UNIVERSAL ANARCHY AND WAR BY PROXIES IN SYRIA

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**Universal Anarchy and War by Proxies in Syria**   
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**Introduction**

This article asserts a neutral position regarding all parties involved in the confrontation in the Syrian predicament. Its objective is to identify the nature and complexity of the Syrian crises and to propose that unless all concerns of parties involved in the conflict are taken seriously, there is less hope for finding solutions. Few articles posted on the Internet, raised the following: «Is what’s happening in Syria today a revolution, a civil war or a proxy war?» The mere usage of one of these concepts in the current Syrian situation denotes a political position. Supporters of the Syrian opposition call it a revolution, while those not at all sympathetic to the opposition call it a proxy war, which is an attempt to ridicule the opposition. But which of these terms is accurate in a state of international and regional anarchy?

The Syrian bloody and messy predicament is mostly consistent of people of the same country fighting against each other (although all parties at conflict have brought in some foreigners to help them in their struggle). The Syrian strife is also considered a proxy war in that each side had foreign states backing them with their own particular interests. Despite this, the Syrian strife is also referred to as a revolution. It is a revolution because, first of all, different parties are trying to overthrow the existing regime and replace it with another one, with a lot of confusion on the nature of the new regime to replace the existing one[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn1" \o ").

Thus, the Syrian strife is simultaneously a revolution, a civil war, as well as a proxy war. It is a civil war in that both sides involved are from the same country and fighting against each other although, there are internationals fighting on both sides, notably, Iranians and Hezbollah militants with the Assad regime, and foreign Sunni jihadists with the opposition. It is a proxy war in that each side in the civil war has foreign state backers (Iran and Russia for Assad; The West, Turkey, and the GCC states for the opposition). And it is a revolution in that a percentage of the political and social elite supported by a mass of population wish to change the dominant political system. But it also is a social revolution, in that we have seen an unprecedented eruption of the «Syrian street», whereby the elite no longer holds a monopoly of power. This reclamation of the public space, exemplified by face-book pages, videos, songs, parodies, and witty signs, is in itself a revolution without placing face-value on its good or bad nature. And it is «popular» in that this eruption involves segments of society that were historically marginalized and excluded from the cultural and public life of Syria. The Syrian revolutionaries are reclaiming their voices in a much disoriented manner, and this in Syria is developing a revolution within a revolution[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn2" \o ").

**Historical Precedents**

If we look at historical precedents, Syria’s civil strife is like all other civil wars, it is a revolution, a civil confrontation, and a proxy war all in one. The point here is that these are not mutually exclusive categories. They are terms that can complement each other and are used to describe different aspects of a conflict. In fact, historically, there is very little precedent for any conflict in any place being only one or the other without some intersection and overlap. The Bolshevik revolution turned into the Russian Civil War. The Cuban revolution against Batista was a popular uprising against a US-backed president, yet the rebels later sought Soviet support, thus, Batista, and later Cuba’s revolutionaries, were also proxies, in the classical definition of the word. Yet, in leftist discourse, this was all ok, because, in Russia and Cuba, one side was fighting an ideological struggle against another. Thus, them being involved in a civil war, or a proxy war, were not something that hindered their revolution[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn3" \o ").

Facts in Syria now reveal that fighting groups are sponsored by outside powers and are seeking to score against each other ultimately shaking or maintaining the existing balance of power. Almost all fighting groups in any domestic strife always call for external support and ultimately become hostage to this support in conducting a war by proxy. Anarchy that is known by scholars as the absence of a worldwide government or universal sovereign provides strong incentives for power expansion. All states strive to maximize their supremacy relative to other states because only the most powerful states can guarantee their survival. They pursue military and power policies when the benefits of doing so out-weight the costs. States under anarchy face the ever-present threat that other states will use force to harm or subdue them. This compels states in a state of universal anarchy to improve their relative power positions, through arms and proxy wars.

