An analysis of foreign involvement within the Syria conflict.

- Why had the United States and Russia a foreign interest in Syria.
Abstract

This study offers an alternative analysis of the current literature regarding foreign involvement in the Syria civil war. The initials briefly describe the current situation in Syria, international relations and why the conflict is interesting to analyse from a scientific standpoint. The relevant actors and theoretical construction are also introduced. In the previous research chapter, the current research is presented concerning the global superpowers as well as the interventions that have taken place in Syria.

In the theory chapter realism and liberalism are presented, and a number of important factors are discussed. In the result, the decisions and events that have taken place during the conflict in Syria is analysed through the lens of previous named theories. The actors studied are the USA and Russia. There are both realistic and liberalist elements in the decisions made by the actors. The final part of the essay discusses the result. The underlying interest of the players largely determines which decision is ultimately taken. Moreover, there are underlying tones of realism even in clearly liberalistic decisions.

Key words International Relations, International politics, IR Realism, IR Liberalism, foreign policy, foreign intervention, Syria civil war, Russia foreign policy, US foreign policy.
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1. Introduction

The Arabic Spring in 2011 consisted of spontaneous public riots who challenged the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, including Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. In Syria democratic activists started a revolution against the country's ruling al-Assad family and demanded the resignation of the president and democratic reforms.1 The war in Syria has been raging for over eight years, and a huge part of the population have had to flee their homes. Many of them are children, and numerous are severely traumatized.2 The uprising was "cut off" and Syria is now an arena for regional and global superpowers different interest.3

Within an increasingly globalized world international relations are becoming progressively more important. International politics is a summary term of states' foreign policy and mutual relations.4 International relations explain the relationship between national governments, international organizations, multinational corporations, economic culture and national politics.5

It is interesting to analyze what really determines the foreign policy of states from a scientific perspective; is it because of self-interest or idealistic considerations?6 The war in Syria is also interesting to study from an outer

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2 UNHCR, "Kriget i Syrien” 2019, https://sverigeforunhcr.se/syrien
4 Nationalencyklopedin, internationell politik http://www.ne.se.proxy.lnu.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/läng/internationell-politik (011219)
6 Peter Esaiasson, Mikael Giljam, Henrik Oskarsson, Lena Wängnerud, “Metodpraktikan – konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad” tredje upplagan, Elanders Gotab, Vällingeby 2007. 40
scientific perspective as the world today is beset by several conflicts. In 2015, the refugee crisis peaked and became the biggest humanitarian crises since the Second World War. The conflict in Syria has attracted several strong international players and the decisions has not been unanimous. 7

1.1. Aim, problem statement and limitations.

This paper aims to explain on what grounds international superpowers have made their decisions regarding the Syria conflict. Through comparing selected actors in relation to established theories of international relations this thesis aims to answerer to the following problem statement; Why did the United states and Russia act as they did regarding the conflict in Syria? - an analysis of the Syria conflict using realism and liberalism.

1.1.1. Limitations

This paper will mainly focus on the Syrian conflict and not on other Arab Spring countries, however, other countries within the region will be mentioned if considered relevant.

This paper has limited the actors to two different global superpowers, namely the United States and Russia, due to their prominent role in the conflict. Other international actors such as EU and UN will not be analyzed since this study only focuses on states as actors. There are also several significant regional powers that are involved in the conflict such as Turkey, Israel and Lebanon, however, they will not be studied because of the scope of the essay.

The theories used in this paper is realism and liberalism since they are the two most prominent perspective within international theories. Another prominent theory is constructivism; however, the scope of the study does not

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allow for further theories. There will also be limitations within the concepts and a few main factors will be presented.

1.2. Outline

The thesis begins with an introductory chapter, which presents a brief description of the Syrian conflict, international politics and international relations. Subsequently, problem formulation, aim and limitations are presented. Thereafter, the previous research is offered where foreign affairs, global powers and foreign involvement will be defined. The methodology presents the research design, choice of material and the operational indicators. The third chapter introduces the theories, they will be defined, and a number of prominent factors will be mentioned. The problem statement will be answered in the result, which will describe both the United States and Russia's actions using the theories mentioned. The report is concluded with a discussion chapter.

1.3. Previous research

1.3.1. Global powers and foreign interventions

According to Christopher J. Coyne, professor at George Mason university, a foreign intervention is defined as when a government uses its power to handle an issue within a foreign society. The aim with the interventions is to address and create a desirable state of affairs in the country where the problem is regarded to be. The “preferable state of affairs” is, according to Coyne, decided by the state that is intervening another country. This can be problematic when the view of a preferable state of affairs differs. Another definition of foreign

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8 Christopher J. Coyne, "The Law and Economics of Foreign Intervention and Rule Reform", Department of Economics George Mason University Fairfax, VA 22030
Intervention is by Steven P Lee who defines it as a state by itself, or with a group of states, decides to intervene in a matter within a third party state that otherwise would have been considered a domestic matters. Frederic S Pearson professor in political science argues that a foreign intervention is defined as a military force led by a single country or a group of countries crossing the border of another country. Pearson is using the almost exact same definition but is focusing more on the military perspective.

Kenneth Waltz is prominent political scientist from the US. He maintains that the terms “world politics” or “global politics,” has to some extent been substituted to other forms of politics, for example international law. Waltz argues that policymakers in self-interested states is now focuses on more than just their own nations security.

According to Waltz does a country's ability to become an important power player heavily increases as their economy grows. This, in turn, means that the state and its significance can be greatly expanded. In a self-help system, states use all instruments accessible to influence states that do not possess the same means. As nations globally grow stronger, they gain influence from external states. Social scientist Matthew D. Stephen claims that the 1990s study of international politics was heavily influenced by the liberal perspective, which

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12 Ibid. 33 (091219)
meant that international institutions were reinforced and strengthen. States had to adapt this new form of approach towards global governance.  

The majority of researchers active in the field of international relations argues that the United States is the world's most powerful actor. However, with a new world order, several new states have begun to emerge. Some states have become a given part of the world order due to their enormous economic growth, for example India and China. Russia has also returned as an important global player with a clear interest in asserting itself at the global level. The emergence of global players is a clear indicator that we are in a new world order. Moscow has taken a clear distance from the consensus that has existed in the world built by the United States since Washington have lost some of its credibility and authority since the 2008 economic crises.

