, 29 March 2011. Congressional Records-House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/29/CREC-2011-03-29-pt1-PgH2033.pdf>
- Pettersson, T., & Wallensteen, P. (2015). Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(4). Retrieved from http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/66/66314_1armed-conflict-by-type-1946-2014.pdf
- Pew Research Center. (2011a). Modest Support for Libya Airstrikes, No Clear Goal Seen, 28 March 2011. PEW Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2011/03/28/modest-support-for-libya-airstrikes-no-clear-goal-seen/>
- Pew Research Center. (2011b). Public Wary of Military Intervention in Libya, 14 March 2011. *People Press*. PEW Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2011/03/14/public-wary-of-military-intervention-in-libya/>
- Pew Research Center. (2013). Opposition to Syrian Airstrikes Surges, 9 September 2013. PEW Research Center. Retrieved from [http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/9-9-13 Syria Release Update.pdf](http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/9-9-13%20Syria%20Release%20Update.pdf)
- Phillips, C. (2012). Syria's Torment. *Survival*, 54(4), 67–82. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.709389>
- Plachta, M. (2001). The Lockerbie Case: The Security Council in Enforcing the Principle Aut Dedere Aut Judicare. *European Journal International Law*, 12(1), 125–140.

- Plaut, M. (2011). Gaddafi's African "mercenaries" leaving Libya, BBC News, 27 August 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14693343>
- Pollack, K. M. (2014). An Army to Defeat Assad How to Turn Syria's Opposition Into a Real Fighting Force. Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141848/kenneth-m-pollack/an-army-to-defeat-assad> [Accessed 18 September 2014]
- Post-ABC Poll. (2013). Post-ABC poll_ Syria. The Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2013/09/03/National-Politics/Polling/release_258.xml
- Post-ABC Poll. (2014). Wide support for striking ISIS, but weak approval for Obama, 09 September 2014. The Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/page/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2014/09/09/National-Politics/Polling/release_361.xml
- Powlick, P. J. . (1995). The Sources of Public Opinion for American Foreign Policy Officials. *International Studies Quarterly*, 39(4), 427–451.
- Putnam, R. D. (1988). Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games. *International Organization*, 42(3), 427–460. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027697>
- Quandt, W. B. (1986). The Electoral Cycle and the Conduct of Foreign Policy. *Political Science Quarterly*, 101(5), 825–837.
- Quinn, A. (2013). Kenneth Waltz, Adam Smith and the Limits of Science: Hard choices for neoclassical realism. *International Politics*, 50(2), 159–182.
- Rabinovich, I. (2009). *Damascus, Jerusalem, and Washington: The Syrian- Israeli Relationship as a U.S. Policy Issue, Number 19, March 2009*. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2009/3/syria_israel_rabinovich/03_syria_israel_rabinovich.pdf [Accessed 09 November 2014]
- Rathbun, B. (2008). A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism. *Security Studies*, 17(2), 294–321. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09636410802098917>
- Ratnam, G., & Hudson, J. (2014). The Obama Administration Has a Kiss-and-Tell Problem Foreign Policy, 13 October 2014. Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/13/the-obama-administration-has-a-kiss-and-tell-problem/> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Reeve, R. (2015). Libya's Proxy Battlefield. *Oxford Research Group*, (January 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/ORGJan15LibyaProxyBattlefield.pdf>
- Regan, P. M. (1996). Conditions of Successful Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflicts. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 40(2), 336–359.
- Regan, P. M. (2002). Third Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts, 1–35.
