


RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

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ABSTRACT

In International Relations, countries act from a realist perspective, depending on their interests, powers and foreign policies of states in anarchic order. At the heart of Russia's foreign policy is the aim of "going to warm seas". The study examines this policy of Russia in the historical framework and from a realist point of view, from 1812 to the present. The period that started with the post-2014 destabilization in Syria is based on the question of whether Russia has enabled it to be successful both politically and militarily in the realization of the warm seas goal. Based on the research, literature review, newspaper news, columns, military and political characteristics of the period, content and current situation analysis are made. In connection with the countries of the region and the political conjuncture, the process that started with Russia's request for assistance from the Syrian president and resulted in the naval base and air base in and around the city of Tartus and its dominance up to Crete in this region is discussed in detail. As a result, it would not be wrong to say that Russia achieved the goal set at the beginning of the 19th century upon the request of the Syrian president. In addition, it is seen that Russia has gained a significant power not only in Syria but also in the region with the agreements it has made with neighboring countries in the region such as Iran, Turkey and Jordan. The study also shows that Russia has created a permanent and important power element in the Eastern Mediterranean region with a 45-year agreement with Syria for the Tartus military base, which can be extended for another 25 years optionally.

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Introduction

In order to understand the reason for Russia's current existence in the Eastern Mediterranean, it would be appropriate to understand the geopolitical handicaps it has experienced historically. Russia, which does not have a suitable area to make a port in the northern regions and on the Black Sea coasts, except for Sevastopol, has been aiming to go to the warm waters since the USSR period. Since World War I, Turkey has made various efforts to open up to the Mediterranean via the straits (Bosporus and Dardanelles). Although there is an agreement that serves this purpose in peacetime with the Montreux Agreement, this will not be the case in times of war. In the bipolar world that emerged after the Second World War, there was a period called the Cold War. In this period, the Middle East policies of the USSR also developed in line with the policies of the USA to contain the USSR. As a matter of fact, the period in question is the formation period of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The subject becomes more understandable when we focus on this period and the attraction of the Middle East.

For this reason, the aim of the USSR to go to the warm waters, energy routes and the Middle East policy will also be emphasized in the study, and it will be tried to be explained by including the current alliances (Russia-Syria, Russia-Iran, etc.) in the historical process from the beginning of the Truman doctrine. When it comes to the 2000s, it is seen that the region has become anarchic in the international system with the energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, Russia being a Challenger Power against the USA and the destabilization of Syria.

According to the neo-realist Waltz, a central authority is needed for cooperation to occur in the international system. Emphasizing Waltz's approach through the concept of international sovereignty, Lake states that the system is determined by the sovereign and the great powers that have embedded relations with each other in international politics (Lake, 2003). Ensuring the balance of power in the system of anarchy and the existence of Russia as a Challenger Power in the Eastern Mediterranean are examined in terms of

power and interest relations in the historical process. Russia's policy to reach warm water aims to protect the country's interests, both commercially and militarily, apart from the country's lack of coasts suitable for making ports.

Russia has not made any concessions from Turkey's demands regarding the Straits during and before the First World War. In addition, the underground richness of the Middle East is seen as another factor. The warm water policy, which was shaped during the period of Tsarist Russia, remained one of the main strategic objectives, although the approaches changed situationally. By examining the subject in the context of Russia's foreign policy in the historical process, it provides an understanding of the policy in question and Russia's military position in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean today. In the international demand that changed after 2000, Russia's agreement to strengthen its presence in Syria in line with its own interests in the Eastern Mediterranean shows that it has begun to show the USA its weight in the region through cooperation with Iran, Turkey, Israel, and other regional countries. In this sense, Russia's presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, its strategy, and the historical process of landing in the warm waters are given in the following sections.

Russia's Warm Seas Policy and Historical Process

Russia's interest in the Mediterranean for the first time was shaped in the time of Tsar Peter I, who is known as a reformist, and Russia's future strategy began to be designed together with the restructuring of the country (12 ministries and the establishment of universities).

Warm waters and the Mediterranean's location here had a special place in the Tsar's perception of the future. In this period, among the factors that made it difficult for the Tsar to descend to the warm waters, "the presence of the Turks in the Black Sea, the Straits and the Balkans, the Caucasian problem, the war with Sweden and reforms" (Öztürk, 2013, p. 52-53). In the later period, Tsarina Yekaterina adhered to the same strategy. They remained in conflict with the Turks and supported the uprisings in the Egyptian region.

