ASSESSING RUSSO-SYRIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (1960s-2015)

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Abstract

This article examined the accounts of diplomatic relations between Russia and Syria. It interrogated a significant aspect of global politics, where the interaction of geopolitical interests, ideological affinities, and regional influences played defining roles in shaping this diplomatic association from the height of the Cold War in the 1960s and 1970s to the Syrian Civil War that began in 2011. This scope allowed extensive research into the changing nature of Russo-Syrian relations, providing a diverse revelation into their historical evolution. This article relies on a wide array of primary sources, including diplomatic records, as well as secondary sources offering useful context and perspective. The primary aim was to reveal the motivations and strategies that steered diplomatic exchanges between them and the real-political considerations that formed the basis of their engagement. Moreover, this article considered the ramifications of Russo-Syrian relations on the broader Middle East region and how partnership affected regional stability, conflict, and the distribution of power such as the Soviet Union's support for the Ba'athist regime in 1963, Syria's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967, and Russia's military intervention in the Syrian civil war in 2015. Through historical evaluation, this article contributes to an understanding of international relations and their implications for security and stability.

***Keyword*:** Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations, geopolitical interests, ideological affinities, regional Influences, cold war, Syrian civil war, real-politic considerations.

Introduction

Diplomatic relations between nations have long been a central pillar of international politics, shaping the course of global events and impacting the lives of countless individuals. Within diplomacy and power, the Russo-Syrian diplomatic relationship stands as a desirable and elaborate chapter in the annals of history. This historical analysis embarks on an adventure to uncover the secret of this enduring partnership, exploring the geopolitics, ideology, and regional influences that defined and evolved these relations. The Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations commenced during the height of the Cold War between 1948 and 1953, a period marked by ideological confrontations and superpower

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rivalries and extends into the twenty-first century, venturing into the heart of the Syrian Civil War that began in 2011. This temporal scope avails the opportunity to engage in an in-depth study into the changing nature of Russia and Syria's diplomatic relations, offering comprehension of their historical trajectory.

To start this scholarly endeavour, this article draws from an extensive array of primary and secondary sources, crafting an up-to-date analysis. Diplomatic documents and an assortment of secondary materials provide the foundation for investigation of the motivations and strategies that steered the course of Russo-Syrian relations. Our primary aim is to reveal the considerations that underpinned the diplomatic exchanges between the Russian Federation and Syria and understand the drivers behind this partnership.

Furthermore, we aim to contextualise the impact of Russia-Syrian relations on the broader Middle East region, looking into the challenges of regional stability, the dynamics of conflict, and the balance of power. We scrutinise key milestones in this diplomatic voyage, including the Soviet Union's continuous support for the "Ba'athist" regime, Syria's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Russia's military intervention in the Syrian Civil War on President Assad's request for help. In effect, this examination of Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations aspires to contribute to an understanding of international relations and their ramifications on world politics, security, and stability. The story of this multi-dimensional partnership is one of intrigues, conflict, and cooperation, mirroring the delicacy of world affairs. At the end of this study, we intend to reveal the historical importance that defines a relationship of global importance.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

i. reveal the motivations and strategies that steered diplomatic exchanges between Russia and Syria;
ii. investigate the effect of Russo-Syrian relations on the political stability and fragility of the Middle East;
iii. understand the contribution of Russo-Syrian relations on international relations and their implications for global politics, security, and stability;
iv. anticipate potential future scenarios in Russo-Syrian relations, considering geopolitical shifts, regional dynamics, and global power structures.

Research Questions

The following research questions are set:

i. What are the motivations and strategies that steered diplomatic exchanges between Russia and Syria?
ii. What are the effects of Russo-Syrian relations on the political stability and fragility of the Middle East?
iii. How have Russo-Syrian relations shaped international relations and its implication for global politics, security and stability?

iv. What is the prospects of Russo-Syrian relations, considering geopolitical shifts, regional dynamics, and global power structures?