Dr. Sherri L. Wallace declared that the Trump administration from the beginning has shown a noticeable difference from the Obama’s foreign policy. There is still a basic premise and interest for protecting American national interest however, their methods are considerably dissimilar. They have both been critiqued for the way they been handling the situation in the Middle East. However, what is common during both administrations is that the United States are in fact losing ground to emerging global powers, such as Russia and China.

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15 Ibid 151 (091219)
Professor MacFarlane in International Relations claims that the idea of emerging powers assumes several features, for example, regional dominance, aspiration to become global actor and a desires to contest the US unipolarity.\textsuperscript{18} Kenneth Waltz also maintains that Russia is an emerging power which can have an impact on the current world order with the United States as a hegemonic power.\textsuperscript{19} Macfarlane continues to argue that Russia's policy is heavily affected by the countries current domestic economic and political politics. Moscow is using partnership and agreement when dealing with imperative issues to the US. However, for issues more important to Russia, a more competitive conduct is used. Its foreign policy is dominated by efforts to reverse the decline of the 1980s and 1990s. Russian policy aims to limit further losses and promote conditions that will allow it to re-emerge as a global power.\textsuperscript{20}

1.3.2. Foreign intervention in Syria

Several political and financial powers have been involved in the Middle East. The region has become one of the world’s most important area due to the foreign interest. The conflict in Syria has attracted both global and regional powers.\textsuperscript{21} According to Joshua Landis, a professor in Middle East studies, did the uprising in Syria not lead to any regime change which can largely be attributed to foreign intervention.\textsuperscript{22} The situation in Syria has evolved into a conflict where regional and global superpowers pursue their own interests while a civil war is underway. The Obama administration announced that the


\textsuperscript{19} Waltz, Kenneth. "Structural Realism after the Cold War." 6 (121319)

\textsuperscript{20} S. NEIL MACFARLANE, The ‘R’ in BRICs: is Russia an emerging power (121319)


Syrian government's use of chemical weapons would push the United States toward participation in the conflict. However, every attempt to use the UN to act against the Syrian regime has been vetoed by Russia and China.23

President Obama outlined his policy on September 10, 2013, announcing that the United States will conduct air strikes against Isis targets "wherever they are", including Syria. The goal was to cut the finance for the group and to avoid foreign jihadists from entering the region. The United States have approved more than 150 air strikes against Isis targets since August 7, 2014, with the aim to back a counter-offensive by Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) forces to protect religious and ethnic minorities risking slaughter at the hands of the jihadist fighters. Isis is funded by millions of dollars gained from foreign sponsors and has contained a large arsenal of US-made weapons from retreating Iraqi security forces.24 However, professor in international law Marc Weller question the legal nature of the airstrikes according to international law.25

In September 2015, Russia also launched air strikes against Syria, the aim was according to Moskva to fight extremist groups. The air strike in Syria represented Russia's largest interference in the Middle East in several decades. Russia has since then become an important player in the conflict, which has forced the United States to realize that they are not the only power brokers within the region. Professor Angela Stent questioned the relationship these two power players should and will have in the future.26 Also, professor of law Michael Scharf continued to question how legal the foreign intervention in

Syria is. Scharf has also presented research regarding how IS and the war on terror in Syria has changed international law.\(^\text{27}\)

2. Methodology

2.1. Case study and qualitative research

This essay will be a case study and a qualitative research. The qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a entirety in contrast to quantitative research which takes apart a phenomenon to examine components which becomes the variables of the study.\(^\text{28}\) For data collection and analysis the researcher is the primary instrument.\(^\text{29}\) When using a qualitative design there is a few points of comparison in focus. One of them is the focus of research, which is the quality of nature and essence. The goal of investigation is understanding, description, meaning and hypothesis.\(^\text{30}\)

This essay is therefore a holistic description and analysis of a single unit or a bounded system. This method can be combined with other types of methods such as basic qualitative study, phenomenology or grounded theory.\(^\text{31}\) Case study’s is a sort of catch-all category for research. For this study the goal is to gain an in depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. I will take an interest in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable and in discovery rather than confirmation.\(^\text{32}\) The single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the


\(^\text{28}\) Sharan B. Merriam, “Qualitative Research and Case study Applications in Education” California 1998, 6

\(^\text{29}\) Ibid, 7

\(^\text{30}\) Ibid, 9

\(^\text{31}\) Ibid, 12

\(^\text{32}\) Ibid, 19
object of study. The case for this report is the Syrian conflict through different lenses of international theories more specific realism and liberalism. I have chosen the Syria civil war because it is a conflict that has been raging since 2011 with vast amount of international evolvement. Concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity allows me to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. Qualitative case studies can be characterized as being particularistic: the case study focus on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent. For this study the case will be the Syria conflict and the international involvement.

The aim for the result of this analyzes is for the knowledge to be concrete; case study knowledge resonates with our own experience because it is more vivid, concrete and sensory than abstract.

2.1.1. Strength and limitations

The qualitative method is using the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The risk when using a human instrument is its limitations; mistakes are being made, opportunities are missed, and personal biases can interfere. There are also limitations regarding the sensitivity and the integrity of the investigator. The investigator needs to relay on instincts and abilities throughout most of the research effort. Further limitations involve the issues of reliability, validity and generalizability. The case study has been faulted for its lack of representativeness and its lack of rigor in the collection, construction and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to this

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33 Ibid, 27
34 Ibid, 28
35 Ibid, 29
36 Ibid, 31, 32
37 Ibid, 20
The term case study is not used precisely: it has become a catch-all category for studies that are clearly not experimental, survey or historical. There are a few primary strengths of case studies. The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the case. The study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. This will offer insight and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences. These insights can be constructed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence case studies play an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base.

2.2. Research design and sample selection

Creating a good research design will help me to get from point A to point B.” Point A may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and point B is some set of conclusions or answers about the questions. The set of questions to be answered is derived from what is technically known as the theoretical framework of my study. The theoretical framework defines the research problem and it is derived from the orientation or stance that I will bring to my study. The choice of a theoretical model will guide the research process in terms of the identification of relevant concepts, definition of key variables and specific questions to be investigated. Selection of a research design, choice of a sample, data collection strategies and interpretation of findings.

