CONFLICT IN SYRIA: IS IT A PROXY WARFARE?*

Suriye İç Savaşı Bir Vekalet Savaşı Mı?

Şafak OĞUZ**
Kadir Ertaç ÇELİK***

Abstract

This article analyses the protracted conflict in Syria in the context of proxy warfare theory, focusing especially on the competition between global powers (the US and Russia) and regional actors Iran and Saudi Arabia, which is supported by other regional Sunni states. When eventuated, the conflict in Syria represented an example of proxy warfare, but a military intervention by exterior actors upon the onset of the DAESH terrorist organisation, and shifting relations between global and regional actors, turned Syria into a more complex political and military battlefield, which a single warfare theory can no longer adequately explain.

Keywords: *Proxy Warfare, Syria, Syrian Conflict, Iran, Saudi Arabia.*

Öz

Bu makale, özellikle küresel güçler olan ABD ve Rusya ile bölgesel aktörler olan İran ve bölgedeki diğer Sünni devletler tarafından desteklenen Suudi Arabistan arasındaki rekabete odaklanarak, Suriye'de uzun süredir devam eden çatışmaları vekalet savaşları teorisi kapsamında incelemektedir. Makale, çatışmaların başlangıçta bir vekalet savaşı örneğini teşkil ettiğini; ancak DEAŞ terör örgütünün ortaya çıkması üzerine harici aktörlerin askeri müdahalesi ve küresel ve bölgesel aktörler arasındaki değişen ilişkilerin Suriye'yi daha karmaşık bir siyasi ve askeri savaş alanına çevirerek savaşın karakteristiğini tek bir teori kapsamında anlatamayacak şekilde değiştirdiğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Vekalet Savaşı, Suriye, Suriye İç Savaşı, İran, Suudi Arabistan.*

* Received on: 10.09.2018 – Accepted on: 24.11.2018
** Dr., USGAM Security Expert, e-mail: safakoguz76@yahoo.com.tr
*** Arş. Gör., Ankara Hacı Bayram Üniversitesi İİBF Uluslararası İlişkiler, e-posta clkertac@gmail.com

Introduction

Contrary to the emerging post-Cold War theories, proxy warfare was more widespread during the Cold War era, with a focus on the struggle between the US and the former Soviet Union, especially after the advent of nuclear weapons. Both superpowers financially, politically, and militarily supported warfare for their strategic interests in third countries and refrained from direct confrontation. The probability that any crisis could spiral out of control and escalate into total war, including nuclear confrontation, led them to resort to proxy warfare to contain the spread of the other superpower and maintain the strategic and global balance.

The indirect confrontation between the US and Russia carried over into the post-Cold War era, as civil wars in Bosnia, Angola, and Somalia, as well as terror attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, emerging as the main methods of proxy warfare. The Syrian conflict has also been considered as an example of classic proxy warfare, in which state and non-state actors supported by external global and regional powers have been engaged in prolonged conflict. However, shifting and fragile relations between the actors on the ground have changed the nature of the conflict, resulting in a more complex and intricate military environment.

The Syrian conflict is viewed as a proxy warfare between the US and Russia, and/or between Sunni (mainly Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Turkey) and Shiite regional powers (mainly Iran). All these global and regional powers have been part of the conflict since the beginning of the crisis, with different levels of involvement ranging from financial aid to armament support. The advent of the al-Dawlah al-Islamīyah fī l-ʻIrāq wa-sh-Shām (DAESH) terror organisation, though, changed all paradigms in the conflict and tipped the balance of power in the region. Global and regional powers that were refraining from direct engagement initiated military operations ostensibly targeting DAESH but in reality, against their competitors.

Thus, protests against the Assad government in Syria morphed into a protracted conflict with military involvement by global and

regional powers, in blurred limits and with long-term and standing global and regional implications. The problems lie in the question of whether the changed character of the conflict that was previously categorised as proxy warfare has rendered it inconsistent with the principals of proxy warfare theory.

Proxy Warfare Theory

Although the strategies, technologies, and dimensions of warfare have experienced immense evolution during history, the central principles of warfare have been valid for centuries. As a result, the principles set forth by Sun Tzu in the 6th century BCE and Clausewitz in the 19th century still shape the main strategies of modern warfare, including emerging theories such as hybrid[1]- or fourth generation warfare. These principles also shaped proxy warfare, which emerged as one of the shining warfare theories, especially during the Cold War. The dimise of the Soviet Union brought by expectional changes in the internationa relations discipline including warfare theories.[2] As Abbink highlighted, supporting proxy warfare has been a predictable extension of the "normal" diplomatic strategy of enhancing the national interest, in a variant on the old Clausewitz doctrine on warfare.[3]

Proxy warfare is defined as "indirect engagement in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its strategic outcome,"[4] and "a conflict in which one party fights its adversary via another party rather than engaging that party in direct conflict".[5] As both definitions make clear, it is a warfare between the proxies, but conducted in such a way that the major competition is between their supporters.

1 For Hybrid Warfare; Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Şafak Oğuz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russian's Example in Crime", *Gazi Akademik Bakış,* 9(17), Kış 2015, p. 263-267 .

2 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Oktay Bingöl, "Uluslararası İlişkiler ve İstihbarat", *Dış Politika Analizinde Teorik Yaklaşımlar: Türk Dış Politikası Örneği*, der., Ertan Efegil-Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, Barış Kitap, Ankara 2012, p. 294.

3 Jon Abbink, "Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Warfare and Prospects of Peace in the Horn of Africa", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21(3), September 2003, p. 420.

4 Andrew Mumford, *Proxy Warfare: Warfare and Conflict in the Modern World*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2013, p. 11.

5 Cecily G. Brewer, "Peril by Proxy: Negotiating Conflicts in East Africa", *International Negotiation*, 16(1), 2011, p. 138.