Review of Related Literature on the Russo-Syrian Diplomatic Relations

The historical backdrop of Russo-Syrian relations has its origins in the wake of the October Revolution of 1917, with a hiatus during the French Mandate period (1923-1946). During this time, the Soviet Union played a limited political role in the region, though it supported the establishment of the Syrian-Lebanese Communist Party in 1924 (Kreutz, Andrej, 2007:19). Rami Ginat (2000:150-17) observes that Russia and Syria established diplomatic relations in 1944, with periods of both warmth and coldness characterising their relationship. Moscow disapproved of Syria's intervention in Lebanon's protracted civil war in the mid-1970s. During the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 when Moscow and many Western states supported Iraq, Syria stood alone among Arab states in supporting Iran. Syria was then dissatisfied with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev for improving relations with the United States, the West, moderate Arab states, and even Israel (Bjørsvik, 2018). Although Russian-Western relations deteriorated during the Yeltsin era (1991-99), Russia's absence from the Middle East meant limited support for Syria (Freeman, 2001:2). Historical ties between Russia and Syria, forged through adversity and political pragmatism, remained resilient (Ginat, Rami, 2000:153). Following the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, Syria recognised Russia as its legal successor (Lea, David, 2001:11).

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has had dire consequences, with several lives lost and millions of people displaced from their homes (Qandeel & Sommer, 2022). The Russo-Syrian diplomatic ties have weathered internal political crises and regional conflicts, including the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Iran-Iraq war, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 (Miller, 2001:3). Bartz (2016) submitted that cultural and family affinities also aided the Russia-Syrian diplomatic relations, with many Russians married to Syrians and *vice versa*. In the words of, Criticisms emerged from European Union member states in 2015 regarding Moscow's role in Syria, particularly its interference in the armed conflict. But, this criticism often overlooked the decades-long relations between Russia and Syria, characterised by pragmatic collaboration during times of internal political crises and regional conflicts in the Middle East (Stent, 2016: 13). The Western bloc and its Gulf Arab allies may have oversimplified the reasons for Russia's intervention in Syria, by not taking into account the historical ties that has existed between the two nations from the time of president Hafez Al-Assad in 1971 to 2000 when he died (Charap *et al*., 2019).

The Western oversimplified narrative has no doubt portrayed Russia as an external intruder supporting an internal despot in Syria (Charap *et al.*, 2019). The collective West also waved aside the fact that Moscow's rapprochement with Damascus dates back to Syria's independence from France as a modern nation-state in 1944 (Kreutz, Andrej, 2001:15). Moreover, Russia's military involvement in Syria in 2015, including fights against opposition militias, was not an isolated event. Russia's presence was based on an invitation from the Syrian government and in alignment with its foreign relations doctrine to protect its allies when necessary anywhere around the globe (Weitz, 2010:30). Weitz (2010) also wrote that the Russians may have been motivated to aide President Assad to prevent the type of violence that ousted Muammar Gaddafi from power in Libya.

The Soviet Union's response following the Suez crisis in 1956 increased Russia's acceptability and prestige in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, with military and economic pacts between the Soviet Union and Syria resulting in over $294 million worth of aid (military and economic) from 1955 to 1958 (Lahav, 2015). In 1971, President Hafez al-Assad's rise to power in Syria marked a significant turning point. A naval agreement allowed Soviet naval ships to sail and dock in Tartus for its Black Sea fleet, establishing a permanent Russian presence in the Middle East (Hubbard, Ben. 2015:10). The improved relations between Russia and Syria in 2005 coincided with Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon and the resolution of the Syrian debt issue in Syria's favour. Russia's foothold in the Syrian petroleum sector was further secured when the Russian oil firm Tatneft gained access (Weitz, Richard, 2010:34). The Russian naval base in Tartus, which serves as a strategic hub for many of its naval operations in Syria, was established during the Cold War under a 1971 agreement with Syria (Weitz, Richard, 2010).