In the following period, the rapprochement of Greece, which also had religious ties with Russia, which achieved success in the Borodino war with Napoleon on September 7, 1812, disturbed England and France, the other great powers of that period. In addition, the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1833 helped the Russians to approach the warm waters. The content of the agreement; “This strategic agreement would not exceed 8 years and would relieve Russia, especially against England, as the Ottomans would close the straits in case of war, against the negativity that might arise between Russia and the British Kingdom and France” (Öztürk, 2013, p. 54).

In addition, Russia continued to deal with the Slavic elements in the Balkans as part of its warm waters’ strategy during this period and the period leading up to World War I. With the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire began to lose its prestige.

With the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war on the side of the Germans in the First World War, Russia's supply lines were cut as a result of the closure of the straits, and internal problems and revolution took place in Russia in this period (Kennedy, 1989, p. 263). From this period until the Second World War, Russia continued to make efforts to reach warm waters through Turkey and the Balkans in various ways.

After the Second World War, the Cold War took the place of the conflicts. In this period, the efforts of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to spread its ideology among the Slavic peoples in the Balkans began to be seen after the Red Revolution. It is seen that the Bulgarians, the Greek Communists, who received the support of Tito in Yugoslavia and the USSR, carried their ideological dissemination efforts in this region to the level of conflict. However, the uprising of the ethnic groups in northern Iran by the USSR is seen as a part of the energy resources and warm water policy in the Middle East. It is seen that the Middle East and warm water strategy, which was suspended during the Lenin period, gained momentum after 1924. In this context, it is necessary to explain the importance of the Middle East for the USSR during and after the Cold War, and its policies and regional activities in this region.

USSR and the Middle East

The fact that the energy resources in the Middle East are at a level to meet the needs of the world population increases the importance of this region for countries with limited energy resources. In addition, the ethnic diversity of the people living in the region has become an area where other powers compete for their interest in the region and to benefit from the riches there. In this context, the Middle East becomes a “geopolitical, strategic and economic area of competition and struggle” (Yüce, 2016, p. 289). From the point of view of the USSR; The Middle East was not only a way to reach warm waters, but also had an important place in the foreign policy of the USSR during and after the Cold War. During the cold war, the Soviet Union directed its foreign policy in line with its ideological line, and the policy definition of the USSR is expressed as competition and effort to exist in the region. In this sense, the Middle East policy of the USSR during the Cold War period is generally shaped by the Israel-Arab conflict, the policies towards border states such as Iran and Turkey, the influence of the USA in the Middle East and the competition for control of the gulf. During the Cold War Period, the US appeared as the only dominant power in the Middle East, and due to the possibility of creating a dangerous structure for the USSR, Russia made efforts to get closer to the countries of the region in terms of making counter moves within the framework of its policy of spreading its interests and ideology in the region and establishing the balance of power in the Arabian Peninsula. If we look at these processes historically, the path to the Truman doctrine is of great importance.

After the revolution in Russia in 1917, it is seen that the newly established Soviet Union's influence on the Balkans, where the Orthodox population is concentrated, has increased. Apart from this region, before the start of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had military and economic aid to some Arab states, especially Egypt and Syria (Khasan, 1998, pp. 84-105). Although the relations of the USSR with Egypt have followed a fluctuating direction, Syria has stood by the Soviets as an ally in this region. In this period, although the USSR saw that this region was not a class society to spread its ideology, it tried to keep its relations warm, but the relations of the USSR with the Arab world in this region remained weak until the middle of the century. Despite the

weakness of the relations, the ideologies of the Soviets had an impact in this region, and this effect was demonstrated by the BAAS movements that adopted the socialist approach. The ideological structure of the BAAS movement is similar to that of the Soviet Union. In particular, the main purpose of the BAAS Party, which was established in Damascus in 1943 and its leaders, is stated as "to create a single Arab Nation, to save Arabs from the yoke of foreigners and to bring Socialism" (Yüce, 2016, p. 278). Alongside Egypt, the Soviets established diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1943, and supported Libya's independence in 1955, following official relations with Syria and Iraq in 1944. Three years later, he tried to strengthen his official relations in the region by establishing relations with Tunisia in 1958 and with Morocco a year later in 1959 (Öztürk, 2013, p. 55). In the middle of the 20th century, this change in the Middle East began to be experienced with the invitation of the Soviets to be a force in this region. The USSR, acting upon the request of the Egyptian General Cemal Abdul Nazir, started to provide military and economic support to this region. Although the purpose of the Soviets in giving this support is a defensive policy, it is a movement against the US policy of encircling the Soviet Union.