Although it is mainly associated with the Cold War, "proxy warfare is not a new phenomenon in international politics".[6] Since ancient times, empires and nation-states have employed foreign troops and indigenous forces to wage war, or have backed them when it suited their policy aims.[7] As Mumford put it, "the appeal of what can be characterised as 'warfare on the cheap' has proved an irresistible strategic allure for nations through the centuries."[8]

History includes numerous conflicts defined as proxy warfare by scholars. According to the Mumford, the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), in which Protestant France and Catholic Spain covertly involved themselves on the sides of their co-religionists within the Holy Roman Empire, constituted a classic example of proxy warfare.[9] Turse highlights that by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the tactic had become de rigueur for colonial powers such as the French, who employed Senegalese, Moroccan, and other African forces in Indochina and elsewhere, and the British, who regularly used Nepalese Gurkhas to wage counterinsurgencies in places ranging from Iraq and Malaya to Borneo.[10] The implication is that all of these conflicts have been proxy warfare.

Mumford, though, does make the point, that although proxies have been used throughout history as means of fulfilling the objectives of third parties, it was only in the twentieth century that warfare by proxy emerged as a prolific form of conflict.[11] Towle agrees, arguing that throughout history we can see examples of states employing mercenaries or paying other countries to help them fight their enemies. Only in the 20th century, though, do the superpowers finance, arm, and aid belligerents on a massive scale without becoming involved in the fighting themselves.[12]

6 Geraint Hughes, *My Enemy's Enemy: Proxy Warfare in International Politics*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton 2012, p. 2.
7 Nick Turse, *The Changing Face of Empire: Special Ops, Drones, Spies, Proxy Fighters, Secret Bases, and Cyberwarfare*, Haymarket Books, Chicago 2012, p. 70.
8 Andrew Mumford, "Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict", *The RUSI Journal*, 158(2), April/May 2013, p. 41.
9 *Ibid.*
10 Turse, *loc. cit.*
11 Mumford, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
12 Philip Towle, "The Strategy of Warfare by Proxy", *The RUSI Journal*, 126(1), 1981, p. 21.

Brewer argues that proxy warfare was associated mainly with the Cold War competition.[13] During the Cold War, the US and the former Soviet Union used their proxies to advance their strategic and political interests with lower risk than direct confrontation.[14] During the Cold War, civil wars in Angola, Somalia, Chad, Congo, Greece and many other third countries played an important role in the struggle between the US and the Soviet Union. As Brewer pointed out, "proxy warfare as inter-state conflicts [is] fought via intra-state means."[15] Thus scholars have branded many Third World civil wars as proxy warfare.[16]

Many scholars argue that the advent of nuclear weapons was the main reason the superpowers refrained from direct confrontation. During the Cold War, the term 'proxy warfare' was used to refer to the superpowers' use of allied factions or states to pursue their global rivalry outside the strictures of Northern-Hemisphere nuclear deterrence.[17] Mumford argues that the recourse to proxy warfare has been particularly prevalent since 1945 as the shadow of nuclear warfare ensured more acute selectivity in conflict engagement, given the consequences of a potential nuclear exchange.[18] However, Towle rejects the idea that proxy warfare was the result of the advent of nuclear capabilities; these only bolstered the tendency that started mainly at the beginning of the 20th century.[19]

Not much has changed in the post-Cold War era as global powers continued their policy, refraining from a direct engagement or confrontation with other nuclear states. Proxy warfare emerged in different forms, but civil warfare remained the main method. Conflicts in Bosnia Herzegovina, for example, became the theatre

13 Brewer, *loc. cit.*
14 Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The Strategy of Warfare by Proxy", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 19(4), November 1984, p. 263
15 Brewer, *loc. cit.*
16 Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Warfare: The International Community, Weak States and the Perpetuation of Civil Warfare*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2005, p. 104.
17 Dylan Craig, "State Security Policy and Proxy Warfare in Africa", *Strategic Insights*, 9(1), Spring-Summer 2010, p. 33.
18 Mumford, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
19 Towle, *loc. cit.*,

for the struggle between the US and Russia as well as European states. Modern civil warfare is frequently fed by competing external supporters who use local proxies as part of a larger regional or even global struggle.[20]

Conflicts in Kosovo, Georgia, Ukraine and many more places also have emerged as examples where proxies fought against each other as part of the competition between global and regional powers in the post-Cold War era. Kosovo evolved into a classic proxy warfare between the US and Russia, described by prominent politicians and scholars including Zbigniew Brzezinski, Javier Solana, and Carl Bildt, as "proxy warfare with the Holocaust."[21]

Operations by Georgian troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008[22] and civil unrest in Ukraine[23] against the pro-Russian government in 2014, were both supported politically and militarily by the US and EU, emerged as a proxy war between the US and Russia in the form of civil war. Having declared Georgia and Ukraine's NATO membership as its red line, Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and annexed Crimea using Russian Special Forces, creating a frozen conflict in eastern Ukraine while the US refrained from direct confrontation with Russia.

In addition to the global competition, regional competitions were also reflected in proxy warfare, especially in Africa. Apart from the ideological struggle of the Cold War, proxy warfare experienced a shift in its character, from internationalised conflicts of an ideological nature to regionalised interventions motivated by inter and intra-state competition for power and resources.[24]As

20 *Miriam R. Estrin-Jeremy Shapiro,* "The Proxy Warfare Problem in Syria", *Foreign Policy*, 4 February 2014.

21 Bernard Henry-Levy Etal, "Kosovo Defines the West", *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 16(3), Spring 1999, p. 45.

22 Carol Weaver, *The Politics of the Black Sea Region: EU Neighborhood, Conflict Zone Or Future Security Community?*, Routledge, London 2016, p. 83.

23 Alexandra McLees-Matthew Kupfer, "A Proxy Warfare in Ukraine?", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 31 July 2014, http://carnegie.ru/commentary/56307, (Date of Accession: 07.01.2018); Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, ""Ukrayna-Kırım Krizi" ya da "İkinci Yalta Süreci"", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, 41, Spring 2014, p. 4.

