
SYRIA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR: AFTER ASAD REMOVAL, WHY THE SUDDEN INTEREST OF THE WEST, ARAB NATIONS, OTHER WORLD POWERS IN SYRIA'S RECOVERY

Bieni Victor Emenike

victorbieni@gmail.com

+2348165818835

Department of Political Science/ International Relations.

Faculty of Social of Sciences,

University of Benin (Uniben), Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study, titled "Syria After the Civil War: After Assad's Removal, Why the Sudden Interest of the West, Arab Nations, and Other World Powers in Syria's Recovery?", examines the strategic motivations behind renewed international involvement in Syria's post-conflict reconstruction. Grounded in Structural Realism (Waltz, 1979), the research explores how global powers use humanitarian aid to advance geopolitical and economic interests. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the study analyzes official documents, policy statements, media narratives, and elite interviews. Using NVivo, content was coded into key themes: humanitarian assistance, political conditionality, sovereignty, economic investment, and strategic positioning. Findings reveal that Western actors frame aid around democratic reform, while Gulf states and Eurasian powers focus on investment and influence. Aid delivery patterns differ: some bypass state institutions to support NGOs, while others centralize power, sidelining civil society. The study also underscores Syria's transformation into a battleground for regional and global rivalries, where military presence and donor agendas reflect broader strategic calculations. Ultimately, Syria emerges as a prism through which sovereignty and influence are renegotiated. The study recommends transparent, locally driven recovery strategies that preserve the neutrality of aid and ensure inclusive peace building.

Keywords: Syria, post-conflict reconstruction, geopolitical interests, humanitarian aid, strategic positioning.

Introduction

The removal of Bashar al-Assad from power marks a significant turning point in Syria's post-civil war landscape, prompting renewed global interest in the country's recovery and reconstruction. Once a battleground of proxy interests between Iran, Russia, the West, and Arab nations (Bozorgmehr, 2015; Chance, 2015), Syria now stands at the center of a complex geopolitical re-engagement driven by both humanitarian narratives and strategic ambitions. The humanitarian catastrophe unleashed by the war, including widespread displacement and the collapse of healthcare infrastructure as seen during the Syrian polio outbreak (Kennedy & Michailidou, 2017) has intensified calls for coordinated recovery efforts. However, as Cuttitta (2017) argues, humanitarianism often serves as a vehicle for political and territorial influence rather than neutral aid. The growing involvement of external actors in Syria's post-war reconstruction reflects this tension, with powerful nations seeking to shape the country's future through investment, diplomacy, and soft power rather than through overt military means (Ibold, 2019). While humanitarian concerns, such as the migration crisis in Europe (Staněk, 2017), provide public justification for intervention, deeper motivations lie in regional security, economic interests, and the recalibration of influence following Assad's exit (Rehman, 2015; Chapter Seven, 2015). Against this backdrop, Syria's recovery has become a contested space where inclusion and exclusion are negotiated not just through aid, but through the reassertion of international norms and power hierarchies (Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005).

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, evolved from an internal uprising into a complex international conflict involving regional and global powers. As the Assad regime fought for survival amid opposition from various rebel factions, countries like Iran and Russia offered crucial military and diplomatic support to ensure Assad's continuity in power (Bozorgmehr, 2015; Chance, 2015). This period of civil unrest devastated Syria's infrastructure, economy, and public health systems, while exacerbating the refugee crisis across Europe and the Middle East (Staněk, 2017). The removal of Assad, whether through political transition or regime change, represents a major shift that alters the balance of