Thus, if we wish to characterize the armed opposition in Syria as a «proxy», meaning they get support from foreign states, this is accurate. However, if by «proxy» we mean that they simply do foreign states’ bidding for them with no popular support base on the ground, this is inaccurate. However, there are always heavy costs associated with proxy wars and the most vital is that domestic groups lose their liberty in finding an internal national solution. In order for any future way out, for the Syrian predicament, to work, it has to obtain the consent of domestic and all intervening powers[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn4" \o ").

Universal and regional anarchy allows the international system to provide incentives for power expansion under certain conditions. Under anarchy, many of the means a state uses to increase its security decrease the security of other states. This security dilemma causes states to worry about one another’s future intentions and relative power. Teams of states may pursue purely security-seeking strategies, but inadvertently generate twisting of mutual hostility or conflict. States often, although not always, pursue expansionist power policies because their leaders mistakenly believe that aggression is the only way to make their states secure. Under most circumstances, the stronger states in the international system do pursue military, diplomatic, and foreign economic policies that communicate restraint.

**Syria and the concept of Proxy War**

In today’s blunder usage of the term «proxy war» to refer to Syria, it is clear that people are not simply trying to state «it is a revolution with foreign state backers», but rather, that the fact that there is a proxy war leaves no room for revolution, or even for civil war. This is exemplified by statements such as, «It is not an uprising (revolution), it is a proxy war», or analysis that proclaims «what started out as a revolution is now a proxy war» whereby Syria is reduced to a «battleground» for foreign states. The importance of raising such argument in this article has to do with feasible solutions. Negating an essential reason, cause and motive of the Syrian strife will hinder a potential compromise leading out of this complicated predicament[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn5" \o ").

Some analysts crafted the category of «proxy war» as one that is mutually exclusive and that cancels out anything and everything that preceded it. Uprising in the implied argument states that uprising must remain «pure», and once foreign states become involved, the situation is no longer a revolution. Those who are claiming that Syria’s conflict is «not a revolution, but a proxy war» are misusing the term proxy war and misrepresenting what revolutions were historically. The new usage of the term by those who wish to deny that Syria is also undergoing a revolutionary process denies the history of revolutions against governments frequently being proxy wars at the same time. Instead, it is trying to draw a comparison not to the righteous struggles of the past that also just happened to be proxy wars, but to historical events such as the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1959, whereby Cuban exiles were trained by the CIA to do the CIA’s bidding. They were sent into Cuba with no popular support base with the express purpose of overthrowing the revolutionary leftist government of Cuba, which was the objective of the US government. This is the analogy people are trying to draw when they say Syria’s situation today is a «proxy war and not a revolution». However, this new definition of a proxy war does not apply to the Syrian case today. The Syrian rebels took up arms on their own and were encouraged by some other states. They receive support to upgrade their struggle and it is historically normal that they are now confined by the sponsors for the critical part. Comparing Syria’s armed opposition to Cuban anti-Castro exiles or to Nicaraguan contras is inaccurate. The opposition in Syria does have popular support base on the ground. It has as well armed Syrian band of soldiers and ultimately this complicate political solutions because some think that a military solution is the only alternative[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn6" \o ").

Even calling it a «proxy war» in the disapproving sense mischaracterizes the Assad regime. The Assad regime is not an Iranian/Russian proxy fighting to do the bidding of Iran and Russia in Syria. Rather, it is a proclaimed regime that is fighting for its survival, with Iranian and Russian backing. Both sides, then, in Syria, are not «proxies» in the sense that they only do foreign states’ bidding. They are only «proxies» if by proxy we mean that they receive foreign state backing. And yes, those foreign states that back each side do not do so out of the pureness of their hearts (which is itself an irrational argument, as it suggests states have acted out of the pureness of their hearts at some point in the past, which they have not), but rather for their own interests. But there is a difference between intervening with certain interests and achieving those interests (which explains the hesitancy of some of the states backing the opposition).