The USA's Middle East Approach

The USA's realization that the ideology of the Soviet Union began to spread coincides with the fact that the Russians adopted an aggressive policy during the Leonid Brezhnev era and began to be the dominant power in the region (Khasan, 1998). Because during this period, friendly relations began to be established between the Soviet Union and Arab countries and progress was made. In particular, the Soviet Union's ethnic provocations by supporting the Azerbaijani separatists in Northern Iran, its view on the Iranian government to make oil concessions, and its efforts to force base and transit rights in the Turkish Straits, and the Soviet government's rejection of the Baruch plan to carry out international control over nuclear energy and weapons in 1946, and the British rejected the Greeks. American foreign policy has undergone changes due to the withdrawal of aid and assistance to the Turks. President Truman brought to congress the demand for American civilian and military personnel and equipment support, apart from financial aid, to the Greek and Turkish governments, and ensured this aid with the

argument that the Middle East would be lost if Greece and Turkey were on the side of the Soviets (Truman, 1947).

The main purpose of this aid is to surround Russia and prevent the Middle East's energy resources from falling under Soviet domination. Because the Soviet Union did not comply with the agreement after the Yalta Conference, did not withdraw from Poland and other countries under Soviet occupation, and attempted to establish a Communist Alliance in these regions (Ertem, 2009, pp. 337-397). This aid was followed by the process of Greece and Turkey being admitted to NATO, and it is accepted as a strategy that will prevent the ideological influence of Greece in particular, as the Soviet Union affected Orthodox-Slavic peoples in the Balkans such as Yugoslavia, Poland and Romania. Turkey, on the other hand, strategically received protection and support as part of its plan to contain the Soviets in the Middle East. During this period, the BAAS movement seen in Arab states also appeared as a danger that would hinder the goals of the USA. The reason why the Soviet Union was invited to this region by Arab governments is to ensure the balance of power in the region.

The USSR and the Middle East from 1950 to 1980

Between 1950 and 1960, USSR established diplomatic relations with countries such as Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan, and Somalia. It supported and officially recognized Algeria through the United Nations in 1960, and established official relations by supporting South Yemen in 1967. The main reason underlying these relations is the spread of socialist ideology by establishing contacts in the energy, trade and military fields of the region (Öztürk, 2013, p. 55). By the 1960s, although Russia did not side with Egypt and Syria in the Six-Day Wars, there was no deterioration in friendly relations, after the death of Egyptian President Nasser, Egypt experienced a shift in axis and followed pro-US policies, the Soviet Union in the region continued its existence through Syria. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s, it helped third world countries through Syria and became active in the region through Syria. Its proximity to Syria enabled the USSR to take part in the Syrian negotiation process, which continued during the occupation of Lebanon, and with this move, the USSR became active in the region (İdrisoğlu, 2010,

pp.57). Syria sees the Soviet Union as a shield for itself, both within the framework of dose agreements from the past and against the USA (Deniz, 2013).

The attitude of the Soviet Union in the Iran-Iraq war was to sell weapons to both sides and to keep an equal distance, and this created the impression that the Soviet Union's effectiveness in the Middle East was limited. Some sources attribute this ineffectiveness to the poor economic situation of the Soviets during the Cold War, and the wear and tear of the Soviet Union by the Afghan war in the 1970s is given as a reference (Talal, 199, p. 1-7). Towards the end of the Cold War, Syria faced the danger of losing its biggest ally (Yüce, 2016, p. 279).

Change in Russia and Its Effects on the Middle East from 1980 to 2003

In the 1980s, due to the economic problems in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev, the leader of the Communist party of the time, thought that reforms had arisen in the country, and started to carry out a new program, namely "Reconstruction (Perestroika)" in the strategic field and "Openness (Glasnost)" in the tactical field. Although the main purpose of Gorbachev's effort was to regain the power of the Soviets, it was not a situation that could be realized by using the capabilities of the country alone and with the effect of the Reagan doctrine, the Soviet Union entered the process of collapse (Kissenger, 1998, pp. 750-751).