24 Mumford, *op. cit*, p. 45.

Abbink highlighted, "in the era of the Cold War, proxy warfare was often orchestrated on a large scale by the then superpowers, as occurred, for example, in Angola and Mozambique and in countries in the Horn of Africa; but after about 1990 they proliferated in Africa in more limited regional settings, in the context of state competition.[25]

Proxy Warfare in Syria

As the final destination of the Arab Spring, Syria has been enduring a form of warfare which is hard to define and explain only with one warfare theory. Having started with street protests for more liberty as a continuation of the "freedom movements" in other Arab states, the seven years of warfare/conflict/civil warfare/ proxy warfare has resulted so far in hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of internal and international refugees. Due to the complex dynamics in the region, competition between regional and global actors are wrapped into one conflict. Mumford, for example, calls the Syrian war "anarchic proxy warfare" because of the involvement of a broad network of shifting benefactor-proxy agent relationships, each with different goals in mind.[26]

A particularly noxious brew of external supporters and their proxies,[27] the Syrian conflict is mostly characterised by proxy warfare, but the main supporters and actors in the conflict have been defined in various ways. Der Spiegel, for example, states in sum that two proxy wars are being waged on the same territory: the more visible one between Russia and the West, and the structurally more meaningful proxy warfare being waged between the Shiites and the Sunnis -- and between their protector states, Iran and Saudi Arabia.[28] As King summarised the issue, "the

25 Abbink, *op. cit.*, p. 407.
26 Vladimir Rauta-Andrew Mumford, "Proxy Warfare and Contemporary Security Environment", Robert Dover-Huw Dylan-Michael S. Goodman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Security, Risk and Intelligence*, Palgrave Mcmillan, London 2017, p. 108.
27 Miriam R. Estrin-Jeremy Shapiro, "The Proxy Warfare Problem in Syria", *Foreign Policy*, 4 February 2014.
28 "Battle for Aleppo: How Syria Became the New Global Warfare", *Der Spiegel*, 11 October 2016.

competing and overlapping interests of an array of outside actors have played out over nearly six years of grinding conflict in Syria and alliances have shifted; rivalries have sharpened and eased; even highly predictable events contrive to surprise."[29]

In the context of proxy warfare, actors and proxies can be analysed in three different layers. At the top level, there has been a visible confrontation between the US and Russia since the beginning of the Syrian warfare. Competition between Sunni and Shiite regional powers, namely mainly Iran and Saudi Arabia, constitutes at the second level. Finally, Sunni groups such as opposition forces supported by the US and Sunni regional powers and Assad forces with the help of Shiite groups (especially Hezbollah) supported by Iran and Russia function as the main proxies on the ground. But the conflict has evolved into a complex war with the involvement of more outside and inside actors within changing supporter-proxy relations, blurring the lines between these layers.

It is worth noting that some scholars oppose calling the Syrian conflict as a "proxy warfare". Beehner, for example, argues that to do so is wrong because three assumptions are wrong. One, it implies that the conflict is mainly about larger fissures in the region, especially the rift between Sunni and Shiite, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Second, it suggests that the conflict will be resolved chiefly by outside actors hashing out their differences at the table. Third, the phrase indicates that the conflict is an incredibly high-stakes game involving existential issues on which compromise is impossible[30] Kupchan supports him, arguing that the term 'proxy war' overstates the U.S.-Russian strains over Syria, and the only signal of a proxy conflict, and a weak one, are the press reports that Saudi Arabia is increasing deliveries of TOW anti-tank missiles to Syria.[31]

29 Laura King, "Who Wants What in Syria: World Powers Jostle for Influence", *Los Angeles Times*, 23 December 2016.
30 Lionel Beehner, "How Proxy Warfare Work and What That Means for Ending the Conflict in Syria", *Foreign Affairs*, 12 November 2015.
31 Eyder Peralta, "We Ask Experts: Has the Situation in Syria Become a Proxy War?", *NPR*, 17.10.2015, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/10/16/449181764/we-ask-experts-has-the-situation-in-syria-become-a-proxy-war, (Date of Accession: 19.12.2017).

Proxy Warfare between the US and Russia

Many scholars described the Syrian conflict as "proxy warfare" between the US and Russia.[32] Politicians on both sides, though, have issued conflicting statements on the topic, with US senators Tom Cotton[33] and John McCain[34], for example, arguing that the US is engaged in "proxy warfare" with Russia in Syria, while President Obama stated that the US is not going to turn Syria into proxy warfare between the US and Russia.[35] Upon deployment of US Special Forces in Syria in 2015, Lavrov, for his part, claimed he is not sure whether either the US or Russia want [the conflict] to become so-called proxy warfare.[36]

However, since the beginning, both the US and Russia played decisive roles in the fate of the conflict and supported opposing groups to promote their respective interests. The US tried a new approach in its Middle East policy by expanding its neo-colonial web through the production of proxy warfare rather than through the traditional intervention and invasion, as occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the US attempted to covertly sponsor non-state actors, including terrorists.[37] On the other hand, Russian politicians aimed at achieving geopolitical parity with the US; for this, Assad's political survival is merely a means to that much larger end.[38] Russia has initiated a military operation in Syria with the intention to widen its footprint in the Middle-East.[39]

32 See: Michael Capek, *The Syrian Conflict*, Abdo Publishing, Minnesota 2017, p. 48; Brian Glyn Williams, *Counter Jihad: America's Military Experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria*, University of Philadelphia Press, Philadelphia 2017, p. 313.

33 Tom Cotton, "Russia's Intervention in Syria and What Washington Should Do", *Foreign Affairs*, 30 November 2015.

34 Martin Pengelly, "John McCain Says US is Engaged in Proxy Warfare with Russia in Syria", *The Guardian*, 04 October 2015.

35 Mark Mazzetti et all, "Military Success in Syria Gives Putin Upper Hand in U.S. Proxy Warfare", *The New York Times*, 6 August 2016.

36 Alexandra Sims, "Syria: Moscow Issues 'Proxy Warfare' Warning over US Special Forces", *The Independent*, 31 October 2015.

37 Paul Antonopoulos-Drew Cottle, *Syria: The Hegemonic Flashpoint between Iran and Saudi Arabia?,* Vij Books, New Delhi 2017, p. 76.

38 "Battle for Aleppo: How Syria Became the New Global Warfare", *Der Spiegel*, 11 October 2016.