Sample in case studies; there are two samples in case studies: firstly, I must select the case to be studied. Secondly, I need to do a sampling within the case; to decide what I am going to analyze within the case. The most appropriate

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38 Ibid, 42, 43
39 Ibid, 43
40 Ibid, 41
41 Ibid, 44
42 Ibid, 45
43 Ibid, 47
44 Ibid, 64, 65
sampling strategy is “no probabilistic”, which is the most common form. It is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight.\(^{45}\)

### 2.3. Collecting data and level of analysis

Case study’s does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data can be used. In this study different material and data will be analyzed and then relevant data shall be studied\(^{46}\) Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the material. This is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. These meanings of understandings or insights constitute the findings of the study.\(^{47}\)

### 2.4. Validity, reliability and ethics

Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality.\(^{48}\) To achieve high internal validity the conclusions need to be legitimate and well-grounded. This report will present conclusions of explanatory character.\(^{49}\) The external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of my study can be applied to other situations.\(^{50}\) The report will to some extend be generalizable because several of the conflict within the Middle East have similarities. However, the main focus of this study is not to

\(^{45}\) Ibid, 61  
\(^{46}\) Ibid, 28  
\(^{47}\) Ibid, 178  
\(^{48}\) Ibid, 201  
\(^{50}\) Sharan B. Merriam,” Qualitative Research and Case study Applications in Education”, 207
create a high external validity and will therefore mostly focus on the conflict in Syria.  

Reliability refers to the extent research findings can be replicated, if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results? Qualitative research is not conducted so that the laws of human behavior can be isolated. Rather, this essay seeks to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it.  

2.5. Material and source discussion

Several different types of sources have been used to create an as accurate and in-depth explanation of reality as possible. I have used a wide selection of materials and been careful about choosing sources according to relevance. When choosing sources, I have considered four different questions, namely; authenticity, contemporary, dependency and tendentious.

In the theory chapter I will use both printed literature and articles. All sources should be genuine and not have any underlying purpose. The sources will contain up-to-date information that is considered to work well in relation to the purpose. The main part of the sources is so – called primary sources, since most of them are written by the researchers them self. I have used information that can be located in several different sources, which are independent from each other, this will increase validity.

In the result chapter have I used multiple types of sources, for example, research articles, news reports and reports from international organizations. Actualities from global organizations will only come from internationally recognized establishments whose motives give a credible impression. I am

51 Peter Esaiasson, et.al, “Metodpraktikan – konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad”
52 Sharan B. Merriam,” Qualitative Research and Case study Applications in Education”, 205
53 Ibid 314
aware that these sources can be tendentious as they explicitly aim to promote a specific goal. However, if the content is found in several sources, I will consider it credible. When selecting articles, there will be a primary focus on the author and purpose for the paper. To have relevant information will the thesis’s not published later than year of 2005. When I have used information from news articles, have I especially thought about the fact that they are biased and have a commercial aim. They are also dependent since most newspapers have taken a political stance, which can affect the information. I am arguing that all sources used in this study is suitable and reliable, however it is still of importance to think critically about my findings.

3 Theory

3.1 Realism

The main stand within international relations is the realist theory. Realism focuses on power, anarchy and order. Some students of international relations consider realism out-dated. Since the theory mostly focuses on anarchy, self-help and balancing power this belongs to a bygone era. However, the system would have to change completely for realism to become obsolete. The theory is a normative view, meaning it has the ability to explain how the world should work, not how it actually works.

3.1.1 Security

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According to the realist view a rational state, with the goal to protecting itself, will not knowingly aggravate another state. Due to the security dilemma this can be hard to accomplish, since whatever decision a nation makes to increase its own security usually decreases the security of another state. Keeping this in mind a rational state will at some point go on the offensive towards a “wild” state if they believe that this will increase power on the cost of the reckless state. This increase of power will also grow the probability of survival which is the main goal for states.57

Nations exist in an anarchic order, which means that security is the ultimate goal. It is only when a state’s security is assured that other goal such as profit, power and tranquilly can become important.58 The principle of action in this order is a form of self-help, which means that nation’s most help themselves by providing their own security. 59

In order for nations to create well – being and reassurance from threats, their safety needs to be effective and successful. In a state of anarchy no one can really be trusted which create an uneasy state of affairs, which is even more intensified by the” security dilemma”. For example, can one state decide to gather instrument of war for its own defense, however other nations then see this as a threat and react by buildup their own war arsenal which can show the first state that their concern and need of protection was required.60

3.1.2 Interests

States foreign policy is usually influenced by domestic policy and the domestic program is often a significant part of the decision process. Sometimes even more than strategic logic policy, for example, one powerful affinitive group or one particular person with a “bad faith agenda” can have unnecessary

57 Ibid, (120219)
59 Kenneth N. Waltz,” Realism and International Politics”, 63
60 Ibid, 59
influence on a state’s foreign strategy. According to Waltz, states who act whiteout a strategic plan usually pay the price, which sometimes can be quite high, since the international system in itself is highly predictable irrational behaviour have a tendency to backfire.\textsuperscript{61} The cost to pursue faulty politic does according to Waltz creates strong incensement for states to act rational, and that is the reason why the system does work in a predictable manner.\textsuperscript{62}

The field of global politics is autonomous from other areas such as the economic, religious or ethical in terms of sphere of action and understanding, which lead officials acting in terms of interest defined as power. Political realism accept that a nation's morality can apply as a guideline for the foreign policy, since all nations strive to transfer their moral ideal to other states. Assuming that nations are the subject of moral rules is one thing, although, to assert that someone surely knows what is good or evil in international relations is something else entirely. Politicians should not allow other areas to be superior to the political sphere. A politician always assesses how a certain policy and action will affect the state's power. However, the officials are not unaware of the existence, relevance, standards and principles of surrounding areas.

