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**EUROPEAN UNION AS AN ACTOR IN SOLVING THE
SYRIAN CRISIS – REASONS FOR UNSUCCESSFUL
INTERFERENCE**

Bachelor's Thesis

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Tallinn 2015

I declare I have written the bachelor's thesis independently.
All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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ABSTRACT

The war in Syria has been continuing for over 4 years causing hundreds of thousands of casualties and millions of people have been forced to leave their homes. A peaceful solution to the conflict has not been able to achieve. Therefore, this research examines how the European Union has acted in order to find a solution to the conflict. Since the war has grown to have an influence to the whole surrounding region, the EU has been expected to react to the crisis. And the problem lies in the fact that what started as a civil war has turned into a regional problem and it is important to find an ending solution to it. Rise of the radical Islamist groups can be seen as a spillover of the happenings in Syria, which affect EU countries as well. The objectives of the research are to find why the European Union has reacted to the crisis as it has, and why has it not succeeded in finding a resolution. Hypothesis states that the organization should have reacted faster to the crisis in order for the interference to be more effective. This was proved during the research, in addition to four main concluding points why the actions of the EU have not been successful. The points are the lack of common stance towards the crisis, disunity of the Syrian opposition groups, difficult economical situation inside the EU and complexity of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Still, it is important for the EU to consider alternative solutions of interference before the complex conflict spreads even further. These could for example include joint military intervention with the United Nations or the US, without whom the EU will most likely not succeed in its actions.

Title: European Union as an Actor in Solving the Syrian Crisis – Reasons for Unsuccessful Interference

Keywords: European Union, Syria, Middle East, Arab Spring, Radical Islam, Conflict Management, Common Foreign and Security Policy, USA

INTRODUCTION

Syria is a home country for 17 million people from diverse ethnic and religious groups, who have over the years been part of the Ottoman Empire and France before the country's independence in 1946. However, the post- independence period was rather turbulent and several military coups took place in the country from the 1940's to 1970's. The unrest in the country has continued in the 21st century as well. Despite the rather small ethnical variety in the state with two main ethnic groups, Arabs and Kurds, the country still has suffered severe violence because of the clash of mainly two different religious groups: Sunnis and Alawites. The happenings of the Arab Spring in the late 2010 and early 2011 have been said to be the driving force to the political unrest and instability in the country, which has led to the current crisis in Syria.

From the year 2011 Syria has been in the middle of a war, which has caused nearly 200 000 casualties and millions of people have been forced to leave their homes. The influence to not only to the neighboring countries of Syria but also to the countries in Europe has been severe because of the amounts of refugees. Several European countries have taken refugees from the crisis area, but still many people are trying to get their ways to Europe from the crisis area illegally via Greece and Libya for example. Therefore, what once was a civil war in Syria has changed into a regional crisis.

This thesis aims to investigate the role of the European Union when trying to find a solution to the crisis in Syria. The main problem is that no solutions have been able to reach in order to end the war, which has started to spread all the way up to Europe. As the crisis has spread and radical Islamist groups have been drawn into the happenings in addition to Kurds, Christians and other minority groups, the nature of the civil war has changed. As aforementioned, the refugee flows to Syria's neighbor countries and to Europe have to be handled in a sophisticated way, and a possibility to start a new life after the devastation of their home country has to be secured. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR – has stated that the organizations and its partners are currently dealing with nearly 4 million refugees who are directly affected by the violence in Syria (UNHCR 2015). Most of these refugees have been placed to Syria's neighbor countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt in addition to countries in Europe.

The rise and presence of radical Islamist groups in the area has become a problem, which is influencing countries all the way up to Scandinavia. Especially young men who have an immigrant background from the crisis area and who currently reside in the EU have left to serve in religious groups such as ISIS in order to protect their ideologies and radical vision of their religion. At the moment their countries of residence are struggling to prevent this from happening as well as how to deal with the people returning from the war zone. Some states, for example Spain and the United Kingdom, have even made it a crime, which is to be punished with jail sentences.

Of course the desired situation at the moment is that no armed conflicts would take place within the borders of Syria and that the aftermath of the conflict would satisfy both of the parties involved. It is also important that the refugees would be placed to countries where they will be able to rebuild their lives with the help of the receiving country's government. It can be argued that in order to achieve these objectives Syria needs outside help from international institutions and organizations such as the EU. Also the fact that the crisis is a severe humanitarian crisis and has spread to the whole region as well as to the European countries makes the EU responsible to act. Even though the EU has not traditionally been seen as a security actor, the Lisbon treaty gave an opportunity for it to widen its international security role. The previous happenings of the Syrian crisis and the flow of illegal immigrants through the Mediterranean Sea have showed that EU needs to play a role of a security actor in order to maintain its own territories safe. As aforementioned it is evident that the topic is current and is influencing the international relations between the states not only in the Middle East area but between western countries as well.

Obviously, what it comes to the actions of the European Union, they have not been effective in solving the current crisis in Syria. Therefore, the research question is what the EU has done in order to solve the crisis in Syria and why has its actions not been effective. Studying conflict management, especially on the EU level, is important because the current situations in the global arena and within the borders of the EU have showed that crises will be likely to continue their existence. For example the crisis in Ukraine is a good example where the EU has been one of the mediators taking part to the peace talks but no actual results have been achieved yet. It can also be argued that the EU is expected to take stronger stance towards similar crises, which can even be linked to the possibility of building common military or peacekeeping forces for the EU member countries in the future.

Objectives of the research are going to answer to the question why the EU's interference towards the crisis has not been effectual. When it comes to the conflict management of the EU, it is assumed that the process before anything happens or actions are actually taken is very long and bureaucratic. Most likely the result will turn out to be on the side of reshaping the conflict management of the EU rather than keeping it in a form that it is today. And the restructuring would most likely to be bigger than just changing a couple features of the process.

The hypothesis of the research problem is that the interference from the EU's side should have been faster and stronger from the beginning of the crisis to be more effective. The longer the war continues the harder it becomes to impede. The framework to which the organization is built on can also be seen to be heavy and bureaucratic, which makes quick interference to such issues difficult.

To prove the hypothesis and achieve the objectives discussed above, the following tasks will be fulfilled. First, it is important to understand the nature of war in Syria – how, why and when it started, who are the parties involved and what can be seen as the outcome of the conflict until today. The beginning of the conflict can be seen as a civil movement to fight for democracy but later on it has turned out to be a war with several parties involved. Secondly, the relations between the EU and Syria will be inspected. Are there any particular agreements between these two, how has the relationship formed especially after Syria's independence from France. And thirdly, to understand the nature of the conflict management of the EU especially in the area where the conflict takes place, it is important to pay closer attention to the framework of Common Foreign and Security Policy, The European Neighborhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean. All in all, successfulness and the nature of the actions in Syria have to be analyzed carefully in order to find an answer to the research question.

Qualitative methods will be used in order to achieve the results for this research. Articles and books from successful scholars will be referred to and theories of conflict management and English School of International Relations ideas will be used to back up the arguments and tie the actual happenings into theories. Historical matters will be taken into consideration while examining the past relations of the EU and Syria, as well as the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

First chapter after the introduction will consider the theories of conflict management and ideas of the English School of international relations. This will give a theoretical framework to the research which will be referred to throughout the paper. How have successful scholars identified a conflict and what kind of models could be used in order to solve them will be examined. Ideas of the English School will concentrate on the international interference and why EU can be seen as a justified security actor in this crisis. Next chapter will move to empirical and analytical part of the research. What has actually happened, what the EU has done if it has and what kind of a role the US has had and are its action linked to EU's actions? Discussion will be an important part to sum up the empirical and analytical chapters, which will be followed by conclusions of the research as well as future ideas and possibilities to continue investigate this topic further.

1. THEORETICAL APPROACH

In this part considering subject related theories, I have chosen to pay closer attention to conflict management and its different theories and the English School of International Relations. These aspects have been chosen due to their relevance to the topic of the thesis and due to the hypothesis that the EU's reactions towards the crisis in Syria could have been more effective and faster from the beginning. Also since the war in Syria has turned into a devastative humanitarian crisis, it can be argued that the EU is expected and justified to act. Before we can understand what went wrong and why the organization has not been able to help to achieve peace it also significant to understand what does a conflict mean and what kind of models and approaches can be used to solve conflicts. When it comes to political interventionism, ideas about international and humanitarian responsibility need to be taken into consideration in a situation like Syria has at the moment. Ideas of the English School will be presented in the following chapters. Interdependence between countries is growing decade by decade and it is nearly impossible to isolate a single state from any of the happenings beyond its borders.

Terminology: Armed conflict, conflict management, contemporary conflict, negotiation, conflict resolution, interdependence, English School of International Relations

1.1 Conflict management theories and models

In the last quarter of the twentieth century the debate in international relations has concentrated on tensions between the postures of anarchy and order, conflict and stability in world politics (Yehuda, Sandler 2002, 1). It can be argued that it has continued to the 21st century as well when looking at the world politics today and happenings for example in Ukraine, Syria and Central Africa. However, the following examples will give a good idea how the conflict resolution has constituted as an own field of study. First issue of the "Journal of Conflict Resolution", which was published in 1957, a contributed scholar Kenneth Boulding wrote the following about conflict resolution:

The reasons which led us to this enterprise may be summed up in two propositions. The first reason is that by far the most practical problem facing the world today is that of international relations – more specifically the prevention of global war. The second is that if intellectual progress is to be made in this area, the study of international relations must be made an interdisciplinary enterprise, drawing its discourse from all the social sciences even further.

(Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall 2011, 35)

However, after twenty years had passed, the responsibility of the subject had widened significantly and Boulding added the following topics to the discussion:

The threat of nuclear holocaust remains with us and may well continue to do so for centuries, but other problems are competing with deterrence and disarmament studies for our attention. The journal must also attend to international conflict over justice, equality and human dignity; problems of conflict resolution for ecological balance and control are within our proper scope and especially suited for interdisciplinary attention.

(Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall, 35)

In today's global arena, it can be argued that conflict management and peace building are playing even bigger role and additions to the aforementioned topics have been done. Even though our generation has coped from the Second World War as well as the Cold War, it seems that conflicts are still likely to erupt. Because of the interdependence that countries have today, a conflict such as in Syria is likely to affect other states far away from the area itself. This is arguably also due to the technological globalization, economical interdependence and power struggle between the most influential states in the world. Therefore, it can also be argued that powerful states such as the US and Russia are playing a significant role when it comes to conflict eruption and conflict management. This has been seen for example in the Iraq and Afghanistan war as well as in the current conflict in Ukraine. Therefore, it can be said that conflict management needs to be taken into closer attention

especially because of the more globalized world we live in. And since the EU is arguably one of the most influential organizations in the western world it can play a significant role in conflict management when the member states agree on common terms. It is also important not to only concentrate on the conflict resolution, but also think about how to build long lasting peace between countries and prevent future conflict from happening.

What it comes to understanding the conflict itself, Peter Wallensteen (2012) has paid closer attention to its definition in his book “Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System”. First, he points out that all conflicts are solvable. However, the options are fewer after the conflict has erupted into a war (13). The author continues that behavior or action is always needed in order to a happening to become a conflict (15). However, if it would be that simple, conflict would end when the behavior or action of the other party ends, which is not applicable. Wallensteen moves further to explain that conflict can actually exist even though if there are no actions taken or demands formulated, but in that case the conflict is internal to the system (15). This can be related to the case of Syria in a way that the roots of the conflict and civil war had been planted to the nation from a longer period of time before nothing actual happened. Nevertheless, the reasons why the conflict erupted in Syria will be given closer attention in the following chapters, which will clarify these definitions and link them to the actual happenings.

Wallensteen concludes the definition of conflict to the position that as long as there is unpredictability in the system, there will be fear, and thus conflict, and actors and parties are fundamental to the conflict to occur (16). However, war, totalitarianism and genocide, which can be seen as the most difficult of all conflicts, need to be given more attention to. All of the aforementioned are started by humans and can be ended and remedied by humans, but not undone (17). The war in Syria meets all these definitions, which makes it even more important to try to find a solution to the issue as well as study further why the actions which have been taken to solve it, have not succeeded.

M. Rahim has stated in his book “Managing conflict in Organizations” (2011), that conflict does not actually have a single meaning and it can be defined in several different ways. Even though Rahim is focusing on conflict management on an organizational level, many of his ideas can be interpreted to conflicts inside states, between states and on the international arena in general. Five following elements are listed, which can be argued to sum up the definition of the conflict (Rahim 2011, 16):

1. Conflict includes opposing interests between individuals or groups in a zero-sum situation;
2. Such opposed interests must be recognized for conflict to exist;
3. Conflict involves beliefs, by each side, that the other will thwart (or has already thwarted) its interests;
4. Conflict is a process; it develops out of existing relationships between individuals or groups that reflect their past interaction and the context in which these took place; and
5. Imply actions by one or both sides that do, in fact produce thwarting of other's goals.

In the Syria's case, there are opposing interests between the government and opposition. These interests are clear to recognize and both of the sides have tried to prevent the other from succeeding in their aims. Also the conflict has developed throughout its existence and has become even more violent and both of the parties involved want to harm other party's interests.

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall have taken more political approach when examining the nature of conflict in their book "Contemporary Conflict Resolution" (2011). They see that "conflict is a universal feature of human society. It takes its origins in economic differentiation, social change, cultural formation, psychological development and political organization – all of which are inherently conflictual – and becomes overt through the formation of conflict parties, which come to have, or are perceived to have, mutually incompatible goals" (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall 2011, 7-8). Especially the economic differentiation, social change and political organization are features that have played a significant role in the escalation of the Syrian civil war and therefore, the definition can be arguably linked to the topic discussed. And as it will be discussed later in this research, the goals and intentions of the two opposing parties in the war are clearly incompatible and far away from each other.

Johan Galtung was the first peace researcher whose origins were not in Northern America but in Scandinavia instead. Galtung is well known for his concept of the conflict triangle, which is probably the most influential model to analyze the conditions of a conflict.

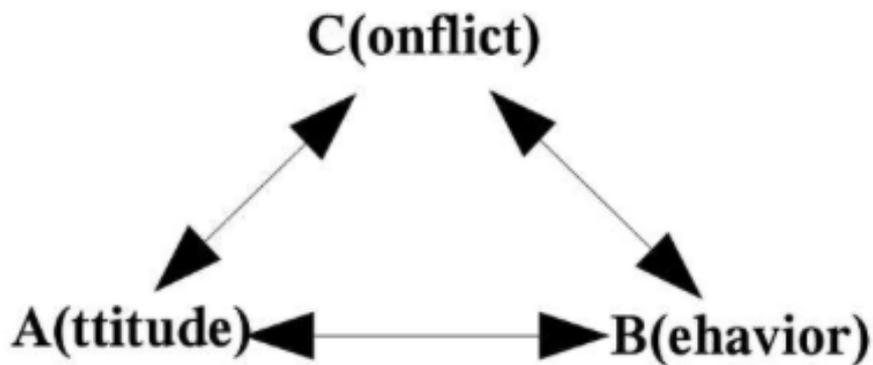


Figure 1. The conflict triangle

Source: (Galtung 1958-1973, 105)

The triangle serves a double purpose of keeping the three apart as well as linking them together creating a two-way causation (Galtung 105). Attitude includes parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other and behavior can involve cooperation or coercion gestures. Attitudes are always subjective reactions, which often activate in a conflict situation. This includes personal goals, dreams, wishes and morals. Each of the parties' political, social, ethnical identity as well as religion has an impact to the attitudes and how people cope with them (Peitso 2006, 7). Behavior refers to how parties express themselves in a conflict situation. It can be either straightforward oral communication; in a written form or with actions and in the worst case scenario behavior leads to violence (Peitso 7). However, all the parties in a conflict usually have a different perspective of what has happened and why. These perceptions are also likely to change while the conflict proceeds. To sum up the three phases of the triangle, conflict on top of the pyramid, which sometimes referred to contradiction, cannot be present without attitude and behavior (Galtung 105).

Ramsbothan and Woodhouse have combined Galtung's, Fisher's and Keashly's ideas about conflict and violence to produce the 'hourglass' model of conflict resolution responses, which represents the narrowing and widening of political space during conflict (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall 13). When the glass narrows and widens, different conflict resolution responses become more or less appropriate or possible. Ramsbothan, Woodhouse and Miall open the model explaining that the conflict transformation is seen to encompass the deepest levels of cultural and structural peace building, conflict settlement corresponds to negotiations

or mediations to reach mutual agreement and conflict containment includes preventive peacekeeping, war limitation and post-ceasefire peacekeeping (14).