39 Riana Teifukova-Mehmet Seyfetin Erol, "Russian Hybrid War: From Theory to Practice", *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1(2), Hibrit Savaşları Özel Sayısı, p. 52.

Having undeniably encouraged the Arab Spring and the Syrian conflict, the US preferred not to become militarily engaged in the conflicts for a long time, although the Americans supported moderate forces against Syrian regime forces and urged Bashar Assad to relinquish power despite a strong opposition by Russia, Iran and China. The US provided non-lethal weapons and other military equipment, training, and financial support for the opposition forces directly or through the regional Sunni Gulf States. The US issued 500 million dollars to train, called "proxy training" by Rauta and Mumford,[40] and equip opposition forces in June 2014[41] and pursued a "no-boots-on-the-ground" strategy until the advent and rise of DAESH.[42] Even the alleged use of chemical weapons by Syrian regime forces in August 2013, declared as a red line by the Obama administration did not trigger the involvement of US troops in the conflict.

The same situation applied to Russia. Since the beginning of the crisis, Russia has lavished the Assad regime with political, military, and economic aid and vetoed all resolutions against Syria in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), strongly reacting to any change of a pro-Russian regime in the Middle East, stressing in particular that the West cheated Russia in toppling the regime in Libya.[43]

This period represented a classic type of proxy warfare between the US and Russia as defined by many.[44] Russia supported the state actor (the Syrian regime) and the US supported the opposition forces (non-state actor) without confronting each other militarily, but only politically, to meet their strategic goals (for the US,

40 Rauta-Mumford, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

41 Helene Cooper, "Obama Requests Money to Train 'Appropriately Vetted' Syrian Rebels", *The New York Times*, 26 June 2014.

42 Gregory Korte, "16 Times Obama Said There Would be No Boots on the Ground in Syria", *USA Today*, 30.10.2015, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2015/10/30/16-times-obama-said-there-would-no-boots-ground-syria/74869884/, (Date of Accession: 22.01.2017).

43 "Russia will not Allow Libya-Style Regime Change in Syria: Lavrov", *Al-Arabiya*, 09 June 2012, https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/06/09/219590.html, (Date of Accession: 22.01.2017).

44 Anne Barnard-Karam Shoumali, "U.S. Weaponry Is Turning Syria Into Proxy Warfare with Russia", *The New York Times*, 12 October 2015.

throwing out a pro-Russian regime and for Russia preserving its proxy regime). Neither side became directly part of the conflict.

However, the advent and rise of DAESH in Iraq and Syria changed the course of the conflict. The US formed a coalition force, with participation by many Western and Gulf states, with the aim of defeating DAESH. Following the DAESH takeover of Mosul in September 2014 coalition forces carried out airstrikes against DAESH first in Iraq and then Syria. Thus, the US militarily became part of the conflict in Syria but with a changed target (DAESH) and proxy (Kurds) rather than the original target and proxy of the conflict (Syrian regime forces and opposition forces). The US has since focused on supporting Kurds to fight against DAESH, neglecting American support of opposition forces involved at first in the fighting as the main US proxy.

Since then the US has been stressing that the top priority in Syria is defeating DAESH and that once that goal is achieved the Syrian people should be allowed to decide the fate of their president; the Secretary of State has recently repeated this claim.[45] Kurds emerged as the main US proxy in the conflict since then and the US has provided the YPG terror organisation, an affiliate of the terror organisation PKK, thousands of tons of weapons, equipment and materials, despite warnings and the strong reaction by its NATO ally Turkey.

Considered clear proof of cooperation between the US and DAESH and between Kurds and DAESH, and the cooperation between Kurds and the US, the advent of DAESH and the role it has played so far casts doubt on the main purpose and strategic outcome for the US proxy war in Syria. Risking breaking up relations with NATO ally Turkey, with whom they targeted the Assad regime in the beginning, the US, which still insists on the removal of Bashar Assad, supports the Kurdish terrorist organisation, which has been in close cooperation with the Assad regime, against DAESH, which also has been in close cooperation with Assad and to date has not

45 Abby Phillip-Mike DeBonis, "Tillerson, Haley Issue Differing Statements on Future of Assad in Syria", *The Washington Post*, 9 April 2017.

attacked the YPG. Thus, the new US target and proxy have been in cooperation and both of them also have been in close cooperation with the previous US target, the Assad regime.

The US has been providing a huge amount of sophisticated weaponry and military equipment to the PYD terror organisation as their new proxy in the conflict. These circumstances carry risks of breaking up with Turkey; one of the most important regional powers and fellow participant in the conflict as well as an ally in NATO, and leaves Ankara no other option than to intervene militarily for its national security and interests, in cooperation with Russia and Iran. Thus, the evolving situation and the US's siding with a terror organisation detrimental to its ally's national security interests have changed the supporter/proxy relationship, resulting in Turkey's cooperation with Russia and Iran while retaining its policy of toppling the Assad regime, the latter supported by Russia and Iran. Here, then, is another puzzle for proxy warfare theory.

The same situation applies to Russia, which became part of the conflict upon the invitation of the Assad regime in September 2015. Russia's bombing of DAESH units, amid reports that the Russians targeted opposition forces instead,[46] tipped the balance of power in favour of the Syrian regime. Russia, who has been in proxy warfare with the US, also targeted DAESH; which cooperated with Assad, a Russian proxy, and that fights with Iran that has been another Russian proxy. On the other hand, Russian bombardment of DAESH helped Kurdish terrorists (the US new proxy) seize much of northern Syria and become an imminent threat for Turkey, which had been cooperating with Russia and Iran for a political solution to the conflict.