By the 1990s, the Soviet Union collapsed as a result of the US competition and economic crisis, and the Cold War seems to have ended. Many states left the Soviet Union, and the end of the bipolar world in 1991 marked the beginning of a period when the US hegemony became stronger (Elma, 2010, p. 130). Two main approaches are seen in the foreign policy of the Russia in the post-1990 period: Eurasianism and Atlanticism. Yeltsin and the foreign minister of his time had an Atlanticist viewpoint and 'in Yeltsin's messages he constantly argued that the east was now the USA, the western states, not only their partners but also their allies. It emphasizes the importance of promoting democracy, freedoms and human rights, legality and moral values, and talks about

peaceful cooperation.' However, it conflicts with the Eurasian perspective (Donaldson, Robert H.; Nocee, Joseph L., 2005, pp. 229-231).

After the Cold War, it was a period for the Soviets to develop a "Partnership for Peace Policy" and reforms in order to prevent the expansion of NATO and the rapprochement with the West in general (Donaldson, Robert H.; Nocee, Joseph L., 2005, pp. 254-266). In this period, the Soviet Union implemented the Near Environment Policy and wanted to emphasize that the Middle East and the Caucasus were too important to be lost since 1993, but did not take a clear stance towards the Middle East (Sağlam, 2019, p. 211-217).

After this period, due to the power bloc created by the USA in the region, the Soviets turned to different formations for this region and started a struggle against non-regional power elements with the power elements known as the Shanghai Five and today called the Shanghai Power Union Organization (İdrisoğlu, 2010). By the 2000s, Russia's Putin period began, and this period constitutes a rapid change process in domestic and foreign policy. Putin has determined his priority as to strengthen Russia and to realize this with a strong state, strong economy and strong army (Kona, 2007, p. 187). In the 2000s, Russia's foreign policy was given a direction that encompassed the principles of multipolarity, pragmatism and selective globalization. The view of the Soviets on the international system is expressed as multi-polarity among these principles (Sağlam, 2019, p. 213). With the economic recovery of the Soviet Union and its political strengthening, and with Putin, it is seen that the multipolar world, the foreign policy with the priority of the immediate environment, and the anti-US efforts have significantly remained in Russia's official policy. Strengthening the state of the Soviet Union is Putin's priority; it has determined the way to achieve this with a strong state, strong economy and strong army. In this period, the energy strategy of the Soviet Union is also important, and one of the Soviets' orientation areas is the Middle East, the most strategic area of the global power struggle, considering both its energy resources and its location (Sağlam, 2019, pp. 214-215).

Change in Russia in the Putin Era from 2003 to the Present

The Putin era is a period in which the Soviets began to rise, both militarily and economically. Putin has also succeeded in placing his country in a good position at the international level militarily, economically and politically (Yüce, 2016, p. 280) and it is seen that he has a tendency to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union and the Middle East and countries close to him, such as Iran, China and Syria.

These relations also balance the American hegemony in the Middle East. Russia's first move on this theme was seen in 2003, when the USA used its veto right on the draft plans for the invasion brought to the UN Security Council against the Iraq operation. Russia opposed this plan for two reasons, the first is that it does not want the USA to become stronger in the Middle East, and the second is to prevent Russia from harming its influence in the Middle East, as it will harm Russian-Iraqi relations. With this approach, it would not be wrong to say that Russia has started to realize its presence in the Middle East and North Africa within the framework of the bilateral relations established with Iran, Syria, Algeria and Libya. As a matter of fact, Moscow, which has made agreements with these countries in the fields of energy, arms trade and technology, has created its still limited influence on strengthening its relations with these countries. It is seen that the Soviets, who remained silent during the "Arab Spring" that took place in 2010, followed a different path after the "Arab Spring" spread to their allies in the region. In this context, it was seen that the Soviets would not allow a unipolar structure strategically, especially in the Middle East, after Putin (Sağlam, 2019, p. 215). Despite the embargo of the West, Russia supported Iran, and its trade and military relations with this country helped the recovery of the Russian economy. At the same time, the West's silence in the face of Russia's attacks on Ukraine and Georgia shows that the Soviet Union has regained its former power, and its support for Iran despite the USA and the West strengthens this image. Likewise, while strengthening their relations with Syria from the past, they have taken a similar stance to Russia and Iran.