- Regan, P. M. (2010). Interventions into Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas. *Civil Wars*, 12(4), 456–476. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2010.534632>
- Reuters. (2010). Russia to sell Syria warplanes, air defense systems, 14 May 2010. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/14/us-russia-syria-arms-idUSTRE64D35S20100514> [Accessed 09 December 2014]

- Reuters. (2013). Car bomb explodes at Syria-Turkey border crossing, 17 September 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/17/us-syria-crisis-turkey-idUSBRE98G0SO20130917>
- Reuters/Ipsos Survey. (2011). In US poll, 60 percent back Libya military action, 21 March 2011. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE72N00S20110324?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>
- Ripsman, N. M. (2009). Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ripsman, N. M., Taliaferro, J. W., & Lobell, S. E. (2009). Conclusion: The state of neoclassical realism. In S. E. Lobell, N. M. Ripsman, & J. W. Taliaferro (Eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, D., & Ackerman, S. (2014). US begins air strikes against Isis targets in Iraq, Pentagon, 08 August 2014. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/08/us-begins-air-strikes-iraq-isis> [Accessed 05 December 2014]
- Rogers, M. (2011a). Congressional Record H. Res. 292 Discussions — House, 3 June 2011. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/03/CREC-2011-06-03-pt1-PgH3998.pdf>
- Rogers, M. (2011b). Rogers on Libya and Ivory Coast, 3 April 2011. NBCNews. Retrieved from <http://www.nbcnews.com/video/meet-the-press/42401516#42401516>
- Ronen, Y. (2013). Britain's Return to Libya: From the Battle of al-Alamein in the Western Libyan Desert to the Military Intervention in the "Arab Spring" Upheaval. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(5), 675–695. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2013.811651>
- Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics*, 51(1), 144–172.
- Rosenau, J. (1969). Intervention as a scientific concept. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 13(2).
- Rubio, M. (2011). *Foreign Policy, 14 September 2011*. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/09/14/CREC-2011-09-14-pt1-PgS5619.pdf>
- Rugh, W. A. (2013). Obama's Policy Towards Syria. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 37(3), 147–151.
- Rumman, M. A. (2013). Islamists, Religion, and the Revolution in Syria. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Salehyan, I., Gleditsch, K. S., & Cunningham, D. E. (2011). Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups. *International Organization*, 65(4), 709–744. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818311000233>
- Sambanis, N. (2004). What Is Civil War?: Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48(6), 814–858. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022002704269355>
- Sanders, B. (2013). *Authorizing the Limited and Specified Use of US Armed Forces against Syria, 10 September 2013*. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from

- <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgS6312-2.pdf>
- Sanger, D. E. (2011). Libyan Arms Pact Reduces Qaddafi's Power, 01 March 2011. New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/world/middleeast/02arms.html?_r=0 [Accessed 07 November 2014]
- Sarkees, M. R., Wayman, F. W., & Singer, J. D. (2003). Wars : A Comprehensive Look at Their Distribution over Time , 1816 – 1997. *International Studies Quarterly*, 47, 49–70. Retrieved from <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/71639/1468-2478.4701003.pdf>
- Saunders, P. J. (2014). Russia's role in the fight against IS, 06 October 2014. Al-Monitor. Retrieved from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/russia-isis-syria-s300-missiles-assad.html> [Accessed 09 December 2014]
- Sayigh, Y. (2013). The Syrian Opposition's Leadership Problem. The Carnegie Endowment.
- Schumacher, E. (1986). The United States and Libya. *Foreign Affairs*, 65(2), 329–348.
- Schweller, R. L. (2008). *Unanswered Threats* (Second Edi). Woodstock: Princeton University Press.
- Sciutto, J., Castillo, M., & Yan, H. (2014). U.S. airstrikes hit ISIS inside Syria for first time, 23 September 2014. CNN. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/u-s-airstrikes-isis-syria/> [Accessed 06 December 2014]
- Sharp, J. M., & Blanchard, C. M. (2011). *Unrest in Syria and U . S . Sanctions Against the Asad Regime*.
