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The Nature of Syrian Conflict and The UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's Mediation Efforts 2012-2014: A Case Study

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This study aims to analyses the nature of the Syrian conflict and the UN Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's mediations efforts during 2012-2014 and why these efforts failed. This paper argues that the increased complexity of the conflict, regional and international rivalry, incompatible interests of the external powers, lack of willingness and passivity from the part of the disputants had complicated the mission of Lakhdar and therefore his efforts failed. The study has employed a case study approach that would analyze primary and secondary literature on this subject matter.

This paper concludes that, although Brahimi is a man with an extensive experience in mediation, he failed to hammer out a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Syria during his mission from 2012 to 2014. This was because of a number of factors that made the conflict defied Brahimi attempts to mediate a negotiated settlement. Chief among these factors is the nature of the conflict in terms of its complexity and intensity.

Keywords: Nature, Conflict, Mediation, Efforts, Special Envoy

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طبيعة الصراع السوري وجهود الوساطة للمبعوث الأممي الخاص الأخضر الابراهيمي 2012-2014 حالة دراسية

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل طبيعة النزاع السوري وجهود الوساطة للمبعوث الأممي الإبراهيمي في الفترة 2012-2014 ولماذا فشلت هذه الجهود في التوصل إلى حل سلمي لهذا الصراع.

تقوم هذه الدراسة على فرضية مفادها أن الطبيعة العقدة للصراع والمنافسة الإقليمية والدولية وتقاطع المصالح للأطراف الخارجية وعدم توفر الإرادة إضافة إلى سلبية الاطراف المتنازعة قد عقدت مهمة الإبراهيمي وبالتالي افشلتها.

إن الجزء الأكبر من هذه الورقة هو نقاش وتحليل لطبيعة الصراع إضافة إلى تحليل مهارات وخبرات الإبراهيمي في الوساطة ومحاولاته من أجل إنهاء الصراع سلمياً.

ومن أجل هذه الغاية فلقد وظفت الدراسة منهج الحالة الدراسية من أجل تحليل الأدبيات الرئيسية والثانوية المتعلقة بهذه الموضوع حتى يتم تطوير فهم للمتغيرات والديناميكيات التي أثرت على جهود الوساطة وفشلها.

لقد توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى نتيجة مفادها أنه وبالرغم من أن الإبراهيمي رجل ذو خبرة ومهارة واسعة في الوساطة الدولية إلا أنه فشل في تحقيق تسوية سلمية للصراع وذلك بسبب عدة عوامل جعلت من الصراع أن يجافي كل هذه المحاولات حيث أن أشهر هذه العوامل هي طبيعة الصراع المتعلقة بتعقيده حدته.

الكلمات الدالة: طبيعة، صراع، وساطة، جهود، مبعوث خاص

Introduction

Since the end of 2010, a series of changes and political transformations have swept across the Arab World as a result of the eruption of violent and non-violent uprisings that created unprecedented chaos and instability in the region. The beginning was at Tunisia and then spread out across the region where almost every Arab country in one way or another witnessed its own spring. Chief among those countries is Syria. The Syrian conflict began in March 2011 when about 15 children had written anti-regime graffiti on community walls in Durra(1). Syrian government security forces and militias responded with violence, killing many protesters in Darra(2). Such reaction on the part of Damacus's forces led to the eruption of the crisis that was transformed into an armed conflict.

This widespread movement rapidly took on a much more formal nature when the opposition and army defectors began to organize political and military groups with regional support. At the onset of the conflict many had the belief that it would be a carbon copy of the Tunisian, Egyptian uprisings or other Arab countries that affected by the Arab Spring. Contrary to such expectations, the crisis had transformed into a lengthy deeply contested intra-state conflict with an active involvement of regional and global powers like Iran, Gulf countries, Turkey, Russia, U.S and many European countries. However, the international community particularly the UN and the Arab League have responded to the eruption of the conflict and appointed three successive special envoys in order to hammer out a peaceful solution to the conflict. These envoys were: Kofi Annan 2012, Lakhdar Brahimi 2012-2014, De Mustora 2014-2019 .

Problem of the Study

The problem of the study is that the Syrian conflict transformed from civil and peaceful protests into deeply-rooted conflict with so many parties involved. Moreover the international community has invested many efforts in order to achieve a mediated peaceful settlement to the conflict. Part of these mediation efforts were conducted by the UN Special Envoy Brahimi in 2012-2014. During these mediations attempts hard and lengthy rounds of talks and shuttling diplomacy were conducted that produced so many declarations, proposals, offers, and UN Security Council resolutions. Yet no historical deal was reached and the conflict has defied all these mediation efforts during the aforementioned period of time. The conflict and these mediation efforts have received the

(1) Tan,Kim Hua and Perudin,Alirupendi, The "Geopolitical" Factor in the Syrian Civil War: A Corpus-Based Thematic, SAGE Open, April-June 2019, p1

(2) Ibid, pp1-2

attention of scholars, researchers, and commentators and generated much analysis that raised many questions. Chief among them: Why the Syrian conflict has defied the logic of all these efforts particularly attempts made by a well experienced envoy like Lakhdar Brahimi? What were those variables and factors that made the conflict rigid and less amenable to solution?