Realities and complex relations created a new situation on the ground for proxy warfare. The US and later Russia became directly and increasingly involved in the conflict, visibly in the same boat against DAESH but with different and conflicting purposes and in essence against each other, in the same territory

46 Robert Service, *Russia and Its Islamic World: From the Mongol Conquest to The Syrian Military Intervention*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford 2017, p. 90.

in a third country. Thus, military involvement in the conflict has breached the main principle of proxy warfare, which is to refrain from direct military involvement in a third country. As Mumford pointed out, any definition of proxy warfare that includes direct military intervention misinterprets what should arguably be the fundamental cornerstone of our understanding of proxy warfare: indirect interference.[47]

Secondly, the new situation on the ground, in which the US and Russia support different proxies against the same adversary (DAESH) with direct involvement but without direct engagement, has changed the paradigm of classic proxy warfare theories. Having refrained for a long while from military involvement, both powers have created a new dimension for proxy warfare, "targeting a common enemy with different and conflicting strategic outcomes

Thirdly, both the US and Russia changed their proxies based on the new situation in the region as well as the changing balance in the warfare. Having supported the Sunni opposition forces to topple the Assad regime, the US substituted the Assad regime with DAESH and substituted the Kurdish terror organisation for the Sunni opposition forces. Not surprisingly, the US's new target (DAESH) and new proxy (YPG) had been in dark and close relation and cooperation with each other as well as with the Assad regime, casting doubt on the strategic outcomes in the proxy warfare and the long-term project of the US in the region.

Finally, the US's open and immense support for its new proxy (the terror organisation YPG), created an immense threat against one of US's ally that has been fighting against the Assad regime with the US has also changed the basic principles of proxy relation. The new situation urged Turkey to cooperate with Russia and Iran, whose proxy have been the main target of Turkey, and be militarily involved in the conflict against YPG, US' new proxy.

47 Mumford, *op. cit.*, p. 22-23.

Proxy Warfare between Sunnis and Shiites

The struggle between Sunnis and Shiites dates back roughly to the death of Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam and over the centuries it has been one of the most important triggers of confrontation in the region, with Shiites mainly represented by Iran and its affiliates and Sunnis represented historically by the Ottoman Empire but now mainly led by Saudi Arabia. Recently, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been waging a struggle for dominance that has turned much of the Middle East into their battlefield; rather than fighting directly, they encourage and thus worsen the region's direst problems: dictatorship, militia violence, and religious extremism.[48] Both states have engaged in political and religious struggles throughout the Islamic World, from Yemen and Pakistan to Lebanon, but their struggle is mainly polarized in the Syrian conflict.[49] For both Saudi Arabia and Turkey, major Sunni regional powers that still insist on the removal of the Assad regime, Syria constitutes the ultimate battleground for hegemony in the region.[50]

As a possible "thirty years warfare"[51] between Muslims, the Syrian struggle underlines the sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. Many scholars argue that the real proxy warfare in Syria has been between Sunni and Shiite regimes in the region, especially between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Service, for example, argues that "vicious proxy warfare was being fought on Syrian soil between Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia."[52] Levitt argues that the Syrian warfare is also a classic case of proxy warfare, in this case between Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Gulf states, on one hand, and Iran, on the other, with the additional, especially dangerous overlay of sectarianism.[53] Melamed names Saudi Arabia,

48 Max Fisher, "How the Iranian-Saudi Proxy Struggle Tore Apart the Middle East", *The New York Times,* 19.11.2016.

49 Antonopoulos-Cottle, *loc. cit.*

50 James M. Dorsey, "Saudi Arabia's Syria Strategy: Rewriting the Middle East's Political Map", *Huffington Post*, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-dorsey/saudi-arabias-syria-strat_b_9216132.html, (Date of Accession: 03.01.2017)

51 Richard Norton-Taylor, "A Thirty Years Warfare in Iraq and Syria?", *The Guardian*, 11 June 2014.

52 Service, *op. cit.,* p. 83.

53 Matthew Levitt, *Syria Spillover: The Growing Threat of Terrorism and Sectarianism in the Middle East*, Testimony Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee March 6, 2014, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/030614AM_Testimony%20-%20Matthew%20Levitt.pdf, (Date of Accession: 04.12.2017), p. 8.

Qatar, Turkey and Jordan as the main Sunni regional powers with the Syrian regime, Iran and Hezbollah on the Shiite side.[54] Sanders, on the other hand, argues that the tense relationship between Riyadh and Tehran revolves around power and influence rather than sectarianism.[55]

The fate of Assad, namely the continuation in power of an offshoot of Shiite Islam in the only Arab state that supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, is crucial for Iran in the competition for hegemony in the region. Syria is the central pillar in the axis of resistance and critical to its regional and international aspirations.[56] Its Alawite leadership and important Shiite shrines have reinforced the strategic relationship with a measure of ideological sympathy, while, for Tehran, the revolutionary imperative of maintaining a land bridge to Hezbollah in Lebanon has helped to cement the alliance further.[57]

For Saudi Arabia with its ambitions of regional leadership especially among the Sunni population, revising the Sunni-Shiite balance in the region and decreasing Iran's influence is the main reason for supporting Sunni rebels. Syrian rebels, supported by Saudi Arabia, fighting the Assad-Iran axis in Syria are also motivated by their deep animosity toward Iran and its Shiite proxies".[58] Considered Iran's increasing impact in the region, "the Syrian revolt against Assad was the one opportunity presented by the upheavals of the Arab Spring for Riyadh to roll back Iranian influence."[59]

The course of the "proxy warfare" between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been similar to the "proxy warfare" between the US and

54 Avi Melamed, *Inside the Middle East: Making Sense of the Most Dangerous and Complicated Region on Earth*, Skyhorse Publishing, New York 2016, p.118.
55 Levis Sanders, "Saudi Arabia vs. Iran: From 'Twin Pillars' to Proxy Warfare", *Deutsche Welle*, 8 November 2017.
56 Melamed, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
57 Ali Ansari-Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi, "The View from Tehran", Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi-Raffaello Pantucci, ed., *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*, Occasional Paper prepared by Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, August 2016, p. 3.
58 Melamed, *loc. cit.*
59 F. Gregory Gause III, Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War, *Brookings DOHA Center Analysis Paper*, Number 11, July 2014, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/English-PDF-1.pdf, (Date of Accession: 02.01.2018), p. 13.