- Sharp, J. M., & Blanchard, C. M. (2012). *Armed Conflict in Syria : U.S. and International Response, 21 August 2014 [Online]*. Retrieved from <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/198098.pdf> [Accessed 14 August 2014]
- Sherman, B. (2011). *Conflict in Libya, 04 April 2011. PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS*. US Congressional Record- House. <http://doi.org/10.1097/00017285-197507000-00018>
- Shlapak, D. A. (2015). Towards a More Modest American Strategy. *Survival*, 57(2), 59–78. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1026068>
- Simura, B. (2015). USA and Russia in Syria and Ukraine: The Irony of Geo-Political Interventions. *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 14(1), 68–75.
- Slaughter, A. (2011). Fiddling While Libya Burns - The New York Times, 13 March 2011. New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/14/opinion/14slaughter.html?_r=0
- Sly, L. (2014). or Turkey and U.S., at odds over Syria, a 60-year alliance shows signs of crumbling, 29 October 2014. The Washington Post. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/for-turkey-and-us-at-odds-over-syria-a-60-year-alliance-shows-signs-of-crumbling/2014/10/29/9fa07c49-0546-4afd-b6ad-cf6fa70e7fe4_story.html [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- Smith, A. (2011). Congressional Record_House Resolution 2278 Discussions — House, 24 June 2011. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/06/24/CREC-2011-06-24-pt1-PgH4550-2.pdf>
- Smith, B. (2011). *UK relations with Libya, 02 March 2011*.

- Solomon, J., & Johnson, K. (2011). U.S. Freezes \$30 Billion From Gadhafi [Online]. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703749504576172683788619182> [Accessed 10 August 2014]
- Sparrow, B. H. (2008). Who Speaks for the People? The President, the Press, and Public Opinion in the United States. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 38(4), 578–592. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2008.02665.x>
- Spencer, R. (2011). Libya desperate Col Gaddafi offers protesters concessions as British rescue continues, 25 February 2011. Telegraph. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8347396/Libya-desperate-Col-Gaddafi-offers-protesters-concessions-as-British-rescue-continues.html> [Accessed 14 September 2014]
- Sperling, J. (2016). Neo-classical realism and alliance politics. In M. Webber & A. Hyde-Price (Eds.), *Theorising NATO: New perspectives on the Atlantic alliance* (First). Abington: Routledge.
- Sprout, H. H. (1935). Pressure Groups and Propaganda. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 179(May), 114–123.
- Spyer, J. (2015). SDF plays central role in Syrian civil war. *Jane's Intelligence Review*. Retrieved from http://www.janes360.com/images/assets/333/57333/SDF_plays_central_role_in_Syrian_civil_war__1_.pdf
- Stacey, K., Rigby, E., Aglionby, J., & McGregor, R. (2013). US ready to act after UK rejects Syria strike, 30 August 2013. The Financial Times. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c562580a-10f8-11e3-b5e4-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3KySxRVoX> [Accessed 04 December 2014]
- St John, R. B. (1982). The Soviet penetration of Libya. *The World Today*, 38(4), 131–138.
- Stanford. (2015a). Jabhat al-Nusra | Mapping Militant Organizations. Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/493>
- Stanford. (2015b). The Islamic State | Mapping Militant Organizations. Stanford University.
- Stavridis, J. (2011). US Operations in Libya _ Admiral James Stavridis and General Robert Kehler testified to Senate Armed Services Committee, 29 March 2011. C-SPAN. Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?298726-1/us-operations-libya&start=8469>
- Stent, A. (2016). Putin's Power Play in Syria. *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February), 106–113.
- Stepak, A., & Whitlark, R. (2012). The Battle over America's Foreign Policy Doctrine. *Survival*, 54(5), 45–66. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.728344>
- Sterling, J. (2012). Daraa The spark that lit the Syrian flame, 01 March 2012. CNN. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/01/world/meast/syria-crisis-beginnings/> [Accessed 17 September 2014]
- Sterner, M. (1984). The Iran-Iraq War. *Foreign Affairs*, 63(1), 128–143.