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate and analyses the nature of the Syrian conflict and different aspects of the mediations efforts invested by the UN special envoy Mr Lakhdar Brahimi in the period between 2012 and 2014 and why these efforts failed to curtail and eventually solve the conflict. It is widely acknowledged that a mediated -negotiation particularly in long standing conflicts, does not occur in a controlled context and that is a continuous clusters of activities involving actors, decisions and situations(1) Moreover, the nature, form and the outcomes of mediation-negotiation process are determined by a number of factors related to the parties, the conflict and the interaction of the parties during their bargaining process(2). Therefore, this study argues that the increased complexity of the conflict, regional and international rivalry, incompatible interests of the external powers and lack of willingness and passivity from the part of the disputants had complicated the mission of Lakhdar. Consequently, the latter' extensive efforts had failed to hammer out a historical settlement to the Syrian conflict during 2012-2014. The significance of this study stems from the fact that it is a re-visit analysis to a curious case of a conflict that defied extensive mediation efforts invested by a highly repudiated and well experienced international envoy like Lakhdar Brahimi. To answer the aforementioned questions and deal with the key arguments of this paper, a case study approach will be employed in order to analyze primary and secondary literature on this subject matter. According to Jacob Bercovitch, the case study approach allows for an in-depth understanding of particular cases and builds up a solid understanding of the factors which influence negotiation, and the activities that occur during a specific stage of conflict resolution(3).

(1) Lane, Tracy. "Negotiation: An Emergent Process of Living Systems." *Behavioral Science*, Vol. 40, Issue. 1, January 1995, p41.

(2) Brigid Starky, Mark A. Boyer and Jonathan Wikendfield (2010) *International Negotiation in a Complex World* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), p6.

(3) Bercovitch, Jacob. "Third Parties in Conflict Management: the Structure and Conditions of Effective Mediation in International Relations." *International Journal*, Vol. XL, No. 4, Autumn 1985.pp125-130

Literature Review

Since its eruption, the Syrian conflict has triggered the interests and the attention of commentators, journalists, analysts and academics who have published a wealth of literature on this subject matter. However, this literature has reflected different perspectives.

Rami G. Khouri has argued that: Syria's war was complex, multi-dimensional, fierce and unique in some ways……one striking dimension of Syria's war that is more noteworthy than aspects of other conflicts in Yemen, Palestine, Libya, Somalia and Iraq is the longevity and intensity of direct foreign military involvement by those who supported the Assad government, notably Iran, Hezbollah and Russia(1).

Others focused on international community efforts to end the Syrian conflict particularly attempts made by Brahimi. Taheri Amir argued that" Brahimi has offered the fairest and the most realistic compromise formula" in terms of diplomacy and political work in hopes of composing a plan that could lead Syrian into peace or at least stabilize the country and reduce casualties(2). While some highlighted Brahimi's approach "Brahimi's approach since the very beginning was heavily based on convincing conflicting internal groups that ensuing the fight was a baseless endeavor with no benefits for anyone, and has sure adopted a "more cautious and consultative approach"(3). Magnus Lundgren argued that "The evidence suggests that the failure of mediation in Syria is partly an effect of mediation strategy, but more importantly, a consequence of the complexity and intractable nature of the wider mediation context"(4). Moreover, regarding Brahimi mediation efforts Magnus also argued that "The regime viewed Brahimi with mistrust because of his references to the Geneva Communiqué, whereas several Arab countries turned against him after he made it clear that he would not necessarily deliver Assad's departure and because he sought to involve Iran, a patron of the Syrian Government, in consultations"(5). Brahimi claimed that "there were no good guys in the Syrian tragedy", placing blame on all parties involved. He says the conflict could have been resolved in

(1) Khouri, Rami, The Implications of the Syrian War for New Regional Orders in the Middle East, MENARA working Papers, No. 12, Septemper 2018, pp4-6.https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/implications-syrian-war-new-regional-orders-middle-east.

(2) Taheri, Amir. "Has the Time Come for Military Intervention in Syria?." *American Foreign Policy Interests* 35, no. 4 (2013): 220.

(3) Lundgren, Magnus. "Mediation in Syria: initiatives, strategies, and obstacles, 2011–2016." *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 2 (2016): 3 4https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303312425

(4) Ibid, 3-4

(5) Ibid, 3-4

2012 had there been a better understanding of the situation, adding that none of the countries involved in the conflict or negotiations "had the interest of the Syrian people as their first priority"(1). Although the abovementioned literature have provided a positive contribution to the analysis of the nature of the Syrian conflict and Brahimi's efforts, this study is an attempt to cover and fill a possible gap on the existing literature related to this subject matter. Furthermore, this study covers a significant period of time where great changes and challenges have taken place in the Syrian conflict 2012-2014. In addition to that this study would be an additional contribution to the field of study which is an integral part of Middle Eastern peace studies.

Structure of the Study

This paper is structured under four main sections; Introduction, The Nature of the Syrian Conflict, The UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi Mediation Efforts and the Conclusion.

1. The Nature of the Syrian Conflict.

The nature of the conflict has been acknowledged to be a key factor in determining the success or failure of both mediation and negotiation efforts.(2) The effect of this determinant is derived from its different aspects such as the intensity and the complexity dispute. The first aspect is recognised as an essential component of how amenable a conflict will be to negotiation and mediation.(3) However, both scholars and practitioners have differed over the effect of the intensity of dispute. On the one hand it has been argued that the greater the intensity of a conflict, the better the chances of a successful negotiation as a method of minimising losses.(4) On the other hand, some have contested this in the sense that this will lead to entrenchment and polarisation,

(1)Brahimi, Lakhdar, Interview with Aljazeera English on 12 March 2016. https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/

(2)Jackson, Richard. "Successful Negotiation in International Violent Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 3, May 2000.p. 332.

