

Radka Havlová

Shrnutí

EVROPSKÁ UNIE A KRIZE V SÝRII

Článek se zabývá analýzou role Evropské unie v řešení krize v Sýrii. Sýrie je dlouhodobě pro evropské státy důležitým prostorem, avšak navzdory významu Sýrie Evropská unie nebyla schopna nalézt adekvátní odpověď na turbulentní vývoj v Sýrii bez ohledu na to, že má k dispozici dostatek politických, diplomatických, ekonomických, vojenských a humanitárních prostředků, jak ovlivnit vývoj v Sýrii. Neúspěšná snaha Evropské unie přispět k vyřešení krize v Sýrii vychází částečně z toho, že opozice v Sýrii je velmi fragmentalizována a Evropská unie se obává možného nárůstu vlivu islamismu a hnutí ISIL po pádu Asadova režimu v Sýrii. Evropská unie rovněž nebyla schopná úspěšně přispět k řešení krizi v Sýrii, neboť mezi členskými státy Evropské unie nepanuje shoda ohledně postupu v Sýrii, postoj Evropské unie se lišil od postoje USA a priority Evropské unie v daném období zahrnovaly jiné otázky, než krizi v Sýrii, jako například řešení krize na Ukrajině či jednání o jaderném programu s Iránem.

Klíčová slova: Sýrie, Evropská unie, občanská válka, Islámský stat, ISIL, islám, padlé státy, Arabské jaro, Asad, syrská opozice

Abstract

This article discusses the role of the European Union (EU) in the crisis in Syria. Syria as a part of the Middle East has been historically an important space for Europe and the situation in Syria is very important for the stability in Europe. Despite the fact that the EU disposes of a variety of diplomatic, political, economic, security and humanitarian tools to intervene in the crisis in Syria, the EU has so far not been able to effectively contribute to the resolution of the crisis in Syria. This is partly because the opposition in Syria is deeply fractionalized and the EU is afraid of the rise of Islamism and the Islamic State in Syria after the regime change. Other reasons for the failure of the EU to react successfully to the crisis in Syria included lack of consensus within the EU states, disagreement with the United States about the approach to the crisis in Syria and other priorities of the EU since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria, such as the crisis in Ukraine or negotiations about nuclear program in Iran.

Keywords: Syria, European Union, civil war, Islamic State, ISIL, Islam, fragile states, Arab Spring, Assad, Syrian opposition

Introduction

Syria has been historically an important space for Europe and the situation in Syria is very important for stability in Europe. Despite the fact that the European Union (EU) disposes of a variety of diplomatic, economic and security tools to intervene in the crisis in Syria, the EU has so far not been able to effectively solve the crisis in Syria. The article first provides a brief background about the conflict resolution within the EU and basic information about the recent development in Syria since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. As the conflict in Syria is very complex, the author does not intend to provide a detailed overview of the recent historical developments in Syria. Only events of key importance also for EU–Syrian relations are discussed in the first part of the analysis; rather than providing a detailed overview of Syrian development in the last five years, more detailed attention is paid to the structure of Syrian opposition ranging from the Syrian Opposition Coalition and Kurdish opposition to ISIL. The lack of common features, besides the opposition to the regime of Bashar Assad, which would unite the opposition after Assad regime is overthrown, may be one of the most important reasons why the opposition has so far not succeeded in changing the regime in Syria and why international actors, including the EU, find it so difficult to effectively support the changes in Syria. Attention is also briefly paid to the regional and global context of the crisis in Syria and the position of major players regarding the conflict in Syria (US, Russia, Iran, Gulf states).

The last part of this article analyses the role of the EU in the crisis in Syria and the impact of the crisis in Syria on the relationships between the EU and Syria. Attention is paid to the specific dimensions in which the EU is active in relation to the crisis in Syria (political and diplomatic, economic, security, humanitarian) focusing on assessment whether the EU policy in these dimensions has been able to contribute to a successful regime change in Syria and termination of a civil war in Syria and, provided that this was not the case, the reasons of failure of the EU are discussed.

This article analyses the role of the EU in the crisis in Syria until August 2015.¹ More detailed information about the history of conflict in Syria and its regional context can be found in Gombar (2003) or Jenkins (2014). The major books on the topics of the ongoing Syrian civil war include the book on the recent history of Syria by John Mchugo (Mchugo 2015) and the analysis of the rise of Islamic state by Patrick Cockburn (Cockburn 2015). However, as the topic is very current, the article is based mainly on contemporary analyses published by renowned think–tanks such as the Washington institute, the United States Institute of Peace and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Many articles on Syria have been published in *Foreign Affairs* (Doran 2014, Tabler 2014). Syrian opposition is excellently analyzed by Sofer and Shafroth (2013), Jenkins (2013) and White, and Tabler and Zelin (2013). Analysis of the role of important regional and global players in Syria can be found in Borshchevskaya (2015), Cunningham (2013), Eisenstadt (2015), Knights (2013), Sharp and Blanchard (2012), and White (2015).

1 The article was prepared as of August 2015. Significant changes which happened since August 2015 are thus not reflected. These include in particular the question of refugees from Syria which has become a fundamental issue for the EU, as well as the territorial changes and power shifts in Syria and the rise of power of the Islamic State.

The European Union's policy towards Syria is analyzed based on up-to-date articles such as Balfour (2011 and 2012), Biscop, Balfour and Emerson (2012), Portela (2012), and Sharp and Blanchard (2013). The economic impact of the EU sanctions towards Syria can be found in Guimelli and Ivan (2013), Portela (2012) and Boogaerts, Portela and Drieskens (2016). Official internet pages of the EU and its institutions (ec.europa.eu, www.consilium.europa.eu, eeas.europa.eu, www.eur-lex.europa.eu, www.democracyendowment.eu) are a valuable source of information about the current development of EU–Syrian relations, of which the most recent and probably most comprehensive is the “Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da’esh threat” published on 6 February 2015.

The European Union and Conflict Resolution

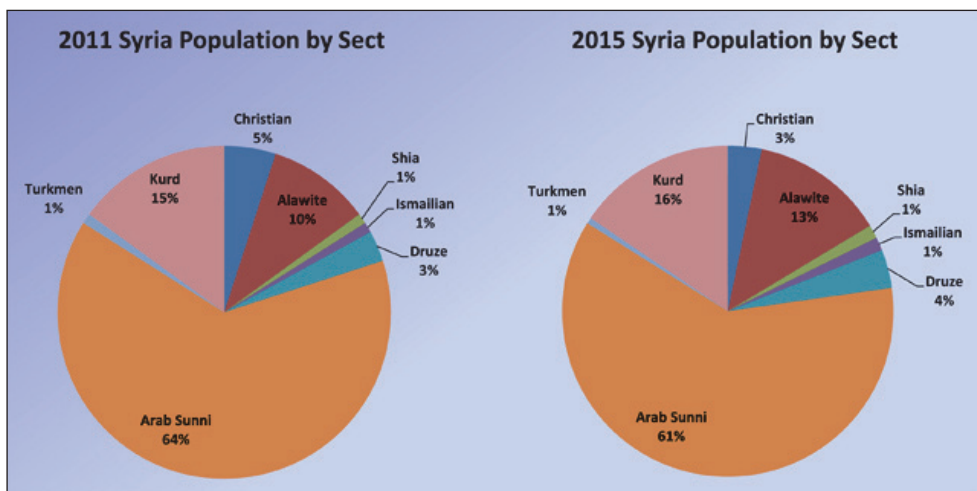
The EU is an important actor in conflict prevention and resolution. The general principles of the common foreign and security policy of the EU are set in the Treaty of Lisbon. According to the Treaty, the EU should participate in all stages of conflict from early warning and conflict prevention to crisis response, stabilization and peace building (Smith, 2009). The EU press release from December 2013 defines the priorities of the EU in the field of conflict resolution and prevention and sets the main tools available to the EU in these areas. These include economic and financial tools such as support of trade, economic and financial assistance or embargos and sanctions; political and diplomatic tools such as recognition and support of opposition, contribution to peace talks, support of resolutions against violence in international organizations; security and defense tools such as military operations, military training and supply of weapons; and development of cooperation and humanitarian aid such as assistance to refugees or support of human rights. Specific steps of the EU involvement include in particular a focus on conflict prevention, preferably through diplomacy and early warning systems, definition of a common strategic vision for conflict prevention, commitment to building peaceful societies worldwide, improved linking of policy areas in external and internal action and close cooperation with partners such as the United Nations, NATO, the African Union and civil society (European Commission 2013b).

The contemporary priorities and objectives of the EU's common foreign and security policy under the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, focus on the crisis in Ukraine, continuation of the Middle East peace process and the role of Quartet in this process, normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, and situation to the South of the EU's border – in particular in Syria and Iraq (EAAS b). The EU is well aware that a successful reaction to conflict requires a proactive engagement of its member states. As I shall demonstrate later, this engagement of EU states towards Syria has not been reached, which is part of the reasons why the EU has so far not successfully contributed to a solution of the crisis in Syria. To understand the role of the EU in the conflict in Syria, let us briefly examine the situation in Syria since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011.

The Civil War in Syria

Syria is a state which did not face extreme ethnic or religious problems before the outbreak of the conflict in 2011. The largest ethnic group, Arabs, comprises up to 85% of the population and Kurds amount to about 15% of the population. Religious differences between majority Sunni Muslims (representing almost 65% of the population) and minority Shia Muslims (represented mostly by Alawites, with about 13% of the population) and about 5% of Christians were not of fundamental importance before 2011. These sectarian differences have nevertheless become increasingly important as the conflict in Syria has escalated – Balanche (2015) even calls the situation in Syria deliberate ethnic cleansing. However, as illustrated by Figure 1 below, despite the ethnic cleansing the overall population distribution by religion has not changed significantly since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria.