- Stevenson, J. (2014). The Syrian Tragedy and Precedent. *Survival*, 56(3), 121–140. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.920151>
- Strategic Comments. (2016). Turkey's diminishing policy options in Syria, 22(2), vi–viii. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2016.1176719>

- Stratfor. (2011). The Syrian Opposition : Perception and Reality, 30 September 2011. Stratfor. Retrieved from <https://www.stratfor.com/sample/analysis/syrian-opposition-perception-and-reality>
- SyriaComment. (2005). The Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change, 16 October 2005. Retrieved from <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/Joshua.M.Landis-1/syriablog/2005/11/damascus-declaration-in-english.htm> [Accessed 27 August 2014]
- Szybala, V. (2013). *The Islamic Alliance Emerges, 26 September 2013*. Retrieved from http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_IslamicAllianceEmerges_11Oct.pdf
- Takeyh, R. (2010). The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment. *The Middle East Journal*, 64(3), 365–383. <http://doi.org/10.3751/64.3.12>
- Tardelli, L. (2013). *When Elites Fight: Elites and the Politics of U.S. Military Interventions in Internal Conflicts*. The London School of Economics.
- Tarhouni, A. (2012). Former Libyan National Transitional Council Finance Minister Ali Tarhouni, 5 January 2012. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/05/former-libyan-finance-minister-ali-tarhouni>
- Tashjian, Y. (2012). The Syrian Crisis : From Local Uprising to Regional-International Struggle The Syrian crisis. *Strategic Outlook*, (December).
- Telhamy, S., & Kull, S. (2011). The American Public and the Arab Awakening A Study of American Public Opinion, 11 April 2011. University of Maryland, Anvar Sadat Chair, Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA). Retrieved from http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr11/ViewsArabs_Apr11_rpt.pdf
- Telhamy, S., & Kull, S. (2012). Americans on the Middle East, 08 October 2012. University of Maryland, Anvar Sadat Chair, Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA). Retrieved from http://www.sadat.umd.edu/MiddleEast_Oct12_rpt.pdf
- Temehu. (2011). National Transitional Council of Libya (NTC) [Online]. Retrieved from <http://www.temehu.com/ntc.htm> [Accessed 10 August 2014]
- Tempelhof, S. T., & Omar, M. (2012). *Stakeholders of Libya`s February 17 Revolution*. Retrieved from http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR_300.pdf [Accessed 11 September 2014]
- The Guardian. (2014a). Libya says chemical weapons destroyed World news theguardian, 05 February 2014. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/05/libya-says-chemical-weapons-destroyed> [Accessed 07 November 2014]
- The Guardian. (2014b). Turkey opens border to 45,000 Kurds fleeing Isis militants in Syria. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/20/turkey-opens-borders-45000-kurds-fleeing-isis-syria>
- The Scottish Government. (2009). Lockerbie - Information relating to decision on Mr Abdelbaset Ali Mohme. The Scottish Government. Retrieved from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/law/lockerbie> [Accessed 21 October 2014]
- The Telegraph. (2012). Syria shot down Turkish jet in international airspace, claims. The Telegraph. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9352113/Syria-shot-down-Turkish-jet-in-international-airspace-claims-foreign-minister.html> [Accessed 13

October 2014]

- The Washington Post. (2011). The U.S. has gotten tough with Syria; now it needs to get tougher, 12 July 2011. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-us-has-gotten-tough-with-syria-now-it-needs-to-get-tougher/2011/07/12/gIQAi7tPBI_story.html [Accessed 04 December 2014]
- Themner, L., & Wallensteen, P. (2013). Armed Conflicts, 1946-2012. *Journal of Peace Research*, 50(4), 509–521. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022343313494396>
- Thomas, G. (2011). *How to Do Your Case Study*. London: Sage Publications.
- Todd, C. (2013). The White House walk-and-talk that changed Obama's mind on Syria, 31 August 2013. NBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/white-house-walk-talk-changed-obamas-mind-syria-f8C11051182>
- Trapp, R. (2014). Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Stockpile of Syria. *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, 19(1).
