

УДК 321.64

Аль-Файез М. Ф.*

THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

В статті піддано науковому аналізу конфлікт в Сирії та його вплив на сусідні держави (Йорданське Хашимітське Королівство, Ліван, Туреччину, Ірак, Ізраїль), на міжнародні відносини в Близькосхідному регіоні в цілому. Надано прогноз щодо еволюції сирійського конфлікту, досліджуються підходи регіональних акторів по стабілізації ситуації у регіоні. Увага приділяється впливу трансформаційних процесів на Близькому Сході на зовнішню політику України.

Ключові слова: Близькосхідний регіон, міжнародні відносини, сирійський конфлікт, трансформаційні процеси.

The article is subjected to scientific analysis of the conflict in Syria and its impact on neighboring countries (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Israel), to international relations in the Middle East region as a whole. The forecast of the evolution of the Syrian conflict the investigation of approaches regional actors to stabilize the situation in the region are also provided. Attention is paid to the impact of transformation processes in the Middle East on foreign policy of Ukraine.

Key words: Middle East region, international relations, the Syrian conflict, transformation processes.

В статье подвергнут научному анализу конфликт в Сирии и его влияние на соседние государства (Йорданское Хашимитское Королевство, Ливан, Турцию, Ирак, Израиль), на международные отношения в Ближневосточном регионе в целом. Даны прогноз по эволюции сирийского конфликта, исследуются подходы региональных актеров по стабилизации ситуации в регионе. Внимание уделяется влиянию трансформационных процессов на Ближнем Востоке на внешнюю политику Украины.

Ключевые слова: Ближневосточный регион, международные отношения, сирийский конфликт, трансформационные процессы.

The current stage of development of the Middle East regional system is characterized by critical transformation processes. Moreover, now we can say that it is possible to review the consequences of the First World War, as the main borders in the Middle East emerged at that time. In the future, only the status of territories changed, colonies turned into independent states, but the boundaries between them remained, with few exceptions, the same. Possible collapse of Iraq or Syria might initiate restructuring boundaries in Middle East region. So still the question

* аспірант кафедри міжнародних відносин та зовнішньої політики Інституту міжнародних відносин Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка.

Науковий керівник: професор О. А. Коппель.

remains the final determining the boundaries of the region and its subjects, mechanisms and ways of regulating relations within the system also haven't been finalized.

International Relations of the Middle East, including the current transformation processes are analyzed in the works of Ukrainian, Russian, Arab and Western researches. In the Ukrainian international political science such researchers as V. Hura, O. Koppel, B. Parahonsky, R. Petyur, Yu. Skorohod, L. Skorohod, V. Shved and others effectively deal with these issues. However, it should be noted that the researchers left unnoticed the question of determining the impact of the conflict in Syria to regional international relations. So the purpose of the article is a comprehensive analysis of the conflict in Syria and its impact on neighboring countries and on international relations in the Middle East region as a whole, with providing forecasts on the evolution of the conflict in the short term. Approaches of regional actors to stabilize the situation in the region are also investigated.

The conflict in Syria has been ongoing since 2011 and has left approximately 100,000 people dead, tens of thousands more wounded and displaced millions, internally and externally. The war is being fought between the Syrian government (mainly Alawite) and a predominantly Sunni rebellion. The Syrian government forces comprise the military, police and civilian militia which are loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and his Ba'ath Party. The regime is also allied to Hezbollah, a Lebanon-based Shiite militia group, which has deployed hundreds of its fighters to Syria in recent months.

Internationally, the government is supported politically, financially and militarily (with weaponry) by Russia, Iran and to a lesser extent, China. The rebellion is led by a number of groups. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces represents the majority of the rebel fighters, including the well-known Free Syrian Army.

It is currently unclear how much longer the war in Syria will last. The duration of the conflict is dependent on many factors, including the potential involvement of a foreign power, such as the US, in the fighting or an increase in supply of rebel or regime forces by their respective international partners. Decisive battlefield victories by either side could force a negotiated settlement or result in the military defeat of one side or the other. At present, the Syrian conflict endgame is unknown. What is known, however, is that the war is having an increasing impact on Syria's neighbors, namely Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Israel, and this is likely to worsen in at least the short to medium term [6, p. 13-37].

Jordan has experienced a major influx of refugees with approximately 500,000 displaced people moving into the country since 2011. The Jordanian government has dealt adequately with the crisis and established a number of camps for the refugees. Apart from the movement of displaced persons into the country the Syrian conflict has had a limited impact on Jordan to date with only sporadic rocket and mortar fire affecting the immediate border region. Some refugee areas experience occasional unrest related to living conditions. These security incidents are expected to continue in the near-term. The good management of the crisis is largely a result of the government's non-intervention policy with regard to the Syrian conflict and due to the ability of its security forces. The well-resourced and trained Jordanian military and police have increased their operational presence in the north of the country since 2011 to manage the flow of refugees, check incidents of conflict spillover and limit Jordanian nationals (would-be militants and smugglers) from entering Syria [1].

The medium- to long-term impact of the war on Jordan remains uncertain. Including armed agitation. Further to this, Jordan has allowed the US military to base a small contingent in its territory to assist its own security forces. While this presence does boost the countries overall defensive posture it also opens it up to possible retaliatory unrest/violence from anti-Western

groups based in the country and wider region, which are already heavily critical of the country's pro-Western stance.

Israel is watching the unfolding Syrian conflict with significant concern. Of particular worry for the Jewish state is the possible deployment of chemical weapons in Syria or the transfer of these and other heavy weapons to its opponents in Lebanon, specifically Hezbollah. Raising the ire of the Syrian regime, Israel is likely to continue to act aggressively against possible shipments to Hezbollah, with which it fought a month-long war in 2006, as it likely assesses the Syrian regime's ability to respond as limited. While the Syrian regime is not expected to take on Israel while battling its domestic opponents, it has, however, given anti-Israeli militant groups the green light to conduct attacks against Israeli interests in the Golan Heights. However, no attacks have been forthcoming as yet [9, p. 68-80].