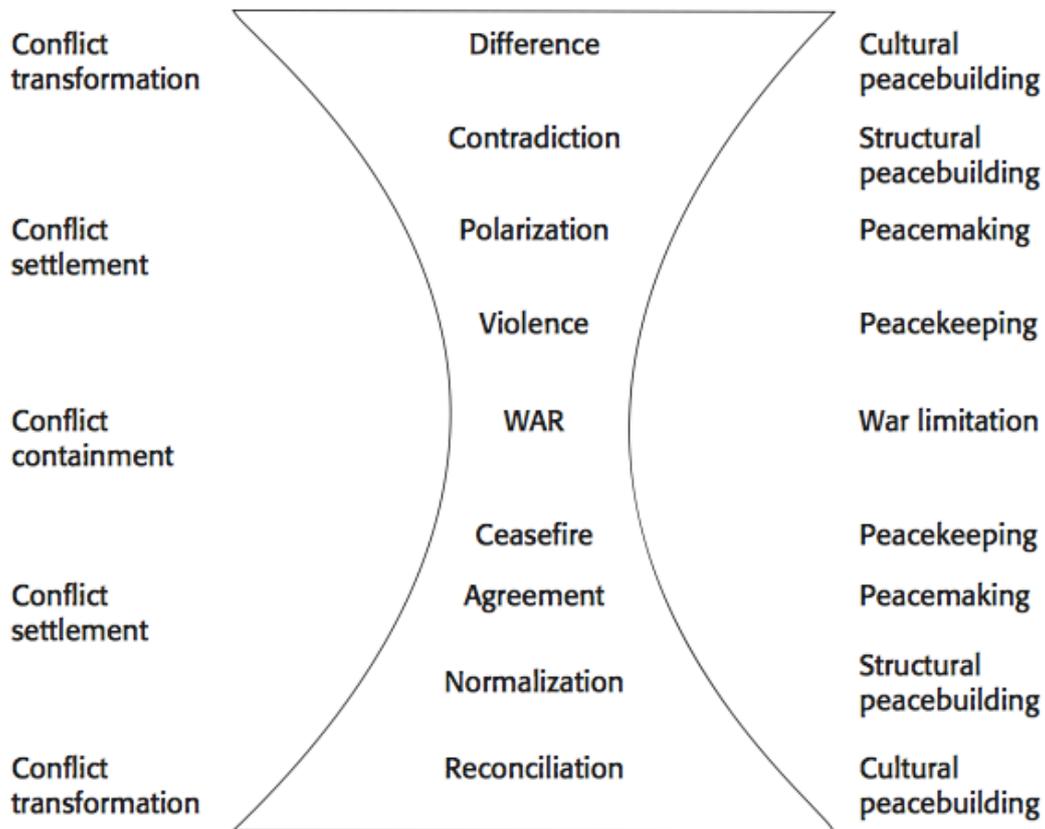


Figure 2. The hourglass model: conflict containment, conflict settlement and conflict transformation.

Source: (Ramsbothan, Woodhouse, Miall 2011, 14)

Peacekeeping and peace building in their all forms differ from each other so that is why the authors have chosen to use them in different phases of the conflict. Peacekeeping refers to actions that aim to prevent the conflict from escalating into a war and to limit the intensity, geographical spread and duration of the war once it has broken out (Ramsbothan, Woodhouse, Miall 147). Peacekeeping is also important when consolidating a ceasefire and creating space for reconstruction at the end of the war (147). Peace building measures aim to overcome structural and cultural violence (conflict transformation), which is performed integrally with peacekeeping and peacemaking (198). Peace building has been one of the most

important factors of the whole conflict resolution process since it also concentrates on post-war reconstruction (226).

It is important to concentrate on all these factors when looking at the role of the EU in trying to achieve peace in Syria. Are there certain peacekeeping actions that have been taken place and what could be the possible peace building solutions to take, after the crisis has settled? The EU as an international actor arguably has the tools for conflict management and peace building processes, but the question whether it is capable of using them effectively rises in the case of Syria. If and when the peace will be achieved, it is extremely important to pay a lot of attention to the reconciliation process, since the country can already be said to be in ruins.

1.2 The English School approach

The English School of International Relations, also called as International Society Tradition, gives attention to the international history, ideas, structures, institutions and values. English School sees that the main actor on the international field are the heads of states, heads of international organizations and corporations who can be seen as the main decision makers and followers of the international law. International responsibility and humanitarian responsibility are approaches that are closely linked to the ideas of the English School and are relevant approaches when looking at the crisis in Syria in the context of this research. The English School approach shows why the EU is a justified security actor especially in the case of the Syrian crisis, when the conflict has become regional and is affecting members of the EU states as well.

Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen have represented ideas of different authors in their book “Introduction to International Relations - Theories and Approaches” (2013). They see that the main distinguishing feature in English School from other international relations theories is that international relations ought to be understood as a society of mutually recognizing states and not merely as a system of competing and conflicting powers (Jackson, Sørensen 133). The authors have brought up ideas of different scholars, such as Hedley Bull, who made a distinction between the international system and international society, which is one of the leading ideas behind the English School. Bull saw that in an international system states are forced to communicate with each other and they have to consider the interests of

others (Jackson, Sørensen 134). An example of this could be in the relations between the USA and USSR during the cold war, when it was inevitable for these two countries to communicate even though they did not necessarily find it pleasant to consider each other's interests. In an international society states share common values and accept common norms, which they share in the work of common institutions. This could be an example of the EU. What connects the states is that all of them have to protect the existing international order and common goals and interests to maintain their independence (Jackson, Sørensen 134). For example, Russia had to become a reliable member of western centered international society after the Cold War. Strongest states are the ones who are responsible of maintaining this international order (Jackson, Sørensen 135).

English School discerns three different levels of responsibility in the international relations between states. They are national responsibility, international responsibility and humanitarian responsibility. National responsibility sees that statespeople are responsible for the wellbeing of their citizens and national security is valuable to protect (Jackson, Sørensen 145). This perspective could also be called as a Machiavellian perspective from the realism point of view; put your nation and citizens first. When looking at the war in Syria and why EU has not been successful in solving the conflict, it can be argued that at the moment EU is facing problems within itself, which it finds more important to deal with than happenings outside of the Union. Also due to the national responsibility it can be argued that the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad has failed in taking responsibility of his own nations' wellbeing. However, international responsibility is the factor that makes the clearest distinction from the theory realism for example. English School of IR sees that states are not isolated, but rather related to each other. International law and agreements define the rights and duties of the international society and those are to be protected and followed (Jackson, Sørensen 146). This justifies the EU's actions towards the crisis in Syria and why the organization should and is acting as a security actor. Humanitarian responsibility sees that because statespeople are human beings they have the responsibility to protect and respect human rights around the world and not to forget that people in other countries are just like themselves (Jackson, Sørensen 147). It is a cosmopolitan concept, which sees that it is inevitable to respect other and get involved in the situation if human rights are violated. For example the purpose of the United Nations has partly been built to this idea. As it is stated in the Article I, "To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural,

or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion;” (Charter of the United Nations).

Even though the theory of the English School is based on the activities of states, it is applicable when talking about the EU as well. Since the EU is trying to unify its foreign policy in order to work more efficiently behind the borders of its own member states, the ideas of the theory are valid. When taking the last two principles of the English School of IR, international responsibility and humanitarian responsibility, it is evident that international organization such as the EU has a responsibility intervene to the war in Syria in order to achieve peace. Especially when the crisis has become regional and is even affecting the most north EU member states. It can be argued, that especially when the EU can be seen as one of the most powerful actors on the global arena its responsibility is to take actions in order to find peace in its neighboring area. Regardless of the focus of the theory towards individual states, the EU will act as a single organization with a common stance towards the issues in Syria.

2. EMPIRICAL AND ANALYTICAL CHAPTERS

The following chapters will give a closer look of how the relations between the EU and Syria have developed over the years and what has been done in order to achieve the objectives that have been present in the relations before the internal crisis in Syria erupted. I will analyze the nature of the conflict in Syria, how it started, who are the main parties involved and their supporters, and what has been done up to today by international forces in order to solve the conflict. Further on, especially close attention will be given to the EU's involvement in the crisis. Role of the United States will be examined as well, since they have been one of the biggest foreign actors in the Middle East area in the past decade. It can also be argued that the EU might be following the lead of the US when making decisions of their own involvement and actions towards the Syrian civil war.

2.1 The European Union's relations with Syria

As aforementioned, Syria became a part of the French Empire in 1920 when the King Faisal's forces got into a battle with the French troops in a battle of Maysalun. After the battle ended, French troops took over the country; forced Faisal to flee and hold power over the country until 1946. The beginning of the independence was rather turbulent when the country took part to several coups and battles, which has continued in the 21st century as well.

The relations between Syria and the EU are based on the European – Syrian Cooperation Agreement, which was signed in 1977 mainly covering issues considering trade (Delegation of the European Union to Syria - Agreements). Predominantly, the agreement provides duty free access of most of the Syrian industrial goods to the EU market, assistance to Syria's production and economic infrastructure as well as encourages economic dialogue between the parties (Delegation of the European Union to Syria - Agreements).

In the webpage of European Union Delegation to Syria states that the organization seeks to develop closer relations with Syria by promoting political dialogue and trade relations that would be mutually beneficial for both of the parties. Next step from the Cooperation Agreement is the Association Agreement, which would give the main framework for bilateral relations with the two. It will include three main following fields: Political relations, Economy and trade relations and cooperation, which would include a wide range of

areas such as education, science, health and agriculture (Delegation of the European Union to Syria – Agreements). On October 2009 the EU member states unanimously agreed to sign the Association agreement with Syria, but Syria requested more time to examine the agreement further. However, the Association Agreement has not been signed yet (Delegation of the European Union to Syria – Agreements).

Syria is a part of the European Neighborhood Policy, which aims to achieve closer relations between the EU and its neighbor countries as well as strengthen security, stability and prosperity in the area. ENP is a bilateral agreement between the EU and each of the 16 partner countries to which include Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Through the ENP the EU offers tools to build a privileged relationship based on the values of democracy, rule of law and human rights (European Union External Action – What is the European Neighborhood Policy?). The list of the cooperation sectors of the ENP goes on on the European Union External Action webpages, including objects such as political association and deeper economic integration, increased mobility of the people, tools to fight against unemployment, climate change and promote trade. All in all, the European Neighborhood Policy seems to cover pretty much all the fields of the society from economics to agricultural matters. Social and economic benefits of the ENP are seen considerable through the wide range of projects form different scopes of life, which are launched by the ENP to the neighbor countries (European Union External Actor – What is the European Neighborhood Policy?).