(3) Bercovitch, Jacob and Houston, Allison. " Why Do They Do It Like This?: An Analysis of the Factors Influencing Mediation Behavior in International Conflicts." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 44, No. 2, April 2000.p. 177.

(4) Aggestam, Karin, Enhancing Ripeness (2005): Transition from Conflict to Negotiation, in eds, Zarmtman, I. William and Faure, Guy Olivier, *Escalation and Negotiation in International Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp272-273

making negotiation more difficult.(1) Richard Jackson contends that and argued that international negotiation is more successful in low intensity disputes.(2)

Apart from the above-mentioned contention this aspect suffers from the difficulty of evaluation and definition. What does intensity mean? And what is the best way to measure it?. Kenneth Kressel and Dean G. Pruitt have suggested that intensity can be defined by measuring the severity of the conflict, the level of hostility, the anger and the strength of the parties' negative perceptions(3). However, others suggest that the number of fatalities in terms of human losses is the most obvious and accessible measure, which can explain the intensity of the conflict.(4)

In regard to the complexity of the conflict, the rigidity of the disputed issues and the number of parties involved are the major determinants of how complicated a conflict is. A dispute with few parties involved is more amenable to resolution whereas a conflict with many additional parties makes the likelihood of reaching a solution more difficult. Intervening actors complicate the dispute by expanding the interests of the contested parties, adding more issues and complicating the communication process. The most important aspects which determines the nature of a conflict are the disputed issues which represent the causes of the dispute and the focus of the disputants' behaviour.(5) The nature of the issues at the heart of the contention will be influential in the determining the outcome of the negotiation(6). Jacob Bercovitch, Theodore Anagnoson, and Donnette L. Wille, have suggested five types of issues in international conflict: sovereignty ones over a specific piece of territory, ideological issues emphasising basic values and beliefs, security matters concerning frontiers, borders, and territories, issues of self-determination related to independence and a residual category of other issues.(7)

In regard to the nature of the Syrian conflict, this paper has argued that this variable has a very significant impact on the international mediation efforts and their outcome particularly attempts made by Lakhdar. To reveal how much the effect of this factor was, analysis should go beyond this general argument. It has

(1) Ibid.
(2) Jackson, (2000), 272-276.
(3) Kressel, Kenneth and Pruitt, Dean G. "Themes in the Mediation of Social Conflict." Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1985.
(4) Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille, "Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations." Journal of Peace Research Vol. 28, No. 1, February 1991 p. 13.
(5) Bercovitch and Houston , (2009), p. 177.
(6) Jean Marie Hiltrop, "Mediator Behavior and the Settlement of Collective Bargaining Disputes in Britain," Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1985, p. 87.
(7) Bercovitch, Anagnoson and.Wille, (1991), p. 14.

to focus on the different aspects of the dispute, particularly its duration, number of involved parties, humanitarian costs including casualties, severity of the conflict and disputed issues.

The Syrian conflict is a long standing and protracted one that has been going on since 2011 and went through different stages that fluctuated between extreme escalation and de-escalation. It began when number of children had written anti-regime graffiti on community walls(1). However, in time the popular protest movement gained momentum that led Assad to announce certain steps toward reforms in April 2011 and at the same time, his military security forces and militias responded with violence, killing many protesters in Darra. This led to the eruption of the crisis that was transformed into an armed conflict that rapidly took on a much more formal nature when the opposition and army defectors began to organize more political and military groups with regional support. The root causes of this conflict were issues related to the oppressive and the authoritarian nature of the regime, social and political injustice, marginalization, poverty and above all the impact of the Arab Spring that erupted late 2010.

The Syrian conflict was rapidly developed from peaceful communal protests into fierce multiple simultaneous civil wars and regional and international proxy confrontations. This structural change has exacerbated the intensity and complexity of the conflict that witnessed heavy involvement by many regional and international powers including non-state actors. The number of parties (state actors as well as non-state actors) who have been involved is one of the major characteristics of the Syrian conflict(2). Their perceptions and as well as their various and changeable interests have strongly exacerbated the complexity of the conflict.

The number of foreign forces that have been involving, fighting in Syrian, or did so indirectly by arming, financing and training fighting forces since 2012, were at least twenty different states and major non-state actors. Key regional and international actors are: Iran, Russia, USA, UK, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, UAE and Israel. Moreover, Non-state actors also have been involved in the conflict like: Hezbollah, Free Syrian Army, Islamic State, al Qaeda, Ahrar el-Sham, Jibhat Al-Nusra, Iraqi Shatt militia as well as Kurdish military groups in addition to a number of many smaller tribal, Islamist and secular rebel groups(3). The fierce ways in which Syrian and foreign actors

(1) Tan, Kim Hua and Perudin, Alirupendi, (*2019)*, p1
(2) Mitton, John, The Problem with everybody's favourite solution in Syria, *International Journal*, Vol.71(2), pp286-289
(3) Mitton, John, pp286-287

on both sides fought each others have also led to further intensity and complexity of the conflict. The antagonists have used chemical weapons, practiced ethnic cleansing and massacres against civilians, torture and killing methods, sieges and other inhuman acts that can be considered as war crimes. The prolonged severity of the fighting suggests that, the concerned parties were ready to die –hard and the unacceptably high cost of losing the conflict, particularly the Syrian regime and its backers, who have been determined to win whatever it takes(1). Russia intervened fiercely because of what it saw as the imperative of maintaining the Assad government in power, given the pivotal role of Syria in Moscow's reassertion and expansion of its strategic interests across the Middle East.