**Parties at War in Syria**

If we stick with the classical definition, then yes, the conflict in Syria today is a proxy war. The alternative conceptualization which is now noted in the literature about proxy wars is that of multiple proxy conflicts playing out in the midst of the Syrian civil war. This would bring about the realization just how many different parties and powers are facing off against each other there. Some are using proxies. Some represent their interests directly.

First, we have Assad and his allies: Iran, Hezbollah and Russia. Then we have the Syrian rebels and their allies: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Let’s not leave out Israel which has no concern with Assad, but which opposes Iran and Hezbollah. That makes Israel, a party with a major military presence, a wild card. Despite its false protestations and to the contrary, it has intervened in the war, though only to embargo weapons shipments from Iran to Hezbollah. But to re-modify the balance of deterrence, it has also attacked advanced Russian arms being shipped via Syria, possibly to Hezbollah.

Israel has warned Assad that it would penalize the state military forces if he attacks it in retaliation for IAF air attacks on these weapons shipments. Israeli military sources have gone so far as to threaten to undermine his rule. But what would Israel do? Replace Assad with whom, with what? The Syrian Chalabi? The Syrian Islamists? How many allies does Israel think it has among the Syrian opposition? Of course, it could buy somebody off. But that’s both an expensive proposition, and even less likely to work for the long run[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn7" \o ").

Up till now, (in the eyes of the Israelis) Assad maintained a stable, relatively peaceful border in the Golan. He was predictable and quiescent, except for the less significant nuclear adventure with the North Koreans. So what will come after Assad? Is it anarchy? The Nusra Front, Al Qaeda, Alawites in new robes, new Sunni elites. So far, all are fighting for their slice of the territorial pie. That could leave the country in a mess, much as Lebanon was during and long after its own civil war. In such a situation, Syria poses a grave threat to Israel. Instability could easily lead to development of a native Hezbollah style opposition and some say it is already in the making.

Israel is not yet launching a proxy war in Syria, but it could play off the protagonists one against the other as it did between Fatah and Hamas after the latter first began; or as it did between the Maronites, Shiites, and Sunnis in Lebanon. As long as there is a reasonable balance of power in Syria, and one ethnic group doesn’t overpower others, the resulting stalemate might force them to fight each other rather than Israel. That’s why Daniel Pipes, in his typical fashion, suggests that Israel support whichever side appears to be losing. In his mind, the more the Syrians slaughter each other the less they’ll slaughter Israelis[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn8" \o ").

Complicating this further are the various proxy standoffs among the parties: Russia against the U.S.A., Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey against the Alawite Assad, who is backed by the Shiite Iranians. It’s enough to make one lightheaded. But the end result of all of this ethnic fragmentation is an exceedingly dangerous situation. Already over 80,000 have died, over 1.5million are refugees. In other similar ethnic wars in Rwanda, Serbia-Kosovo, Congo, hundreds of thousands have been slaughtered. Unless all parties aren’t exceedingly careful, this could be Syria’s future.

If you layer over this the larger war playing out between Israel and Iran, including their respective backers, the U.S. and Russia (again), this is a very high stakes game. But unlike poker, there may be no winners. A further instructive historical example might be the Spanish Civil War, in which Nazi Germany used Franco as its proxy while Soviet Russia and the international left used the Loyalists as their proxy. In that conflict, the Nazis especially tested out their latest weapons systems, which would go on to «productive» use in the greater war that followed. As that Civil War was a rehearsal for World War II, might Syria now be a rehearsal for an even greater regional conflict to follow?

Reviewing the major parties at conflict in Syria as follows; Pro-Syrian government; The Syrian Regime and government loyalists; Iran, Russia and Hezbollah. Anti-Syrian government: The Syrian opposition and anti-government rebels; the US, NATO, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. It is worth mentioning that none of these actors are allies in any traditional sense in the international system. Instead, the actors above are simply either for or against the current Syrian Government. These participating foreign states have no strong active military presence within Syria yet, but they are transitioning from backing tens of thousands of fighters, not including independent jihadists assembling from different Islamic regions.