Since the ENP aims to strengthen security and stability in the area, the framework could arguably include something considering conflict resolution towards the member countries. Therefore, via ENP the EU should be able act in order to find a resolution to the conflict in Syria as well as loose the tensions in the whole region. However, up to today only economic support to Syria has been given and neither the ENP nor other EU bodies have achieved a resolution to the conflict. In order to work more efficiently in the future in strengthening the security and stability in the area, the ENP could possibly considering using some of the conflict management models mentioned earlier in the theoretical approach and add those to the framework of the policy.

Both the EU and Syria are also members of the Union of the Mediterranean, which was created by 43 Euro-Mediterranean Heads of States and Governments in Paris on 13th of July 2008. The members at the moment include all the 28 EU member states plus 16 partner

states from the Southern Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East. The aim of the UfM is to increase the potential for the regional integration and cohesion among the member states as well as to bring and promote peace, democracy, cooperation and prosperity in the area (Union For the Mediterranean – About Us). The key initiatives on the agenda of the UfM are as follows (European Union External Action – Euro-Mediterranean Partnership):

- the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea, including coastal and protected marine areas;
- the establishment of maritime and land highways that connect ports and improve rail connections so as to facilitate movement of people and goods;
- a joint civil protection program on prevention, preparation and response to natural and man-made disasters;
- a Mediterranean solar energy plan that explores opportunities for developing alternative energy sources in the region;
- a Euro-Mediterranean University, inaugurated in Slovenia in June 2008;
- the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative, which supports small businesses operating in the region by first assessing their needs and then providing technical assistance and access to finance.

Even though the objectives of the UfM are not clearly political, they do have a link to political relations between the members. The cooperation inside the UfM has not always been very easy, especially when it comes to the political situation between Israel and Palestine. Resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine is a strategic priority for the EU and the organization aims to achieve a two-state solution with an independent and democratic Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel and its other neighbors. However, Syria is known of having difficult relations with Israel and is even considered its enemy. This has caused difficulties between the relations of the EU and Syria, when Syria has refused from collaboration until the Israel-Palestine conflict is solved.

What can be seen from the previous is that there are some outside factors that also influence the relations between the EU and Syria. The complicatedness among the relations of the countries in the whole Middle East area reaches the EU level as well. However, it clearly

seems that the EU has been trying to build up a solid relationship between Syria during the last few decades. Nevertheless, it is evident that the war in Syria has effected and slowed down the accumulation of the relations. The war has frozen many agreements and discussions of possible further arrangements between the parties, which have been postponed further. It also seems that despite the well looking objectives of the ENP and UfM, the policy tools have not included factors that would take a stance towards conflict resolution in the areas. The ENP and UfM could be seen as more effectual in conflict resolution rather than taking the question to the Common Foreign and Security Policy framework. Of course the ENP and UfM could only interfere up to a certain degree. However, adding the conflict resolution to the objectives of the two, would speed up the resolution process especially in the Syria's case.

The internal crisis in Syria has also led to limiting measures by the EU that has an impact on bilateral trade between the countries. However, this has been quite unavoidable and expected when looking at the situation where Syria is today. The actions taken by the EU after the crisis erupted will be examined further in the following chapter "EU's involvement towards the crisis".

2.2 Crisis in Syria

It can be argued that happenings of Arab Spring were one of the main driving forces that gave a rise to the conflict in Syria to escalate into a regime problem. Arab Spring started with unrests in Tunisia in the late 2010 when people of the country wanted to take away the power from the longtime president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and turn the country into a democratic regime. These happenings quickly spread to six other countries in the area, which included Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Algeria and Syria, causing a wave of demonstrations and protests. In Egypt and Tunisia these revolutions were rather quick and gave a new direction to the development of these countries and a possibility for the nations to move towards more democratic regimes. However, the aftermath of the Arab Spring is still visible in the seven countries in which the happenings took place.

Lilly Korpiola and Hanna Nikkanen ponder why the Middle East area was and still is prone to conflicts like the Arab Spring in their Book "Arabikevät" (2012). First, the Middle East is a birthplace for three monotheistic world religions. Therefore, a number of different religions, sacred places and traditions meet in the area, which causes tensions between the

people representing these religions and ethnicities (Korpiola, Nikkanen 56). In addition to this, the major powers of conquest and colonial policy period can still be seen in the Middle East. Areas of national boundaries were drawn in the aftermath of colonialism to shaky grounds, which did not take into consideration the older borders of the nations. The colonial period was further followed by the Cold War, which reshaped areas in the Middle East according to the spheres of interests of the USSR and USA, not to mention the region's oil resources that are still in progress due to the energy war (Korpiola, Nikkanen 57).

However, as it is visible from the everyday news, Syria is still in the middle of the conflict influenced by the Arab Spring, and the tensions between the opposing parties have not loosened since 2011.

Over the past forty years only one family has been in charge of governing the country of Syria. President Hafaz al-Assad gained power in 1971 and after his death in the year 2000 his son Bashar al-Assad followed his father's steps by becoming a president. Bashar al-Assad was re-elected as a president in 2007 as well as in 2014, after the civil war had already started. Especially the younger al-Assad has changed the direction of the country what it comes to restrictions in forms of tightening the freedom of speech, isolating the economy and giving no future hope for democratic rule. In addition to the aforementioned, Syria became a militarized country at the beginning of the 21st century.

Al-Assad has been known of supporting the minor religious group Alawites, which is a unique and a little know form of Islam, and favoring them when it comes to government positions and high paid jobs. Hafaz al-Assad already at his time trusted the Alawites the most and reserved top positions in the military and intelligence services for them.

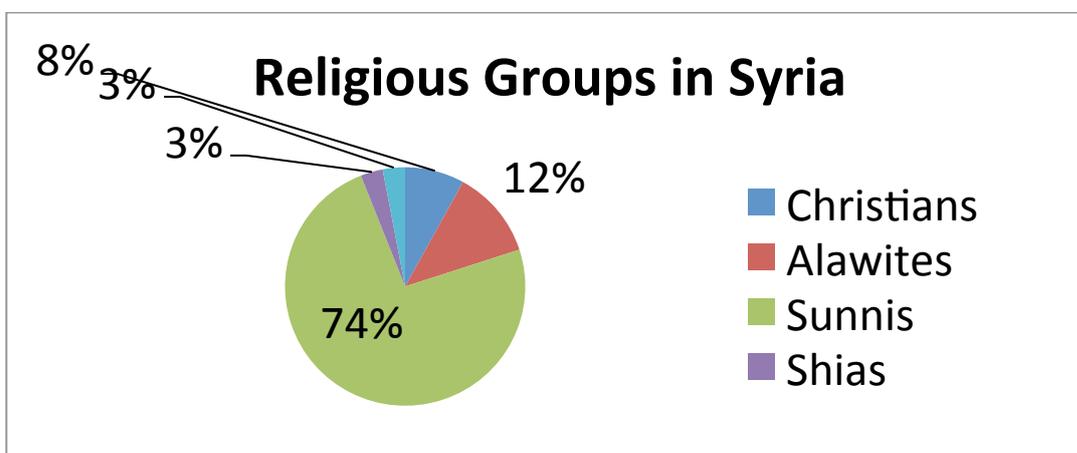


Figure 3. Religious groups in Syria

Source: (The Guardian 2013, The War in Syria Explained in Five Minutes – Guardian Animations)

Years of favoring the Alawite minority left frustration and anger among the major religious group Sunnis. Root causes of the conflict could be seen as already mentioned political repression towards president Bashar al-Assad, frustration towards the mainly privatized economy, population growth and uncertainty of getting a job in addition to corruption and state violence (Manfreda 2014). At the beginning of the uprising Syria suffered similar social and economic problems as other Arab countries without oil reserves. Economic growth in the beginning of the 21st century was not quick enough to create jobs for the growing population, and especially younger people were left aside (Lesch 2012, 58). Disappointment and dissatisfaction that Sunnis had towards the government, which had neglected the majority of the country, escalated into to a conflict in the spring 2011 after a push from the happenings of Arab Spring. From that on, different opposition groups and the government have fought on a battlefield.

Uprisings spread rather quickly during the spring 2011 to several cities in Syria. Even though the government had been in control of the country for a long time, different information channels and new technologies made it possible for people to hear about the happenings and take part to demonstrations (Lesch 69). Satellite television, Twitter, Facebook and other social media channels spread the message quickly and were the main reasons why the protests erupted spontaneously and in an uncoordinated way (Lesch 69).

Religious groups who are resisting and confronting the president and the current government are called the opposition. The problem is that the only common goal these several groups and individuals share is the hate towards the president. At the beginning of the conflict the protests were mainly unorganized events towards the corruption and oppression from the government. In July 2011 the first organized attempt to fight against the government took place when the Free Syrian Army was formed. The main target of the movement against the president al-Assad was to take him down and form a democratic Syria with free elections (Macleod 2011). Since the rebel groups are not working in coherence or according to the same plan, it has been extremely hard to find a common solution that would even please all the groups in the opposition, not to mention the government.