The international community reacted for the most part with a few intermittent practical responses to the sustained military brutality against both armed elements and civilians. In regard to human casualties of Syria's civil war have grown from the first handful of protesters shot by government forces to hundreds of thousands of dead. But as the conflict has dragged on, growing more diffuse and complex monitoring and counting attempts have essentially become difficult and sometimes impossible. Therefore, most of the casualties' numbers have been based on fluctuated estimates. The United Nations, which released regular reports on the death toll during the first years of the war, have roughly estimated that 400,000 people had been killed(2). However, others like the Syrian Centre for Policy Research had issued a report in 2016 that estimated the death of 470,000 people(3). The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said last month that at least more than 370,000 people dead including 112,000 civilians, had been killed in the war since March 2011(4).

In regards to the economic and social ramifications of the Syrian conflict, it has inflicted profound damage and destruction to the Syrian society national fabric and its economy. In time, the conflict has resulted in the partial or full breakdown of urban systems in many cities by destroying houses and public service–related infrastructure like roads, schools, and hospitals,

(1) Khouri, rami, The Implications of the Syrian War for New Regional Orders in the Middle East, MENARA working Papers, No. 12, Septemper 2018, pp4-6.https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/implications-syrian-war-new-regional-orders-middle-east.

(2) Rath, Saroj Kumar, Searching a Political Solution for Syria, India Quarterly, Vol. 73(2), p181

(3) Ibid

(4) Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Syria death toll tops 370,000 in 8 years of war,25/03/2019. http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=121974.

while leading to economic collapse in many areas. The conflict has not only resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of people and damaged productive elements; it has also severely diminished economic connectivity and decreased incentives for production(1). Syria's GDP was estimated to have contracted by 61 percent between 2011 and 2015 in real terms and by an additional 2 percent in 2016—a 63 percent decline compared with its 2010GDP(2). Estimates of national account indicators, including counterfactual GDP numbers estimated by using statistical estimation methods, show that the actual GDP fell $51 billion (in 2010 prices) short of the counterfactual GDP in 2016(3). Aggregating these differences between counterfactual and actual GDP numbers between 2011 and 2016 shows that the cumulative loss in GDP amounts to $226 billion in 2010 prices, about four times the 2010 GDP(4).

The conflict in Syria, , has resulted in the displacement of almost half population; more than six million people are displaced within the country, more than five million are refugees in neighboring countries, and a million have fled to Europe(5). Since the beginning of the crisis, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and other countries in the region have hosted the vast majority of refugees(6). In addition to that, more than 800,000 Syrian nationals are estimated to have sought asylum in Europe. Moreover, there are an estimated 0.4 million to 1.1 million unregistered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. The number of internally displaced persons was at 5.7 million as of January 2017, with 56 percent of them remaining within their own governorates(7).

The abovementioned discussion to the complexity and intensity of the Syrian conflict suggest that, the conflict considered to be one of the most violate and highly destructive conflict in contemporary history. Moreover, the number of parties whether states or non-states actors, unprecedented influx of displaced persons and refugees, economic losses, high level of destruction and high number of casualties, has made the Syrian conflict less amenable to

(1) Onder, Harun, The Toll of War: The economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria, This study was prepared by a multidisciplinary team led by Harun Onder, *World Bank Group* 2017. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/publication/the-toll-of-war-the-economic-and-social-consequences-of-the-conflict-in-syria.

(2) Ibid, p181.

(3) Onder, Harun, *The Toll of War: The economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria*

(4) Ibid

(5) Dimtrova, DanielaV, Aksak, Emel Ozdora and Ahern, Colleen Connoally, On the Border of the Syrian Refugee Crisis: views From Two Different Cultural Perspectives, *American Behavioral Science*, Vol. 62(4), 2018, pp532-533

(6) Ibid

(7) Onder, (2017).

solution. Therefore, it has complicated the international community mediation efforts to hammer out an agreed upon peaceful solution.

2. The UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's Mediation Efforts

Mediation is the intervention of a skilled and impartial intermediary working to facilitate a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement on issues that are the substance of the dispute between the parties(1). Mediation is a process of conflict management where disputants were assisted by an outside individual, organization, group, or a state, to settle a conflict without further use of violence according to the law, applying techniques, resources, legitimacy, or knowledge brought in by the third party(2). A common description is the operative one used by Bercovitch, Anagnoson &Wille : mediation is 'a process of conflict management where the disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, state or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical violence or invoking the authority of the law'(3). This means that there is an 'outside' actor that is central, often described as a third party, who does not have authority to impose a solution. Moreover, Zartman & Touval (2007: 438) argued that mediation is a mode of negotiation in which a third party helps the parties find a solution that they cannot find by themselves(4). What is clear from this, is that mediation is an activity geared towards resolving an ongoing dispute; that it is action by an autonomous, outside party (a third party); that it uses persuasion rather than coercion; and that it aims to reach a solution acceptable to the (primary) parties. Thus, mediation aims at conflict resolution and primarily achieves this through negotiations, by resorting to reason and logic and, ultimately, by appealing to the common wishes to end violence and prevent its recurrence. These definitions signify the importance of mediation as a process of conflict management as well as highlighting necessary conditions for a successful mediator like skills and impartiality.