**Russia and the Syrian Predicament**

The Russians are not interested in supporting President Assad of Syria for ideological reasons. They have a high stake in securing their geopolitical interests first; however, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They also have no desire to see Assad’s Regime crumble and be taken over by terrorists or a U.S.A. installed government that is unfriendly to them if they can do anything about it. Moreover, there are some economic benefits, but there are more economic costs than benefits at this point in time. Thus, the very issue for them is vastly geographic and political in nature. As for Iran it is more of an ideological support (existentialist in nature) and they are more committed[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn9" \o ").

The present move by the Russian is one related to the balance of power in the Middle East and the regional anarchy that permits intervention by all who have the capability to do so. Further, it is a direct response to a more likely U.S.A. intervention incoherent within the state department, seeking to take the initiative on behalf of the rebel forces opposing President Assad. Russia is thus further reacting to the U.S.A. in a preemptive manner in response to increasing Congressional and White House pressures and talks of no-fly zones or the arming of the rebels. The Russian operational strategy is to prevent a situation similar to Libya, where the U.S.A. or NATO air superiority is jeopardized, diminished or challenged by the Russian fleet’s force of presence. As observed up to this point in time, American involvement in Syria has been limited to passive support like intelligence sharing or medical aid to the Syrian opposition. A no-fly-zone has not yet been established and it appears that Russia is far exceeding the US in its political and military commitments in regards to Syria.

The military mobilization by the Russians should not be downplayed by the Americans or the opposition supportes. Ruling out any unintentional entanglement between Russian forces, though a low possibility at present, is not negatively confirmed. Such an unplanned escalation of war by an increasingly unstable power balance in and around Syria may also come from pairs like Russia and Israel, who face each other in direct geopolitical opposition. The Russian administration primarily seeks to secure their portion of Syria, their investments and their geostrategic interests. Only secondarily does it support the Syrian government by more overt and covert measures. After they establish more secure solid zones in the chaos, once safe from Western threats to bases and interests, they will then be in a better position to funnel supplies through those ports unconstrained. The Russian warships stationed off the Syrian shores carry with them supplies and marines and they are a lot more than a symbolic force. They are a substantial, genuine, military build-up on Syrian waters[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn10" \o ").

**Change in Military Balance**

The fact that the pro-regime Syrian forces are regaining the initiative is likely due to two critical factors: 1) the increased foreign support and commitment to the Syrian government and 2) a stronger uniformity than the rise up groups. To the North of Syria, Turkey is harboring the political Syrian Opposition leadership backed by the West, as well as over 400,000 refugees. Thus far only few have decided to join the ranks and fight back in a campaign of pushing in the direction of the South. The rebels in the Northern Al- Raqqah, Northern Aleppo and Idlib provinces are apprehensive of the strict control of an expanding Turkish/NATO sphere of influence.

The current military strategic map indicates that the geostrategic province towards the Northeast, Hassakah and Deyr al-Zor, demonstrate the political influence of a large ethnic Kurdish rebel population, foreign Kurdish influence and the immigrating extremists from Iraq, filtering through cities like Abu Kamal. In the West, on the Mediterranean, Russia is stationed in Latakia and Tartus Provinces as well as Hezbollah coming out of South Lebanon and Al-Hirmel province for aid. Both areas permit the Regime with a strong supply from its ports and through Lebanon. They also permit outward control of central Syria expanding out from these zones.

As for competing countries that have no direct border influence or access they may choose to funnel assistance through Jordan or Iraq, for example. In the meantime, Iran continues to sustain the Assad Regime without the advantage of a shared border through arms flights and limited ground access through Iraq. They have supplied not only continual stockades of arms but advisors as well. Iran continues to back Hezbollah. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are backing many hardcore Islamist and jihadist fighters into cities clashing with cities of the extreme South, like Daraa[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn11" \o ").