3.1.3 **Power rivalry**

Realists believe that nations are in anarchy and the survival of the state is the primary purpose. Only the most prominent and strong states can determine the development of the world. Nations should only cooperate and share power if it benefits their own interests and the goal is to maximize their own profits. As a result, states are constantly arming themselves militarily and all nations strive for more power and increased security. A state’s relative power is the most important factor, which means how powerful a nation is in relation to

\textsuperscript{61} Mearsheimer, J. J. (2009). Reckless States and Realism (120219)

another state. Peace are only an exception because the very foundation of the anarchic system is based on uncertainty and the threat of conflict is always present. During the cold war there was a mutual fear of a nuclear war between the US and the Soviet Union which actually made the risk of war less imminent.63 A “self-help” system demands that every state is in charge of protect their own interest and not to relay on help from other nations for survival.64

Since the end of the cold war the international political system has evolved into a unipolar structure. This form of arrangement seems to be the least stable. When dominant power gets involved in affairs beyond their border, they weaken themselves in the long run. Even though the dominate state is acting with moderation and restrain, weaker states worries about the future behavior of the state. Even the founding father of America expressed concerns about the threats of power without checks and balance. Which begs the question if balanced power is less of a concern.65

One central questions Mearsheimer raises in his thesis about “False Promise” is “can international institutions prevent war by changing state behavior?”66 Can institutions make states avoid war using a “balance-of-power logic”, which means to refrain from calculating each important move according to how it affects their relative power position. Realists does not accept that institutions can sway away states from behaving as short-term power maximizers. The institutions only reflect the state's interest in relative power. Consequently, realists believe that institutions have no significant effect on the nation's behavior. However, realists acknowledge that there may be a positive purpose to use institutions to create, maintain and even increase their share of world power. An example is NATO which consisted of the

64 Ibid. 213 (120219)
65 Ibid. 214 (120219)
United States allies during the cold war. The aim was to balance power against the Soviet Union. The organization was informal and an ad hoc alliance that did not force its member states to take action in war.\textsuperscript{67}

3.1.4 Resources

The vast majority of countries strive to become global superpowers and those who do not do so are deviant. As a country's material resources increases does also their status in the world. A state with a large and prominent economy have had to assume the role as superpower whether it was the goal or not.\textsuperscript{68} For a country to remain a major power, it is necessary for the nation to use its resources effectively in the long run.\textsuperscript{69} Nations should gather all the wealth and resources to which they are entitled.\textsuperscript{70} In order for a poor country to take its place among the prominent nations, it is necessary that the country use its resources for its military objectives.\textsuperscript{71}

Since an important part of realism is the sovereignty of states and the security of the nation, is it important for states to avoid becoming too dependent on goods and resources that can be denied to them in crises. Countries should therefore take the necessary measures to ensure that the resources required for the survival of the state will exist even in times of crisis.\textsuperscript{72} The idea of interdependence is a prominent feature in liberalism. However, the realist view cannot accept it if there is an unequal interdependence between the partners, that is, if a particular state has more

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid 52 (120419).
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid 55 (120419).
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid 62 (120419).
advantages over the other one. Relatively independent states are in a stronger position than relatively dependent states, because, the dependent one is at greater risk of being affected by the other state, which can adversely affect the nation's security and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{73}

Another important factor regarding resources is the question of why prominent states should invest large resources in expanding international institutions if there is no obvious purpose and interest. Examples of such an institution could be NATO; what benefits might states get from investing and putting resources into such arrangement.\textsuperscript{74}

3.2 Liberalism

The main attention of international liberalism is society, interdependence and progressive change.\textsuperscript{75} The liberal theory is the second biggest theory within international relations and emphases the importance of domestic and international security and global organisations.\textsuperscript{76}

3.2.1 The UN system

International organizations are important factors within the liberalist theory. International organizations are multilevel linkages, norms and institutions. Sometimes referred to as another form of world politic structure.\textsuperscript{77}

In the 1950s and 1960s most of the liberal work was dedicated to the United Nations and other official establishments. After the second world war ended, several international organizations led by the US, such as UN offered theoretical accounts on how collective security was logic and how the “League of Nations” differed as collective security institution. Research made on international institutions in the post war era took an interest in their formal

\textsuperscript{73} Kenneth N. Waltz, The Emerging Structure of International Politics, 53 (120419).
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid 21(120419)
\textsuperscript{75} G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism in a Realist World”, 204 (120519)
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 204 (120519)
\textsuperscript{77} Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence”, fourth edition, USA 2012, 46
procedures and policy. The United Nations itself was considered to be an organization where influence was projected, and power was exercised.\textsuperscript{78}

Since, the US government has failed as peacekeepers in for example Lebanon the role for UN to become a form of peacekeeper in the world has enhanced. It is the Security Council’s responsibility to carry out the consent of all nation within the UN.\textsuperscript{79}

\subsection*{3.2.2 International law}

It is important to shift our attention from constitutional law to international law. Even though international laws are hard to enforce and control, they can guarantee respect.\textsuperscript{80} By enforcing international law and multilateral institutions this could offer a co-operative infrastructure and also provide a stable controlling of international relations. According to the Wilsonian version international law was “not a binding, sovereignty yielding legal mechanism”.\textsuperscript{81} Instead is it supposed to be considered a set of “legal norms” that nations would embrace with respects to other democratic state and they would want to embrace this law out of self-interest. The liberal expectation is as time goes by, states would soon come to act according this set of norms through adopting their ethical and political priorities.\textsuperscript{82}

International law could never be as complete nor as well enforced as in a well-ordered domestic political system. The institutions are not working as autonomous nor as powerful as in a domestic system either.\textsuperscript{83} There are several issues with applying international law and one of them is states viewing them as insignificant or completely disregards them. Nevertheless, even though

\textsuperscript{78} G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism in a Realist World”, 211 (120519)
\textsuperscript{79} Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence”, 293
\textsuperscript{80} Kenneth N. Waltz, “Realism and International Politics”, 116
\textsuperscript{81} G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism in a Realist World”, 207 (120519)
\textsuperscript{82} Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence”, 16
international laws are weak, international governments usually have interdependent relationship that does involve other countries.\textsuperscript{84}

3.2.3 Trade

There is an argument to be made that citizen only can appreciate the true benefits of trade under conditions of peace. Therefore, does existing liberal nations, among other US, Japan and EU, stresses the importance of peace.\textsuperscript{85}

According to the liberal view no one but the war advocate gains from war. When free trade exists, “no class” gains from forcible expansion because; “foreign raw material and food stuffs are as accessible to each nation as though they were in its own territory”\textsuperscript{86}.