(1) Fisher, Ronald J(2001) ,*Methods of Third-Party Intervention*,Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, (Berline: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management)

(2) Wallensteen, Peter and Svesson, Isak, Talking peace: International mediation in armed conflicts, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 51(2), p316

(3) Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille, (1991), p. 8.

(4) Touval,Saadia and Zartman.I.William,(2003) International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era, in eds Crocker,Chester A, Hampson,Fen Osler and Aall, Pamela, *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003),pp 427-428

Brahimi is yet another man of rich and vast experience in mediation, evident by his mediation history. His key philosophy can be summarized in the famous report, where he states that "peacekeeping operations should only be deployed when there is a peace to keep"(1). He is often described by many as mission impossible type who exhibits great mediation skills and management who has an engrossed belief in the role of politics in resolving conflicts(2). Previously, Brahimi had served as the Algerian Foreign Minister for two years in the 90's, and held many UN missions as Special Representative in Afghanistan and UN Special Envoy to Iraq and Syria. His expertise include post-conflict building, as evident from his "State Building in Crisis and Post-Conflict Countries" UN report presented during the 7th Global Forum on Reinvention Government in Austria (2007), peacekeeping, as well as crisis prevention and resolution(3). Furthermore, part of Brahimi's philosophy is to rely on resources available internally in a country of crisis, which later became to be known as "light footprint", evident through his work in Afghanistan with the use of an almost all-Afghani staff rather than heavy reliance on expatriate and foreign diplomats(4). A significant part of his approach, as presented in the Brahimi report, lies in two main aspects: not being afraid of taking sides when one side is perceived as guilty of crimes against humanity, and refusing to take inappropriate measures and decisions even when pressured to do so, especially given the costly consequential effects such decisions may have(5). His report, however, received mixed reception from within and out side the UN. In other words, Brahimi rejects traditional peace-keeping efforts in hopes of implementing more constructive and realistic measures, suggesting that peacekeepers' "use" (and obligation to the use) "of force should be extended" whenever necessary(6).

(1) John Karlsrud, "The UN at war: examining the consequences of peace-enforcement mandates for the UN peacekeeping operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali," *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 36, No. 1 (2015), p 42, doi:10.1080/01436597.2015.976016.

(2) John Karlsrud (2015), p 258

(3) Ojanen, Hanna. "Peacekeeping-peacebuilding: preparing for the future." *the Report of Finnish Institute of International Affairs* (2006), p 5.

(4) Chesterman, Simon. *You, the people: the United Nations, transitional administration, and state-building*. (Oxford: University Press on Demand, 2004), p 1.

(5) Malone, David. *Ingredients of success or failure in UN reform efforts*. Working Paper for the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, source: http://www. un-globalsecurity. org/pdf/Malone_paper_UN_reform_efforts. pdf, accessed on: 20.02, 2005: 9.

(6)Reynaert, Julie. "MONUC/MONUSCO and Civilian Protection in the Kivus." *International Peace Information Service* (2011),p 12.

Perhaps less known than Kofi Annan, Brahimi still held as recognized position as mediator and politician who also had his fair share of success and failures through his work with the UN and the Arab League. In retrospect, he appears more knowledgeable and relatable than counterpart Annan in managing peacekeeping and conflict management missions in Arab countries given his wider "understanding of the Islamic community" and various other cultures dominating the MENA region(1). First and foremost, his efforts came to fruition in brokering a successful ceasefire deal in Lebanon in 1989(2). Eventually, he oversaw the end of Lebanon's seventeen-long civil war through the Taif Agreement. Moreover, his work in South Africa could be seen as one of his most earnest successes in mediation, giving way to a great leader, Nelson Mandela, to rule as president(3). However, this is an imperfect example of multi-stage constitutional processes in conflict settings. This was mainly due a number of factors, including that multiple positive factors contributed to the generous head-start given to the democratic process, as well as the general dissatisfaction with minority rule, prompting positive political change. Later in Haiti on the UNMIH mission, Brahimi was several successes, including the establishment of "free and fair elections", rehabilitating and "training" the Haitian police force, rebuild infrastructure, and assisted Haiti's Government assume its responsibilities and functions following a coup in late 1991(4).

On the downside, several critics claim that the system deployed and implemented by the UN in Haiti is rather dysfunctional, and incapable of providing efficient aid services to citizens in distress especially following the natural earthquake disaster of 2010(5). Perhaps what perplexed Brahimi the most about is that that all efforts at maintaining peace fell short when it came to rebuilding a country lost to crisis. In his own words, he states "the international community has been trying to help Haiti rebuild a viable state for twenty years

(1) Brahimi from Algeria would Replace Annan as UN's Peace Envoy to Syria." Arab League Online. December 8, 2012. http://www.arableagueonline.org/brahimi-from-algeria-would-replace-annan-as-uns-peace-envoy-to-syria/.

(2) Abedin, Mahan. "Dossier: Lakhdar Brahimi United Nations envoy." *United States Committee for a Free Lebanon & Middle East Forum* 6, no. 6-7 (June &july 2004). Middle East Intelligence Bulletin.