There are two main reasons for Russia's support for Iran and Syria. First, the fall of Syria with a blow from the outside will also cause Iran to become more isolated and endanger its two important allies, as well as the concern that if the US and Israel intervene in Iran, it will cause confusion and instability on its own country's southern border. The second reason is that presenting the Sunni regimes supported in these rapid transformations in the Middle East as a model poses a problem for Russia. These elements, which are also present in Russia's internal dynamics, and the threat of radicalization of the artificial formations in its immediate surroundings arouse concern for the Russians. The reason for this is the lessons learned after both the Chechen war and the war in Afghanistan, after acting together with the USA against the Taliban regime. In addition, it is important to protect the military base in the Tartus region, which has been an agreement between Syria and the Soviet Union since 1971. Although Tartus is the only Soviet Naval Base opening to the Mediterranean, "Considering the oil and natural gas reserves under the Eastern Mediterranean, Russia's presence in the Mediterranean, which relies heavily on energy, seems to depend on the Tartus Naval Base and Having an ally in such a valuable region means preventing the exclusion of Russia in the new energy equation" (Sağlam, 2019, p. 216). In the news of the Near East Newspaper dated 28.09.2015, El Menar conveys an analysis of the TV channel regarding Russia's desire to build a military build-up in Syria and the targets it foresees as follows:

The five targets envisaged by Russia in Syria and the stages of their implementation are as follows:

1- To gain influence in the Mediterranean and in Syria, the only Arab country that is an ally of Russia.

2- Trying to balance American influence and establishing a military base on the Turkish border by directly entering the US influence area.

3- Interfering with terrorist groups to prevent terrorists from returning to Russia and moving closer to Turkey's borders, which has influence over Moscow's dangerous enemies, the Caucasian and Central Asian fighters.

4- To preserve Russia's alliance with Bashar Assad and with the Syrian army of both the Soviet Union in the past and Russia today.

5- Establishing an alliance with Iran on the Silk Road route in Syria (which includes China, Russia and Iran). This alliance also needs Afghanistan with the aim of reaching the warm seas (Mediterranean) via Iran, Iraq and Syria. However, the difference is that although America invaded Afghanistan to cut the Silk Road connection between China, Russia and Iran, and Iraq to cut the connection with Iran to Syria, America's plan in these two countries faced failure.”

In the same news, the implementation stages of Russia's Syria strategy are:

“1- Establishment of a military base in Latakia. Russia installed giant radars in Slanfa and in the mountain ranges on the Syrian coast. New T-90 tanks, missile defense systems and dozens of advanced military equipment have been deployed around Russia's military base in Latakia.

2- The Syrian army is based on the land, and large-scale logistics support is envisaged without any war on the ground. In addition to logistical assistance, air support and intelligence assistance are also envisioned, as well as the deployment of Russian satellites to Syria's Sukhoi aircraft. These were previously requested but denied. In addition, Russia will share intelligence, report the movements of armed groups, as well as the meeting places of armed groups, logistics supply lines and weapons depots to the Syrian army. Russian commanders will attend military meetings via satellite. In other words, the Russian military communication system will be connected to the Russian military communication system.

3- In order to strengthen the ally militarily, air and intelligence support will be given to take back some important and sensitive places, and then Turkey's role will be weakened. Likewise, in order to prove Russia's view that the Syrian army is the only effective ground power in the fight against ISIS, the areas in the hands of ISIS will be taken back” (Yakindogu Haber, 2015).