There are multiple advantages of trade. Amongst other does’ states progresses towards free trade and liberty collectively.\textsuperscript{87} Liberal economic theory argues that these international links from a supportive internal law of employment and free trade has several advantages. Each and every economy would arguably have more prosperity than it would have had in an autarky; each thus acquires an incentive to avoid politics that will not lead states to break these economic ties.\textsuperscript{88}

The idea was that free trade and social and economic exchange would facilitate the modernization of societies and create incentives for them to unite their differences. Economic interdependence would provide the basis for prosperity and undercut tyranny and geopolitical revisionism.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. 17
\textsuperscript{86} G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism in a Realist World”, 6 (120619)
\textsuperscript{87} Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics”, 1154 (120619)
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 1161
\textsuperscript{89} G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism in a Realist World” (120619)
3.2.4 **Interdependence**

Mutual dependence and cooperation help to stimulate further cooperative behavior that is mutually beneficial to several states.\(^{90}\) War and peace are points that should be discussed in order for cooperation to be advantageous. The emergence of the nation state as well as the western sovereignty, has changed the view of anarchy and power and the relationship between international politics and the international economy has become increasingly more important. Dependence between states, institutions, authorities, non-governmental companies and civil society has become even greater. This has created questions on the global scale that all countries and regions should consider. However, prominent differences remain in both focus and approach between the countries.\(^{91}\)

Three different points are taken into consideration when studying interdependence. The first is multiple channels, meaning that communities are linked to each other through informal ties between state elites and formal foreign office. This could be "face-to-face" contact between non-governmental elites and information transfer taking place via multinational banks and cooperation. This communication can be described as intergovernmental, cross-border and transnational relations.\(^{92}\)

The second factor is managing the agenda of interstate relationship. The agenda should not be determent beforehand, and military issue are therefore not always at the top. Opening the agenda enables several issues to become important as well as allowing issues that can create interdependence between states.\(^{93}\)

Lastly should not the military use force against other governments due to religion or if it is threatening interdependence between countries. For example,

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\(^{90}\) Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics”, 1161 (120819)

\(^{91}\) G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism in a Realist World”, 204 (120819)

\(^{92}\) Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence”, 20

\(^{93}\) Ibid 21
the military might be irrelevant in resolving disagreements on economic issues among members of alliances, but at the same time is it important for alliances that the political and military complex of mutual dependence should be fulfilled. 94

3.3 Table 1.1

| Indicator | Realism | Security | States exist in an anarchic order. They must help them self to secure the survival of the state. | Interest | States foreign policy is influenced by domestic policy. For example, through affinitive groups or specific people. | Power rivalry | The international political system is changing from unipolar to bipolar. The relative power of states is of importance. | Resources | As the resources of a state is growing is also their status in the world. It is important to not be overly dependent on other states. |
|-----------|---------|----------|-------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Indicator | Liberalism | The UN system | It is the Security Council’s responsibility to carry out the consent of all nation within the UN | International law | Need for shifting the attention from constitutional law to international law. | Trade | Citizens can only appreciate benefits of trade under conditions of peace. | Interdependence | Interdependence and cooperation help stimulate further cooperative behavior that is mutually beneficial for the states. |
| Indicator | Has the state’s prominent role within the UN security council influenced there foreign policy. | Have the states been regarding international laws? | Are states entering trade relationship with Syria. | Is there any interdependent relationship between the actors and Syria? |

94 Ibid, 21
4 Result

4.1 Realism

4.1.1 USA

In the year of 2013 the Obama administration announced their interest to take action against al-Assad, however, the American people did not share the same concern. Which also begged the question of what interest USA actually had within the Syria conflict.95 President Barack Obama announced in May 7 2014 that the United State had “both a moral obligation and a national security interest in, ending the slaughter in Syria,” However, the American public had no real interest or felt like they were responsible to be fighting in Syria.96 Russia’s interest in the Middle East have developed into a threat for the United States, and they felt compelled to act to enhance their nation’s security. This is a primary example of self-help.97

The conflict in Syria has opened up for foreign interests that may be hostile to the United States. The United States has contributed more than $ 500 million in humanitarian aid and an additional $ 250 million to the opposition’s Supreme Military Council. President Obama stated that the United States is doing its utmost to facilitate the opposition groups in their work for a more democratic and freer Syria. The Obama administration said that not only would Syria's population benefit from a democratic Syria, but that it would also be in the US interest.98 This is a clear realistic idea since president Obama wants to spread the idea and morals of the USA to create both security and allies in the region.99 Trumps interest in Syria is different from Obamas it does

95 United States Institute of peace https://www.usip.org/publications/what-the-us-interest-in-syria (120719)
96 Truman center, what is the interest in Syria, 2011, http://trumancenter.org/doctrine-blog/what-is-the-u-s-interest-in-syria/ (121119)
98 United States Institute of peace (121119)
not seem as Trump has the same desire to create a democratic Syria that can work as an ally in the Middle East. President Trump has instead made efforts to create improved relations with Russia and Turkey.\textsuperscript{100} The interests of Washington are affected by their ability to change the balance of power in the world and also the domestic interest.\textsuperscript{101}

An argument made that the United States should shift some of the resources and attention as they are currently giving to the Middle East and more specific the conflict in Syria has not been accepted. The Middle East region has grown into a sort of theater for “great-power competition”. One of the most prominent factors to why the US will not leave Syria and the Middle East is that China and specifically Russia will try to fill the vacuum that a US departure would create. Russia has already made certain moves that could be interpreted as they have a desire to become a power broker in the region.\textsuperscript{102}

One of Syria’s natural resources is oil and gas, which can explain some of interest. However, since the war in Syria started in 2011, the oil and gas production has been severely weakened. A huge reason for this was the massive economic sanctions against the country. The conflict divided the oil between several players; the Syrian government, the Kurdish forces, and the Islamic State and they are all in conflict with each other. However, in spring 2016, half of the IS oil field was destroyed, due to an attack made by Russia, America and the Kurds.\textsuperscript{103} This is a clear realistic decision since the interest in the oil is based in the nation's interest in increasing its resources and thus the security of the country.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{100} Helena Zachariasson, Trump häver sanktioner mot Turkiet, 23 OKTOBER 2019, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/trump-om-syrien (121119)
\textsuperscript{103} Hussein Almohamad, “Oil in Syria between Terrorism and Dictatorship” Soc. Sci. 2016, 5(2), 20; https://doi.org/10.3390/soscsic5020020 (121119)
In the autumn of 2019 president Trump decided to withdraw a huge part of the American troops from Syria, however, he decided to leave the troops who are controlling the oil. Trump announced that the only reason for leaving the troops was to keep control over the oil and the statement has been highly criticized. The US declaration regarding protecting the oil from the IS terrorist movement is a sweeping reason even though several US officials has articulated that the main reason for them to harvest the oil is to keep it away from IS. It is illegal, according to international law, to exploit the natural resources of an independent state unnotarized. Because it would be considered to violate the territory of the nation and that would threat the sovereignty of the state. Even Turkey, which due to their NATO membership has been an allied to the United Stated, has expressed their believe that the Syrian natural resources belong to the country itself.\textsuperscript{105} This is a clear realist thought which emphasizes the nations need for resources. Trump is breaking international law, which may indicate that he does not recognize it which also reflects the realist view. It is clearly important for Trump to not be depending on the Middle East and the US does not aim to be in a relative dependence with the region.\textsuperscript{106}