President al-Assad and the government have their main supporters among the Alawite Muslim minority, to which the president himself also belongs. Supporters of the president see him as the best guarantee to maintain the regime as it has been and prevent it from falling into the hands of the opposition groups (Niemeläinen 2013). International actors such as Russia, Iran and Hezbollah have also been supporting the government. Russia - Syria relations reach back to the Soviet era and are motivated by military and trade interests as well as Syria's geographical location. Over the times the countries have had strong and stable relations. Especially in the 1960's the Soviet Union supported the left wing parties in Syria, and through that had control over the regimes in the whole Middle East. This made it possible for the Soviets to promote communism in the area. Also Russia's only exit to the Mediterranean is through the Tartus port in the North-West of Syria, which centers Russia's strategic interest. In addition, Russia has investments and weapons contracts with Syria, which it wants to protect (Gamal El-Din 2013). Actions taken by the United Nations Security Council have also proofed the unwillingness of China to act towards issues in Syria, even though China is not seen as an ally of the Syrian government. Traditionally, China has not vetoed many cases in the UN Security Council, however this has happened in the case of Syria. It is clear to say that due to Russia's permanent seat in the Security Council, Russia and China's actions could be argued to be the main reasons why the resolution of the conflict has been so slow.

Iran and Syria share a relationship, which can be described as "a unique convergence of interests" (Manfreda 2014). Both countries want to hold back the influence of the United States in the Middle East and Iran has also been providing military essentials to the government during the conflict (Fulton, Wyr 2012). Hezbollah is the Lebanese Shia militia and political party and part of an anti-Western alliance with Iran and Syria. The Syrian regime has organized the flow of Iranian weapons through its territory for years to help Hezbollah with its conflict with Israel. Hezbollah has also supported the government of Syria by sending troops to fight against the rebels (Manfreda 2014).

Rebels and opposition groups also have their international supporters, including Turkey, Qatar and Saudi-Arabia (Syria crisis: Where key countries stand 2014). Especially Saudi-Arabia's interests in supporting the upraise is to break the relationship between Syria and Iran. Saudi-Arabia has provided opposition groups with weapons and was one of the first countries to disapprove Al-Assad's regime in 2011 (Manfreda 2014).

Several attempts have been taken in order to solve the conflict, but no actual resolutions have been achieved. The biggest international players in the crisis, USA and Russia have been confronting each other in the Security Council about the situation in Syria. The United Nations came up with a peace plan led by the Secretary General Kofi Annan, which however failed and led to the resigning of Annan as a mediator of the conflict (Luukkanen 2012, 41). Countries in the Security Council could not reach a conclusion whether to intervene to the conflict with military or peacekeeping forces. As aforementioned, both Russia and China have used their veto rights in the Security Council several times when the topic of Syria has been discussed (Luukkanen 42).

The Arab League, which is a regional organization of 22 Arab countries, has twice tried to solve the Syrian civil war with their peace initiatives. The organization invoked to both the government and the opposition groups to end the violence and convincing both parties to start negotiations on peace. First attempt took place in November 2011 but without succession, and which led to Syria's membership of the League to be suspended. Second attempt started right after, in December 2011 and lasted until January 2012. Again, violent demonstrations continued and the Arab League was forced to end its peace mission under the violent circumstances.

President Al-Assad also offered his own peace plan in 2013 where he invoked towards the opposition on ceasefire and to agree to his terms of peace. The terms al-Assad offered required renouncing the armed struggle, effective recognition of al-Assad's presidency and commitment of the transition process under al-Assad's leadership. Al-Assad offered the following on his peace plan: cessation of violence, new constitution and parliamentary elections. However, the opposition did not approve the peace plan and called it a "pre-emptive strike" and "declaration of war". (Manfreda 2014)

Latest peace negotiations to end the crisis took place in in January- February 2014 and were called the Geneva II Conference. However, these negotiations failed as well due to the disagreements between the parties. Next peace talks were held in Moscow at the beginning of 2015. This time representatives from both the government and opposition groups were present and actual discussion was held. However, no breakthroughs were still achieved.

What can be seen from the brief description of the happenings that led to the civil war in Syria, is that the conflict is not only between the parties inside in the country. The problem has reached a regional level and arguably even a global level when counting in the action of

the US and China. It can also be argued to be a power struggle between great powers that want to follow their own interests and aims and keep their own economies running well. The fact that peace has not yet been achieved and countries in the UN Security Council have not been able to agree on military intervention could also be because of the aforementioned reasons. Also, it would be time to challenge and question the processes used in international organizations to solve issues like in Syria. Would it be time for a change what it comes to conflict management and resolution in bigger organizations such as the UN and the EU?

2.3 EU's involvement towards the crisis

Countries in the European Union have mutually agreed to condemn the actions of the Syrian government towards the opposition groups. The EU countries have also tried to get through the Syria –resolution in the United Nations Security Council, but as aforementioned Russia and China have not agreed on terms of the interference (Salehzadeh 2013, 18). However, due to the extreme violence and complexity of the crisis, the EU has not only used ways of peace building or peacekeeping in the country, but also imposed several sanctions and ended mutual agreements between the organization and the Syrian Government.

After the crisis erupted in Syria, the EU suspended the aforementioned agreements that the organization and Syria share considering the European Neighbor Policy and European Syrian Cooperation agreement. In May 2011 the EU suspended the bilateral cooperation programs with the Syrian government under the ENP and the participation of the Syrian authorities in the EU regional programs. The European Investment Bank had also loan operations and technical assistance in Syria, which were interrupted after the crisis turned into a war. (European Union External Action – The EU's relations with Syria)

Following these actions that the EU had taken, it has also implemented a number of restrictive measures towards Syria, including an import ban on crude oil and petroleum products and exports restriction in dual-use goods, luxury products, telecom equipment and technology for the oil and gas industry. The restrictive measures also reach to the financial and transport sector, which has made it prohibited to fund certain infrastructure projects and enterprises in Syria. Also economic resources of the individual people who have benefitted from the Syrian regime have been frozen. (European Commission 2014)

Despite the sanctions, frozen agreements and programs plus suspension of bilateral cooperation, the European Commission press release from 2013 stated that several projects with Syria's non-state actors are still on going. These projects include for example Erasmus and Tempus programs with Syrian students and universities (ENP Package – Syria 2013).

On August 2013 a chemical attack took place on the Ghouta area in Damascus, Syria, killing about 300 people mainly unarmed civilians including women and children. Even later on, the UN Weapons inspectors have not been able to allocate who is responsible for the attack. However, use of chemical weapons gave international actors a justified reason to form an international agreement. After the attack, Syria promised to get rid of the chemical weapons. Massive operation, which was led by the western countries, destroyed the chemical weapons on the international waters. The use of chemical weapons has been said to be an awakening for the western countries that something really needs to be done towards the conflict in Syria to prevent this form happening again. Especially the EU and the US had failed to achieve any positive results towards a peaceful resolution on the Syrian conflict before the destruction of the chemical weapons. The sanctions against al-Assad had not worked the way it was expected and the peace negotiations between the government and the opposition had not been successful (Dagdeverenis 2013).

The war in Syria has also been extremely large humanitarian crisis and demands even more help from the international actors as it continues. This is also why due to the ideas of the English School of International Relations the EU has a responsibility to act and try to find a resolution to the conflict. The magnitude of the humanitarian need is overwhelming in Syria as well as in the countries that have taken most of the refugees. These include the neighbor states such as Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, there have been close to 200 000 casualties in the conflict, 7,6 million internally displaced people and 4,6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in hard to access areas (UNOCHA 2015). Estimated amount of people in humanitarian need according to the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection is 12,2 million (ECHO 2015). European Union and the member states have collectively mobilized 3,6 billion Euros for the relief and recovery assistance, which takes the leading spot when looking at the international response by numbers (ECHO 2015). The main priority is that the wounded are evacuated and treated, provided with food, water, shelter, medical assistance and sanitation (ECHO 2015).

Press releases, which can be found from the European Commission's webpage, are one after another referring to the devastation and violence of the crisis and how important it is to help Syria itself in addition to the countries around it due to the spillover effects. On December 4th 2014 a press release stated that the European Commission adopted a package worth of 180 million Euros to assist Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (EU-Syria: €180 million to deal with crisis and spill-over in Lebanon and Jordan 2015) On the same release, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini said that "Today, the EU cannot simply watch the suffering of Syrian people without acting. We are ready and willing to bring a continued support to the people of Syria and to the countries hosting Syrian refugees. It is time for things to change. We are determined to play our role to the full and bring a lasting political solution to this regional crisis". To follow Mogherini's ideas, Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn stated his concern towards the children in need in Syrian and in the neighboring countries, and that with the funding money children will be given a chance to receive education and learn skills, which will be needed after the peace is restored and when it is time to rebuild Syria (EU-Syria: €180 million to deal with crisis and spill-over in Lebanon and Jordan 2015).