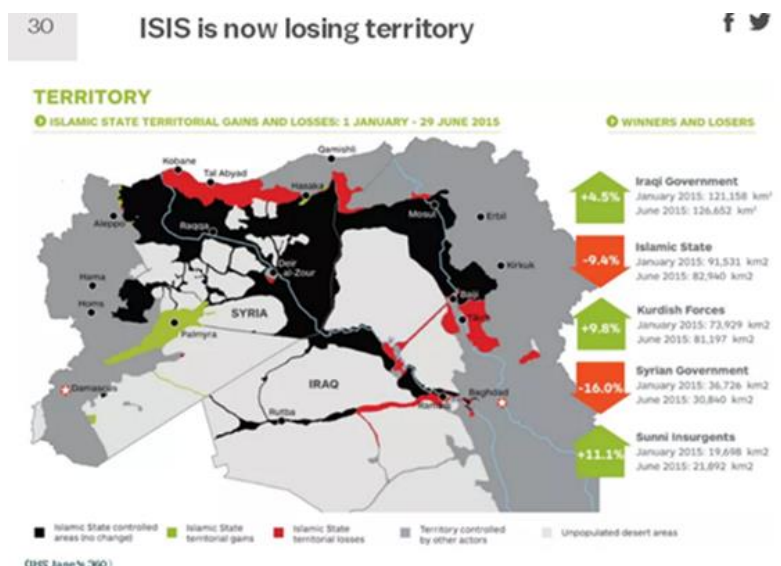


Figure 1: 33 Maps that explain terrorism 30th

(picture.<http://www.vox.com/2015/12/15/10133138/terrorism-map> Retrieved 12.04.2015)

In return for the support given to Assad, the Russian army first started to use the Tartus base effectively and increased the capacity of the base. Russia's military presence in Syria as of September 2014 is shown in the map on Newsweek magazine's website, in the news and map of Deutsche Welle's website in March 2016. The situation in Syria before and after Russia's intervention is shown in Figure 2 on the maps below.

“Russia launched airstrikes in Syria on September 30, 2015 under the name of "fighting terrorism." The Kremlin used the Assad regime's Hmeymim airport in Latakia as a base for these operations. However, the Russians were accused of targeting moderate opponents rather than terrorist groups in these attacks. It is known that there are Su-24, Su-25, Su-30 aircrafts, Mi-24 attack helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles in Hmeymim.

After the Russian plane was shot down on November 24, 2015: “for violating Turkish airspace, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced that it had placed the S-400 air defense missile system in Syria. It has been stated that the S-400s will protect the Russian base from land, while the Moskva cruiser will provide support from the sea.

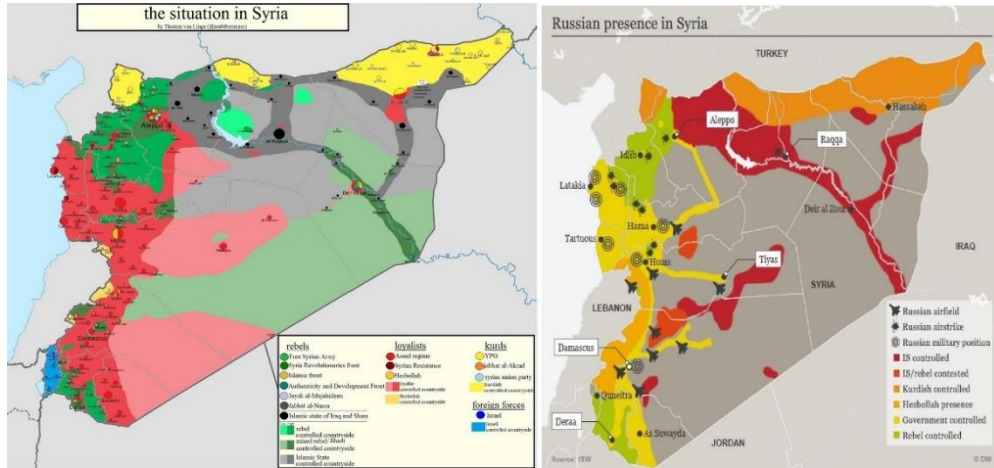


Figure 2: Maps of Syria in 2016 before the 2104 Russian intervention and after the 2015 Russian intervention from retrieved on 07.06.2022

(<https://www.newsweek.com/dutch-high-school-student-maps-isiss-terrifying-advance-syria-and-iraq-342604,2014> map, <https://www.dw.com/en/syria-and-russia-launch-huge-offensive-on-rebels-in-aleppo/a18786712>, 2016 map)

There are also warships in Tartus port of Latakia, Russia's stronghold of Assad. It is stated that there are Russian experts at the T-4 military airport in Shairat, which belongs to the Assad regime. It is estimated that the number of Russian soldiers in Syria is approximately 4 thousand and the number of warplanes is 35” (sanliurfa.com, 2016).