4.1.2 Russia

\textsuperscript{105} Hussein Almohamad, “Oil in Syria between Terrorism and Dictatorship” (12111)
Russia has been in an important player in the Middle East for a long time and they have a special interest in Syria. When the Trump administration announced in autumn 2019 that they would remove their military troops from the northern part of Syria. Russia was given the opportunity to take part in the decisions regarding the evolvement of the conflict. Since the US prepared to leave the conflict, the Kremlin’s strategy would not have to change significantly, which implore the question that maybe it was not only about Syria.\[107\] It could be argued that Russia’s campaign in Syria and interests in the entire Middle East was always the Kremlin’s goal. Hence, the conflict was viewed as an instrument to showcase Russia’s motivations as a global power within the Middle East. This would allow Moscow to recognize the Trump administration’s decision to desert Syria as a victory, which therefor would add significantly power to the capital. Furthermore, it would allow the Russian politicians to also reach out to important leaders in Europe such as France and Germany to influence them to embrace their own version of a political settlement. Russia have a noticeably interest in spreading their ideology and morals within the region to create even more security. Moscow is showing their power against the United States as a way to shift the power balance and also help themselves to show other states that the nation once again is on its way to become a superpower.\[108\]

When Russia started to mediate in the Middle East, Syria was in a state of crises with several different groups in conflict with each other. However, Moscow and their military campaign in Syria was meet with extreme caution due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia saw a defeat of IS as an important part of the political settlement in Syria, which would open of for Russia to regain their status as a global power.\[109\]

It is clear that Moscow have had a goal of emerging as a regional power within the area. Russia adopted a form of “fixer role” and articulated that they could be a new alternative to the United States. The role as “fixer” has given benefits to Russia and it could be argued that Putin always have had greater intentions then to just take what was left but to “flex its muscle and showcase power”. Moscow have increased trade and regional political capital in the region. Even before Trump’s decision to withdraw troops from Syria, Russia had already developed enough political capital and used its hard power leverage to become a key intermediary.\textsuperscript{110} Russia is trying to shift the power balance and there is several indications that the Middle East has become an arena for Moscow to change the world order from unipolar to bipolar. One effect this will have is according to Waltz a more secure international politics that has a form of checks and balance that currently are not existing.\textsuperscript{111}

Russia has also taken an interest in Syria's oil production and has tried to help the government to regain control. In addition, in the year of 2018 the two states entered into an agreement on a joint energy cooperation contract. The agreement gave Russia exclusive rights to build up the Syrian oil and gas sector, which was seriously affected by the unrest in the country. IS took control over the oil production as a result of the conflict, however, they lost it to the opposition and the US. In addition, production was negatively impacted by the US air strikes that caused major injuries.\textsuperscript{112} Moscow has an economic interest regarding getting access to the oil production. Both USA and Russia

\textsuperscript{108} DMITRIY FROLOVSKIY, “What Putin Really Wants in Syria”, Foreign Policy, FEBRUARY 1, 2019, HTTPS://FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/2019/02/01/WHAT-PUTIN-REALLY-WANTS-IN-SYRIA-RUSSIA-ASSAD-STRATEGY-KREMLIN/ (121219)
\textsuperscript{110} DMITRIY FROLOVSKIY, “WHAT Putin Really Wants in Syria”, (121219)
\textsuperscript{111} SOHR, “Turkey, Russia preparing another Syria summit: Kremlin”, (121219)
\textsuperscript{112} Kenneth N. Waltz, “Realism and International Politics”, 197
stress the importance of resources. An increase in recourses will growth Russia’s status in the world and to not be overly dependent on other states.113 Moscow has expressed its dislike for the Trump administration's plan to maintain the military presence at the Syrian oil fields. According the US was the reason for keeping the oil fields solely for the sake of the nation's security, however, it is arguably their way of keeping the assets away from both Russia and Iran.114

Russia's 2015 military intervention in Syria took many by surprise and raised questions about the potential for similar actions in other conflicts outside of post-Soviet. Russia’s decision to intervene in Syria could be a direct effect of the threat the conflict presented against the nation’s security. The intervention would also provide significant benefits such as geopolitical profits. Since the conflict was an imposing security threat, alternative means, for example diplomacy, would according to Moscow have been proven useless.115 On the other hand, it could be argued that other methods would have been positive, for example during the war in Lebanon, there were hundreds of ceasefires that, despite being constantly broken, saved thousands of people's lives.116 Nevertheless, even if it is not likely that Russia will intervene in other neighboring countries. The USA both civilian and military decisionmakers should not assume that Russia will back down from any conflict that will be beneficial for their interest.117

115 SOHR, 50 months of the Russian intervention in Syria: thousands of dead, political agreements and military measures to return more than two-thirds of the country to the control of the “regime”. Northern Syria is a gift from the International Coalition to Moscow and Assad, 30/11/2019, http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=149018 (121219)
117 SOHR, 50 months of the Russian intervention in Syria: thousands of dead, political agreements and military measures to return more than two-thirds of the country to the control of the “regime”. Northern Syria is a gift from the International Coalition to Moscow and Assad, (121219)
4.2 Liberalism

4.2.1 USA

There are currently two basic legal principles in international systems: states are sovereign, and they should not invade other states generally. The UN Charter reflects these two principles and recognizes only two exceptions in its text: actions taken under a UN Security Council resolution and individual or collective self-defense. The United States has stated that they are considering taking action against the Syrian regime and it is necessary to decide how to comply with these laws. If they choose to look past the laws claiming that there is a greater purpose, it could potentially be considered an illegal intervention in Syria.118 Syria is still a sovereign state that can maintain reasonable control over its borders, economy and population. There have been exceptions with the UN resolution, for example when the United States invaded Libya. Both Russia and China have stated that they will veto any intervention in Syria that comes before the Security Council.119

According to International laws is an imminent attack against Syria illegal, though, an armed intervention would be legal if the Syria government was planning to attack another state. However, the same argument was made during the American intervention of Iraq and the theory relies heavily on evidence and intent, which historically has been difficult to prove. It is problematic to create a hard-legal justification by the UN for an invasion of Syria. According to this theory, there is reason to believe that the United States

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119 Ibid. (121419)
could have a case based on the violence in Syria, including the huge number of refugees, armed violence, and border instability.  