Figure 1 | Comparison of Population by Sect, 2011 and 2015



Source: Balanche (2015)

Economic aspects are also of significant importance in the conflict in Syria. Despite the fact that the oil reserves in Syria are smaller than in other countries of the Middle East (and therefore oil is not such an important factor in conflicts like the one in Iraq – see Sorkhabi 2014), the conflict in Syria has had a negative impact on the economic situation in Syria: the Syrian economy showed a constant growth of approximately 5% annual GDP growth until the Arab Spring and Syrian GDP per capita reached up to \$2,948 in 2011, i.e. before the outbreak of the Arab Spring (UNCTAD). Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria, the Syrian economic performance has deteriorated significantly with inflation rising up to 121% in August 2013 (EIU ViewsWire 2015). The economic situation together with the civil war has also led to many social problems, of which the largest is the refugee crisis – estimates state that up to 50% of the Syrian population has been forced to leave their homes since 2011 (World Bank 2014) with the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) reaching around 6.5 million (World Bank 2014). Other

problems since the outbreak of the civil war include deteriorating access to food and health care leading to the spread of diseases and destruction of large numbers of schools. The “Fragile State Index” (FSI) published annually by the Fund for Peace therefore ranks Syria the 15th on the FSI, which places Syria among the worst performing states worldwide with the worst performance in the criteria of refugees and IDPs, group grievance and security, in which Syria scores 10 points out of 10 (Fragile State Index 2015).

To understand the current situation in Syria it is necessary to briefly explain the historical development in Syria since the beginning of the Assad regime. Syria has been rather unstable since becoming independent from France in 1946 (Mchugo 2015). The Baath party came into power in 1963 and Hafiz Assad became the president in 1970. This marked the beginning of over 40 years of undemocratic rule of the Assad family in Syria, with preference given to the Alawites as Assad himself was an Alawite. After the death of Hafiz Assad in 2000 power was taken by his son Bashar, which brought hopes for reforms and democratization in Syria. These hopes increased during the Arab spring of 2011, which brought further expectations for change and democratization in Syria, since there was a call for the political and economic reforms promised by Bashar Assad after his entrance into office in 2000. However, economic reforms did not take shape, and the lifting of the formal State of Emergency that had been in Syria since 1963 in April 2011 did not bring the expected political changes and democratization; on the contrary, the social imbalances in Syria grew (Mchugo 2015). Despite the fact that the international community, headed by the United States and the EU, pressured for changes in the Syrian regime, such changes did not happen, and instead economic growth contributed to the improved position of the regime elites.

Syria was thus facing many economic, political and social problems even before the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Power was concentrated in the hands of the Assad family, which was confirmed in February 2012 in a national referendum on the new Syrian constitution. This was designed to open the political system to free political competition beyond the Baath party. The referendum approved a new system of presidential elections which enables Assad to serve two additional consecutive 7-year terms, i.e. until 2028 (Sharp and Blanchard 2012). The parliamentary elections which took place based on the newly adopted constitution in May 2012 were boycotted by the opposition, resulting in Assad’s clear victory (receiving 90% of 250 seats in Syrian parliament). The hopes of the Syrian opposition movement for democratization and liberalization were turned down as protests against Assad’s regime were repressed, human rights violated, and the situation turned into an armed rebellion (Dodge). Assad’s regime continued to suppress the opposition and demonstrations against his regime, and no significant political reforms took place as a result of the Arab spring (Mchugo 2015). UNHCR estimated that around two thousand people died in the riots from March to July 2011 (UNHCR 2015a).

In reaction to the rise of violence, the Syrian Army was established in July 2011 to protect civilians against the violence of Assad’s regime. The Syrian opposition also tried to gain international support by creating the Syrian National Council in Istanbul, which aimed at unification of the Syrian opposition in exile. As a reaction to continuous violence in Syria, the Arab League suspended Syria’s membership in this organization and introduced economic and political sanctions towards Syria in November 2011. The League’s observers in Syria were called back due to the unstable security situation in Syria. The Syrian regime however still claimed to have international support, partially because the United Nations

Security Council failed to adopt a resolution which would condemn the attacks of the regime security forces against opposition and which would call for the immediate end of violence in Syria (UN SECURITY COUNCIL S/2012/77), as such a resolution was vetoed by China and Russia. UN efforts to stop the violence failed also in March 2012 when conflicts broke out also in the city of Homs, and in June 2012 in Aleppo and close to Damascus. The Red Cross officially called the situation in Syria “civil war” in July 2012 (BBC 2012).

The international community, including the United Nations, Arab League, the EU and the United States, strived to solve the ongoing civil war in Syria. However, the majority of these attempts failed, including the six point plan to end the violence announced by the UN Special Envoy Kofi Annan in February 2012, and the most important effort of June 2012 when peace talks took place in Geneva (“Geneva I Conference on Syria”). The Geneva conference set the fundamental conditions which were to be met to stop the violence in Syria, including formation of a transitional government with full executive powers which would include members of the Assad régime and opposition forces, organization of free elections or review of the constitutional order and legal system; however, it did not directly call for the resignation of President Assad. Representatives of the Assad government, the Syrian opposition, Saudi Arabia as the main supporter of the opposition forces and Iran as the main supporter of Assad régime did not however participate at the Geneva peace talks. As such, the proposals of the Geneva conference did not lead to the end of the civil war in Syria.

The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (National Coalition) was established in November 2012, and included the Free Syrian Army and other opposition groups. However, it was ignored by Islamist opposition organizations such as the Nusra Front which aimed at creation of an Islamic state in Syria. The main aim of the National Coalition which was internationally recognized by the EU, United States, Turkey, Gulf states and Australia was to overthrow the regime of Assad and create a new government (Mchugo 2015). The situation further escalated in 2013 as the fights between regime and opposition forces continued. The opposition forces remained fragmented, the number of groups and organizations fighting against Assad regime and among themselves increased. Islamist groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) have become increasingly important in the fight against the Assad regime since 2013.

The situation in Syria further escalated in August 2013 after a chemical weapons attack close to the capital city of Damascus which resulted in the death of hundreds of civilians (BBC 2013a). As a reaction to the use of chemical weapons (most likely by the Assad regime) the United Nations Security Council adopted the resolution 2118, which among other things condemned the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular the attack on 21 August 2013, in violation of the international law requesting that no party in Syria should use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, retain, or transfer chemical weapons (UN SC Resolution 2118). The United States, however, failed to act or support the mandate of the Security Council after the “red line” mentioned by President Obama had been crossed by the chemical weapons attack (Kessler 2013).

The most significant results in the peace process in Syria were reached in January 2014 at the international conference convened in Switzerland by the United States, Russia and the United Nations to implement the Geneva Communiqué of 2012 (“Geneva II Conference on Syria”). Unlike the effort in Geneva in 2012, representatives of the Syrian opposition and Assad regime participated at the meeting in Geneva in 2014 to discuss measures to end the civil war in Syria. The Special Envoy of the United Nations, Staffan

de Mistura, also proposed the establishment of a series of “freeze zones” which would allow negotiation of local ceasefires to allow aid deliveries to besieged areas (BBC 2014). Negotiations have nevertheless not led to the end of the civil war in Syria, which still continues in 2015. No party in the conflict has been strong enough to unify the entire territory of the state, which has been fragmented and is now under the control of either Assad’s regime or various opposition groups.

The economic situation in Syria remains dramatic, which is confirmed by the United Nations General Assembly Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic from February 2015. The number of refugees searching for asylum in particular in Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan increased to almost 4 million in April 2015, while the number of internally displaced persons amounted to 6.5 million (UNHCR 2015a). The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimated the number of victims of the Syrian civil war to be 210,000 (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights 2015). The religious clashes between Sunni and Shia Muslims continue to remain a significant aspect of the civil war in Syria which is also confirmed by the indicator of group grievance in the Fragile state index (Fragile State Index 2015).

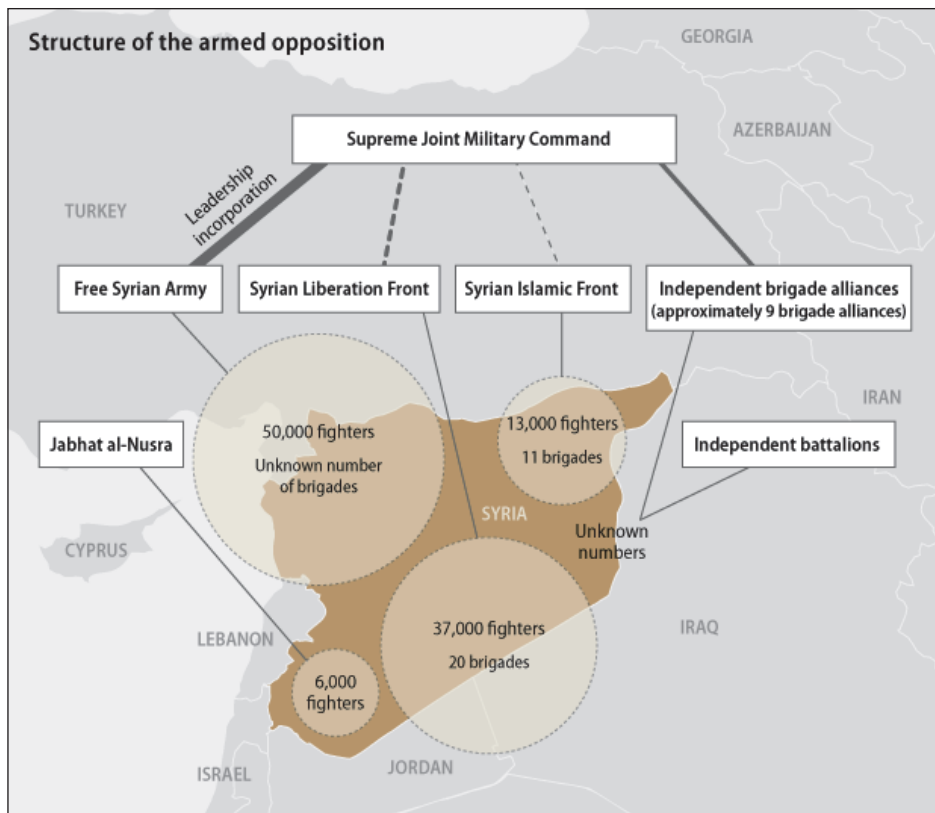
Sharp and Blanchard (2012) discuss six different scenarios of further development of the conflict in Syria which include: 1. Imminent regime defeat (clearly this option is not likely due to regime support by Russia and Iran and inability of the opposition to adopt a uniform strategy against Assad); 2. Enduring conflict or state collapse (resulting in a deadlock situation with neither party being able to win control over the entire territory of Syria, possibly also leading to the division of Syria into Sunni, Alawite, Christian and Kurdish enclaves, which could create a significant security vacuum in the region and lead to further destabilization of the region); 3. Conflict among various rebel groups (provided that the opposition fails to find a uniform goal and program for the development after Assad is ousted, which could prolong the civil war and lead to violence in Syria); 4. A military coup (which currently seems less likely but remains an option of regime change); 5. A negotiated solution (the scenario most likely preferred by the international community but not likely to take place as long as the governmental and rebel forces are not willing to negotiate and cannot agree on the formation of a national unity government) and 6. Regional spill-over of the conflict (i.e. spill over of the conflict to surrounding countries, in particular Lebanon, whose ethnic structure is similar to Syria and which could further destabilize the situation in the Middle East).