**Fragmentation of Development**

The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees reports that 6.8 million are in need of aid and by the end of this year, about 10 million (half the population) will require humanitarian assistance. Also of note are the expanding bubbles of states into Syria’s Civil War due to fear of ethnic cleansing, torture, religious murders, terror, massacres, terrorism, extrajudicial killings, kidnappings and chemical weapons. That in addition to larger scale jihad between religious sects that could further escalate the situation to a Civil War which could threatens to ignite greater religious jihad in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and the greater region. The indirect warring between state powers with eager geopolitical regional interests for the control are also compounded by the greater internal crisis of a sectarian warfare between the Shiaa and Sunni concentrated areas.

When the West dropped support at the discovery of more and more of the rebel groups turned out to be radical jihadists backed by clusters of Saudis and Qataris, they began to back off further. One of jihadist faction, Jabhat al-Nusra, who is reported to have up to 10,000 fighters, even openly acknowledged an alliance with al Qaeda in Iraq. There is also the legitimate concern of a growing jihadist infiltration of the Syrian Opposition. So there was not only an increase in Russian and Iranian support for the Syrian Regime that caused a recent operational advantage, but there was also a decline and disruption in U.S.A. logistics to the Opposition force supply lines, which still remains a big issue. After the chemical weapons reports and the success of the regime Syrian military operations towards the West and to the North of Syria, Washington is planning on some sort of military action short of its soldier’s presence on the ground; still, they have been hesitant. The second reason for Syrian advances is the in-fighting between the Syrian Opposition rebel groups. This has increased as the Civil War becomes more and more defined in terms of pushing for democracy tendencies and jihadist inclinations[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn12" \o ").

Anarchy in Syria has indicated that various terrorists or militant groups are not restrained in targeting each others; even if they have the same ultimate objective of removing Assad from power. This has led to an increase in local warlords imposing strict religious standards or battling with another group to extract control after Syrian forces incurred losses or retreated in those towns. Hezbollah itself can claim to hold towns for Assad as well until the Syrian Army arrives. As the factions and infighting intensify, and as the Syrian regime military forces realigns itself with make confident allied support, the Syrian government continues to benefit from a clear advantage.

Theoretically, anarchy in Syria is now the flip side of Westphalian notions of sovereignty, where each unit is completely autonomous (at least in theory) within its own boundaries, and there is an absolute distinction between the domestic realm (a realm of hierarchic order) and the international realm (a realm of anarchy). Scholars of Politics have questioned this absolute distinction between anarchy and hierarchy in international systems, arguing that there can be different qualities of formal anarchy, from more «mature» anarchies where there is widespread agreement on principles of order to less «mature» anarchies where conflict among the units is more endemic. In effect, the organizing principle of international systems is not a given, as the old literature of politics contends, but a contested concept in itself [[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn13" \o ").

**USA and Future Interventions**

Stronghold positions of various factions clearly demonstrate the impact of foreign power projection of either pro or anti-Assad bleeding into a proxy war from their border areas. The U.S.A. remains confident that Syria’s partners and recent developments do not restrict their operational control; however, this may not be a tenable position as the events unfold. Already, Russia has placed a good amount of forces in the region. They appear determined to tip Syria’s fate and to prevent Western control of the war’s aftermath. This information, if confirmed, reflect the widening scope of Syria’s proxy war between Shiite Iran and some Arab Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar that are generously supporting Sunni opponents of Assad.

As Western countries stand with the Syrian opposition, and Russia continues to support and defend Assad in a conflict that has become open to all regional parties, Israel finds itself dragged into the crisis». Iran’s role and Hezbollah’s role have grown substantially over the last couple of months», Observers have alleged that Hezbollah fighters were leading the battle for Qusayr in Homs province; three days after the Syrian regime began an assault to regain control of the town.