Russia. In the first phase, Iran covertly supported Syrian regime forces with Iranian troops and provided essential military supplies. Western intelligence agencies have reported the involvement of Iranian troops in the conflict since the beginning, but Iran has denied the placement of covert military units in the battlefield and officially states that they have only personnel to advise and train Syrian forces.[60]

The US argued in August 2012 that there is evidence Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) are trying to develop and train a militia within Syria to fight on behalf of the regime.[61] In September 2012, for the first time, Iran acknowledged the presence of its special forces to help the Assad regime, stating that it does not constitute a military presence while stressing that they will involve themselves militarily if their ally comes under attack.[62]

Between 2011 and early 2013, as conditions on the ground deteriorated, Iran sent members of its Law Enforcement Force and IRGC Ground Forces to advise Assad and to provide training and logistical support to the Syrian army. By late 2013, Russia had gradually taken over this role, while Iran increased its presence on the ground.[63] In October 2015, Joseph Dunford, Chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated there were 2,000 Iranian soldiers fighting in Syria.[64] The Telegraph reported in 2016 that 3,000 Iranian troops have been fighting in Syria and 700 soldiers were dead.[65] Based on interviews with senior Iranian officials, Ansari and Tabrizi argue that until April 2016, the total number of IRGC and Iranian paramilitary personnel operating in Syria was estimated at between 6,500 and 9,200.[66]

60 Erich Follath-Dieter Bednarz, "Spiegel Interview with Iranian Foreign Minister Salehi: Assad Poses No Threat to the Middle East", *Der Spiegel*, 8 October 2012.

61 "Iran Forming a Militia in Syria, Leon Panetta Warns", *The Telegraph*, 14 August 2012.

62 Ian Black, "Iran Confirms It Has Forces in Syria and Will Take Military Action If Pushed", *The Guardian*, 16 September 2012.

63 Ansari-Tabrizi, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

64 Joseph Dunford, *Hearing to Receive Testimony on the US Military Strategy in the Middle East*, Committee on Armed Services US Senate, *27 October 2015*, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/15-81%20-%2010-27-15.pdf, (Date of Accession: 12.01.2018).

65 David Blair, "Almost 700 Iranian Troops and Militia Fighters 'Killed in Syria' to Preserve Bashar al-Assad", *The Telegraph*, 10 May 2016.

66 Ansari-Tabrizi, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

The Shiite Hezbollah, the most important proxy of Iran in the region, and other Shiite groups have also taken on direct combat since the beginning of the crisis. Iran's own interests in Syria are in large part defined in terms of preserving supply lines to Hezbollah, ensuring its survival. Given this symbiosis, Iranian and Hezbollah approaches to the Syrian political transition and similar issues have been convergent.[67]

In 2012 the US accused Hezbollah of taking part in the conflict.[68] Hezbollah fighters especially fought decisively in Qusayr in May 2013, the cornerstone of the Syrian War.[69] The sectarian lens through which the Gulf had viewed the war was largely absent until the entry of Hezbollah, particularly during the battle for Qusayr, when the intervention by the Iranian-backed group sparked outrage in the Gulf States and had a dramatic impact on the political rhetoric they used about the conflict.[70] Since the beginning of the crisis, Hezbollah vowed to fight to support Assad and turn the tide of the conflict in Assad's favour.[71] Iranian troops and Hezbollah have predominantly operated in the provinces of Aleppo, Latakia, Homs, Hama, Idlib and Tartus under the control of senior commanders appointed directly by Jafari.[72]

Iran urged the international community to fight against DAESH and called "for a concerted and genuine international effort to uproot extremist violence," implying cooperation with Western states including the US.[73] Iranian troops then were involved in conflicts against the DAESH terror organisation in Iraq in close coordination with Iraqi troops and Western coalition states such

67 Shashank Joshi, "The Views of Non-State Actors", Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi- Raffaello Pantucci, ed., *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*, Occasional Paper Prepared by Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies, August 2016, p. 28.
68 Rick Gladstone-Anne Barnard, "U.S. Accuses Hezbollah of Aiding Syria's Crackdown", *The New York Times*, 10 August 2012.
69 "The Syrian Civil War: A Turning Point for Bashar Assad?", *The Economist*, 8 June 2013.
70 Michael Stephens, "The View from Gulf States", Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi-Raffaello Pantucci, ed., *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*, Occasional Paper Prepared by Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies, August 2016, p. 41.
71 Anne Barnard, "Hezbollah Commits to an All-Out Fight to save Assad", *The New York Times*, 25 May 2013.
72 Ansari-Tabrizi, *loc. cit.*
73 Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Peace in Syria is Vital. And it's within Our Grasp", *The Guardian*, 18 December 2015.

as from the US, UK, and Canada, especially in military operations to take Baiji and Tikrit back from DAESH.

On the other hand, the Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, have been supporting (financially, politically, and militarily) moderate Sunni rebels fighting the Assad regime, but there has been no report of direct involvement of troops of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states; this is consistent with the statement of former Intelligence Minister, Faisal of Saudi Arabia that "No Saudis will be trained to fight in Syria, and Saudi Arabia doesn't want any Saudis there at all."[74]

In the first phase of the conflict, Saudi Arabia took part in the covert CIA operation code-named Timber Sycamore by the US, under which the Saudis contributed both weapons and large sums of money, and the CIA took the lead in training the rebels on AK-47 assault rifles and tank-destroying missiles.[75] Saudi Arabia mainly financed weapons that were transferred to the Sunni opposition groups with the help of the Jordanian intelligence network.[76] There has been no report of military involvement of Saudi troops.

Saudi fighters became part of the coalition of Western states to fight DAESH and have taken military action in support of coalition airstrikes in Syria. As of March 2017, Saudi Arabia had flown 341 sorties against DAESH in Syria, the second largest number after the United States.[77] On the other hand, Saudi officials stated that they have offered their special forces in the event the US decides for ground operations[78], yet we have seen no credible report of ground

---

74 Ben Hubbard-Robert F. Worth, "Angry Over Syrian Warfare, Saudis Fault U.S. Policy", *New York Times*, 25 November 2013.