The Structure of Opposition in Syria

As pointed out above, the Syrian conflict is of a very complex and complicated nature (see graph 2 below). The major dividing line is the conflict between the government and opposition forces. However, further divisions exist along religious sectarian lines (Sunnis, Shia/Alawites, Christians and Kurds) and between rural and urban populations. The fragmented opposition to Assad’s regime and the fear of the rise of Islamism in Syria after Assad is ousted are probably the most limiting factors which complicate the solution of the civil war in Syria. As I shall argue later the fragmented opposition represents one of the fundamental reasons why international actors, including the EU, have so far failed in contributing to the resolution of the crisis in Syria. Therefore, I consider it important to briefly discuss the structure and objectives of the various opposition groups in Syria.

The conflict in Syria should not be understood only as a simple struggle of the opposition against the Assad regime. Originally the opposition called for democratization and political reforms; however, besides joint opposition to Assad, there were only a few common factors that would unify the various opposition forces. To understand the complicated structure of opposition in Syria it is fundamental to realize that the dividing lines in Syria have a very deep historical context, some elements dating back to the time of dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and French Mandate over Syria, when the borders of modern Syria were set without respect to clan, ethnic and religious structures.

Graph 2 | Structure of Armed Syrian Opposition



Source: Sofer and Shafroth (2013)

The opposition to Assad is composed of two main groups: the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (Syrian Opposition Coalition, SOC), and the Supreme Joint Military Command (SMC). These provisional bodies were formed in 2012 and were supported by the international community. The main objective of these organizations included the formation of a national democratic opposition to fill the power vacuum after Assad is ousted. The fundamental differences between the groups forming the Syrian opposition issue from the decentralized structure of the opposition to the lack of common objectives and values.

The largest opposition group is the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (SOC) formed in November 2012 by the main Syrian opposition groups. It unites over 70 representatives of various opposition forces including the Syrian National Council, the Syrian Revolution General Commission, the Muslim Brotherhood or local revolutionary councils, and is also supported by a small number of Kurdish leaders. The United States and other representatives of the international community, including the United Nations, the EU, Turkey or Saudi Arabia consider the SOC to be a recognized legitimate representative of the Syrian people. The main objective of the SOC is to coordinate the Syrian opposition and to unite this opposition in a provisional government which would be able to take over after the Assad regime falls. It should also isolate and marginalize more extremist elements of the opposition and provide international donors with a legitimate, unified channel for all aid to the rebellion (Sofer and Shafroth 2013). However, there are some fundamental differences among the SOC members in particular about the formation of transitional government; the center of dispute being in particular whether the current members of government should be included in the provisional government. Membership of the Muslim Brotherhood in the SOC also causes many disputes not only within the SOC but with the international community, including Saudi Arabia. Another criticism of the SOC is that it is formed mostly of Syrian opposition politicians and leaders who are exiled from Syria, and are thus not in direct touch with the situation in Syria, causing limited credibility of the SOC in Syria (Sofer and Shafroth 2013).

Another large opposition group is the Supreme Joint Military Command (SMC), which was founded in December 2012 as the Defense Ministry of the SOC. It is composed of members from the Syrian Liberation Front, the Syrian Islamic Front, independent brigades and regional military councils. Its main objective is to unite the different armed groups of the opposition and to form a national army and simultaneously to limit the influence of extremist groups within the SOC. Major funding of the SMC comes from the Western countries including the United States and the EU as well as from the Arab states of the region such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar or Egypt.

Smaller opposition groups to the Assad regime form an uncoordinated "array of ideologically diverse and uncoordinated brigades and battalions with limited areas of operation" (Sofer and Shafroth 2013) whose unifying factor is only the desire to overthrow the regime of President Assad. According to one of the high-ranking UN officials the number of these armed militias in Syria rebellion amounts to "more than a thousand" (Sofer and Shafroth 2013). Out of these fragmented groups the largest include the Free Syrian Army, the Syrian Liberation Front and the Syrian Islamic Front. However, these umbrella organizations are composed of several tens of organizations with diverse objectives and they do not have a uniform command structure.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) represents the largest umbrella group within the Syrian armed opposition. It is composed of ideologically moderate opposition and its leadership is fully incorporated in the SMC and closely cooperates with the SOC. Similarly to the SMC, the FSA receives its funding and support in particular from the Western world and neighboring countries. A smaller coalition of opposition forces includes the Syrian Liberation Front (SLF, known as the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front or *Jabhat al-Tahrir al-Souriya al-Islamiya*) which represents the largest coalition of opposition forces outside the FSA. The SLF closely cooperates with the FSA, however it frequently criticizes the FSA's exiled leadership for being too detached from the realities of the in-country military conflict (Sofer and Shafroth 2013).

Islamic opposition to the Assad regime includes in particular the Syrian Islamic Front, the Nusra Front and the Islamic State. The supporters of the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF, known as *Jabhat al-Islamiya al-Tahrir al-Souriya*) are usually religiously motivated to oust the Assad regime and stress the religious dimension of the conflict – Assad being an Alawite while the SIF supporters are conservative Salafists. However, organizations associated in the SIF do not call for establishment of a caliphate and do not support cooperation with Al Qaeda and other extremist Islamic groups. The majority of support of the SIF comes from wealthy individuals from the Gulf states (in particular Saudi Arabia and Kuwait). The Nusra Front (NF, known as *Jabhat al-Nusra*), established in January 2012, on the other hand closely cooperates with Islamist terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, and it also receives financial and military assistance and military training from these organizations. Fighters for the NF include Syrian and foreign jihadists, many of whom are veterans of the Iraqi insurgency (Sofer and Shafroth 2013). The NF is also responsible for a large number of attacks against the Assad regime (United Nations General Assembly, A/HRC/28/69), partially as a sectarian fight of the Sunni NF against the Assad Alawite regime. However, the NF refused the merger with the Islamic State in April 2013. The NF has also been a cause of disputes within the Syrian opposition to the Assad regime as many of the more moderate organizations associated within the SOC do not approve of the fundamentalist rhetoric and violent methods used by the NF.

The opposition to the Assad regime further includes the Sunni Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, which is loosely affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood, established already at the end of the Second World War, was officially banned in Syria after the Alawite Assad family came to power in 1963. In the 1980s the Syrian government violently suppressed the Muslim Brotherhood uprising and killed many of its members in Syria. In 2005 the Muslim Brotherhood in exile signed the Damascus Declaration, together with other opposition forces; this called for gradual peaceful reforms in Syria. The Muslim Brotherhood did not participate in the initial protests against the regime in Syria in 2011 which were led by the non-Islamist opposition in Syria. However, the Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed a greater support among Assad's opposition abroad, which understood the Brotherhood as one of the dominant forces in opposition to the regime (Sly 2012). In April 2012 the Brotherhood issued a manifest in which it pledges to respect individual rights, and promotes pluralism and democracy (Oweis 2012).

Probably the most significant Islamist opposition to the Syrian regime is the Islamic State (Islamic State in Syria and Levant, ISIL, Da'esh).² This organization started to operate in Syria in April 2013 as a result of severe social and economic conditions in the region and continuous civil war and instability in Syria. ISIL also gained power due to the clashes between the Sunni and Shia Muslims in Syria, and thanks to the supply of weapons to Syrian opposition from abroad which ended in the hands of radicals from ISIL. ISIL's support also results from very good propaganda on social networks, which led to an influx of thousands of foreign fighters from abroad (Cockburn 2015).

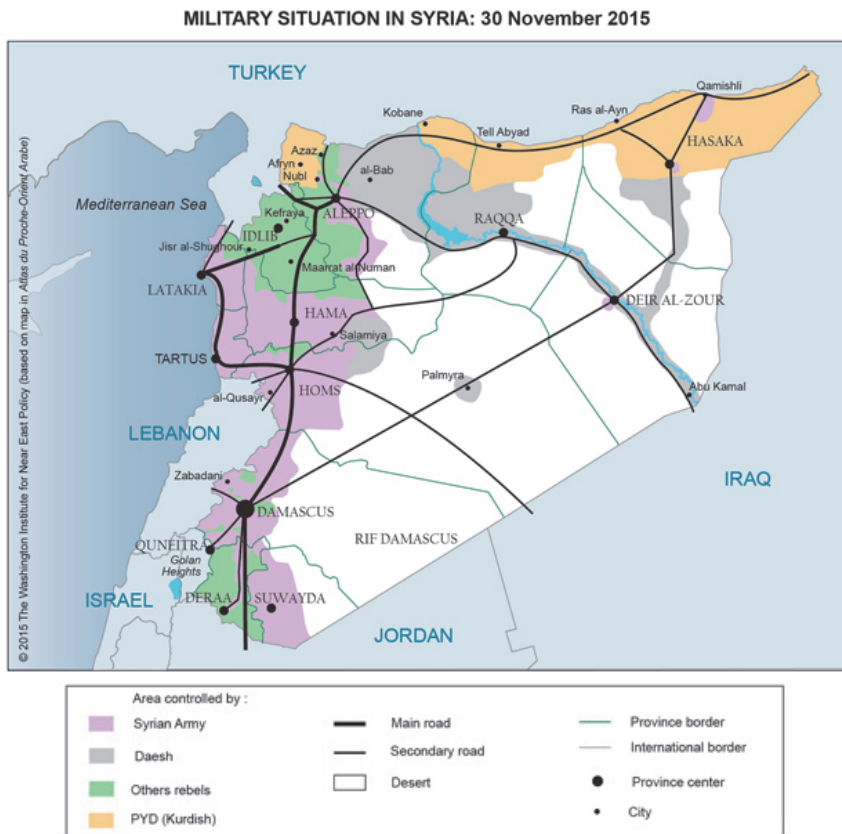
The opposition to the Assad regime also includes Kurdish groups such as the Kurdish Democratic Alliance and the Kurdish Democratic Front. At the beginning of the civil war the Kurdish population did not participate in opposition against the regime, and put

2 Due to the increased importance of the Islamic State, its role in the conflict in Syria and its rising power have been subject to numerous in-depth analyses such as Cockburn 2015, Brannen 2015, Makoff, 2013, Sly 2015 or Wood, 2015.

emphasis on creation of an autonomous Kurdish region within a federate Syria. However, the increased violence and outlook for autonomy in the north–east region of Syria led to a more proactive approach of the Kurds in the rebellion, operating in particular in the north–eastern region of Syria. The Kurdish People’s Defense Units present a serious threat to the Islamic State in the region. However, clashes between Kurdish units and the Nusra Front are not uncommon, which complicates a more coordinated approach of the opposition against the Assad regime.