Russia's support for Syria has experienced periods of strain, including during the 1990s, when Russia was unhappy about Syria's unwillingness to repay its Soviet-era debt and the improvement in Russian-Israeli relations under President Putin (Freeman, 2001). Moscow's refusal to sell advanced weapons to Damascus at the behest of Israel and the United States also led to tension (Weitz, Richard, 2010:33). Nonetheless, the warming of relations in 2005 stemmed from Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon in response to a popular uprising and Russia's endeavour to revitalise naval facilities at the Syrian port of Tartus (Kreutz, Andrej, 2007: 24). Syria recognised Russia as its legal successor in 1991, following the Soviet Union's dissolution (Lea, David, 2001:11). The support of the Soviet Union and, later, Russia has played a significant role in the Syrian government's resilience. The continuation of this relationship has contributed to the enduring nature of the Russo-Syrian diplomatic ties and has been rooted in pragmatic collaboration, shared interests, and historical bonds (Ginat Rami, 2000:153). These historical and multifaceted relations have had a lasting impact on the Middle East's geopolitical environment and have no doubt served the mutual interests of both nations.

Motivations and Strategies Guiding Russia-Syria Diplomatic Exchanges

According to Al-Trawneh (2018:1) in Jabber (2015), Syria stands as the final bastion of logistical presence for Russia in the Middle East, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The collapse of the Soviet Union has also led to a diminished impact on Russian influence in the Arab world with the West taking the lead (Al-Trawneh, 2018). Notably, Russia's only naval facility outside the shores of the Commonwealth of Independent Countries (CIS) is situated in the Tartous province, serving as an advanced outpost for overseeing American and Western activities in critical oil-rich areas spanning the Arabian Gulf, the African Horn, the Red Sea, and the North Mediterranean. Consequently, the Russian government made no secret of its dedication to preserve its friendship in the Syrian arena, actively supporting President Assad’s regime through various means, and providing assistance to stop the unrest within Syrian territories (Al-Trawneh, 2018).

Many scholars of international relations have agreed that President Putin’s manoeuvres at first glance is a desperate gamble to save the regime in Damascus. While a military

intervention might provide temporary stability for President Assad, they opined that Russia could face a situation reminiscent of the 1979-1988 conflict in Afghanistan where the Soviets were humiliated and forced to withdraw with human and material losses. While addressing the United Nations, President Putin stated that if Russia did not intervene in the Syrian conflict, it could result in a humiliating defeat for President Assad and potentially strengthening Islamic State extremism in Syria. Furthermore, President Putin argued that Russia was better equipped than the United States to put a stop to the conflict in Syria, citing the historical relationship between the USSR (now Russia) and Syria:

> We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian government and its armed forces, which are valiantly fighting terrorism face-to-face. We should finally acknowledge that no one but President Assad's armed forces and Kurdish militias are truly fighting the Islamic State and other terrorist organisations in Syria. We know about all the problems and contradictions in the region, but they are based on reality".
>
> Vladimir Putin (2015)

It was no longer a news or subject to argument that, King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia expressed his displeasure in 2012 of Russia's support for the Syrian regime and Russia also do not care about the Turkish government's reactions regarding its military actions in Syria (Schanzer, 2012). The Arab monarchies who are dissatisfied with Washington's policies in the Middle East have found Russia as an alternative necessary to cultivate ties with. Unlike the United States, Russia doesn't face the dilemma of choosing which side to pitch its tent between Iran and its Arab rivals. Russia has managed to maintain closeness with Iran while at the same time strengthening connections with Persian Gulf monarchies (Kerr, 1969). The United States' reluctance from the beginning to get involved in the conflict in Syria has had ineffective support for the opposition to Assad and struggled to find a *détente* (Laub, 2023). In contrast, or perhaps as a consequence, scholars believe there was a "consensus that Russia plays a central role in the resolution of the Syrian conflict." While the US Secretary of State under President Obama's administration, John Kerry, was advocating for a diplomatic solution, it was Russia, not the United States, which was actively shaping the situation on the ground to push for diplomacy (Frantzman, 2016).