(3) Suellentrop, Chris. "Can Lakhdar Brahimi save Iraq?" *Slate Magazine*. May 13, 2004. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/assessment/2004/05/un_envoy_lakhdar_brahimi.html.

(4) UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH)."United Nations. September 1996. http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unmih_b.htm.

(5) Karunakara, Unni. "Haiti: where aid failed." The Guardian. December 28, 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/28/haiti-cholera-earthquake-aid-agencies-failure.

[…] today, ten years later almost nothing has changed"[(1)]. In Afghanistan, Brahimi exhibited a sense of continuity that was important in the early stages of implementation in the peace-building process[(2)]. However, this is one example where Brahimi had tides blow in his desired direction, as stated by Thorsten & Rotmann (2008) who assert that it had a rather favorable context compared to other peace operations, thus; it could be seen as a mixed success in his favor[(3)]. Also, Brahimi adopted the "light footprint" approach, giving the UN a very small part to play in the country's recovery and later development, resulting in what is known as the "Bonn Process" as this requires Afghani capacity to govern itself by taking charge of their situation wherever possible[(4)].

Many claimed that Brahimi had offered the fairest and the most realistic compromise formula in terms of diplomacy and political work in hopes of composing a plan that could bring peace to Syria or at least deescalate violence and reduce casualties[(5)]. Brahimi's approach in Syria since the very beginning was heavily based on convincing conflicting internal groups that ensuing the fight was a baseless endeavor with no benefits for anyone, and has sure adopted a more cautious and consultative approach [(6)]. Doubtlessly, Brahimi had to tread with caution indeed as not everyone was too happy to have him as a mediator.

The Security Council provided him with the utmost levels of support and funding[(7)]. However, Syrian government gave him dubious looks due to his commitment to the Geneva I Talks[(8)] as the basis for future mediation and

(1) Brahimi, Lakhdar. "State building in crisis and post-conflict countries." In 7 th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, Vienna, June. 2007,p15.

(2) Papagianni, Katia. "Mediation, Political Engagement, and Peacebuilding." *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* , Vol.16, No. 2 (2010),p258

(3) Benner, Thorsten, and Philipp Rotmann. "Learning to learn? UN peacebuilding and the challenges of building a learning organization." Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding Vol. 2, No.. 1 (2008),p52.

(4) Chesterman, Simon. "Walking softly in Afghanistan: the future of UN state-building." Survival , Vol.44, No. 3 (2002):p37

(5) Taheri, Amir. "Has the Time Come for Military Intervention in Syria?." American Foreign Policy Interests Vol.35, No. 4 (2013) p 220.

(6) Lundgren, Magnus. (2016), p277.

(7) Katulis, Brian, Siwar al-Assad, and William Morris. "One Year Later: Assessing the Coalition Campaign against ISIS." Middle East Policy Vol. 22, No. 4 (2015) p 13

(8) At an international peace conference for Syria in June 2012, participants agreed to what has become known as the Geneva Communiqué. It laid out a six-point plan intended to stop the violence and move the two sides towards a political settlement. The United Nations is trying to implement that framework at peace talks going on now in Switzerland where the two parties have finally agreed to meet. The Communiqué calls for the establishment of a transitional governing body that would "exercise full executive powers." It says that could include "members of the present government and the opposition and other groups and shall be formed on the basis of mutual consent."

conflict management in Syria, while Arab politicians did not seem pleased either due to his inclusion of Iran, one of Syria's close neighbors and staunch supporters of the regime(1). Furthermore, Annan's Syrian universe was surely quieter and less violent, whereas Brahimi had to deal with widespread and escalating violence leaking into Iraqi borders, the use of internationally outlawed chemical weaponry, and the rising influence of third parties taking sides (or armed action) in the crisis(2). Speaking of the usage of chemical weapons against civilians and deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syrian, the UN Security Council passed two resolutions during Brahimi mediation efforts. The first one was in27 September, 2013 (Resolution 2118) called for the elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons. Given the unfortunate events which took place in late September of 2013 regarding the use of chemical weapons from unknown sources, Ban Ki-Moon the UN general secretary delivered a firm, united response while issuing remarks on the Syrian conflict(3). Surprisingly, Damascus responded rather quickly and swiftly during the first 7 days of implementing the resolution, where chemical weapons were already being disposed of.

However, this does not mean that Brahimi and this resolution were not under the attack of critics. Sources report that "Resolution 2118 does not mention the international community's responsibility to protect Syrian civilians from violence, but refers solely to the threat to international peace and security posed by Syria's possession and use of chemical weapons"(4). This could perhaps be a reflection of Brahimi's mediation tactics that value diplomacy over facades of humanitarian ethics. Furthermore, Resolution 2118 calls for another important point in its 3rd paragraph: "Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic"(5). This line also fell victim to criticism, as the resolution does not specifically call upon the US nor Russia (nor neighboring Arab states) to halt any attempts that would undermine Syrian territorial integrity and sovereignty, nor does it hold any countries accountable for violations regarding chemical

(1) Lundgren, Magnus. (2016) p 277

(2) Akpınar, Pınar. "The limits of mediation in the Arab Spring: the case of Syria." Third World Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 12 (2016), p22.