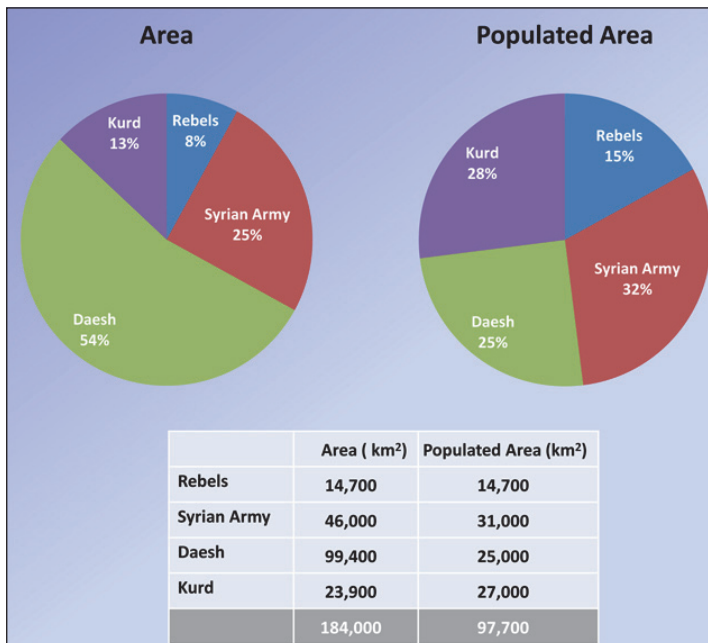
What should nevertheless also be taken into account is the fact that, as Balanche (2015) points out, there is a sharp distinction between two important items of statistical data: the size of territory controlled by government and various opposition forces, and the size of the population living in these areas. As illustrated by Figures 3 and 4 below, the largest area of Syria is controlled by the Islamic State (Da’esh). However, taking into account the populated areas of Syria, it is visible that Da’esh controls only 25% of Syrian territory, i.e. almost half of the territory controlled by Da’esh represents uninhabited areas. On the other hand, Kurds control only about 13% of Syrian territory, which nevertheless represents almost 30% of the Syrian population.

Figure 3 | The Territory of Syria Controlled by Various Groups



Source: Balanche (2015)

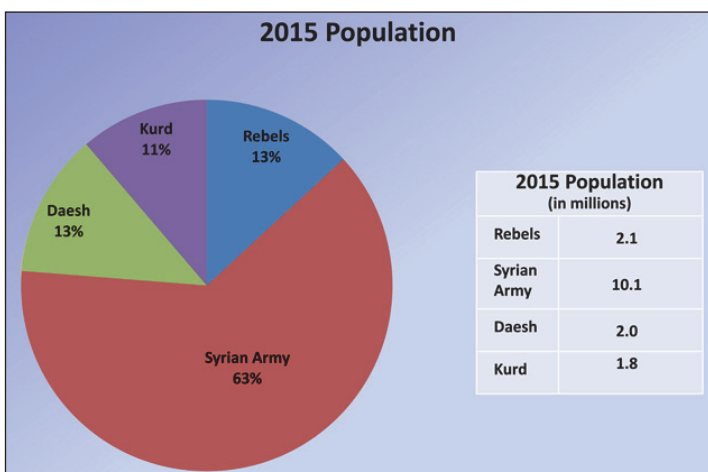
Figure 4 | Comparison of Area and Populated Areas Controlled in Syria



Source: Balanche (2015)

This distinction becomes even more evident if we examine the distribution of population controlled by government and most significant opposition forces. From Figure 5 below it is evident that even though Assad’s Syrian Army controls only roughly 25% of Syrian territory, it controls over 60% of the Syrian population.

Figure 5 | Population Control in Syria



Source: Balanche (2015)

The size of the population controlled by government and opposition itself is not the most decisive factor in the Syrian civil war. Popular support of the government as well as various opposition forces are of fundamental importance. The support depends mainly on the ability to provide the population in the territory under control (by government or opposition forces) with basic goods such as food, water, fuel and services (healthcare, education). Assad's regime has so far been quite successful in securing these basic needs for the population under its control. Islamist rebel groups (Islamic State, Nusra Front) have been more successful at winning popular support and providing the local population with basic needs in the controlled territory compared to the non-Islamist opposition groups, due to the fact that the Islamist opposition is more organized and structured than other rebel groups. The Free Syrian Army, in contrast, has frequently failed to win popular support in the controlled territory and secure basic goods and services for the local population (White, Tabler and Zelin 2013).

The complex and fragmented structure of the Syrian anti-government actors has made the opposition to the Assad regime ineffective. Despite the common desire to oust Assad, there is little in common that unifies the various opposition groups, and this has prevented the formation of a provisional government and formulation of a coherent strategy for Syria after Assad. Disagreements within the various opposition groups in Syria have arisen in particular on the question of the future of Syria's chemical weapons, the approach to terrorist organizations, and the prevention of sectarian violence in Syria. Fragmented opposition also complicates the efforts of the international community, including the United States and the EU, to distribute financial, material and military assistance to the opposition in Syria and to facilitate successful regime change in Syria. However, the fragmented structure of the Syrian opposition can be seen also as an advantage and a reason why the Assad regime has not yet been able to crush the opposition.

According to the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council from February 2015, the continuing violence, violation of human rights and failure to apply democratic reforms in Syria has also led to the increased power of extremist groups such as the Nusra Front or Islamic State at the cost of a moderate opposition (European Commission 2015a). However, the Islamist opposition is not dominant in Syria. As Norell and Pollock point out, the majority of opposition forces in Syria prefer the democratic structures of the EU as the model for the government in Syria after Assad is ousted (Norell, Pollock 2012).

The European Union and the Crisis in Syria

Before examining the role of the EU in the conflict in Syria, let us briefly look at the regional and global context of the conflict and position of the main actors towards the conflict in Syria. One can roughly divide the international and regional actors involved in the conflict in Syria into supporters of the Assad regime (Russia, Iran) and supporters of opposition forces (USA, EU, Gulf countries). The reasons for the involvement of various actors varies and reflects their economic, political and religious interests.

Russia is traditionally one of the strongest supporters of the Assad regime. Russia has historically been an important supplier of arms to the Syrian regime, providing military and technical assistance and military equipment including advanced weaponry and training of Syrian governmental military forces. Syria is also strategically important

for Russia as it hosts the only Russian maritime base in the Mediterranean whose loss could have a major impact on the Russian position in the Middle East and it would also have a psychological effect on Russia (Portela 2012, White 2015). In addition to providing military assistance to Syria, Russia also supported the Assad regime diplomatically by vetoing the UN SC efforts to pass resolutions critical to Assad's regime (October 2011, February 2012). Russian continuous cooperation with the Syrian government also represents a major obstacle to effective imposition of EU and US sanctions in Syria.

Iran is another traditionally strong supporter of the Shia Alawite Assad regime (as well as of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah which is by many considered to be Iran's proxy in the Middle East). Iran has provided military assistance to Assad, providing the regime with crowd-control gear and Internet surveillance technology and advisors on handling demonstrations as well as large-scale financial and business assistance (Eisenstadt 2015). Iran also allowed for the *Liwa Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas* (LAFA) forces to be formed from mostly Iraqi Shiite fighters with the support of the Irani Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. LAFA forces have significantly contributed to military support of the governmental forces in their fight against rebels since 2012 as the Shia volunteers are well trained (supposedly by Hezbollah in Lebanon) and highly motivated (Smyth 2015).

The United States is on the contrary considered to be one of the most fundamental supporters of the opposition forces in Syria. US-Syria relations have been tense since the 1980s when the USA pressed Syria to end its support of Hezbollah, engage in peace talks with Israel and called for a more open control of Syrian weapons of mass destruction. The Obama administration has stressed the following position towards Syria since the outbreak of revolution and civil war in Syria in 2011: it called for a political transition to democracy, it supported UN SC actions against the Assad regime, and imposed sanctions against the Syrian regime (freezing assets in the US, travel bans). Simultaneously the administration provided humanitarian and non-lethal aid to rebel forces (Sharp, Blanchard 2012). The United States Institute for Peace also initiated a program focusing on discussions about Syria's future in the democratic transition period called "The Day After Project" which comprehensively focuses on various aspects of this transition such as the rule of law, transitional justice, reform of the security sector and fundamental political reforms including electoral reforms and design of constitution (for more information see United States Institute for Peace 2012). In addition to the US, the opposition forces also receive support as well as funding from a variety of regional players including Turkey and the Gulf States, most notably Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The EU is also considered to be a strong supporter of the opposition forces in Syria. Syria has historically been an area which was important for the EU as a former French Mandate (1922-1946) and subject to close cooperation with the EU since its independence. The factors that historically influenced the EU's policy towards Syria presented a complex policy challenge, in particular in the context of developments in the Middle East generally and of the relations between Israel and surrounding Arab states, including Syria, specifically. The official cooperation between Syria and the European Community (EC) was established by signature of the Cooperation Agreement in 1977. The EC member states nevertheless did not maintain good relations with Syria during the Cold War as Syria was viewed as a Soviet ally in the region and a supporter of terrorism in the region (in particular the Shia radical organization Hezbollah in Lebanon). As a reaction to a terrorist incident in 1986 (see Kreutz 2005), the EC declared diplomatic sanctions

against Syria in April 1986 (lasting till November 1994), signaling to the regime that state-supported terrorism was unacceptable (Boogaerts, Portela and Drieskens 2016).