- Trofino, S., & Nemets, A. (2009). Russia: Tipping the Balance in the Middle East. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 22(3), 367–382. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13518040902917990>
- Tziarras, Z. (2014). *Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under the AKP (2002-2013): a Neoclassical Realist Account*. The University of Warwick.
- Tziarras, Z. (2015). Author Interview with Dr.Tziarras Zenonas, Analyst on Security & Turkey, Diplomatic Academy, University of Nicosia, 18 May 2015.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). U.S. trade in goods with Syria. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/index.html>
- Udall, T. (2013). Authorizing the Limited and Specified Use of US Armed Forces against Syria, 10 September 2013. US Congressional Record- Senate. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2013/09/10/CREC-2013-09-10-pt1-PgS6312-2.pdf>
- Ukman, J., & Liz, S. (2011). Obama Syrian President Assad must step down, 18 August 2011. The Washington Post. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington/post/obama-syrian-president-assad-must-step-down/2011/08/18/gIQAM75UNJ_blog.html [Accessed 30 November 2014]
- UN. (2011a). *UN Security Council Resolution 1970, 26 February 2011* (Vol. 1970).
- UN. (2011b). *UN Security Council Resolution 1973, 17 March 2011*.
- UN Security Council. (2014). Resolution 2139, 22 February 2014, 2139(February), 1–5. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2139\(2014\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2139(2014))
- UN Security Council. (2012). *Report of the assessment mission on the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region, 18 January 2012*.
- UNHCR. (2016). Syria Regional Refugee Response - Regional Overview, 07 March 2016. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>
- United Nations. (2013). *UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of CW in the Syrian Arab Republic, 13 September 2013*. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/disarmament/content/slideshow/Secretary_General_Report_of_CW_Investigation.pdf [Accessed 18 September 2014]

- UNSC. (1967). UNSC Resolution 242 (1967).pdf.
- UNSC. (1973). UNSC Resolution 338 (1973).pdf.
- UNSC. (1992). UNSC Resolution 748, 31 March 1992.
- UNSC. (1993). UNSC Resolution 882, 11 November 1993.
- UNSC. (2004). UNSC Resolution 1559. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1559 (2004) [Accessed 24 November 2014]
- UNSC. (2007). UNSC Resolution 1757. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1757 (2007) [Accessed 24 November 2014]
- UNSC 2118. (2013). UN Security Council Resolution 2118, 27 September 2013. UN Security Council. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2118\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2118(2013))
- UNSCR 2235. (2015). Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2235 (2015), Establishing Mechanism to Identify Perpetrators Using Chemical Weapons in Syria, 7 August 2015. UN Security Council. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12001.doc.htm>
- US Census Bureau. (2015). U.S. trade in goods with Libya. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c7250.html>
- US Department of State. (2011). Remarks After the International Conference on the Libyan Crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/03/159327.htm> [Accessed 04 December 2014]
- US Department of State. (2014). Lebanon Travel Warning, 26 November 2014. US Department of State. Retrieved from <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/lebanon-travel-warning.html> [Accessed 24 December 2014]
- US Library of Congress. (1989). *Libya: a country study* (Fourth Edi). Retrieved from <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a207424.pdf>
- US London Embassy. (2014). Fact Sheet Securing Dangerous Materials' Stockpiles in Libya Embassy. Embassy of US, London. Retrieved from <http://london.usembassy.gov/acda047.html> [Accessed 07 November 2014]
- Walker, D. (2014). Trends in U.S. Military Spending, 15 July 2014. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.cfr.org/defense-budget/trends-us-military-spending/p28855>
- Walt, S. M. (1988). Testing theories of alliance formation: the case of Southwest Asia. *International Organization*, 42(2), 275–316. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300032823>
- Walt, S. M. (1992). Revolution and war. *World Politics*, 44(3), 321–368. Retrieved from papers2://publication/uuid/FF36875F-054A-4072-9826-9CE56F7BEA0E
- Walt, S. M. (1997). The Progressive Power of Realism. *The American Political Science Review*, 91(4), 931–935. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2952177>
- Washington Post. (2013). Algerian hostage crisis throws spotlight on spillover of Libyan war, 18 January 2013. Retrieved from <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01->

- 18/world/36474835_1_libyan-weapons-libyan-rebels-libyan-conflict
- Weinberger, K. (2016). Russian Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2AD) Range. *Institute for the Study of War*, (August). Retrieved from <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-anti-access-and-area-denial-a2ad-range>
- Weiss, B. M., & Stuart, H. (2011). *The Syrian opposition : Political analysis with original testimony from key figures*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03017605.2011.583094>
- Wezeman, P. D. (2013). *SIPRI Yearbook 2013 Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*.