75 Mark Mazzetti-Matt Apuzzo, "Saudi Arabia, the CIA and the Arming of Syrian Rebels", *Irish Times*, 24 January 2016.

76 C. John Chivers-Eric Schmitt, "Saudis Step Up Help for Rebels in Syria With Croatian Arms", *New York Times*, 25 February 2013.

77 "Saudi Arabia and Counterterrorism: Fact Sheet: Fighting and Defeating DAESH", May 2017, *Official Web Site of Saudi Arabia Embassy*, https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/Fact%20sheet%20-%20Fighting%20and %20Defeating% 20DAESH.pdf, (Date of Accession: 22.12.2017).

78 Samiha Shafy-Bernhard Zand, "Saudi Foreign Minister: I Don't Think World Warfare III Is Going To Happen in Syria", *Der Spiegel*, 19.02.2016.

troops, although there have been massive ground troop exercises with participation by other states, even Gulf States, against DAESH.

The competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia took the form of proxy warfare at the beginning of the conflict in Syria and has evolved into a complex and dynamic struggle with involvement by Iranian and Saudi troops in the conflict, just as it happened between the US and Russia. Iranian forces effectively have taken part in the conflict in addition to sending military advisers for Syrian regime forces, but on the other hand, both Iran and Saudi Arabia have conducted air strikes against DAESH, thus setting an unusual example for proxy warfare theory by fighting against a common enemy for conflicting purposes. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has fought against the "allegedly Sunni" DAESH while representing the Sunni side in the proxy warfare between Sunnis and Shiites. Similarly, to fight DAESH Iran asked for cooperation and joined the Western states that have been struggling to topple the Iranian-backed Assad regime, creating no small measure of complexity in the relationship between supporter and proxy.

Protracted conflict has also resulted in questioning long-term supporter-proxy relations, especially arguments that Iran has performed as a Russian proxy in the Syrian war. Iranian senior officials occasionally admitted that Iran and Russia have common and strategic targets in Syria and they have been operating in coordination. However, Russia's decision to partially withdraw from Syria without communicating with Iran increased suspicions in Tehran and Iranian officials seem particularly concerned that Russia might be using Syria as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the US on other issues, such as Ukraine, and is therefore not as committed as Tehran to keeping Assad in power nor to preserving the integrity of the country.[79] However, it is worth noting that Russia and Iran still adhere to their strategic goal of keeping the Assad regime in power, despite setbacks incurred over the years.

79 Ansari-Tabrizi, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Conclusion

The unusual and changing characteristics of conflicts in the post-Cold War era have encouraged scholars to construct new warfare theories. New theories not rooted in concrete and long-term experiences failed to explain emerging conflicts, resulting in the revision of existing warfare theories. Thus, "proxy warfare," heretofore mainly associated with the fierce competition between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, once again became the intense focus of scholars and politicians in order to explain the conflicts in this period.

The policies of regional and international actors shaped the character of ongoing conflicts in Syria but without raising the spectre of a much larger conflict between global or regional powers. The conflict in Syria has become a battleground for geopolitical supremacy between Russia and the USA, as well as geopolitical competition for dominance among regional powers, especially Iran and Saudi Arabia, and thus has been regarded as a proxy warfare by many scholars and politicians. Throughout, what started as a classic example of proxy warfare, has given the complex and evolving situation in the country with changing overt and covert intervention by outside actors evolved into a more complicated example of warfare.

Especially the fight against the DAESH terror organisation, which ostensibly functioned as a secret proxy for the US, Israel, and Kurdish groups in their common regional ambitions, has changed the principles of proxy warfare theory, in particular by the military involvement of proxies on opposite sides both targeting DAESH but for conflicting purposes. The shift in supporter-proxy relations based on a new security environment and especially on the revelation of covert and dirty relations between supporters and non-proxies, as well the emergence of new proxies, has altered the major assumptions that led to the definition of the conflict as "proxy warfare".

As a result, the complex military and political environment

involving numerous regional and global state and non-state actors (as supporters and proxies), all entangled in shifting balances and strategic and regional interests, has altered what began as a proxy war in Syria, turning the conflict into a series of different wars across two separate axes. For these, the theory of proxy warfare fell short of providing an intelligent explanation.

References

"Battle for Aleppo: How Syria Became the New Global Warfare", *Der Spiegel*, 11 October 2016.

"Russia will not Allow Libya-Style Regime Change in Syria: Lavrov", *Al-Arabiya*, 09 June 2012 https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/06/09/219590.html, (Date of Accession: 22 January 2018).

"Saudi Arabia and Counterterrorism: Fact Sheet: Fighting and Defeating DAESH", May 2017, *Official Website of Saudi Arabia Embassy*, https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/Fact%20sheet%20-%20Fighting%20and %20 Defeating% 20DAESH.pdf, (Date of Accession: 22 December 2017).

"The Syrian Civil War: A Turning Point for Bashar Assad?", *The Economist*, 08 June 2013.

ABBINK, Jon, "Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Warfares and Prospects of Peace in the Horn of Africa", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21(3), September 2003, p. 407-425 .

ANSARI, Ali-Aniseh B. Tabrizi, "The View from Tehran", Aniseh B. Tabrizi-Raffaello Pantucci, ed., *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*, Occasional Paper Prepared by Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, August 2016, p. 3-10.

ANTONOPOULOS, Paul-Drew Cottle, *Syria: The Hegemonic Flashpoint between Iran and Saudi Arabia?*, Vij Books, New Delhi 2017.

BARNARD, Anne, "Hezbollah Commits to an All-Out Fight to Save Assad", *New York Times*, 25 May 2013.

BARNARD, Anne-Karam Shoumali, "U.S. Weaponry Is Turning Syria Into Proxy Warfare with Russia", *New York Times*, 12 October 2015.

BEEHNER, Lionel, "How Proxy Warfare Work and What That Means for Ending the Conflict in Syria", *Foreign Affairs*, 12 November 2015.

BERNARD, Henry-et all, "How the Iranian-Saudi Proxy Struggle Tore Apart the Middle East", *The New York Times,* 19 November 2016.