Syria's role in the Mediterranean and its cooperation with the EC increased in the beginning of the 1990s when Syria joined the international coalition against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and participated in peace talks with its major enemy in the region, Israel. These factors were understood by the EC as a willingness of Syria to contribute to increased security in the region. Syria and the EC had also closely cooperated within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership since November 1995 (the so-called "Barcelona Process"). This document emerged from previous cooperation of the European Community and 12 Mediterranean countries, and its main goals included cooperation in the political and security areas, economic partnership leading to creation of a free trade zone in the Mediterranean, and partnership in the social and cultural area with the objective to create an area of stability, peace and prosperity in the region. The EC stressed the importance of resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the region (including the conflict between Israel and Syria) and democratization and reforms in the Mediterranean countries. The main role of the EU in this process was normative, consisting in the introduction and reinforcement of international law and norms, trying among others to limit and ban the weapons of mass destruction in Syria (Elleman, Esfandiary and Hokayem 2012).

The Association agreement between the EU and Syria had been negotiated since 1998, but the EU did not find the conditions in Syria right for signature of the agreements in particular due to Syria's politics in Lebanon, the question of human rights and weapons of mass destruction in Syria. The Association agreement sets out cooperation in three major areas: economy and trade, political relations and cooperation in other areas such as science, culture, environment, health, agriculture and investment (Council of the European Union 2009). The EU understood the Association agreement as a "decisive impetus to the political, economic and social reforms needed to improve the country's situation" (Schenker 2008). However, the political and social reforms did not take place and the required democratization and call for human rights in Syria failed. The agreement has thus so far not been signed as a reaction to the ongoing civil war in Syria despite the fact that it was unanimously approved by all EU members in 2009 following the gradual reforms in Syria.

For the EU it became evident shortly after the outbreak of the Arab spring in the Mediterranean, and the subsequent civil war in Syria, that the original assumption of equation between the political stability in North Africa and the Middle East and containment of security risk (such as terrorism or migration) is no longer valid. The changes in the EU policy towards the Mediterranean, including Syria, thus indicate a qualitative change in the EU relations to the region which stresses greater differentiation among the MENA countries, refined conditionality and new tools for democracy building (Biscop, Balfour and Emerson 2012). The "three Ms" include "more money, more market access and more mobility", offering the MENA countries, including Syria, additional EU investments and loans by EU financial institutions, support of MENA citizens' mobility in particular through university scholarships and visa facilitation, and easier access to the EU single market (EAAS 2011). Other broader initiatives offered to MENA countries as a reaction to the Arab spring included the SPRING program (Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth) allocating EUR 350 million to the region in 2011-2012 as well as implementation of the European Endowment for Democracy which should be

a more flexible grant-making body to carry out the EU policies in the MENA region with a special emphasis on support of implementation of democracy in the region through cooperation with NGOs (Biscop, Balfour and Emerson 2012). Other institutional changes in the EU structures in reaction to the Arab spring included appointing Christian Berger as Director for North Africa, Middle East, Arab Peninsula, Iran and Iraq in the European External Action Service with the main objective to support the development of a more strategic style of thinking towards the region (Balfour 2011).

Despite the continuous civil war as a result of the Arab spring in Syria, Syria has remained among the top priorities of the common foreign and security policy under the new High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, and Syria was ranked among the top priorities of the EU CFSP (EAAS b). Since the outbreak of the conflict, the EU has preferred diplomatic and political solutions to the crisis in Syria, in cooperation with other major international players, such as the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the United States or regional actors such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The EU therefore supported diplomatic initiatives of the League of Arab States and the United Nations and their special envoys Kofi Annan and Lakhdar Brahimi as well as the initiatives of the Geneva peace conferences and other UN diplomatic initiatives.

In reaction to the crisis in Syria and Assad's repressions of the opposition, the EU suspended its bilateral cooperation programs with Syria in May 2011 (EAAS a). This applied to both programs under the European Neighborhood Policy and as a part of the EU regional programs. The EU quickly adopted a series of sanctions based on the call from the Arab League and within less than one year adopted a series of sanctions in line with the sanctions imposed by the United States. The EU thus applied sanctions against Syria in line with other regional powers such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia or Turkey (Portela 2012). The sanctions of the EU can be roughly divided into five categories: 1. Sanctions targeted against the Syrian government (including end of loans and technical assistance provided by the European Investment Bank); 2. Sanctions directly aimed at individuals directly involved in the exercise of repression (travel bans and a freeze of asset); 3. Sanctions towards the repressive apparatus of the regime (including arms embargo); 4. Sanctions targeted specifically at the energy sector; and 5. Sanctions based on trade restrictions (Portela 2012). Travel bans and a freeze of assets were imposed on selected citizens of Syria by the Council Decision 302 from May 2011 (Official Journal of the European Union 2011), with the number of individuals was gradually increased to 179 individuals and 53 entities by May 2013. The aim of this diplomatic pressure was first to convince the regime of President Assad to adopt democratic reforms, and therefore President Assad was originally not included in the list of travel bans as he was first considered to be a legitimate representative of the Syrian people and the EU intended to give him a chance to change his policy towards the opposition.

The coercive effect of the sanctions did not however lead to democratic reforms or a regime change, and it was gradually replaced by a more intense constraining aspect of sanctions. Assad and his family were added to the sanction list in May 2013, and with continuous violence towards the regime opposition the EU moved to support the opposition with the aim to weaken the regime of President Assad. The EU recognized the SOC as the representative of the Syrian opposition in November 2012, and called for political reforms in Syria which would include Assad's resignation (Council 2012). The

European Delegation to Syria was closed in December 2012 as a reaction to the severe security situation in the country, and some EU member states (such as Belgium, France and Italy) also closed their embassies in Syria.

Since the outbreak of violence in Syria, the EU has criticized the abuse of human rights and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country. One of the most fundamental documents of the EU dealing with the crisis in Syria was the “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions towards a Comprehensive EU Approach to the Syrian Crisis” adopted in June 2013. This comprehensive strategy defines the approach of the EU in the fundamental areas of interest of the EU with respect to the crisis in Syria, aiming at 1. Support of a political solution that brings a sustainable solution to the crisis; 2. Prevention of regional destabilization from the spillover of the conflict to neighboring countries; 3. Addressing the dramatic humanitarian situation and assistance to the affected populations; and 4. Addressing the consequences of the conflict on and in the EU (European Commission 2013a). As such the EU should, according to the Communication, a focus on justice and accountability and political settlements of the conflict in Syria in cooperation with third countries and non–state organizations, and it should continue to impose targeted sanctions and deal with the weapons of mass destruction in Syria while simultaneously providing assistance to Syrian civilians and preventing radicalization and involvement of foreign (in particular European) fighters in the conflict in Syria.

Concurrently with its own efforts to comprehensively address the crisis in Syria the EU also supported the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura as well as political reforms in Syria which would lead to the establishment of a transitional government (BBC 2014). The EU periodically issued press releases and statements on the situation in Syria condemning the violence and calling for political reforms, for example in the speech of Catherine Ashton in the European Parliament in September 2013 (EAAS d).

The EU has also closely monitored the situation in Syria in relation to the rise of the Islamic State and terrorism in the region, for example in the “Summary: 20 October 2014, Luxembourg – Council of the European Union Foreign Affairs meeting conclusions on the ISIL/Da’esh crisis in Syria and Iraq”, and the “Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da’esh threat” in February 2015. These documents outline the basic strategy for the EU approach towards ISIL and call for the EU to contribute to peace and security in Syria and the elimination of the terrorist threat in the region in particular, by stressing “the need for a sustained and comprehensive engagement to address the underlying dynamics of the conflict through diplomatic engagement and long–term support for political reforms, socio–economic development and ethnosectarian reconciliation” (European Commission 2015b).

Despite the diplomatic and political efforts of the EU, its reaction to the crisis in Syria has not been effective, mainly because the Syrian opposition is very fragmented, thus making an effective political support to the opposition forces complicated. The EU and its representatives carried out numerous discussions with various fractions of the Syrian opposition, trying to contribute to the formation of a transitional government. However, the lack of common values and objectives among the Assad opposition limited the results of these efforts. As Norell and Pollock (2012) nevertheless point out, the majority of opposition forces in Syria prefer the democratic structures of the EU as the model for the government in Syria after Assad is ousted, but the lack of support from the West,

and the continued refusal to help militarily, gives the non-Islamist opposition precious little choice. The EU therefore must support the non-Islamist opposition, no matter how decentralized and fragmented it is, and democratic reforms in Syria, in order to contribute to stabilization of the situation in the country and the end of the civil war in Syria. Disputes concerning the priorities of the major European countries in their position to Syria is another factor which has limited the results of the EU diplomatic involvement in Syria (in particular the different interests of Germany, France and Great Britain as the main political leaders of the EU).

Diplomatic and political tools to suppress the violence in Syria have not reached the intended objective of ousting President Assad, and the EU thus subsequently imposed economic sanctions. The sanctions on Syria were imposed in line with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and in line with the US sanctions, as no UN sanctions had been imposed on Syria. The first sanctions on Syria were imposed by the EU in May 2011 by the Council Decision 2011/273/CFSP and Council Regulation No. 442/2011.³ The EU also imposed sanctions on the export of arms and telecommunication equipment to Syria and the export of oil and gas from Syria. Financial relationships with Syrian institutions, asset freezes and investments in energy industry were also banned by the embargo. The embargo was targeted to financial and other supporters of the Assad regime and associated companies, entities and subsidiaries and military commanders and government ministers said to be involved in internal repression (Lester, O’Kane 2015). The embargo was gradually applied also to the export of crude oil, trade and banking and the embargo was also extended to the Bank of Syria, which was accused of trying to evade sanctions.

However, the sanction policy of the EU did not lead to the end of violence and political reforms in Syria, which led to a change in the sanction policy of the EU. This was partly due to the fact that Russia and Iran did not apply sanctions to Syria and probably also enabled Syria to export its oil and other products via these countries (Portela 2012). The application of sanctions nevertheless had a significant impact on the trade between the EU and Syria. Before the imposition of the sanctions, the EU was Syria’s first trading partner. Syria’s main exports to the EU included oil and constituted approximately one third of Syria’s income from exports. The embargo which the EU imposed in September 2011 led to a decrease in trade of almost €5 billion in 2012, the Syrian exports to the EU dropped by 90%, and the EU exports to Syria dropped by 61% compared to 2011 (Guimelli, Ivan 2013). Six months after the oil embargo was imposed, the Syrian oil minister evaluated the losses produced by Western sanctions as \$4 billion (Aji, Hubbard 2012) and production dropped from 345,000 barrels per day in May 2011 to 71,000 in June 2013 (Guimelli, Ivan 2013). The loss of income from exports to the EU was partially compensated by the rise of Syrian exports to Lebanon and Iraq. Financial sanctions were eased by investments from Russia and Iran as the sanctions were effectively imposed only by the EU and not by the UN as a whole, allowing Syria to at least partially compensate the losses caused by the EU embargo.

