

# [Geostrategic of syria during the conflicts](https://assignbuster.com/geostrategic-of-syria-during-the-conflicts/)

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By the end of the paper, it is expected that student will get thorough knowledge of the strategic environment after using the geopolitics-strategy analysis on certain case. The case this paper will highly concentrate is Syrians political tension during the conflicts which involve many other Middle East’s states. The tension has become the Syrian Crisis’ as it is never controlled in good manner to prevent it becoming a crisis. From the very start, the uprising had taken time in March 2011.

It led to more major conflicts between the Free Syrian Army and the persistent regime as they demand on he resignation of Basher Alaska.

However these political tensions must have not hampered the foreign policy taken by Syria in pursuing control over its resources and route; or in the most basic sense, for the importance of protecting state borders. If it seemed to hampering enough the foreign policy decision making of Syria to be finished, the only explanation can only be seen in the study of where the state directs its power and the geographic focus of the state’s foreign policy. 2 In other words, geography is the one that Syria need, as it gives choice to where to project, if any, rower and influence.

Despite of analyzing solely on the Syrians foreign policy? means and ways? in geographic sense, the geopolitical reality in Middle East should also be considered as it gave the background of the region’s strategic ends.

The region’s geopolitics, as has been shown in the previous paper, is the importance of routes whereas the Syrians western shores verge with Mediterranean Sea and the Arab Gas Pipeline becomes Syrians strategic advantage. The understanding of this Syrians strategic advantage is expected to be comprehensively done in this paper. Refers to Grille, Jab J.

Great Powers and Geopolitical Change (Baltimore: the John Hopkins university Press, 2006) Ibid. P.

36 Research Question The research question is; how is Syrians strategy towards region’s geopolitical reality during the conflicts? Theoretical Framework Geography as the key variable According to Jab J. Grille, at the level of foreign policy, geography is a geopolitical reality to which states respond by formulating and pursuing a strategy. 3 The visualization of the theory is as seen below. The red arrows symbolize how strategy comes as the respond towards the geopolitics? which lies under the definition of geography.

Grille’s argument revolves around the three concepts of geography, geopolitics and strategy.

Those concepts are determined by three geography variables, which are; trade routes, centers of resources and state borders. The first two affect geopolitics and the third influences strategy. Strategy Theory Grille stated that in a more pr©cited sense; strategy describes where a state concentrates its efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomacy activity. Military Projection STRATEGIC Diplomacy activity 3 Ibid. P. As this paper will talk about geography and strategy in the sense of conflicts and ar, it must be recognized that strategy is aSupremepractical endeavourer. 4 Therefore the strategic will touch the essence only both military projection and diplomacy activity whereas it will be coherently practical. However, Grille further stated that state’s strategy is not necessarily motivated by geographic or geopolitical factors. He correlates more on how a state tend to project power to a location because of the disposition mainly on political reasons, such as ideological reasons, interest groups, or simply the whim of its leader. It seems that practical endeavor and political reasons may come hand in hand to affect the state’s direction of foreign policy. State Borders and Threats According to Grille, the main variable influencing strategy is state borders.

State borders will define the state’s territory. Whenever the invasion and attacks threaten a state, the first priority to do is the protection of territorial security. The military projection and diplomatic activity in strategy are seen in how states adapt to change given by incoming threats and how states are still being able to protect its territory.

States will seek above all else to protect their territory, and state borders re a good measure of territorial security. This below figure shows the significance of state borders, forthcoming limitation and threats. Economic Resources Diplomatic Protection of territorial security and state borders Limit the projection power THREATS Limit the pursuit of control over resources and trade routes Figure 2.

State Borders Significance 4 Inhumane, Thomas G. Strategic Studies: a reader. (New York, Rutledge, 2008) Grille, Jab J.

Great Powers and Geopolitical Change (Baltimore: the John Hopkins university press, 2006) p. 22 5 The scenario will be better put this way; when state borders are threatened or unstable, the state must concentrate its efforts on the preservation of its territorial security and is unable to pursue an effective foreign policy far from its territory. 6 Why unable? Because diplomatic, military and economic resources of a state must be diverted to protect states borders, in order to prioritize the reducing of threats.

Consequently, the limitation on the power projection and the pursuit of control over resources & trade routes will take place as soon as state conducts the protection of state borders. Stability and Security of State Borders Grille has come to define factors in stabilizing state borders. He stated that the stability and security of state borders are influenced by both geography and politics. 7 It is indeed all coming back to geopolitics basic nature. The geography influences are the differences between land and sea borders and between the characteristic of land borders.

The influence by politics comes from the underlying balance of power.

The distinction between sea and land borders, as Grille clarified, continues to be an important variable explaining the likelihood of conflict and the direction and outcome of foreign policy. For example, despite representing a smaller distance than a body of eater, a mountain range might provide more security than a sea. But it does not close the possibility of an easier operation of land invasion, and bigger “ border pressure”. The writer can correlate that this geographical distinction will predict the conflict and further the direction and outcome of state’s foreign policy.