EROL, Mehmet Seyfettin-Oktay Bingöl, "Uluslararası İlişkiler ve İstihbarat", *Dış Politika Analizinde Teorik Yaklaşımlar: Türk Dış Politikası Örneği*, der., Ertan Efegil-Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, Barış Kitap, Ankara 2012, p. 271-299.

EROL, Mehmet Seyfettin, ""Ukrayna-Kırım Krizi" ya da "İkinci Yalta Süreci"", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, 41, Spring 2014, p. 1-14.

EROL, Mehmet Seyfettin-Şafak Oğuz, "Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russian's Example in Crime", *Gazi Akademik Bakış,* 9(17), Kış 2015, p. 261-277 .

FOLLATH, Erich-Dieter Bednarz, "Spiegel Interview with Iranian Foreign Minister Salehi: Assad Poses No Threat to the Middle East", *Der Spiegel*, 08 October 2012.

GAUSE III, F. Gregory, Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War, *Brookings DOHA Center Analysis Paper*, Number 11, July 2014. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/English-PDF-1.pdf, (Date of Accession: 02 January 2018).

GLADSTONE, Rick-Anne Barnard, "U.S. Accuses Hezbollah of Aiding Syria's Crackdown", *The New York Times*, 10 August 2012.

HIRONAKA, Ann, *Neverending Warfare: The International Community, Weak States and the Perpetuation of Civil Warfare*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2005.

HUBBARD, Ben-Robert F. Worth. "Angry Over Syrian Warfare, Saudis Fault U.S. Policy", *New York Times*, 25 October 2013.

HUGHES, Geraint, *My Enemy's Enemy: Proxy Warfare in International Politics*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton 2012.

JOSHI, Shashank, "The Views of Non-State Actors", Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi and Raffaello Pantucci, ed., *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*, Occasional Paper prepared by Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, August 2016.

KING, Laura, "Who Wants what in Syria: World Powers Jostle for Influence", *Los Angeles Times*, 23 December 2016.

KORTE, Gregory, "16 Times Obama Said There would be No Boots on the Ground in Syria", *USA Today*, 30 October 2015, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2015/10/ 30/16-times-obama-said-there-would-no-boots-ground-syria/74869884/, (Date of Accession: 22 January 2017).

LEVITT, Matthew, *Syria Spillover: The Growing Threat of Terrorism and Sectarianism in the Middle East*, Testimony Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 06 March 2014, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/030614AM_Testimony%20-%20 Matthew%20Levitt.pdf, (Date of Accession: 04.12.2017).

MAZZETTI, Mark-Matt Apuzzo, "Saudi Arabia, the CIA and the Arming of Syrian Rebels", *Irish Times*, 24 January 2016.

MAZZETTI, Mark Anne Barnard and Eric Scmitt, "Military Success in Syria Gives Putin Upper Hand in U.S. Proxy Warfare", *The New York Times*, 06 August 2016.

MCLEES, Alexandra-Matthew Kupfer, "A Proxy Warfare in Ukraine?", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 31 July 2014, http://carnegie.ru/commentary/56307, (Date of Accession: 07 January 2018).

MUMFORD, Andrew, “Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict”, *The RUSI Journal*, 158(2), April/May 2013, p. 40-46.

MUMFORD, Andrew, *Proxy Warfare: Warfare and Conflict in the Modern World*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2013.

NORTON-TAYLOR, Richard, “A Thirty Years Warfare in Iraq and Syria?”, *The Guardian*, 11 June 2014.

PENGELLY, Martin, “John McCain says the US is Engaged in Proxy Warfare with Russia in Syria”, *The Guardian*, 04 October 2015.

PERALTA, Eyder, “We Ask Experts: Has the Situation in Syria Become A Proxy War?”, *NPR*, 17 October 2015, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/10/16/449181764/we-ask-experts-has-the-situation-in-syria-become-a-proxy-war, (Date of Accession: 19 December 2017).

PHILLIP, Abby-Mike DeBonis, “Tillerson, Haley Issue Differing Statements on Future of Assad in Syria”, *The Washington Post*, 09 April 2017.

RAUTA, Vladimir-Andrew Mumford, “Proxy Warfare and Contemporary Security Environment”, Robert Dover, Huw Dylan and Michael S. Goodman, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Security, Risk and Intelligence*, Palgrave Mcmillan, London 2017, p .99-115.

SERVICE, Robert, *Russia and Its Islamic World: From the Mongol Conquest to The Syrian Military Intervention*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford 2017.

SHAFY, Samiha-Bernhard Zand, “Saudi Foreign Minister: I Don’t Think World Warare III Is Going to Happen in Syria”, *Der Spiegel*, 19 February 2016.

SIMS, Alexandra, “Syria: Moscow Issues ‘Proxy Warfare’ Warning over US Special Forces”, *The Independent*, 31 October 2015.

STEPHENS, Michael, "The View from Gulf States", Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi-Raffaello Pantucci, ed., *Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian Conflict*, Occasional Paper Prepared by Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, August 2016, p. 39-44.

TEİFUKOVA, Riana-Mehmet Seyfetin Erol, "Russian Hybrid War: From Theory to Practice", *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1(2), Hibrit Savaşları Özel Sayısı, p. 33-67.

TOWLE, Philip, "The Strategy of Warfare by Proxy", *The RUSI Journal*, 126(1), 1981, p. 21-26.

TURSE, Nick, *The Changing Face of Empire: Special Ops, Drones, Spies, Proxy Fighters, Secret Bases, and Cyberwarfare*, Haymarket Books, Chicago 2012.

WEAVER, Carol, *The Politics of the Black Sea Region: EU Neighbourhood, Conflict Zone or Future Security Community?,* Routledge, London 2016.

WILLIAMS, Brian Glyn, *Counter-Jihad: America's Military Experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria*, University of Philadelphia Press, Philadelphia 2017.

YAACOV, Bar-Siman Tov, "The Strategy of Warfare by Proxy", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 19(4), November 1984, p. 263-273.

ZARIF, Mohammad Javad, "Peace in Syria is Vital. And it's within Our Grasp", *The Guardian*, 18 December 2015.