In April 2013 the EU decided to ease the oil embargo to limit the negative impact of the embargo on civilians in Syria by allowing the export of Syrian oil and petroleum products to the EU based on an agreement between the Syrian opposition and the EU.

3 In June 2013 some elements of the arms embargo were lifted as a result of disagreement among EU member states.

However, this change did not contribute to an improved situation of the civil population in Syria as most of the oil production and pipelines were controlled either by the Assad regime or by various warlords including Islamist groups within the Syrian opposition, such as the Nusra Front or the Islamic State.

Despite the EU effort to contribute to political changes, democratization and the end of violence in Syria, the impact of the economic sanctions on Syria was not less than anticipated.⁴ The failure of the EU to gain more effective results via sanctions was caused by the fact that the EU first tried to support the Assad regime, and only gradually shifted to support of the regime fractionalized opposition. Another reason for the limited effectiveness of the EU economic sanctions towards Syria emerged from a lack of international coordination of the imposition of sanctions – the EU was one of the few international actors (besides Australia or Canada) that imposed sanctions against the Assad regime, without coordination of the sanctions with the United Nations and other important international actors such as the United States or Russia. The independent approach of Russia and Iran, which continued to supply Syria with arms and goods on the embargo list, and which enabled Syria to export its goods to these countries, also reduced the effectiveness of sanctions on Syria.

In addition to diplomatic, political and economic tools the EU also focused on security tools to contribute to a solution of the crisis in Syria. These security tools included an arms embargo and military assistance to the opposition forces. The EU imposed a full arms embargo on the Syrian regime from May 2011 to May 2013 in line with Council Decision No. 2011/273/CFSP and Council Regulation No 442/2011, which included an embargo on the supply of military equipment, arms, and equipment which might be used for internal repression. More detailed instructions for application of the arms embargo were set in the EU Council decisions from January 2012 (Council Regulation EU No. 36/2012, 18 January 2012) and June 2012 (Council Regulation EU No. 509/2012, 16 June 2012), extending the arms embargo to telecommunications and interception equipment. By the Council Decision No. 2012/420/CFSP, 23 July 2012, the EU also called for its member states to inspect all vessels and aircraft bound for Syria to prevent weapons smuggling to Syria. Restrictive measures of the arms embargo were further expanded until March 2013 and modified by the Council Decision No. 2012/739/CFSP, 29 November 2012. The sanctions on arms trade with Syria were further extended in February 2013 for an additional three months, with the emphasis on provision of non-lethal support and technical assistance to the Syrian opposition (SOC) for protection of civilians (for more information about the arms embargo on Syria see SIPRI 2013).

The arms embargo was lifted by the Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP, 31 May 2013⁵, as a result of disputes among the EU member states that were in particular divided on the question of whether the arms should be supplied to the Syrian opposition. The only EU

-
- 4 The sanctions did not have any significant impact on the EU as the EU imported only about 1.5% of its oil needs from Syria. The EU states which were the most affected countries by the Syrian oil embargo were Germany, France and Italy, who were the main importers of Syrian oil.
 - 5 However, military equipment that could be used for internal repression remained subject to export and import restrictions based on a specific EU list. Sanctions still apply to the supply of selected telecommunications and monitoring equipment and software. The weapons which the EU can supply to Syria after the arms embargo was lifted should be addressed to the SOC and other opposition forces for the protection of civilians.

countries which were interested in supplying arms to Syrian opposition were France and the United Kingdom, while the majority of the EU member states did not support weapon sales to Syria, being afraid of increased militarization in Syria (International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect). The common approach of the EU member states towards the arms embargo thus collapsed in May 2013, and the countries have started to pursue their own independent arms policies towards Syria.

Despite the fact that the EU imposed an arms embargo on the regime in Syria, the EU opposed from the beginning direct military intervention in Syria. Direct military intervention was also refused by the EU President Herman Van Rompuy in his speech in November 2013 when he called for a political solution to the crisis in Syria (CTV News 2013). Military intervention in Syria was supported only by France and the United Kingdom, but the British parliament rejected military action in Syria in August 2013.

As a part of its involvement in the security field, the EU also significantly contributed to a reduction in the number of chemical weapons in Syria, maintaining pressure on Syria to dismantle the Syrian weapons program completely. However, there is little that the EU can do at the moment besides clearly signaling to Assad that the use or transfer of the weapons of mass destruction is a “red line” that would automatically trigger a NATO reaction (Elleman, Esfandiary and Hokayem 2012). Therefore, the EU should continue its pressure to conduct a complete destruction of weapons of mass destruction and it should also cooperate with the neighboring countries of Syria and Russia in this process to minimize the leaking of Syrian expertise in chemical weapon production should Assad’s regime lose control over the country (Elleman, Esfandiary and Hokayem 2012).

Another security concern related to the crisis in Syria is the fear of a rising number of European citizens fighting in Syria, in particular in the Islamist opposition to Assad’s regime. Based on recent analyses, the estimated number of Europeans fighting in ISIL is around 6.000, mostly from France, United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and Sweden (RFE 2015a; Buchan 2015; Holden 2015). The main concern of the EU is to prevent citizens of the EU from joining the Islamist movements in Syria and to closely monitor the returnees from Syria as potential security threats in the EU, stressing the role of the Counter Terrorism Coordinator and information exchange among the EU member states. The four priorities in this area identified by the Council in 2014 included prevention, information exchange/identification and detection of travel, criminal justice response and cooperation with third countries. (Council of the European Union 2014a). Despite the efforts of the EU and its member states to reduce the number of Europeans fighting in Syria on the side of the Islamist movements, there has not been any significant decline in the number of Europeans fighting on the side of the Islamist movements. On the contrary, some indicators show an increase in the number of European fighters for ISIL (Council of the European Union 2014b). As a reaction to this failure the European Commission adopted an updated Communication on prevention of radicalization to terrorism and violent extremism in January 2014 whose main objective is to prevent further radicalization and recruitment of terrorists from within the EU member states by promoting security and justice, supporting mainstream opinion over extremism, supporting civil society and countering online radicalization and recruitment of terrorists (European Commission 2014).

The area in which the EU has been so far probably the most successful in easing the situation of the Syrian population has been the humanitarian area, in particular the

question of refugees.⁶ The number of refugees has been growing since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria in 2011. The data of the UNHCR estimate that by mid-2014 almost 11 million of Syria's 22 million population was affected by the conflict and in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million internally displaced, often multiple times (UNHCR 2015a). The EU countries which are among the most affected by the refugee crisis are in particular the Southern countries of the EU such as Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and France, and developed EU countries with a favorable refugee policy such as Germany or Sweden. The number of refugees to the EU is growing; however, it still represents only a fraction of the total number of refugees and IDPs from Syria. The EU also significantly contributes to the assistance to refugees in Syria and in neighboring countries. The EU has donated around €3.6 in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilization assistance. The EU, in cooperation with other relief organizations such as the UNHCR, supports the refugees in Syria by providing food, water, medical supplies, shelter and financial assistance to refugees. The importance of the refugee question was also discussed at the Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation – Supporting Stability in the Region – in Berlin in October 2014 and in its final Berlin Communiqué, which stressed the need to promote peace and stability in Syria, address the humanitarian, economic and security needs of the population in Syria and of Syrian refugees in host countries, and the need to prepare conditions for safe repatriation of refugees (Federal Foreign Office 2014). As the refugee crisis intensified, the EU increased its humanitarian assistance to the refugees in Syria and in neighboring countries in particular in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq by €136 million in 2015 (European Commission 2015b). The major conditions of the EU humanitarian assistance in Syria include compliance with international humanitarian law, protection of civilians and guarantee of the safety of humanitarian personnel.

The new comprehensive strategy of the EU “Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat” in February 2015 also addressed the question of the refugees. It called for a more active involvement of the EU in the crisis in Syria, using instruments of solidarity and political support, and promising to contribute at least €400 million invested by the European Commission in humanitarian aid, which aims to cover the needs inside Syria and Iraq, as well as in neighboring countries (Council of the European Union 2015). The question of refugees was also discussed at the Third International Pledging Conference for Syria in Kuwait in March 2015, where the EU pledged €1.1 billion for assistance to Syrian refugees. This pledge includes €500 million in humanitarian aid, as well as early recovery and longer-term stabilization assistance (European Commission 2015b).

The EU is aware of the necessity to simultaneously assist countries which carry the biggest burden connected with the influx of refugees, in particular Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, as stability in these countries is important for prevention of conflict spillover to these countries. The EU has contributed more than €44 million in assistance to refugees in Turkey since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria. Originally this assistance was aimed in particular to support the refugees in refugee camps, but since 2014 the assistance focuses

6 As this question is very current and numerous analyses have been published on this topic (such as <http://syrianrefugees.eu>, <http://www.resettlement.eu/news/focus-syria>), this article discusses only the most significant aspects of the EU involvement in this field as of April 2015. The latter refugee crisis is thus not the subject of analysis in this article.

on off-campus refugees (European Commission 2015b). The EU closely cooperates with the Turkish government, UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations to ease the situation of the refugees in Turkey, focusing in particular on the provision of health services in cooperation with the World Health Organization, on humanitarian funding and assistance to child refugees in cooperation with People in Need, Concern International and the Children of Peace initiative. The EU contributed an additional €13 million via the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to support health services to the refugees in Turkey through UNHCR, and €8.8 million to support the project of UNICEF to provide schooling to Syrian refugee child refugees (European Commission 2015b).

Conclusion

Syria has been historically an important space for Europe, and therefore the EU has closely monitored the situation in Syria since the outbreak of the violence in Syria in 2011. The EU has used a variety of political, diplomatic, economic, security and humanitarian tools to contribute to the end of the civil war in Syria. However, most of the EU efforts have failed, mainly because of the deeply fragmented opposition in Syria, whose lack of common values and objectives (apart from the ousting of President Assad) complicated the contribution of the EU to a successful regime change in Syria. However, on the other hand the fact that the Syrian opposition has been so decentralized has contributed to the situation in which the regime of President Assad had not been simply able to crush the opposition. As the conflict continues, there are increased worries about the rise of Islamist forces in Syria, in particular of the Islamic state, as a result of the civil war. The majority of the opposition forces nevertheless support democratic values and view the EU as a suitable model of government after the regime change in Syria, and therefore the political support of changes in Syria should continue to be one of the EU priorities.