Press releases, which have been released at the beginning of 2015 the same trend follows in the statements of the EU officials. On 31st of March Christos Stylianides, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management stated: "The magnitude of the Syria crisis is testing the capacities of the entire international aid system. The needs are overwhelming and an extraordinary effort is needed by the wider donor community to mobilize significant funding" (EU continues its strong support for the victims of Syria's crisis 2015). Stylianides also appeals to donors to step up, and sees that with global partnership and shared solidarity the countries are able to make a difference in the humanitarian tragedy (EU continues its strong support for the victims of Syria's crisis 2015). Stylianides continues to bring out his concerns towards the humanitarian tragedy on a press release released in April 7th when the EU increased its emergency aid to Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria. He appeals to all parties in the conflict to allow immediate humanitarian access to the area and to afford all necessary protection towards the refugees (EU increases its emergency aid in Yarmouk, Syria 2015).

Despite the actions described above, it can be said that the EU has failed to take a leading role in the conflict. The main problem is that the organization cannot hold a common stance of what it should do to find a resolution. It is not enough to have a statement that the countries in the European Union have agreed to condemn the actions of the Syrian government towards the opposition groups; more actual actions are needed at the moment after four years of war. However, since the nature of the war has changed and the radical Islamic army can be seen as the biggest threat to the EU, why should not the organization support the government of Syria instead? Even though the government together with president al-Assad has been seen as the evil in the conflict, supporting them in order to end the war might at the moment be a considerable option for the EU.

The three biggest power holders in the EU - France, UK and Germany - have different opinions of how the Union should react when smaller member states are bandwagoning towards the position of one of the “big three” (Morillas 2013). Denmark is following France’s lead and the Netherlands has been together with Germany to hesitate over military intervention and pushing more responsibility towards the UN Security Council (Dagdeverenis 2013). At the moment the biggest question is to which extent the member states would be willing to use military force. Common stance will most likely not be found, some member states will most likely to root for the military intervention and some will express their reluctance towards it. If this happens and the situation keeps on rolling in place, EU will maintain its position as a passive bystander.

When it comes to different conflict management models, which were discussed in the theoretical part, it seems that the EU does not have a clear framework or vision of how to react to these kinds of crises. Of course no conflict or crisis is identical to another, but similarities can be found. Based on previous historical happenings, the EU could for example form a clear guideline of how to react in certain phases of the conflict based in the hourglass model by Ramsbothan, Woodhouse and Miall. Therefore, the organization could react to such issues faster and with a clear understanding of what would be the next step. However, using the idea of the hourglass model towards the conflict in Syria can be seen as too late already. At the moment the points that the organization needs to concentrate on are conflict containment, settlement and transformation in order to find a long-lasting resolution to the Middle East area.

2.4 Role of the United States

It is important to bring up the role of the United States when it comes to the happenings in the Middle East. The US has a long relationship with the Arabic countries and therefore has had an influence towards many of the conflicts in the area. The US can be argued to be a hegemonic state with a dominant military and economic power in the world and has a strong influence on other countries' opinions and actions, especially when it comes to crises in the Middle East. The beginning of the stronger US influence in the Middle East can be said to have started from the Suez Channel crisis in 1956, which also decreased the European influence in the area. Great Britain and France wanted the power over the channel from Egypt and together with Israel started an operation that the parties called as peacekeeping mission. However, the US and the Soviet Union started working together to prevent bigger crisis from happening and forced all the parties to ceasefire. From there on, the power over the channel remained on Egypt's hold. Great Britain and France lost their superpower status in the Middle East and the US influence in the area appeared stronger from there on.

Korpiola and Nikkanen bring out the role of the United States in the Middle East for the past decades as well as during the upraise of the Arab Spring in their book "Arabikevät" (2012). The US has been said to be supporting many significant autocrat leaders in the Arab countries to back up its own interests. But during the Arab Spring the country however did not support any of the older leaders who have been know to be allies of the US for decades (Korpiola, Nikkanen 55). The EU has been stricter when it comes to the autocrats of the Middle East countries and has also had difficulties in finding a common stance towards the issues, as already discussed before (Korpiola, Nikkanen 55). Factors that lie behind the difficulties are also linked to the past when France and Great Britain held the colonial power over the Middle East countries (Korpiola, Nikkanen 55).

Despite the hegemonic power that the US holds and the possibilities of it to influence other countries, it was not very active in the beginning of the crisis. Alan Salehzadeh ponders the reasons for it in his article for the National Defense University of Finland and comes up with two main arguments. First, he sees that the US was afraid that the crisis would spread to other Middle East countries such as Iran and Lebanon, if it takes a more active role in the conflict management process. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were very expensive for the US and it did not manage to achieve its objectives. Therefore, the country is not ready yet to

get more involved in the crisis in Syria (Salehzaded, 2013, 19). Secondly, the incoherence of the opposition groups had slowed down the interference of the US as well as other western powers. The US especially is afraid that if the diverse opposition groups will take over Syria, they would not recognize the existence of Israel and eventually would form a fundamental Islamic state like in Iran, which would not accept the democratic norms and rules (Salehzadeh 19).

Even though at the beginning of the crisis the US was rather cautious in taking an active role it still contributed in terms of humanitarian aid and economical support. In May 2013 president Obama gave a comment that the US has not ruled out any options in terms of how to deal with the situation in Syria (Salehzadeh 19). From there on, times have changed when the crisis has continued and radical Islamist groups such as ISIS have become more active, and the US has stepped up to take some real actions. In September 2014 president Obama stated that the country has to combat against the organization and terrorism to secure its own people and promote peace (CNN Politics 2014). The nature of the war has also changed to become a fight towards the radical Islamists and the US has become one of the parties involved in the war after the country together with its allies started air bombings towards the ISIS (Saarikoski, Jokelainen 2014). Majority of the American people were supportive towards the air bombings as well as the fight towards the ISIS. Their opinions have most likely been affected by the video tapings of the decapitation of two American journalists (Saarikoski 2014). President Obama has also admitted that the US underestimated the significance of the events in Syria and thus allowed the development of the jihadist global meeting place (Uusi Suomi 2014).

The cohesion of the actions between the EU and the US especially at the beginning of the crisis is visible. Both of the parties were afraid to take significant actions in Syria and settled to impose sanctions and concentrate on the humanitarian aid. However, as the war has continued and radical Islamists have gained more power, the US has reacted more efficiently compared to the EU. The EU is still clearly looking for the common stance towards the issue as seem to be afraid to act without the support of all the biggest member states. However, it can be argued that at this point it would be beneficial for all if the US and the EU would join their forces and tackle the crisis together. It can also be argued that the capacity of the EU acting alone in this conflict is not enough and the organization needs the support from the US

in order to pursue its interests. In that case, some actual results might be achieved to find a solution for the conflict.

3. COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

What it comes to EU's foreign policy capabilities, they can be seen as complex and diverse as the 28 member states. Despite the outward signs of a supranational superpower and Lisbon Treaty reforms, EU remains as a treaty based regional organization designed to promote international cooperation primary through the use of soft power (Hill, Smith 2011, 190) It can be argued that the idea and use of soft power and international cooperation that the EU has tried to achieve, have not worked efficiently in the matters of solving the war in Syria. Even though the EU is not traditionally seen as a security actor, the organization still has its own framework for foreign security policies. However, the member states have their sovereignty when deciding on foreign policy matters, which arguably is the biggest reason why the CFSP is not effective enough. In the following chapter I will briefly examine the history and nature of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, how has it been applied to the war in Syria, if in any ways, and why it is not seen as effective enough.

Historically, the external political relations of the EU were handled outside of the treaty framework. The first attempt to coordinate the foreign policies of the member states and make them more common was in the 1970's in the form of the European Political Cooperation, which was later incorporated into the treaties with the Single European Act in 1987 (Bache, George, Bulmer 2011, 509). During its existence, EPC mainly consisted of regular meetings between the member states' representatives in order to coordinate national stances to particular issues of the world. However, it still succeeded for example in creating a common position on the Middle East, which made it possible to negotiate improvements in the trade relations between the Arab OPEC states (Bache, George, Bulmer 512). Nevertheless, the main problem the EPC faced was the lack of common grounds towards many issues and it was time for additions to the treaties and foreign policy methods.

In 1992 the Maastricht Treaty was introduced with an abbreviation of Common Foreign and Security Policy. The aims of adding the CFSP to the treaty framework were to promote peace, respect human rights, defend EU's values and make the organization more secure. Germany was among the biggest supporters of the CFSP when the Great Britain wanted to build a central role for NATO when it came to defense. The Treaty of the European Union made the CFSP a separate pillar where the majority voting was restricted and decisions needed to be made by consensus (Bache, George, Bulmer 513). Some changes and

enhancements were made compared to the old EPC and it has been said that as a whole the TEU was a success for the minimalist position on the CFSP (Bache, George, Bulmer 513).