The town is a key strategic prize as it sits on the main highway between Damascus and the Mediterranean coast, and also controls rebel supply routes from the mainly Sunni Muslim port of Tripoli in neighboring Lebanon. All parties concerned are watching this and the Syrian opposition had voiced concerns that «when regime forces do go into Qusayr, if they do capture it, that there will be retaliation against the civilian population. The Syrian entanglement is now being observed as sectarian. It is bringing back of the age-old Sunni-Shiaa conflict and the divide-and-rule policy of imperial powers. It therefore parallels the turmoil in the Indian subcontinent in 1947 at the end of the 140-year-old British Raj. The eight-century long tensions between majority Hindus and minority Muslims culminated in a communal bloodbath which subsided only after Britain divided its colony into India and Pakistan. The partition claimed nearly 800,000 lives, and led to the transfer of 12 million people across the newly demarcated international border[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn14" \o ").

Now, considering the intensity of violence in Syria, the level of armed rebels’ organization and the duration of fighting, the International Committee of the Red Cross ruled on 15 July that the country was in the midst of a civil war. Of the 23 million Syrians, 15.5 million are Sunni whereas levers of power are held largely by 3 million Alawites, a sub-sect within Shiaa Islam.

Several scenarios for Syria have been categorized as clear-cut or protracted. The most optimistic and least violent one has Syrian President Bashar al-Assad transferring power to a transitional authority led by his deputy until fresh elections are held. This proposal has the backing of the U.S.A., Britain and France, and would satisfy the armed Syrian opposition which refuses to deal with Assad under any circumstances. Another clear-cut scenario would entail the loyalist Syrian military defeated by the rebel Free Syrian Army (FSA). The FSA can achieve this by ‘controlled demolition’ of the Assad regime, stripping it of one powerful layer after another. But such a process will not unfold as planned when almost 100 rebel formations are fighting the government.

Moreover, such a multifarious coalition, united only by its hatred of the Alawite-dominated regime, will struggle to cope with the collapse of the centralized Syrian state. The post-Assad period will witness a potential ethnic cleansing of Alawites and their close allies, Christians, as well as clashes between various anti-Assad militias for supremacy, creating a fertile ground for al Qaeda-affiliated groups to flourish as they did in post-Saddam Iraq. A protracted scenario is more likely because the FSA is unable to consolidate its gains, mainly because it lacks popular support in major cities, as has been in the case in Damascus and Aleppo since mid July. Lacking a central command, sufficient ammunition and anti-aircraft missiles, the rebels are being squeezed out of the neighborhoods of the two prime cities by the regime’s air force, armor and infantry. Whereas the regime’s authority has been contested in Damascus and Aleppo, it remains unchallenged in the coastal plain between the al-Alawites Mountains, running north to south, and the Mediterranean.

Tartous, the second largest Syrian port is the site of Russia’s sole naval base in the Mediterranean. By gradually shifting its power base to the coastal plain, the Assad regime could continue a protracted civil war with assistance from Iran and Russia. Already, besides using the seaports to ferry arms and other aid to Syria, Iran is using the unguarded Iraqi air space to shore up the Assad government. The end of such conflict can be achieved by carving out an Alawite state between Lebanon and Turkey. This could involve population exchange amid violence as happened in British India in 1947, with Hindus and Sikhs moving out of West Pakistan into East Punjab and Delhi, and the Muslims from the other side migrating in the opposite direction. Already the Sunnis are leaving the coastal plain to take refuge in Sunni Turkey or to join relatives in the hinterland[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn15" \o ").

Bashar’s more recent privatization policy enriched the Sunni business class in large cities and that strengthened the regime’s non-Alawite base but the sectarian composition of the military remained. The Alawite professional soldiers know that if the Assad regime collapses, they could be exterminated by Sunni victors. They are therefore fighting as much for their own survival as the regime’s. A viable alternative for them is retreat to an Alawite-majority zone where they would be welcome[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria" \l "_ftn16" \o ").