This is the exact calling for strategy to be put upfront in the studies. The complicating factor to be considered is; the politics between the states separated by borders. As Grille emphasize, the more conflicting the underlying political relationship between states, the more unstable the borders. This underlines the conflict happen in study case and above everything are the entire theoretical frameworks this paper has given. 6 Grille, Jab J.

Great Powers and Geopolitical Change (Baltimore: the John Hopkins university Press, 2006) p. 36 7 Ibid. P. 7 Analysis It is important to underline that the level of analysis this paper will use is in immediate level. The level is defined when territorial borders meet the balance of threats and it further could be resulted into relations within the neighborhood. Syrians conflict is the perfect case to present as it will independently give us the understanding on the geographical direction of state’s foreign policy.

The importance of routes in Syria as region’s geopolitical reality Syrian Transport Corridors The country has long held a particularly special place in the transit of energy resources and transport corridors. First example of advantage; The Arab Gas Pipeline (GAP) represents a unique model strategic Arab energy cooperation involving Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and such is of particular significance for the Syrian energy sector. 9 Figure 6. The Route of Arab Gas Pipeline linking Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Soon Turkey. Source: reconnaissance. U The aim of Syrians energy strategy is to gain a strategic position in regional oil and gas transit, which along with the Iraqi-Syrian and Iranian-Iraqi-Syrian plans for building new transport routes.

Yet the implementation of Syrians energy projects and restoration of its regional transit hub status depend on the political situation in the country, geopolitical interests of the leading countries in the world, and also on the energy interests of the neighboring countries, primarily Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Any regional powers that have the most influence on Syria and its future will have access o all the strategic advantages on Syrians western shores verge with Mediterranean Sea.

It is similar with Grille’s theory on the lines of communication, significantly the importance of routes; whoever has the control over the routes, the state will have strategic independence. 8 Odorous, Rain Aimed Gain. “ Future Maps of Syrian Transport Corridors.

” Russian International Affairs Council. The SST 24 April 2014. Web. 31 May 2014 9 Ibid. Syrians borders and territorial security After years of conflicts, Syria by nature has built 19 posts of borders crossing within its boundaries and there are many of trans-border disputes taking place.

The functions of border for the neighboring states during the conflicts, especially Turkey Jordan and Iraq, is to facilitate the crossing of rebel fighters and Shadiest into Syria, limits and controls the flow of Syrian refugees attempting to enter its territory.

10 Syria is bordered with six countries and one sea. Mediterranean sea, Lebanon and Israel are on the west of Syria; while Jordan and Iraq are in the south east; and Turkey dominated the northern side of the state. The map below shows what has been crumbled in national territory of Syria during the conflicts, researched by Cyril Rousseau in Norma research.

Map 1, Transformation of Trans-Border Areas in the Context of the Syrian Conflict. Source: Norma Research, 19th February 2014 The dynamics of Syrians borders has been formed from 2011 until now. Many other neighbor states contributed in giving the dynamics, because geopolitically speaking, Syria has the strategic advantage as energy transit routes and strategic border posts as entry for opposition support army? beside from having political tension between the territory and neighbor states.

10 Rousseau, Cyril. “ Transformation of Trans-Border Areas in the Context of the Syrian Conflict. Norma Research: Focus on Syria (2014): n. Gag. Web. 13th July 2014.

Looking at the underlying balance of power performed by neighboring states adjacent to Syrians borders, Syria is in the stage of trapped’ as the only ally she can rely on is in the far east; Iran. From the north, Turkey is always ready to send troops in diminishing the regime influence. From the east, ISIS/lolls? lactic State in Iraq and the Eleven? performed as Jihads group active in both Syria and Iraq, could anytime attempt to take over the contested area.

With Turkey Each of the 19 posts of border crossings has its own party taking control, whether it is Kurdish {presented as POD (Syrian Kurdish political party)}, Anti-regime (the rebels), Free Syrian Army, or ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Eleven). The state that significantly gives major dynamic towards Syrians borders is Turkey and the reason why lies behind three factors. These factors are analyzed based on Grille’s theory on the stability and security of states borders which are influenced both by geography and politics.

First, between Turkey and Syria, posts of border crossing are 9, out of 19 posts.

Those are Saab, ABA al-haw, ABA al-Salaam, Jarfuls, Ail al- Arab, Tall-Abide, Rasa al-Main, Squamish Massing and Main Data. These posts could give Turkey an ease in entering and fleeing Syria during conflicts. Second, Turkey? through POD? has contributed well in sending fighters and weapons as they have the ease from 4 out of 9 posts in the border. It is also shown in the map 1 marked with the brown arrow. Third, Turkeys agenda is not merely about stability, but to win a dominant power in the region by building power in this good battle arena supporting the majority Sunnis opposition people in Syria.