Other reasons why the EU has so far not been successful in contributing to a change of regime in Syria issues from the lack of consensus within the EU states and lack of a common foreign and security policy of the EU towards Syria. This represents a major obstacle to a more proactive EU involvement in the Syrian crisis. Discrepancies between the EU and the USA on the approach towards Syria has also significantly undermined the EU effort to solve the crisis in Syria. Last, but not least, the EU has also focused on the solution of additional crises and controversial issues since 2011 which were significant for European security, such as the crisis in Ukraine and negotiations with Iran about its nuclear program. These developments caused the EU's attention to shift from Syria to other issues and regions.

The EU has thus focused more on diplomatic pressure on Syria, both directly and indirectly in cooperation with other international players and on humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population and Syrian refugees both in Syria and in the neighboring countries. Such EU assistance aimed at improvement of the situation of the refugees and prevention of the conflict spillover to the region to maintain stability in the Middle East. However, the direct military operation of the EU was never considered as only France and the United Kingdom were in favor of a direct military involvement in Syria, and such operations had not been approved. The EU nevertheless agreed to lift the arms embargo

and agreed to supply weapons to the opposition forces which could gradually lead to weakening of the Assad regime and ousting of President Assad from office.

The least successful was the EU economic pressure on Syria, which included sanctions and an embargo on Syrian exports. However, as this embargo was imposed only by the EU and not in coordination with the United Nations, which refused the sanctions, it failed because important players like Russia and Iran continued to supply the Assad regime with the items to which the embargo applied, and continued to import sanctioned goods from Syria. As Guimelli and Ivan (2013) point out, the Syrian case thus shows that sanctions alone are unlikely to change the fate of a civil war, especially when the targets have significant external support and the authors of the sanctions have reduced leverage and reduced capacity to control the flow of goods and the movement of people across borders.

References

- AJI, Albert – HUBBARD, Ben (2012). Syrian oil minister says sanctions cost the country \$4 billion, *Akk Arabiya News*, 23.5.2012, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/23/216004.html>
- AL-SOUKKARY Ahmed Magdy (2014) Negotiating the Syrian crisis – a compromise remains far off, <http://www.transconflict.com/2014/03/negotiating-syrian-crisis-getting-yes-still-far-203/>
- BALFOUR Rosa (2011). The Arab Spring, the changing Mediterranean, and the EU: tools as a substitute for strategy?. Policy Brief, June 2011, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_1311_the_arab_spring.pdf
- BALANCHE Fabrice (2015). Ethnic Cleansing Threatens Syria's Unity, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy watch 2528, December 3, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/ethnic-cleansing-threatens-syrias-unity>
- BALFOUR Rosa (2012). Changes and continuities in EU-Mediterranean Relations after the Arab Spring. *An Arab Springboard for EU Foreign Policy*, 27–35, January 2012
- BBC (2012). Syria in civil war, Red Cross says. *BBC News*, 15.7.2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18849362>
- BBC (2013a). Syria chemical attack: What we know. *BBC News*, 24.9.2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23927399>
- BBC (2013b). Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition. *BBC News*, 13. 12. 2013. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>.
- BBC (2014). Syria conflict: UN's Staffan de Mistura hopeful, 11.11.2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29999157>
- BBC (2015). Syria: The story of the conflict, 12.3.2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>
- BISCOPE Sven, BALFOUR Rosa and EMERSON Michael (eds.) (2012). *An Arab Springboard for EU Foreign Policy*. Egmont, January 2012, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_1409_academia-egmont_papers_54_u1795_16x24_v2.pdf
- BOOGAERTS Andreas, PORTELA Clara and DRIESKENS Edith (2016): One Swallow Does Not Make Spring: A Critical Juncture Perspective on the EU Sanctions in Response to the Arab Spring, *Mediterranean Politics*, <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/handle/123456789/516045>
- BORSHCHEVSKAYA Anna (2015). Russia in Syria (Part 1): Declining Military Capabilities Won't Hold Moscow Back, *Policy Watch* 2483, September 8, 2015,

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/russia-in-syria-part-i-declining-military-capabilities-wont-hold-moscow-bac>

- BRANNEN Kate (2015). Pentagon: Islamic State is hurting, but nobody is saying they're out of Schlitz, *Foreign Policy*, 27.2.2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/27/pentagon-islamic-state-is-hurting-but-nobody-is-saying-theyre-out-of-schlitz/>
- BUCHANAN Elsa (2015). Syria: 'Over 6,000 Europeans' fighting with Isis and other jihadist groups, 13.4.2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/syria-over-6000-europeans-fighting-isis-other-jihadist-groups-1496058>
- COCKBURN Patrick (2015). *The rise of Islamic state: ISIS and the new Sunni revolution*. 2nd edition. Verso, February 2015. ISBN 978-1-78478-049-4
- COLUM Lynch (2013). Hundreds are joining the fight against Assad. Will they return as terrorists? *Foreign Policy*. *Foreign Policy*, 9.7.2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/07/09/european_fighters_jihadists_syria
- COUNCIL DECISION 2012/420/CFSP of 23 July 2012 amending Decision 2011/782/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Syria, 23.7.2012, http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu_arms_embargoes/syria_LAS/council-decision-2012-420-cfsp.pdf
- COUNCIL DECISION 2012/739/CFSP of 29 November 2012 concerning restrictive measures against Syria and repealing Decision 2011/782/CFSP, 29.11.2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012D0739>
- COUNCIL DECISION 2013/255/CFSP of 31 May 2013 concerning restrictive measures against Syria, 31.5.2013, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013D0255>
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2009). EU-Syria Association Agreement, 17.8.2009, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209921%202009%20INIT>
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2012a). Press release, 3199th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 19.11.2012, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/133604.pdf
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2012b). The European Union and Syria: Fact Sheet, Press Release, 20 August 2012, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2014/141215_01_en.htm
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2014a). Press Release. 3319th Council meeting. Justice and Home Affairs. 5 and 6 June 2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/143119.pdf
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2014b). Council conclusions on the ISIL/Da'esh crisis in Syria and Iraq, Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Luxembourg, 20.10.2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/145203.pdf
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2015). Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat, Brussels, 6.2.2015, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/20150206_JOIN_en.pdf
- COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) No. 36/2012 of 18 January 2012 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria and repealing Regulation (EU) No 442/2011, 18.12.2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012R0036>
- COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) No. 509/2012 of 15 June 2012 amending Regulation (EU) No 36/2012 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria, 15.6.2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:156:0010:0037:EN:PDF>
- CTV News (2013). EU President Van Rompuy says no military solution to conflict in Syria, 21.11.2013, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/eu-president-van-rompuy-says-no-military-solution-to-conflict-in-syria-1.1553525>

- CUNNINGHAM David (2013). Veto Players and Civil War in Syria, Project on Middle East Political Science, <http://pomeps.org/2014/02/12/veto-players-and-civil-war-in-syria/>
- DODGE, Toby. Conclusion: the Middle East after the Arab Spring. LSE: The London School of Economics and Political. http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR011/FINAL_LSE_IDEAS__ConclusionsTheMiddleEastAfterTheArabSpring_Dodge.pdf
- DORAN Michael (2014). The Good and Bad of Ahrar al-Sham. Foreign Affairs. Foreign Affairs, 23. 1 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2014-01-23/good-and-bad-ahrar-al-sham>
- EISENSTADT Michael (2015). Iran's Military Intervention in Syria: Long-Term Implications, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch 2505, October 15, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-military-intervention-in-syria-long-term-implications>
- EIU ViewsWire (2015). Syria economy: Quick View – Inflation rate falls sharply during 2014. 24.2.2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1658051350?accountid=17203>
- ELLEMAN Michael, ESFANDIARY Dina, HOKAYEM Emile (2012). Syria's Proliferation Challenge and the European Union's Response, EU Non-Proliferation Consortium Non-Proliferation Papers, No. 20, July 2012, <http://www.sipri.org/research/disarmament/eu-consortium/publications/nonproliferation-paper-20>
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2013a). Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions towards a Comprehensive EU Approach to the Syrian Crisis, 24.6.2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/130624_1_comm_native_join_2013_22_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v10_p1_7332751.pdf
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2013b). EU enhances its comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises, European Commission Press Release, 11.12.2013, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1236_en.htm
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2014). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response, 15.1.2014, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation/docs/communication_on_preventing_radicalisation_and_violence_promoting_extremism_201301_en.pdf
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015a). Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat, 6.2.2015, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/20150206_JOIN_en.pdf
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015b). Syria crisis, European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, ECHO FACTSHEET, 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf
- EUROPEAN DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS NEW YORK (2014). Summary: 20 October 2014, Luxembourg – Council of the European Union Foreign Affairs meeting conclusions on the ISIL/Da'esh crisis in Syria and Iraq, 20.10.2014, http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_15603_en.htm
- EUROPEAN ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (2011a). DECLARATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPEAN ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 20 December 2011, <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/>
- EUROPEAN ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (2011b). Statutes: European Endowment for democracy, <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/>