**Conclusion**

The war in Syria is looking more like a war by proxy between outside interests. It may be that it can now only be resolved from outside. As stated before, most wars are proxies to some extent, perhaps the most notorious recent war being the three-cornered contest in Cambodia between 1978 and 1992. Syria is now starting to look like such a multi-faceted contest, but perhaps with even greater potential for complication.

Each of the international and regional powers hope to retain some semblance of balance in Syria, lest the country become a strategic black hole, into which they could eventually be drawn, sparking a wider regional war. But like Cambodia, with external actors playing Syria’s internal factions for their own interest, the cost can only be borne by the Syrians themselves. The UN eventually brokered an imperfect peace agreement in Cambodia. It may be in everyone’s interests that the UN now brokers a similarly imperfect peace agreement in Syria.

All parties involved in the Syrian conflict are trying to outsmart one another by denying the potential long-term stagnation of the balance of fear between the combating forces, and portraying the reality in one sided perception denying their opponents of their rights to have a say in proposed solutions.

 In order for any future solution to the Syrian predicament to work, it has to obtain the consent of the major domestic parties at conflict and all intervening powers. The importance of raising such argument in this article has to do with feasible solutions. To negate an essential reason of the Syrian strife will hinder any potential resolution.

N.B.: This article was written at time when decisive political, military and diplomatic events were in process and could alter the development course of action adopted by the different powers involved in the Syrian conflict.

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**الفوضى العالمية والحرب بالوكالة في سوريا**

هل تشهد سوريا اليوم ثورة؟ حربًا أهلية؟ أم حربًا بالوكالة؟ أي مصطلح يُستخدم للإشارة إلى الوضع في سوريا اليوم يكوّن موقفًا سياسيًا. المناصرون للمعارضة السورية يسمّون ما يحصل ثورة، بينما أولئك الذين لا يتعاطفون إطلاقًا مع المعارضة يعتبرونها حربًا بالوكالة. ولكن أي من هذه المصطلحات هي دقيقة في حال فوضى دولية وإقليمية؟  
التاريخ يزخر بالمواجهات المسلّحة التي اتخذت شكل حروب بالوكالة والتي حصلت تقريبًا في كل قارة. كل المجموعات المتصارعة تقريبًا في أي فتنة محلية تطلب دعمًا خارجيًا وتصبح حكمًا أسيرة هذا الدعم في إدارة حرب بالوكالة. الفوضى بمفهومها العلمي هي غياب حكومة معترف بها دوليًا أو قوة مهيمنة دولية تقدّم حوافز دولية لتمدّد القوة. كل الدول الواقعة تحت رحمة الفوضى مجبرة على تحسين مواقع قوتها النسبية من خلال التزوّد بالسلاح وعبر الحروب بالوكالة. وهكذا، إن أردنا توصيف المعارضة المسلّحة في سوريا على أنها «بالوكالة» بمعنى أنها تحصل على الدعم من دول أجنبية، فهذا توصيف دقيق. غير أنه إذا كان المقصود «بالوكالة» أنهم فقط يكتفون بدعم القوى الأجنبية من دون تمتعهم بدعم قاعدة شعبية على الأرض، فإن هذا التوصيف غير دقيق.  
مع ذلك هناك دائمًا أثمان باهظة تُدفع خلال الحروب بالوكالة، وأكثر الأمور حيوية هي أن المجموعات الأهلية تفقد حريتها في إيجاد حل داخلي- وطني.  
ولإنجاح أي حلول في المستقبل بالنسبة إلى المأزق السوري يجب الحصول على موافقة غالبية الأفرقاء المحليين في الصراع وكل القوى التي تتدخّل فيه.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/universal-anarchy-and-war-proxies-syria#sthash.2YF66nAR.dpuf