- Wheeler, William and Oghanna, A. (2011). Libya's Forgotten Refugees, NYTimes, 29 October 2011. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/30/opinion/sunday/libyas-forgotten-refugees.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&
- White House. (2011). President Obama on the death of Muammar Qaddafi The White House, 20 October 2011. White House. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2011/10/20/president-obama-death-muammar-qaddafi#transcript> [Accessed 08 November 2014]
- Wight, D. M. (2013). Kissinger ' s Levantine Dilemma : The Ford Administration and the Syrian Occupation of Lebanon *. *Diplomatic History*, 37(1), 144–177.
- Wolfers, A. (1962). *Discord and Collaboration* (First). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Woo, J.-Y. (2009). *Foreign Military Intervention in Civil Wars*. The University of Wisconsin.
- Wood, P. C. (1998). The diplomacy of peacekeeping: France and the multinational forces to Lebanon, 1982–84. *International Peacekeeping*, 5(2), 19–37. <http://doi.org/10.1080/135333319808413717>
- Woodward, S. L. (2007). Do the Root Causes of Civil War Matter? On Using Knowledge to Improve Peacebuilding Interventions. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1(2), 143–170. <http://doi.org/10.1080/17502970701302789>
- Woolsey, L. (2011). *Is two wars in the Middle East not enough?*, 30 March 2011. US Congressional Record- House. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2011/03/30/CREC-2011-03-30-pt1-PgH2045.pdf>
- Wroughton, L. (2013). As Syria war escalates, Americans cool to U.S. intervention, Reuters/Ipsos poll, 24 August 2013. *Reuters*. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-usa-poll-idUSBRE97O00E20130825>
- Yetiv, S. (2006). The Travails of Balance of Power Theory: The United States in the Middle East. *Security Studies*, 15(1), 70–105. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09636410600666279>
- Yoon, M. Y. (1997). Explaining U.S. Intervention in Third World Internal Wars, 1945–1989. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41(4), 580–602.
- Ziser, E. (2002). June 1967: Israel's Capture of the Golan Heights. *Israel Studies*, 7(1), 168–194. <http://doi.org/10.1353/is.2002.0009>
- Zisser, E. (2005). Bashar al-Assad: In or out of the new world order? *The Washington Quarterly*, 28(3), 115–131. <http://doi.org/10.1162/0163660054026506>
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2002a). Libya in US foreign policy: From rogue state to good fellow? *Third World Quarterly*, 23(1), 31–53. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01436590220108162>

- Zoubir, Y. H. (2002b). Libya in US foreign policy: From rogue state to good fellow? *Third World Quarterly*, 23(1), 31–53. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01436590220108162>
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2009). Libya and Europe: Economic Realism at the Rescue of the Qaddafi Authoritarian Regime. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 17(3), 401–415. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14782800903339354>
- Zoubir, Y. H., & Rózsa, E. N. (2012). The End of the Libyan Dictatorship: The Uncertain Transition. *Third World Quarterly*, 33(7), 1267–1283. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.691830>