For many years after the war broke out in Syria, the United States resisted calls to arm the rebels who opposed Assad's government, establish a no-fly zone, or enforce its own red lines regarding the use of chemical weapons (Roberts, 2013). Consequently, the United States' impact on the war in Syria has been minimal. Quoting President Putin, one of the scholars we engaged alluded to the fact that "all stakeholders in the Syrian war widely recognise that Moscow holds the key to resolving the conflict." In an article published on Politico, Professor Vali Nasr of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies states:

> Moscow's strategic positioning makes it influential in steering Iran, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf monarchies towards compromise. Recent diplomatic efforts, including talks between Russian, Saudi, and Iranian officials, signal a shift. High-

> profile visits to Moscow, coupled with Putin's defence of Assad, indicate that regional actors may opt for a diplomatic solution to avoid potential conflicts with Russia.
>
> Vali Nasr

Scholars in Russian and international studies have noted Russia's assertive and belligerent foreign policy through successful military interventions in conflicts abroad" over the past few years. Despite being well-publicised beforehand and thoroughly analysed by Western observers, the effectiveness of the methods Russia has adopted to execute its missions surprised the West. In response to proxy military operations in Ukraine in 2014, there seems to be a departure in Moscow's military strategies which has led to the widespread use of terms like "hybrid warfare" and "Gerasimov doctrine", which is based on general Valeri Gerasimov's views about United States' contemporary warfare, putting interstate conflict and warfare on a par with political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military activities (Msckew, 2017).These terms reflected an attempt to understand and interpret Russia's unconventional approach to conflict, which initially appeared unfamiliar to the West. According to the 2016 Chatham House Report on the Syrian crisis, the think tank identified two specific instruments through which Russia exerted power, warranting careful examination.

> Russia's armed forces and information warfare capabilities have rapidly evolved, aligning with its persistent intentions. The significant transformation of the armed forces since 2008, ongoing rearmament programmes, and real-world training in Ukraine and Syria showcase Russia's growing conventional military prowess. This trend is likely to continue, with increased confidence and aggressiveness accompanying enhanced capabilities. The success of conventional military interventions, such as in Ukraine and Syria, reinforces Moscow's belief in assertive military actions for effective foreign policy outcomes.
>
> Chatham House Report (2016)

Josh Cohen (2014), referencing information from the Moscow Times, highlights Russia's substantial economic interests in Syria. In 2009, Russia's investments in Syria were estimated at $19.4 billion, and its exports reached $1.1 billion in 2010 (Cohen, 2014). The historical ties between Syria and the Soviet Union led to the relief of up to 75% of Syria's Soviet-era debts in exchange for arms supplies (Shad, 1995). From 2000 to 2010, Russia sold approximately $1.5 billion worth of arms to Syria, and contracts between Damascus and Moscow in 2011 and 2012 alone amounted to $687 million (Grove & Solomon, 2012). According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data on Russo-Syrian arms agreements, the active arms contracts surpassed $4 billion in 2011. Heisbourgh (2015), citing Al-Jazeera News, emphasises the role of foreign intervention and public support in the persistent Syrian conflict, such as the United States and allies targeting Daesh (the Islamic State) with airstrikes.