The start of CFSP did not take a great leap forward in terms of capabilities and ambitions of the EU. The first actions taken were quite modest and mostly built on the EPC (Bache, George, Bulmer 515). These actions included sending monitors to observe the elections in Russia in 1993, sending humanitarian aid for Bosnia, developing a new political framework for aid to the West Bank and Gaza, monitoring the first non-racial elections in South Africa and doing preparations for the elections in Palestinian homeland (Bache, George, Bulmer 515). After the 9/11 terrorist attacks the EU member states were able to form a common position towards the happenings with a declaration to support the US and agreement to follow strong anti-terrorism policy inside the organization. However, the problems began after the US president George W. Bush and his administration identified the “axis of evil”, which included Iran, Iraq and North Korea, which resulted as a setback in the relations between Iran and the EU. Bush decided to tackle Iraq at first in terms of fighting against terrorism, which France and Germany opposed while Britain, Spain and Italy supported. When the division between the states was vivid and states were criticizing each other’s opinions the picture that was given of the EU and CFSP was not appealing. After the invasion to Iraq, British - French relations went totally down.

Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 further expanded the tasks of the CFSP to include humanitarian aid and rescue tasks, conflict prevention, peacekeeping tasks, crisis management, joint disarmed operations, military advise and assistance tasks and post conflict stabilization tasks. However, it can be argued that most of these tasks do not work well. Tuomas Iso-Markku has argued in his briefing paper for the Finnish Institute of International Affairs called “Europe’s Changing Security Landscape” that because the EU does not have a clear role in collective defense or military deterrence, its mutual assistance towards the crises in the world have remained mostly symbolic. Iso-Markku sees several reasons why the EU is having difficulties in the crisis management area: first, the Lisbon Treaty caused the CFSP to undergo major changes. Secondly, the financial crisis the EU is facing at the moment has taken most of the attention of the member states and the countries are neither able nor willing to invest in crisis management. And thirdly, the Common Security and Defense Policy has failed to create a meeting among the member states, which has caused difficulties on agreeing when and how to intervene in certain crises (Iso-Markku 2014). This again reflects to the lack

of common stance between the member states, when it comes to foreign affairs of the organization.

Even though the decision making in the framework of CFSP is based on qualified majority voting, unanimity is needed in military or defense matters. This could be seen as one more reason why the CFSP has not acted efficiently regarding the Syrian crisis. The member states of the EU have not been able to act unanimously when talking about the crisis in Syria and therefore as aforementioned, the results in ending the conflict have been negative.

DISCUSSION

As it can be seen from the previous chapters, the EU has clearly not been able to find a resolution to the crisis in Syria. However, neither have the US nor the United Nations succeeded in that either, as the internal uprising has become a global problem including participants from all over the world. In the following I will deliberate and examine the results of the research and why has the EU acted as it has, what could have been done differently and what could be possible solutions to shape the crisis management of the organization and end the war in Syria?

First of all, it is hard to say who are the ones who should take responsibility of the happenings in Syria, who are the victims and offenders. Of course as we look at the beginning of the crisis the opposition groups can be argued to be justified to show their disappointment and frustration towards the government due to favoring of the minority groups and holding autocrat power over the country. And to continue, countries in the EU mutually agreed to condemn the actions of the Syrian government towards the opposition groups. Therefore, the government and al-Assad should be the responsible ones regarding the civil war and even letting the country to fall into a situation it was at the beginning of the Arab Spring. However, as the crisis has continued it can be argued that neither the opposition nor the government is getting off from the happenings with clean hands. None of the parties have been able to stop the bloodshed and the further the war continues, it is hard to say who is causing the most casualties. Attempts to bring all of the parties to the negotiation table have also not been very successful. This shows the reluctance of the parties to cooperate and unwillingness to find a solution to the devastating crisis. At the end, the people on both sides are the ones who will remain as Syrian people and who will be trying to build up the country again for the future generations.

The disunity of the Syrian opposition is also one major obstacle when it comes to finding a resolution to the conflict. As the opposition is only an umbrella term used for all the groups or individuals calling for a change in Syria, it can be said to be as varied as the number of individuals in it. Even though the EU has shown its support for the opposition groups from the beginning of the crisis, it is hard to direct the support and help when the opposition is lacking a leader and a clear structure and goals. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces founded in 2012 is a coalition of opposition groups but holds only a

little power and cannot control all the rebel groups. Therefore, the problem arises when discussing on peace matters with the Syrian government. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces is only representing a certain group of the opposition and the negotiations still lack a vast number of other rebel groups' opinions. This might possibly lead to even more unrest among the opposition when everyone is unhappy with the situation and does not follow the same rules agreed in the peace negotiations.

Interference from the EU towards the crisis has not been very radical, more likely it could be called as playing as safe as possible. As aforementioned, the main problem is the lack of common stance towards the issue and a common opinion how the organization should react. And it has to be admitted that the biggest member states of the EU are playing decisive roles when it comes to deciding about the foreign policy of the organization. Germany is pushing responsibility towards the UN Security Council when the Great Britain and France have voted against the military intervention. As the hypothesis expected, now it has become too late to react in a productive way since the numbers of casualties and refugees leaving the country have gone up to hundreds of thousands and even millions. However, actions still need and can be taken to prevent the refugee flow to the EU member states and to avoid the war to spread even further. Richard Gowan has questioned the non-military means that the EU has been willing to pursue to resolve the crisis in his article "The EU and Syria – Everything but force?" (2012). He sees that the EU policymakers are afraid that they will face similar problems that were faced in a NATO led intervention in Libya. Instead they have used terms of "soft power" such as economic sanctions (Gowan 2012). However, at the moment the military intervention seems like a reasonable form of interference to the crisis.

Teemu Sinkkonen, a senior research fellow from the Finnish Institute of International Affairs has challenged the EU's role in the Syrian crisis and given further ideas how the organization should act as the nature of the war has changed to include radical Islamist groups as well. First, he admits that the EU has not been able to take a decisive role regarding the civil war as discussed before in this paper as well. However, Sinkkonen sees the potential that the EU has when it comes to coordinating the responses of its member states and fighting towards the radical Islamist groups. He offers ideas such as the EU could "take a role in establishing common guidelines for social media regarding extremist material and agitation for violence" and to find a common ground with Turkey on how to gather and share relevant information, which would be essential to prevent "the travel-for-terrorism cause" (Sinkkonen,

2015, 2). Turkey has also started to spread neo-Ottomanism and its influence over the area which is against the ideology of the Syrian government. The term neo-Ottomanism describes the political ideology that Turkey has, which promotes the ideas, culture and traditions from the times of the Ottoman Empire. Arguably, this causes more tensions between Turkey and Syria that can be seen as one more spillover effect of the conflict.

As discussed earlier in the paper, ideas considering the framework on how to react to conflicts and crises like in Syria should be taken into consideration. The idea of an hourglass model could be taken into action while deciding on matters how to react. The model would already give ideas of interference on certain phases of the conflict and therefore the organization would be faster in its actions. When the clear framework would already be there, the reaction would be faster and it would be even possible to prevent the crisis from spreading in the region. Like it has now happened in the Syria's case.

Dimitris Dagdeverenis sees that at this point of the crisis, the EU should form a common stance when it comes to the military intervention to Syria (2013). He understands that the consequences of such decisions may be counterproductive, but also important when thinking about the nature of the EU and what does the organization present. He points out that the EU sees itself as a civilian power, using weapons of soft power, which include diplomacy and economy as well as an organization promoting peace through peaceful means. Dagdeverenis thinks that the military intervention would undermine the use of soft power, which could be said to be included in the values of the EU. The EU should promote a different kind of response, which Dagdeverenis describes as “a response representative of our character and values, based on soft power, which will seek more vigorously for a peaceful resolution. In other words, a clear and distinctive “European” response” (Dagdeverenis 2013). However, it has now been a few years since the article was made and the nature of the conflict has changed a lot. It would be interesting to hear Dagdeverenis' opinion considering military intervention today, since it seems impossible that peace will be achieved only through peaceful means. However, before a military intervention led by the EU would be possible, changes in the treaty framework would possibly needed to be made. At the moment the organization needs the support from the UN in order to have a military intervention of any kind.

The devastating humanitarian crisis that the Syrian civil war has become, justifies the interference of the EU according to the ideas of the English School of International Relations.

Because the human rights have been violated during the war, it is justified for the EU to get involved in order to improve the situation and for not letting it happen again. These ideas can be referred to solidarisms and the right and duty for states to intervene in foreign countries for humanitarian reasons. In fact, the member states of the EU have been among the biggest supporters of humanitarian aid when it comes to the crisis in Syria. All together 3,6 billion euros has been collected for the relief and recovery process. However, when seeking from the European Union webpage and from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection –page, it cannot be said for sure where exactly the money has gone and has it been used in an efficient way. It would be interesting to see how the EU is monitoring the humanitarian aid money, how many people the aid has reached and has it helped in a way that the contributors wanted. Indisputably, humanitarian aid in any forms is extremely important in a crisis like in Syria and other countries that are not directly connected to the happenings are expected to help out.