As stated by Laramie and Ender, “ Turkeys opposition to Sad is a direct threat to the Iranian regime’s most vital interests. 11 Turkeys interests in Syria seem to be attached forever with her rivalry with Iran. That becomes a reason why Turkey further supports the Syrian rebel and why it is sending fighter to help the rebel. As soon as the presiding regime falls, Turkey could control the importance of routes and the strategic advantage. Thus that is the current geopolitical situation in Middle East.

1 8 Neighboring States as place to flee for Syrian Refugees Rousseau in Norma research stated that among the many consequences of the Syrian conflict; almost all of the neighboring states have strengthened border control, whether they act as neutral or active actors in the conflict. This reinforcement is linked to the withdrawal of Syrian authorities from their border areas adjacent to Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. This is where the Syrian refugees who fled the war seek opportunity to enter the desired destination such as Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon. The flow of refugees is marked with grey arrow in the map 1.

In the following events, Iraq? and other active actors in the conflict? quickly strengthened the border control as they have to limit and control the flow of Syrian refugee attempting to enter its territory.

Data in MUNCH shows that more than 1, 1 million Syrians refugees fled to Lebanon, while almost 800. 000 are in Turkey, more than 600. 00 are in Jordan, and 200. 000 more in Iraq. 13 This number have made the political tensions to control in border posts more complicated as Syria have to balance between countering attacks and minimizing the collateral victims.

In this new dynamics, the border cannot function as a filter (a role it, in fact, never really played); it rather tends to give way to the free movement of fighters, some of whom – the most extremists -aim at a political project that denies the very existence f the established state of Syria.

States borders indeed have the compromising instability whenever the conflicts occurred within the territory. The Syrians foreign policy has to project its best strategy to both eradicating attacks and minimizing the civilian victims from Syrians side.

Seeing all of the Syrians borders are threatened, the state must concentrated its efforts on the preservation of its territorial security and is unable to pursue an effective foreign policy far from its territory. 14 Consequently, the limitation on the power projection and the pursuit of control over resources & trade totes will take place as soon as state conducts the protection of state borders. It indeed seems that Syrian transport corridors as the importance of routes is no longer number one priority for neighboring states.

The influence over the area is the one that becomes the main concerns, in order to slowly topple down Sad’s regime.

In this very sense, Grille’s theory on the stability of state’s borders has touched the essence of truism. 12 “ Syria Regional Refugee Response. ” Inter-information on Refugee’s statistics. MUNCH. N.

D. Web. 13th July 2014. 13 14 Syrians military projection Map 2, Regime’s army mainly in Southern Syria Source: The Economist Compared to the previous map, it can be said that this map reflects the very recent condition of politically and geographically tension over the area. 5 The area with red color shows us the coverage of Syrian army, located mainly in south west of Syria, adjacent with its ally border; Lebanon.

The Syrian army also controls the seven post borders that located mainly in this dense pro-Sad population territory. Those posts are Tarsus, Dubiousness, Tall Kulak, Jessie, Habeas, Nassau and AY Tanat. Damascus med to have firm stance in operating its armed forces as it is included in the state’s dominance territory. However, the state’s Job to maximize power with its military throughout Syria is still on the long list.

The Syrian army’s coverage is rather equal to the anti regime’s army coverage as seen in blue color, where as you can see is spread in the north east part of the country, adjacent with Turkey.

It is the proof that Turkey indeed has utilized its strategic border to support the Syrians opposition army. 15 The ND S, B. “ Syrians borders: State of Play. ” The Economist. 26 March 2014. Web.

2 July 2014 Regime’s military: the best trained forces in the Arab world Syria currently has 178. 000 active personnel on the frontline, and 570. 000 active reserve personnel. 6 With this number, Syria step into the contested area? marked with pastel color in the map 2? in order to seize power and slowly dominating back the whole country for state’s interests. The report on ‘ SW, “ The Sad Regime: from Counterinsurgency to Civil War,” concludes that while the Syrian army is suffering from high casualties it is increasingly reliant on core trusted units to control all of Syria. 17 Those units are 4th Armored Division, Republican Guard and Special Forces.

18 At the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the Syrian Army was one of the largest and best-trained forces in the Arab world.

Organized according to Soviet doctrine, it was oriented to project power into Lebanon and to defend against a potential Israeli invasion. 19 Despite its relatively poor combat record against the Israelis, the Syrian Army had earned a reputation as a disciplined and motivated force. 20 The Army’s cohesiveness and continued logistical capacity in the current uprising is consistent with this reputation. The regime’s military strength rests on many factors, such as the loyalty of troops, the status of equipment, and the number of casualties sustained (Holiday, 2013).

Holiday says reorganization of loyalist brigades and a dependence on irregular army militia has kept the armed forces largely loyal and transformed the conflict to an unconventional civil war. Syria, which is 80 percent Sunnis, is facing an uprising against a regime dominated by the president’s Latest sect, an offshoot of Shiite Islam. While the army is largely representative of the country sectarian makeup, Holiday says anecdotal evidence does suggest sect and geography have laded a part in determining which soldiers are grounded.