The Obama administration, though expressing opposition to the Assad regime, hesitated to fully engage in the conflict. After spending $500 million on training friendly rebels

without achieving desired results, the U.S. scaled back its support until Donald Trump's presidency (Ackerman, 2014). President Trump ordered the bombing of a Syrian airbase in response to an alleged chemical attack, signaling a shift in approach (Martinez et al., 2018). Reports suggest that Moscow may have financially supported parts of Syria's military actions, and Russian firms have substantial investments in the Syrian oil sector (Petkova, 2020). Russia, backed by China, has consistently vetoed Western-backed resolutions on Syria at the United Nations Security Council (Nichols, 2012). The primary motivation for Russia's involvement in Syria lies in political hegemony and economic interests (Oligie, 2019). Furthermore, scholars argued that Russia's longstanding support of the Assad family and Syria aligns with its interests in the Middle East. Experts believe the root of the crisis in Syria is "Cold War dynamics." Johnson (2015) suggests that foreign involvement is tied to agreements like the Bushehr memo, which created the Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline. "The European Union's interest in halting the refugee crisis may be intertwined with securing a gas supply" he concludes.

Rabinovich (2017) opines that the revolt served to realign Syria ideologically and geopolitically, with a global divide between Iran, China, and Russia on one side and the United States, Canada, the European Union, and Turkey on the other. The crisis in Syria has evolved into a complex geopolitical situation where global powers pursue their interests amid regional conflicts (Laub, 2023). Existing literature on the subject of the bilateral relationship between Russia and Syria have concluded that the success of Russia in combating terrorism in Syria has led to diplomatic discussions with the United States-led coalition, recognising a common enemy and suggesting increased joint efforts to eliminate the terrorist group.

Research Methodology

This study employs the qualitative research method, with the use of primary and secondary source materials to provide valuable contexts and perspectives. The research focuses on key historical events and milestones in Russo-Syrian relations, spanning from the 1960s to 2015, covering a significant period of the Cold War and extending into the 2015 Syrian Civil War. The primary focus is on the diplomatic interactions between Russia and Syria, with a particular emphasis on their political and strategic dimensions. Understanding the historical context of Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations is essential for grasping current geopolitical settings, especially in the Middle East. Primary sources encompass interviews with five scholars of international relations. Secondary sources consist of published books, journal articles, newspapers, and verified internet sources, offering a well-rounded perspective. The realism theory of international relations was adopted as the research's foundation. The findings offer insights into the dynamics of international relations and contribute to a detailed understanding of world politics.

Theoretical Framework

The school of thought known as realism in the field of international relations (IR) emphasises upon the competitive and conflictual aspects of international relations (Sandrina Antunes & Isabel Camisão, 2017:15). Scholars often attribute the roots of realism to some of humankind's earliest historical writings, specifically Thucydides'

account of the Peloponnesian War, which occurred between 431 and 404 BCE (Sandrina Antunes & Isabel Camisão, 2017:15). While Thucydides, writing over two thousand years ago, did not identify as a “realist'' because international relations theory did not take a named form until the twentieth century, contemporary theorists, when looking back, discerned many similarities in the thought patterns and behaviours between the ancient and modern worlds. They drew on his writings and those of others to support the idea that there exists a timeless theory spanning all recorded human history, named “realism (Sandrina Antunes & Isabel Camisão, 2017:15).

In the field of international relations, realism, a prominent theoretical framework, provides a valuable foundation for understanding the Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations. Fundamentally, realism highlights the paramount importance of state interests and the relentless pursuit of national security and power (Korab-Karpowicz, W. Julian, 2023). According to Sandrina Antunes and Isabel Camisão (2017:15), realism posits three fundamental assumptions. First, it asserts that the nation-state, commonly referred to as the "state," is the primary actor in international relations. Although other entities, such as individuals and organisations, exist, their influence is limited. Second, realism contends that the state functions as a unitary actor. Particularly during times of war, national interests drive the state to present a unified voice and take cohesive actions. Third, it posits that decision-makers are rational actors, implying that rational decision-making aligns with the pursuit of the national interest. Realism argues that undertaking actions that would weaken or make the state vulnerable is not considered rational. According to realism, leaders of diverse political persuasions acknowledge this principle as they strive to navigate their state's affairs to survive in a competitive environment (Korab-Karpowicz, W. Julian, 2023).