However, as all the citizens of any EU member states are well aware of, the financial situation in the Union at the moment is extremely difficult and needs to be taken care of as soon as possible. Therefore, it is evident that the humanitarian aid money will not continue to flow to Syria forever and at some point the contributing countries will be out of money to help. That is why it would be better to find a quick solution for the problem, not only to help the victims of the war. It is obvious that even after the crisis would be over and peace would be achieved in the Middle East area, there will be some aftermath to do which most likely requires assistance from the EU as well as financial support.

The Syrian crisis has also shown reluctance among the European citizens when it comes to the possible military interference. 71 percent of Europeans see that a strong European leadership in international affairs is important. Nevertheless, 70 percent of them are still against the military intervention in Syria. (Morillas 2013) From this it can be argued that the people living inside the EU are willing to follow the path of soft power that the policy makers of the Union have decided to pursue. This public opinion could also demonstrate that the European people want to characterize themselves and the continent they live in as a pro-peace minded, who are ready to negotiate rather than use military force. Historical events such as the world wars have shaped the European identity and have maybe created the supportiveness towards the use of soft power. For example compared to the US, which has

been involved in several crises in the Middle East in the 21st century, Europeans want to be seen and perceived as peace promoting people.

The EU has clearly taken a distinction to the US's actions when the crisis has continued. Even though both of the aforementioned acted rather cautiously during the rise of Arab Spring, the US has just recently stepped in with more actions. It can be argued that the EU clearly wants to hold on to the idea of using only soft power as long as possible. However, it is hard to say how long that will be possible due to changed nature of the conflict, which has also drawn in parties outside of the Middle East area. At this point of the crisis the ability of the EU to act alone has to be taken into consideration. The war has gotten so far and continued so long that the possible interference from the EU most likely needs the support of the US. This could for example mean a joint military operation done by the EU and the US together.

Even though the Syrian civil war at the beginning was not tied to ideas of terrorisms at all, as it has been discussed throughout the paper the nature of the war has changed and topics such as terrorism and radical Islam have to be taken into considerations when trying to find a solution. It can be argued that the crisis in Syria has reached such a broad scope that it might become a threat to Europe if the war continues. It is possible the latest happenings in Paris and Copenhagen in the beginning of the 2015 where radical Islamists have attacked civilians have been encouraged by the spillovers of the Syrian civil war. Therefore, it is not only the government of Syria and the opposition groups that the international actors need to take care of. Now the list of actors includes also ISIS as well as all the people from the EU member states who have left to fight with the organization. Plus the happenings taking place inside the EU member states, such as aforementioned Charlie Hebdo attack and Copenhagen terrorist attacks. Member states need to observe why these certain people want to join the ISIS, how to prevent it from happening and what to do after they go back to their home country. The question what will happen in the EU countries if the crisis continues and radical Islamist ideas spread further, would be interesting to examine further.

What to do next?

As it has been discussed throughout the paper, the crisis in Syria has grown from a complex civil war to reach an international level with its spillovers. The EU and other

international actors have failed to solve the crisis and eventually the aftermath of it has to be taken care of, which will most likely require help from the international actors. Some might say that why the EU even should intervene in such crisis in the first place. The crisis does not take place inside the borders of the organization and the EU has much more bigger things to take care of. And why should the Union try to mediate a peaceful result for the conflict since people in the Middle East area have been fighting for years? If the EU would have decided not to intervene at all, it should have stated that in the beginning of the crisis and stay out of the happenings. Nevertheless, as the EU can be seen as an influential international actor, it can also be claimed to have responsibility to act as a mediator in such crisis. Syria is also a neighbor of the Union and has quite close relations with the EU when it comes to trade and cooperation in terms of the European Neighborhood Policy. Therefore I see it as important that the EU contributes to the peacemaking process and leads by example showing, that we live in globalized world and weaker need to be taken care of. This needs to be taken into consideration in order for the globalized world to work in the future decades as well.

When it comes to the policy tools of the EU, it seems that the European Neighborhood Policy is working quite well but at the moment it is pretty much frozen in Syria due to the civil war and other crises in Ukraine, Libya, and Moldova. The aims of the ENP seem very reasonable and it is important to tie the close non-member states to the framework of the EU. However, the Common Foreign and Security Policy seems to be complicated and not working efficiently. The main problem could be argued to be the fact that the member states of the EU have the ultimate power to control their foreign policies and the last say when it comes to the decision making considering international affairs. The lack of common stance towards the Syrian crisis and how to intervene can be seen as the main problems why the CFSP has not been effective in solving the crisis. A suggestion to make it work better, would be an actual mutual and joint foreign policy among the member states, which would be led from Brussels by the heads of states of governments of the member states for example. This would enable a faster and stronger reaction to the crisis like Syria is facing when the actions would be discussed mutually inside the Union and the common stance towards certain issues could be formed immediately.

Even though the imposed sanctions have been quite efficient, something else needs to be done in order to end the war. Military intervention at this point of the crisis sounds like an option, since the peace negotiations have not been beneficial either. The possible military

intervention could be arranged together with the EU, UN and possibly US forces, and the main goal could be to achieve ceasefire between the parties at first. From there on the actions should be correlated to the outcome of the intervention, either continuing with military forces or start the reconciliation process. In any case, to solve the conflict and attain peace in Syria will be financially costly for the EU as it already has been. With or without the military intervention the consequences will be big and needed to be dealt by the help of the EU for decades to come.

Before any kind of military intervention would be possible, the EU member states need to agree on a common stance towards the issue. Would they be willing to intervene military wise, to whom would they be willing to give the power in Syria if the crisis would come to an end and what would be the following steps to help Syria back on track? For example the US has stated that if the crisis is obtained and discontinued, they will be willing to concede of Bashar al-Assad to continue his presidency (Hannula 2015). However, on the long run president Obama sees that al-Assad needs to relinquish his power but at the moment if the acquiescence lead to peace in Syria, the US is willing to do so.

Arguably, finding a solution to the conflict in Ukraine would help to achieve peace in Syria as well. Martin Lidegaard, Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs has argued that the key to solve the crisis in Syria is Vladimir Putin (Debating Europe 2014). If the relations with the EU and Russia will continue worsening, the solution to neither of the crisis will most likely not to be found. Russia's help will be needed to convince the government of Syria to negotiate on peace and achieve actual result how to act in the UN Security Council.

CONCLUSIONS

As it was known before, the EU had failed in finding a resolution to the crisis in Syria. The member states of the Union did not expect the crisis to be so devastating and long lasting, arguably due to the similar happenings in the Middle East area in the history. The organization has used a number of policy frameworks when it comes to building up the relations with Syria, such as the European Neighborhood Policy and the Union of the Mediterranean. These frameworks have been used in helping Syria to heal from the war, however they have not succeeded. The reasons for unsuccessful interference can be seen as follows: First, the organization has not had a common stance towards the crisis and therefore decision-making has been slow or even non-existent. Even though the member states have mutually agreed to condemn the actions of the Syrian government towards the opposition groups, it has not been enough to agree on terms of interference. This leads to the second point, which is the disunity of the opposition groups. The lack of a clear leader or a frontrunner of the opposition has made it difficult to negotiate on terms of peace when a certain person is not representing all of the ideas of the opposition. Thirdly, the economical situation inside the EU is bad and it can be argued that there are more important internal issues that need to be taken care of before international interference. And lastly, the complexity of the Common Foreign and Security Policy has slowed down the possible actions. Arguably, it might be more efficient if the CFSP would be under one EU umbrella where the Union would have the power to decide over foreign policy matters, not the member states.

The hypothesis that the interference from the EU's side could have been stronger from the beginning of the crisis, but the longer the war continues the harder it becomes to impede, was proved. As the crisis has continued and new parties such as radical Islamists have become involved, the more difficult it is for the member states to find a common stance towards the issue and act efficiently. When it comes to the framework to which the organization is built on and its heaviness and bureaucracy, these hypotheses were also proved right. However, before starting the research I did not acknowledge how little the EU has actually done in order to solve the crisis and how unsuccessful the peace negotiations and attempts have been. The importance of the US in the conflict and the influence of the country's actions to EU's actions was also something new that I realized after examining the topic further. The influence has

been much stronger than expected and arguably it can be said that the EU wants and needs the US to back up its own decision considering the interference towards the crisis. Most likely it can be said that the EU cannot do much on its own without the help of the US.

When talking about research ideas to continue this topic, it would be interesting to examine the role of the US further. The past history as a supporter of Israel and the US existence in the Middle East in the 21st century have had a influence to its actions considering the Syrian crisis as well, which would be interesting to inspect. The rise of the ISIS is another topic that is very closely linked to the Syrian crisis and would be an interesting and current to continue research further. Also the role of the United Nations in the crisis would be worth looking further – why does it seem that the organization never achieves much in similar conflicts and how should the organization be reshaped to become more effective?

As it has been proved, the extremely complex and disastrous internal conflict in Syria has grown to have an impact on several international actors and individuals abroad. The longer the conflict continues the harder it is to find a peaceful solution to it. It is hard to say if and how the influence of radical Islamists will change the direction of the whole war. Nevertheless, it will have an impact to the future happenings. However, the aftermath of the whole crisis needs to be taken care of at some point, which again will most likely require help from the European Union.

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