Although there may be an interest in the United States to overlook international laws, they should be considered normative values that foreign policy should embrace. International law, treaty obligations and international institutions act as brakes to force nations to more carefully consider the enormous costs and consequences of war, seek consent and consider the broader principles and precedent that are at stake before embarking on war.

Most scholars within the field considered the US air strikes to be illegal. Among other things, it was not considered to be a humanitarian intervention. However, there is an ongoing debate over whether the doctrine of “Jus ad Bellum” contains an exception for humanitarian efforts, the dominant view is that the doctrine contains no such exception. The operation in Syria was carried out even though there was no permit from the UN Security Council, nor was it carried out on the basis of self-defense. Another factor that has led to criticism was the amount of force used from the US. Regardless of the intentions expressed by the Obama administration, they do not follow international law, which contradict Barack Obama's otherwise liberalistic view.

Growing evidence has shown that about 1,429 civilians and more than 400 children died in the chemical weapon attack in Syria, by President Bashar Al-Assad. The attack led to several militaries, political and moral considerations for what responsibilities other states should have and when does it become legal to enter another country. In particular, it is important to discuss whether the Syrian government violated international law when using chemical

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121 Ibid 953 (121419)
122 Ibid 956 (121419)
weapons against civilians and whether the US were legally required to retaliate with military force.124

The United States has on several occasions tried to get approval in the UN Security Council to impose military sanctions on Syria, but it has been vetoed down by Russia and China. However, the UNSIMS was cleared.125 The terms of resolution 2043 authorized a primary placement of up to 300 unarmed military observers and a civilian module. The resolution was given the following mandate:126 “To monitor a cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties; To monitor and support the full implementation of the Envoy’s six-point plan”127 The Council requested the Syrian government to guarantee an efficient operation through enabling a unobstructed deployment of its personnel and capabilities and also to ensure freedom of movement and also access to fulfil its directive.128

In November 2018, the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), together with the State Department and the US Coast Guard, released an update highlighting the risks of cargo and transportation to Syria. There were further additions to risks related to the transport of petroleum owned by the Syrian government and the petroleum with Iranian origin. This was issued on March 25, 2019.129 The main reason why these US departments release this information was to warn states who entered into agreements on petroleum shipments with Syria could be at high risk of sanctions by the USA.130 This form of threats does not match with the liberal thought on trade cause according to the theory is it imperative that everyone is a part of the

124 Ibid 956 (121419)
127 Ibid (113019)
128 Ibid. (111019)
130 Ibid. (11.30.19)
treaty. However, the liberalist view also argues that it is not possible to achieve the true benefits from trade if it is not under conditions of peace which could explain the reason for the United States statement. The sanctions introduced included trade restrictions and freezing of assets to several Syrian officials, as well as a ban on Syrian investment. The sanctions have been introduced for the sale, transfer, delivery or export of "jet fuel" and "fuel additives" to Syria since January 7, 2015.\(^\text{131}\)

John Kerry, the US secretary of states between 2013 till 2017, argues that the government of Syria’s Bashar al-Assad and Islamic State militants have an interdependent relationship with each other. He expressed that “\textit{Assad and ISIL are symbiotic. ISIL presents itself as the only alternative to Assad. Assad purports to be the last line of defense against ISIL. Both are stronger as a result.}”\(^\text{132}\) According to Kerry the situation in Syria can only be resolved through political transformation rather than military power.\(^\text{133}\) Kerry opens up the agenda and talks about the importins of political relations instead of armed violence which is a rather liberal view.\(^\text{134}\) The secretary also expressed the need to be involved in the Middle East since any form of disturbance within the region could be harmful to US economy and national security. \textit{“Any serious disruption to the Gulf oil supplies can have major consequences for our own well-being,”}\(^\text{135}\) according to Kerry.\(^\text{136}\) He underlined the need for resources as an important factor for the nation’s security which is a clear realistic thought.\(^\text{137}\)

\(^{131}\) Ibid (12.15.19)  
\(^{133}\) Ibid (121519)  
\(^{134}\) Grancay, Martin, and Szikorova, Nora. "Liberalism in Foreign Trade versus Liberalism in Air Transportation Is There a Link?" (12.15.19)  
\(^{135}\) Secretary of State John Kerry “Speech on Syria” (12.15.19)  
\(^{136}\) Ibid. (12.15.19)  
\(^{137}\) Grancay, Martin, and Szikorova, Nora. "Liberalism in Foreign Trade versus Liberalism in Air Transportation Is There a Link?" (12.15.19)
4.2.2 Russia

The Russian approach to issues of humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect (R2P) goes against the Western-inspired international norms. Among other things, has the debate been triggered by the conflict in Syria and what international law actually allows? The United States and Russia have considered different actions against Syria, which makes it difficult for the UN Security Council to implement policy.\(^\text{138}\) To some extent, Moscow has shown that international law is not truly accepted and that it is not an obvious part of their foreign policy. Regarding their use of the UN and its resources, Russia has clearly disregarded the US view that the UN should take its responsibility in Syria and used its veto right by stopping several of the proposals in the Security Council.\(^\text{139}\)

The debate has shined some light on whether Russia has ignored the responsibility to protect (R2P) to instead guard their own strategic interests in Syria, including vetoing a resolution that threatens to impose sanctions. This approach to Syria can be explained by their desire to maximize their growing political influence and the trade benefits they enjoy through their relations with the Syrian regime; it is also a way for them to legitimize their foreign policy interests. Moscow's attitudes to intervention and R2P show major differences between Western liberal democracies, including the United States. The question this raises is which arguments relate best to the resolution explaining international law. In addition, questions that explain the extent to which Moscow's arguments may affect international legal debates in conflicts.\(^\text{140}\) An argument to be made here is whether Russia is actually following the international laws better than the US by stopping sanctions against Syria. It