When applied to the Russo-Syrian context, realism elucidates the strategic calculations and power dynamics that have characterised this diplomatic relationship from 1960 to date. During the Cold War (1948-1992), the Soviet Union's support for Syria can be interpreted through a realist lens. As a superpower, the Soviet Union sought to counterbalance the influence of the United States of America (USA) and extend its global presence. Supporting Syria was a means to maintain a presence in the Middle East, gain access to Mediterranean ports, and establish a strategic foothold in a region of significant geopolitical importance.

Furthermore, Russia's support for Syria during the Syrian Civil War reflects a realist perspective. Russia's continued backing of the Syrian government, despite international criticism, aligns with its broader strategy of preserving influence and safeguarding strategic interests in the Middle East. Russia has used the Syrian government as a means to maintain a military presence in the region and protect its interests. Within the context of the Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations, realism underscores the pragmatic pursuit of national interests, security considerations, and the role of power politics. This theoretical framework provides a perspective through which to understand the enduring strategic motivations that have driven the Kremlin’s support for Damascus.

Discussion

Effects of Russo-Syrian Relations on Middle East Stability

The Russo-Syrian relationship seriously altered the power settings of the Middle East, influencing the region's stability with intertwined political, economic, and military dimensions As explained by Allison (2013), Russia has provided resilience to fight for the Syrian regime amid internal and external challenges, thereby impacting the broader Middle East. This stability has influenced regional power play, contributing to the protracted Syrian conflict (Demir & Rijnoveanu, 2013). The Russo-Syrian alliance has also affected the dynamics of international diplomacy in the Middle East. Russia, backed by China, consistently uses its United Nations Security Council veto to counter Western-backed resolutions on Syria, creating a divide in global responses to Middle East issues. This diplomatic alignment contributes to a complex geopolitical environment, hindering unified solutions (Hatahet, 2019). Economically, Russian investments in Syria, particularly in the oil sector, create economic ties that bind the two nations. These investments contribute to the economic resilience of the Syrian government, intertwining Russia's economic stakes with regional stability (Hatahet, 2019). Moreover, the Russo-Syrian alliance has implications for ongoing proxy conflicts in the Middle East, positioning Russia against forces supported by Western nations and their allies. This alignment exacerbates existing tensions and rivalries, contributing to a fragmented and volatile security environment in the region. The Syrian conflict, as a focal point of geopolitical rivalries, involves various regional and international actors, complicating efforts to achieve stability.

Russo-Syrian Relations: Impact on Global Politics, Security, and Stability

Given the present chaos in the Middle East, the enduring Russo-Syrian alliance resonates across the world, exerting profound impacts on politics, security, and stability. Beyond its shaping of regional power play, scholars in international relations concurred that this geopolitical entanglement is disrupting the international balance of power. In world politics, Russia's consistent veto of any issue concerning Syria at the United Nations, often with China's support, obstructs Western-led resolutions on Syria, fracturing diplomatic norms. This discord impedes cohesive global responses, challenging established norms of consensus. Russia's military presence in Syria reshapes security considerations, transforming Russia into a key player in regional conflicts with potential global repercussions. Scholars have also accepted that the Russo-Syrian rapprochement intertwines economic interests through Russia’s investments in Syria's oil industry, thereby influencing global energy markets. Moreover, the Russo-Syrian alignment has changed the *status quo ante*, the Western dominance is been challenged, positioning Russia as a pivotal player in geopolitics (Güner & Koc, 2017). This shift demands a re-evaluation of global power play, highlighting Russia's ascendancy in a strategically significant region. In the words of Russian Foreign Minister, Sergie Lavrov

> The stability of the Middle East is crucial due to its geopolitical importance, depends on Russo-Syrian relations, fostering an interconnected scenario with far-reaching consequences.
>
> Sergie Lavrov (2016)

Potential Future Developments in Russo-Syrian Relations

As of the latest assessments, Russo-Syrian relations continues to be characterised by military cooperation, economic collaborations, and shared geopolitical interests. Economic ties have deepened, with Russia engaging in reconstruction efforts and energy agreements, further solidifying its role in Syria's economic recovery (Wasser *et al*., 2022). Furthermore, the alignment on key geopolitical issues, such as opposition to foreign interventions and support for the government, remains a cornerstone of their relationship.