(3) Ki-Moon, Ban."Remarks to the Security Council on the situation on Syria Secretary-General."United Nations. September 27, 2013. https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2013-09-27/remarks-security-council-situation-syria./jm

(4) Radziejowska, Maria. "Syria: Resolution 2118 and the Legal Aspects of an intervention." PISM: The Polish Institute of International Affairs 108, no. 561 (October 10, 2013). PISM Bulletin.

(5) Security Councilof the United Nations, GA Res 2118, 7038th mtg, UN Doc S/RES/2118 (2013) (Adopted 27 September 2013) para 3.

weapon use or land/air attacks on civilians(1). In addition to the criticism received by the resolution as mentioned above, another point emerged: the conflict in Syria does not only consist of chemical weapons, but is far more complex and includes various ramifications of human rights violation and senseless violence(2). Why, then, should the UN place so much leverage on chemical weapons alone? In defense of the resolution adapted, the adoption of such a mandate allows the UN to strike powerfully when it comes to any future chemical weapon violations in Syria and/or other countries. However, it is shameful to admit that the UN's strongest resolution adopted during the Syrian conflict concerned the use of chemical weapons that harmed only a fraction of the Syrian people, as compared to those killed, injured, and relocated since the beginning of the crisis.

The second UN Security Resolution was in 23 February (Resolution 2139) related to the deteriorating humanitarian conditions. This resolution reflects the UN's concern for the worsening situation under which Syrian civilians live and die. Several areas in Syria were caught under siege where no humanitarian aid could have access. While not fully implemented, the resolution resulted in the lifting of the siege on several Syrian areas a year later while "212,000 people remain trapped in other locations (and the number is likely significantly higher)" with around "2.3 million more people living in 'hard to reach areas' compared with 2013"(3). However, violence continued to rise even though more humanitarian aid could successfully be delivered to citizens in need, particularly in regards to infamous barrel bombings and chemical gas(4). While Russia and China previously used their veto to put an end to a number of previous resolutions that condemn the Syrian government, it had not vetoed Resolution 2139 while expressing concerns for the worsening of the humanitarian situation coming down to a unanimous vote(5). Such facts are deeply concerning, as it

(1) Lehmann, Christof."A Critical Review of Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013) on Syria." NSNBC international, September 30, 2013. https://nsnbc.me/2013/09/30/security-council-resolution-syrias-chemical-weapons-un-balanced/.

(2) Syria, Security Resolution 2118 (2013) and Peace versus Justice: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?" EJIL: Talk! October 03, 2013. https://www.ejiltalk.org/syria-security-resolution-2118-2013-and-peace-versus-justice-two-steps-forward-one-step-back/.

(3) Hartberg, Martin, Dominic Bowen, and Daniel Gorevan. "Failing Syria: Assessing the impact of UN Security Council resolutions in protecting and assisting civilians in Syria." (2015), p 4.

(4) United Nations Response Department of Public Information.A Weekly Update from the UN Department of Public Information, No. 45. 4 June 2014, p 2.

(5) Freri, Marina. "Resolution 2139 a glimmer of hope for Syrian civilians."SBS News. February 23, 2014.http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/02/24/resolution-2139-glimmer-hope-syrian-civilians.

echoes third parties' wish to protect Syrian civilians and resolve the crisis as long as it aligns with their own agenda and diplomacy. Failure to recognize that Al-Assad's government is as destructive (if not more) as any other group engaged in military action in Syria is a failure to the Syrian people.

Despite Brahimi's efforts to draft a clear and effective resolution several council members have expressed their frustration as the resolution was never implemented to the fullest, and that such a resolution with basic human rights had to be drafted in the first place, paving the way for another(1). However, Brahimi still managed to reap a number of successes throughout the process. Geneva II talks were another optimistic attempt to open up a new door for discussion, upon an invitation from Lakhdar Brahimi. These talks, which took place on the 22nd of January, 2014 were largely based on the Geneva I talks. Before the conference took place, a great number of delegates withdrew from the invitation while many others announced their intention to non-participation if Al-Assad were to remain in power. In the words of John Kerry the US Secretary of State, "There is no way, no way possible, that a man who has led a brutal response to his own people can regain legitimacy to govern."(2)

Due to this American insistence on the removal of Al-Assad, the Geneva II talks took turn to failure, despite Brahimi's tremendous and painstaking efforts to secure major players on the table of discussion. However, bringing the US together with Russia, as well as bringing both Al-Assad's regime and the opposition together to the same table of discussion could be perceived as a partial success for Brahimi's efforts. This is unlike anything Annan could have accomplished during his time as Special Envoy for a number of reasons, including the diplomatic context at the time, and the failure to communicate clearly with all conflicting sides. In this move, Brahimi was able to successfully attempt to shift directions both internally and externally. However, it does not mean that Brahimi did not sway to any pressure whatsoever, as Iran (although initially invited) was pulled off the list of participants under pressure from the US.

(1) Syria Special Representative to Brief on Failed Geneva Process : What's In Blue." Syria Special Representative to Brief on Failed Geneva Process : What's In Blue. May 12, 2014. http://www.whatsinblue.org/2014/05/special-representative-to-syria-to-brief-on-failed-geneva-process.php.

(2) Roberts, Hugh. "The Hijackers." Review of *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and Its Jihadi Legacy*, by Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Syrian Notebooks: Inside the Homs Uprising*, by Jonathan Littell, *The Rise of Islamic State: Isis and the New Sunni Revolution*, by Patrick Cockburn and *Isis: Inside the Army of Terror*, by Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan. *London Review of Books* 37 no. 14 (2015), pp 5-10, https://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n14/hugh-roberts/the-hijackers.