\(^{139}\) Hazan, D. (2012, Sep 27). Human rights in syria worsen; global powers intervene. (12.15.19)
\(^{140}\) Ibid 816 (12.15.19)
depends on how to interpretive the US resolution on when states are allowed to enter another country.\footnote{Bill Chappell, Russia Says U.S. Broke International Law In Striking Syria, Citing 'Pretext', NPR, April, 7 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwoway/2017/04/07/522982477/russia-says-u-s-broke-international-law-in-striking-syria-citing-pretext?t=1577291766499 (12.15.19)}

Russia and Syria have developed an open and responsive relationship. Amongst other, trade and economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation have taken shape. In several different arenas, sizable investment projects have advanced. Moscow expressed their desire to keep working together to further straightening their relationship on the bilateral agenda.\footnote{The Russian Government, “Dmitry Medvedev congratulates Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis on the 75th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations” 21 July 2019, http://government.ru/en/news/37417/ (120119)}

Since the Western world has created several economic sanctions against Russia, the Middle East, including Syria, has become a favourable arena for Russia's economy. Arabic oil investments along with fruits, vegetables and dairy products from the Middle East can fill the void that European agricultural producers left. Several countries within the Middle East are sceptical and have expressed criticism of Washington and its lack of action, especially during the Syrian civil war. Al – Assad is using the political and economic dealings with Russia as a means to signal to the United States that there are different alternatives.\footnote{SOHR, “Russia plans long-term Mideast presence via Syria” 27/08/2017, http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=73019 (120119)}

The relationship between the Gulf states, including Syria, has become an important ally for Russia and its position within the region. Cooperation and dependence between the states is increasing, primarily the energy cooperation. This could also lead to an increases financial position for Russia in the region.\footnote{Katerina Oskarsson and Steve A. Yetiv, “Russia and the Persian Gulf:: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence” Middle East Journal , Vol. 67, No. 3 (Summer 2013), pp. 381-403, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/90000726, 381 (120119)} Russia has clearly changed its approach to the region since the fall
of the Soviet Union. Both with regard to the political position of the Persian Gulf as well as expressed economic interests in the area. Russia has also a commercial interest in the region, and interest in creating regional stability. Both the Russian government and the Syria government has developed informal channels that are characteristic for liberal interdependence. The Syrian crisis could further affect Russia's relations with major Arab Gulf states in a positive manner.

The commercial interests for Russia in the region must not mean a complete absence of rivalry in non-military areas nor a complete absence of geopolitical competition. Several of the cooperation relations that exist between Russia, China and the United States are characterized by important parts of both cooperation and rivalry. However, there is information that would suggest that Russia is trying to limit US influence in the region. This may have several reasons, among other things, for meeting its regional goals and partly for control at a global level. Another reason for limiting the influence of the United States could be Russia wanting to build up and protect and strengthen the perception of sovereignty. Furthermore, the rivalry between the United States and Russia are not the most important issue but instead raise the question of whether rivalry is resilient to other factors, including dependency and legitimate interests in stability for commercial purposes.

An important point regarding Russia's cooperation with the Gulf states concerns the region's choice to invest even more in Russian oil and gas extraction and production. In 2008, the International Energy Agency submitted a forecast for oil production earlier, had clearly departed from the view that oil supply may reach a peak or reach a point where global oil

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145 Ibid 401 (120119)
147 Katerina Oskarsson and Steve A. Yetiv, "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence", 381 (120119)
148 Ibid 401(120119)
production no longer increases to then decline. There are several important factors that drive the potential problem of oil reaching its peak, which is the underinvestment of major oil companies and countries, both in oil discovery and in production. These underinvestment’s are caused by a number of different factors, but this problem can be alleviated by greater cooperation between Russia and the Gulf, which will also continue in the longer term. For Russia is it important to maintain favorable relations with the West. Russia has opened the agenda and moved away from military force and instead focused on the relations and interdependence they have created in the region. This does beg the question whether this is because of their liberalistic view or due to them wanting to show USA that they are not the only game in town.

5 Discussion

This analysis opens up for several questions, amongst other, what the underlying interest is when states make decisions. Regarding Russia is it definitely interesting to consider whether the purpose has always been to return to a major global power or whether interest for power has increased as the nation has gained more and more influence in the region. I argue that the balance of power is an important motivation to explain the vast interest in Syria. The aim for Putin's Russia has likely always been to maximize its influence and create allies in the region in order to challenge to balance of power against the United States and to contest the unipolar world order.

As for the US there is also a clear realistic perspective, however, there is still some differences between the Obama administration and President Trumps way of dealing with the conflict. The liberalistic view was more present during Obama, for example, he expressed a desire for the UN to create a peaceful and

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149 Ibid 403 (120119)
democratic Syria. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal was likely to acquire a new ally against Iran. While Trump clearly expressed realistic thoughts, for example his decision to keep the US forces controlling the oil in the country, in order to protect the US from IS. However, his main reason is probable to increase resources and use the oil as a way of not being as dependent on the Middle East's natural resources. Other factors that are likely to explain the decision, is balancing power and creating a strong independent state and keep the US as the number one global power.

Political officials are primarily focusing on the nation's security, prosperity and power. For the US, has Iran been an important factor and something that has greatly influenced their interest in the Syria conflict. For Russia, is there a great interest in resuming their status as a superpower and the country has a vast interest in gaining influence in the region. The realistic perspective has played a major role in Syria and the superpowers have used the country as an arena to pursue their own interests and increase their power.

5.1 Is it liberalism?

It is the realistic perspective that governs the states when deciding on the course of action regarding their foreign policy. Although there is possible to find liberalistic elements. In addition, I believe there are often elements of realism in what appears to be clear liberal factors. For example, interdependence or sanctions can instead of liberalism be a sort of compelling diplomacy, which is instead a realistic element.

The UN is a liberal institution that is built on factors of interdependence and international laws. However, in the Security Council, has the US and Russia been given the opportunity to vote in which way they believe that world policy should develop. It is of interest to consider if the states where actually following UN resolution and international law. The United States claims that it had a responsibility to the Syrian people at the same time that Russia together
with China vetoed several sanctions. Questions of responsibility and the extent to which Syria had control over its borders can be debated. It also opens up questions about whether the UN should be an arena for strong powers to pursue their own politics. Again, the underlying interest behind these states becomes interesting to keep analyzing.

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