The reconstruction phase following the Civil War presents a significant area for future collaboration between Russia and the Syrian Arab Republic. Russia, having played a crucial role in supporting the present regime, is poised to contribute to the rebuilding of Syria's infrastructure. Economic cooperation in this phase could extend beyond energy agreements to encompass broader investments and trade partnerships, fostering economic stability in Syria. The geopolitical outlook in the Middle East is subject to constant shifts. The Russo-Syrian alliance may undergo adjustments based on emerging geopolitical realities. Russia's diplomatic manoeuvering and its relationships with other regional players, such as Iran and Turkey, could influence the dynamics of Russo-Syrian relations. In addition, global power shifts and the involvement of external factors may reshape the strategic calculus for both Russia and Syria.

The mutual interest in combating terrorism and ensuring regional security is likely to be a continued focal point of Russo-Syrian relations. With the persisting threat of extremist groups in the region, joint efforts in intelligence sharing, counterterrorism operations, and military coordination could further strengthen their alliance. Collaborative measures to enhance border security and prevent the resurgence of radical elements would be of paramount importance. Energy cooperation between Russia and Syria may witness expanded collaborations, including joint ventures in oil and gas exploration. This could even serve the economic interests of both nations and contribute to Syria's recovery. The exploration of alternative energy sources and the development of sustainable energy projects could also be areas of future cooperation. Future developments in Russo-Syrian relations could involve increased diplomatic initiatives aimed at resolving regional conflicts. Russia, with its historical ties and influence in the Middle East, may play a mediating role in facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties, as witnessed in the ongoing Israel-Palestinian war. Diplomatic engagement could extend beyond the Syrian borders, encompassing broader regional issues and contributing to stability in the Middle East. As Syria struggles with the aftermath of the conflict that began on March 15th, 2011, humanitarian challenges persist. Future developments may witness increased collaboration between Russia and Syria in addressing humanitarian crises, including the provision of aid, the reconstruction of essential services, and the facilitation of the return of displaced populations back to their homes.

Conclusion

In looking at Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations, this analysis has provided valuable perspectives on international affairs. Traversing important historical periods, from the intensity of the Cold War in the 60s to the challenges of the Syrian Civil War in the twenty-first century, the study delved into geopolitics, ideology, and regional influences, which allowed for an investigation of the ever-evolving nature of Russo-Syrian relations, revealing a narrative that contributes to our understanding of their historical trajectory. Examining primary sources, including diplomatic records, and assessing information from secondary sources enabled an understanding of the motivations and strategies guiding diplomatic exchanges between Russia and Syria. The article examines the "realpolitik" considerations underpinning this partnership, deepening knowledge of international relations and providing revelations of the consequences of Russo-Syrian relations on world politics, security, and stability.

A look at the historical events, from the Soviet Union's support for the Ba'athist regime to Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015, four years after the conflict broke out highlights the importance of this diplomatic relationship. It has shaped the Middle East's regional stability, influenced conflicts, and contributed to the distribution of power. This analysis mirrors the ambiguity of global politics, encapsulating a story of struggle, conflict, and cooperation. The article objectives focused on motivations and strategies, Middle East stability, and the broader impact on international relations, have now been adequately addressed. The identified research questions guided the study towards a clearer understanding of the details involved in Russo-Syrian diplomatic relations. The application of a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative and historical analysis allowed for an all-round examination. Drawing on “realism” as theoretical framework, the article shows the strategic calculations and power plays underpinning this diplomatic relationship. From the Cold War era to the Syrian Civil War, "realism" provides a perspective through which to grasp the enduring strategic motivations driving Russia’s relentless support for Syria.

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