- EUROPEAN ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (2011c). List of EED initiatives in Syria, <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/we-support/?country=syria&page=1>
- EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY SCORECARD 2014, <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2014/mena/50>
- EUROPEAN UNION (2015). Restrictive measures (sanctions) in force. Regulations based on Article 215 TFEU and Decisions adopted in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, updated on 19.3.2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/docs/measures_en.pdf
- EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION (EAAS a). The EU's relations with Syria, <http://eeas.europa.eu/syria>
- EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION (EAAS b). HR/VP Mogherini marks first 100 days in office – EU priorities for global action, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2015/090215_federica_mogherini_100_days_en.htm
- EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION (EAAS c). Syria – Crisis response, http://eeas.europa.eu/crisis-response/where-we-work/syria/index_en.htm
- EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION (EAAS d) Syria: Catherine Ashton calls for inclusive political solution in European Parliament speech, 12.9.2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2013/120913_post_plenary_september_2013_en.htm
- EAAS (2011). One year on from the Arab Spring – A Summary of the EU's Action, 12/2011, http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2011/171211_arabsprin_en.htm
- FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE (2014). Berlin Communiqué of the “Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation – Supporting Stability in the Region” on 28 October, 2014, 28.10.2014, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Meldungen/2014/141028-Berliner_Erklaerung.html
- Focus on Syria. European Resettlement Network, <http://www.resettlement.eu/news/focus-syria>
- FRAGILE STATE INDEX (2015), Fund For Peace, 2015, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/>
- GENEVA COMMUNIQUE (2012), Action Group for Syria, Final Communiqué, 30.6.2012, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniquéActionGroupforSyria.pdf>
- GOMBÁR Eduard (2001). Dramatický půlměsíc. Praha: Karolinum
- GREAVES, Phil (2013). Syria: 'The Army of Islam'; Saudi Arabia's Greatest Export. *Global Research*, October, 3, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/syria-the-army-of-islam-saudi-arabias-greatest-export/5352638>
- GUIMELLI, Francesco and IVAN, Paul (2013): The effectiveness of EU sanctions. An analysis of Iran, Belarus, Syria and Myanmar (Burma), EPC Issue Paper No. 76, November 2013, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_3928_epc_issue_paper_76_-_the_effectiveness_of_eu_sanctions.pdf
- HEYDEMANN, Steven (2011). Syria's opposition takes form. United States Institute of Peace, 6.10.2011, <http://www.usip.org/publications/steven-heydemann-the-syrian-national-council>
- HOLDEN, Michael (2015). Up to 5,000 European fighters in Syria pose risk: Europol, 13.1.2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/13/us-france-shooting-europol-idUSKBN0KM1YC20150113>
- INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT. The Crisis in Syria, <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-syria>
- JENKINS Brian Michael (2014). The Dynamics of Syria's Civil War, RAND Corporation

- KESSLER Glenn (2013). President Obama and the 'red line' on Syria's chemical weapons. The Washington Post, 6.9.2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/06/president-obama-and-the-red-line-on-syrias-chemical-weapons/>
- KNIGHTS Michael (2013). Iran's Foreign Legion: The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch 2096, June 27, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-foreign-legend-the-role-of-iraqi-shiite-militias-in-syria>
- KREUTZ Joakim (2005). Hard Measures by a Soft Power? Sanctions policy of the European Union 1981–2004. Bonn International Center for Conversion
- LESTER Maya, O'KANE Michael (2015). Initial Imposition of EU sanctions & Subsequent Amendments, European Sanctions, Law and Practice, <http://europeansanctions.com/eu-sanctions-in-force/syria/>
- MAKOFF Annie (2013). The Islamic State, Post Magazine, 4.7.2013, http://anniemakoff.co.uk/wpr/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/030-032_POST_0407.pdf
- MALKIN Bonnie (2014). The Telegraph. Syrians to replace Afghans as largest refugee population. The Telegraph, 25.2.2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10661773/Syriansto-replace-Afghans-as-largest-refugee-population.html>
- MCHUGO John (2015). Syria: A Recent History. Saqi, 2015. ISBN 9780863567636
- MIX D.E. (2013). The European Union: Foreign and Security Policy, 8.4.2013, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41959.pdf>
- MORRIS Loveday, DEYOUNG Karin (2013). Syrian activists accuse government of deadly chemical attack near Damascus... The Washington post, 22.8.2013 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-activists-accuse-government-of-deadly-chemical-attack-near-damascus/2013/08/21/aea157e6-0a50-11e3-89fe-abb4a5067014_story.html
- NORELL Magnus, POLLOCK David (2012). The Case for Ramping Up EU Intervention in Syria. Washington Institute. Policy Watch 1439, 17.8.2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-case-for-ramping-up-eu-intervention-in-syria>
- NOVOTNÝ Daniel, BELHAJ, Abdessamad, ČEJKA Marek, SAVOVOVÁ Alice a KUŽVART Jan (2011). The Changing Security Situation in the Maghreb. Association for International Affairs, Research Paper 3/2011, April 2011.
- OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2011), Council Implementing Decision 2011/302/CFSP of 23 May 2011 implementing Decision 2011/273/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Syria, 24.5.2011, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:136:0091:0094:EN:PDF>
- OWEIS Khaled Y. (2012). Syria's Muslim Brotherhood rise from the ashes. Reuters, 6.5.2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-brotherhood-idUSBRE84504R20120506>
- PIERINI Marc (2014). The European Union's Concerns about Syria. Carnegie Europe, 9.6.2014, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=55851>
- PORTELA Carla (2012). The EU sanctions operation in Syria: Conflict management by other means. UNISCI Discussion Papers, (30), 151–158, http://pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/165/165538_1syria-sanctions_clara-p2012.pdf
- RFE (2015a). Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria. Updated on January 29th, 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/infographics/foreign-fighters-syria-iraq-is-isis-isil-infographic/26584940.html>

- RFE (2015b). Iraq And Syria: Past, Present, And (Hypothetical) Future Maps, RFE, April 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/iraq-syria-religious-ethnic-divides-history-future-maps/25232404.html>
- SCHENKER David (2008). The EU and Syria Move Closer, Policy Watch 1439, 11.12.2008, Policy Watch 1439, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-eu-and-syria-move-closer>
- SCHENKER David (2013). US and EU Must Arm the Syrian Rebels or Watch Assad Destabilize the Region, *Guardian*, 30.5.2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/us-and-eu-must-arm-the-syrian-rebels-or-watch-assad-destabilize-the-region>
- SEEBERG Peter (2008). European Neighborhood Policy, post-normativity and legitimacy. EU policies towards Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, No. 14, November 2008, http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles/Files/Om_SDU/Centre/C_Mellemoest/Working_papers/14WP2008PS1_001.pdf
- SHARP Jeremy and BLANCHARD Christopher (2013). Armed Conflict in Syria: Background and US Response. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, September 2013, <https://www.fas.org/spp/crs/mideast/RL33487.pdf>
- SHERLOCK Ruth (2014). Al-Qaeda training British and European 'jihadists' in Syria to set up terror cells at home. *The Telegraph*, 19.1.2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10582945/Al-Qaeda-training-British-and-European-jihadists-in-Syria-to-set-up-terror-cells-at-home>
- SIPRI (2013) EU Arms Embargo on Syria, http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu_arms_embargoes/syria_LAS/eu-embargo-on-Syria
- SLY Liz (2015). Islamic State appears to be fraying from within, *The Washington Post*, 8.3.2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/the-islamic-state-is-fraying-from-within/2015/03/08/0003a2e0-c276-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d_story.html
- SLY Liz (2012). Syria's Muslim Brotherhood is gaining influence over anti-Assad revolt. *Washington Post*, 12.5.2012
- SMIH Michael (2009): Between 'soft power' and a hard place: European Union Foreign and Security Policy between the Islamic world and the United States, September 2009, <http://search.proquest.com.zdroje.vse.cz/docview/203115150/E09A04163B8643DFPQ/1?accountid=17203>
- SMYTH Phillip (2015). The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional Effects. *The Washington Institute*, Policy Focus 138. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-shiite-jihad-in-syria-and-its-regional-effects>
- SOFER Ken, SHAFROTH Julia (2013): The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition, 14.5.2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2013/05/14/63221/the-structure-and-organization-of-the-syrian-opposition/>
- SOLOMON Erika (2014). Special Report: Amid Syria's violence, Kurds carve out autonomy. *Reuters*. *Reuters*, 22.1.2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/22/us-syria-kurdistan-specialreportidUSBREA0L17320140122>.
- SORKHABI Rasoul (2014). How Much Oil in the Middle East?, *GeoExPro*, Vol. 11, No. 1 – 2014 <http://www.geoexpro.com/articles/2014/02/how-much-oil-in-the-middle-east>
- SYRIAN OBSERVATORY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (2015). Death Toll in Syria Rises to Over 210,000 in Four Years. 8.2.2015, <http://www.syriaohr.com/en/2015/02/death-toll-in-syria-rises-to-over-210000-in-four-years/>

- SYRIAN REFUGEES. A Snapshot of the Crisis – in the Middle East and Europe.
<http://syrianrefugees.eu>
- TABLER Andrew J. (2013). Syria's Collapse: And How Washington Can Stop It. Foreign Affairs. July 2013. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139457/andrew-j-tabler/syrias-collapse?nocache=1>
- THE TELEGRAPH (2013). More than 6,000 European jihadists in Syria, EU official says. 13.4.2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11531884/More-than-6000-European-jihadists-in-Syria-EU-official-says.html>
- THE TIMES OF ISRAEL (2013). EU president says no military solution in Syria, 21.11.2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-president-says-no-military-solution-in-syria/>
- THE WORLD BANK (2014). Syria overview. 30.9.2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/overview>
- UN SC RESOLUTION 2118 (2013). UN Security Council. 27.9.2013, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2118\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2118(2013))
- UN SECURITY COUNCIL. S/2012/77 (2012). 4.2.2012, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/223/75/PDF/N1222375.pdf?OpenElement>
- UNHCR (2011). Human Rights Council debates situation of human rights in Syrian Arab Republic in Special Session. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11324>
- UNHCR (2015a). Syria Regional Refugee Response. UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency. 14.4.2015 <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/region.php?id=74&country=107>
- UNHCR (2015b). 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Syrian Arab Republic, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486a76.html>
- UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) (2015). UNCTAD STAT, <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/>
- UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, A/HRC/28/69 (2015). Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 5.2.2015, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/019/37/PDF/G1501937.pdf?OpenElement>
- UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE (2012). The Day After Project, <http://www.usip.org/the-day-after-project>
- WEIGL Jiří (eds.) (2015) Arabské jaro rok poté: Naděje, nebo zklamání?, Institut Václava Klause
- WHITE Jeffrey (2011). Assad's Armed Opposition: The Free Syrian Army. In: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 30.11.2011, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/asads-armed-opposition-the-free-syrian-army>
- WHITE Jeffrey (2015). Russia in Syria (Part 2): Military Implications, Policy Watch 2484 September 15, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/russia-in-syria-part-2-military-implications>
- WHITE Jeffrey, TABLER Andrew and ZELIN Aaron (2013). Syria's Military Opposition: How Effective, United, or Extremist. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy Policy Focus*, 128, 10, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/syrias-military-opposition-how-effective-united-or-extremist>
- WOOD Graeme (2015). What ISIS really wants. The AtlanJC, March 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants-reader-response-atlantic/385710/>