The unfortunate fate of the Geneva II Talks, initially successful but eventually failing could be due to a number of reasons. Omari (February, 2014) lists a few in his Al-Arabiya opinion report, such as John Kerry's "apathy to the face-to-face negotiations between the Syrian regime and the opposition"(1). Moreover, the US had done no significant efforts to ensure the success of the talks, and the surging rise of ISIS and other militia groups to join the conflict. In an interview with The Der-Spiegel the German newspaper, Brahimi discusses how Al-Assad's representatives attended the Geneva II talks with no seriousness in mind, determined not to reach any agreement whatsoever, but only to attend as a gesture to please Russian diplomacy(2). Moreover, Brahimi mentions that, "The majority among the opposition were against coming to Geneva as they preferred a military solution"(3). Despite these various obstacles Brahimi had to work with, he still managed to bring all these forces to the table, only to reach eventual failure due to their refusal to take an active part despite being attendants.

Moving on to another point, Brahimi is believed to be a quite successful selection as special envoy given his cultural background closely related to Arab and Muslim heritage, as well as his previous work within the region and his wide range of diplomatic and mediation expertise. However, Katsoris (2015) argues that part of Brahimi's failure manifested itself as a cultural misunderstanding between him and parties caught up in the crisis(4). Moreover, Katsoris goes on to cite Brahimi and George Mitchell as examples of mediators who were given mediation tasks that greatly differ from their own personal cultural and diplomatic expectations regarding diplomatic protocol and conflict management, where "both resigned in frustration and experienced great difficulty and public ridicule during their terms"(5). However, Brahimi's eventual resignation cannot solely be based on failure to communicate in a cross-cultural mediation setting. The increased complexity of Syrian conflict particularly regional and international rivalry over Syria in addition to the rigid positions of the conflicting parties had complicated the mission of Brahimi. Moreover, in an interview with the German SPIEGEL Brahimi attributed the

(1) Omari, Raed. "Who's responsible for Geneva II failure?" English.alarabiya.net. February 20, 2014. http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/02/20/Who-s-responsible-for-Geneva-II-failure-.html.

(2) Brahimi, Lakhdar. " 'Syria Will Become Another Somalia'" Interview by Susanne Koelbl. Der Spiegel, June 7, 2014.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Katsoris, Melissa. Ibed, (2015), p 697

(5) Katsoris, Melissa. "Does Nationality Influence Neutrality? The Ethical Standards and Expectations of International Mediators." Fordham Int'l LJ 39 (2015), p 699.

failure of his mission to that the stubbornness of Syrian President Assad, the mistakes of the West and the dangers presented by Islamic radicals(1).

Conclusion

This study has attempted to investigate and analyze different variables, dynamics and aspects of the Syrian conflict, its nature in particular and the UN special envoy Brahimi mediation efforts during 2012-2014. To achieve this end, the study has adopted a case study approach to support the examination of primary and secondary literature on this subject matter.

This study has concluded that, although Brahimi a man with extensive and vast experience in mediation efforts who developed the reputation of being an honest and skilful broker, he failed to hammer out a historical settlement to the deadly conflict in Syria during his mission from 2012 to 2014. This is mainly because of a number of factors that made the conflict defied Brahimi attempts to mediate a negotiated settlement. Chief among these factors is the nature of the conflict in terms of its complexity and intensity.

The preceding discussion to the complexity and intensity of the Syrian conflict suggest that, the conflict is considered to be one of the most violate and highly destructive conflict in contemporary history. Moreover, the number of parties whether states or non-states actors, unprecedented influx of displaced persons and refugees, economic losses, high level of destruction and high number of casualties, has made the Syrian conflict less amenable to solution. Moreover, the conflict has transformed from merely civic protests into multiple conflicts that have drawn many regional and international powers where their incompatible interests and passivity have exacerbated the conflict and its rigidity. Moreover, this study has concluded that, the conflicting parties have been unwilling to accommodate each other's and make necessary concessions to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Furthermore, the Syrian regime and its supporters, the oppositions groups and their backers have managed the conflict with zero-sum strategy. In addition to that, the Syrian conflict has revealed how much UN can be dysfunctional as an international organization with a sacred mission of making and keeping peace. The Cold War like rivalry between the conflicting parties mainly the U.S. and Russia has crippled the UN as many proposed resolutions were voted and even those that have been passed never implemented. The UN failed to protect the Syrian civilians and to stop war crimes and atrocities against them.

(1)Brahimi,Lakhdar, Interview with SPIEGEL ONLINE on June 7 2014. https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-former-un-peace-envoy-to-syria-lakhdar-brahimi-a-974036.html

This study also concludes that, the aforementioned conclusions has validated many important arguments in the literature on mediation related to the impact of the nature of the conflict on the mediation process, the role of a skillful and honest mediator, and the impact of the regional and international context in which the conflicts operates. Both, the nature of the conflict and the impact of the context in which conflict operates heavily and negatively influenced the pace of the conflict and its management. Therefore, the conflict has been less amenable to solution. Had the Syrian conflict was contained particularly in its first years and the involved parties specially the U.S and Russia showed genuine willingness to cooperate, the conflict could have been solved peacefully.

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