This period, after the temporary and partial ceasefire agreement on February 27, 2016, Russia reduced its operations in Syria, and Russia's 6.5-month presence in Syria greatly changed the course of the war and the balance of power. Assad forces, which carried out a ground operation with the support of Russia's intense bombardment, made progress in the cities of Aleppo, Latakia and Dera, and Bayırbucak in Latakia became one of the regions where the regime benefited most from Russian support. Regime forces in the Russian air corridor surrounded Turkmendagi from its southwest and captured approximately 80 percent of the region (sanliurfa.com, 2016). Although Russia withdrew after completing its mission to land in the warm seas after this intervention and settling in its bases in Tartus and Latakia, it still continues to support Assad in Syria. Because the Hmeymim Air Base, which Russia established in the north of Tartus, together with air

defense systems and other military elements, has gained dominance in the region stretching from Syria to Crete. It has strengthened its dominance in the region by taking an active part in the Syrian War by Assad's side. In addition, the Russia Tartus Base agreement was signed on January 18, 2017. According to the agreement; The base was given to Russia for 49 years. Within the scope of the agreement, Russia will be able to extend the agreement period of the base for 25 years optionally, the Damascus administration will not be able to demand any fee from the military base, and there will be no control, search, and seizure authority at the base (Işık, 2021). By 2022, with the support of Russia, the Syria map took the form below.

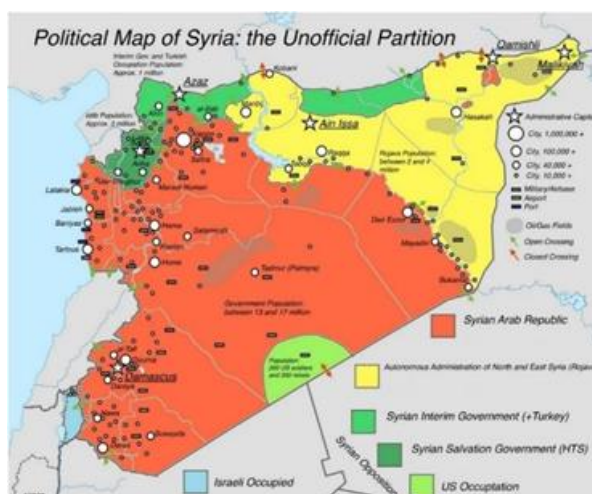


Figure 3: Syria map of 2022, from retrieved on 07.06.2022

(https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/rybrf6/syria_in_2022_strategic_map_2600_2149/)

Russia's military and political presence and interests in the region depend on the presence of Assad or a pro-Assad force in this region. However, Russia has achieved its historical purpose. With its cooperation with the Assad administration, Russia achieved its historical goals and established dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean by permanently placing its military forces there.

Conclusion

When the international policies of Russia from the 19th century to the present, depending on the aim of going to the warm seas, are examined, it is seen that it has achieved its goal with a strategic approach. Historically, it is concluded that Russia pursued a strategy in line with its goal after the formation of conflict or anarchy order in the obstacles to the realization of its existence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Considering the treaties of Tartus naval base in Syria, which started with the Hünkâr Iskelesi Agreement of 1833 with the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, it is seen that Russia achieved its goal through an agreement with the countries in its region by using its power in the international system. In this context, based on the content and literature, Russia has expanded its country's interests militarily and economically in the Mediterranean in this way. However, with this agreement signed with Syria in 2017, it has had the opportunity to continue its existence in the Eastern Mediterranean for a total of 74 years, with the right to extend its presence for 49 years and optionally for 25 years. For this reason, Russia needs a government that is loyal to it and can agree with it in Syria, as it has in the past. If the change in the balance of power in this region does not serve the interests of Russia, a possible conflict is inevitable for the region. As a result, Russia has achieved its own interests and goals since 2017. Although Russia descends to the Mediterranean and establishes a dominance in this region through Syria, according to the result of the Ukraine War in 2022, it will show whether it can maintain its dominance in this region and its position as a Challenger power, and whether it can provide the balance of power in the region. Because, as a result of the war in which Russia and the USA are the main actors, which is expressed as the war of democracy at the moment, it will be clear how the balance of power will evolve. However, it is seen that the interests of the USA and Western countries in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean are in the process of deepening the conflict.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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