At present, the impact of the Syrian crisis on Israel remains relatively contained. Israel has formidable military capabilities and can likely repulse or deal with any militant raid or Hezbollah offensive against its territory. It is likely to continue to act aggressively against any potential threats to its security, be it in Lebanon (against Hezbollah) or Syria, and further air strikes should be anticipated. In time, extra-territorial Israeli military activity could prompt Hezbollah to respond; however, as the militant group is also currently battling rebels in Syria, on behalf of the Syrian regime, the group is unlikely to deliberately instigate a conflict at present [7]. In a post-Syrian conflict scenario the possibility of a confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel is high, particularly if the Syrian regime emerges victorious. The make-up of the post-conflict Syrian government is also important for Israel. Should the current regime remain in place, the status quo with the Assad regime is likely to re-emerge – essentially a state of affairs where both sides maintain an aggressive policy stance towards the other but do not instigate a conflict due to the costs of doing so. Should the regime fall and a rebel government emerge; the reaction from Israel will depend on the make-up of that government.

In addition to its geographic proximity, growing security issues have also been a consequence. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 2011, tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have flooded into Lebanon placing enormous economic pressure on the country. This large presence of refugees (that currently accounts for 10 percent of the total Lebanese population) has resulted in rising tensions with locals. Syrians have been increasingly targeted in armed attacks and kidnappings, and refugees have been widely blamed for the spike in criminal incidents in the country. In addition, the east and north of the country have witnessed a spike in violence involving rival armed groups [8, p.18-33] Tripoli, in particular, has been affected by numerous bouts of fighting between militiamen aligned or sympathetic to the various combatants in the Syrian conflict. Clan violence, sporadic targeted kidnappings of opposition members and conflict spillover in the immediate border region in the Bekaa and North governorates have also been regularly reported.

The Lebanese polity's widening polarization, the weakness of its security forces and the country's proximity to the conflict zone are all likely to keep the country susceptible to the conflict in neighboring Syria over the medium-term at least.

Since the start of the Syrian conflict the Turkish government has emerged as a vocal critic of the Assad regime. It currently allows rebel forces a safe haven and offers these forces critical resupply channels through its territory. The war itself has had a significant impact in areas along the country's lengthy border with Syria. Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees are currently based in camps near the border and more people continue to flow into the country in response to heavy fighting in Syria's Aleppo and Idlib governorates. Conflict spillover has also occurred on occasion. In October 2012, Syrian military shelling landed in Turkey killing five

Turkish citizens. As a result, Turkish forces responded against Syrian military personnel. This followed a June 2012 incident during which Syrian military forces shot down a Turkish reconnaissance plane over the Mediterranean. In May 2013, two car bombs detonated in Reyhanli in Turkey's Hatay province killing 43 people. The Turkish government blamed militants aligned to the Syrian government for the attack, which followed two months after a car bomb detonated near the border crossing point between the two countries near Cilvegozu and Bab al-Hawa in the Reyhanli vicinity. Thirteen people were killed, including three Turkish civilians and ten Syrian nationals. The Turkish government blamed the attack on persons linked to the Syrian military and intelligence services [2, p. 208-220].

These limited cross-border incidents have threatened a wider confrontation; however, these are currently assessed as being insufficient reason for Turkey to become directly involved in the Syrian conflict. Nonetheless, concerns persist that any significant aggravation against Turkish territory or interests linked to the Syrian regime may lead the Turkish government to intervene more directly in the conflict. This possibility becomes increasingly likely should Turkey perceive that its national interests are being threatened. Turkey has also been accused of supporting Islamist militants in northern Syria against Kurd groups. Seeking to contain its own Kurd separatist campaign in the south east, Turkey is likely to continue to support armed groups in Syria against its traditional opponents. This support could have long-term consequences for the Turkish government depending on the outcome of the conflict in Syria [4].

The impact of the conflict in Syria on the security and political situation in Iraq is difficult to quantify. Since 2003, the country has been affected by severe and heightened sectarian tensions and insecurity, which has resulted in tens of thousands of casualties. Identifying any broader impact is therefore difficult in a country which continues to experience near-daily violence involving Sunni and Shiite Muslim communities. What is clear is that the war in Syria has impacted directly on the shared border region with Iraq. [3, p. 68-83] Fighting between rebels and Syrian regime forces has been regularly reported in close proximity to the border, leading to the closure of the shared border at times. Cross-border armed incursions have also occurred. In March, unidentified gunmen ambushed an Iraqi security force convoy transporting recently wounded Syrian regime personnel to the al-Waleed border crossing for repatriation back to Syria. The attack left approximately 40 Syrian soldiers and officials dead. Further incidents are anticipated along the shared border but given the low population densities in eastern Syria, a significant escalation in cross-border spillover is not anticipated as it is in Lebanon which is located in close proximity to major Syrian urban centers.

The establishment of a Kurd autonomous region in north eastern Syria remains a good probability given the Kurds already well-established and organized presence there. Any establishment of a Kurd region, akin to the one currently in place in northern Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government), is likely to bolster general Kurd goals for a single Kurd state and will raise tensions with Turkey and Iran, which are both battling Kurd separatist ambitions in their south east and north west respectively. It is too soon to determine what approach Iran and Turkey, or Iraq for that matter, will take towards any future Kurd federal government in Syria or the Kurds generally; however, given past precedent the policy is likely to be confrontational [5].

Based on the above, we can formulate the following conclusions:

First, the Middle East is and likely to remain one of the most problematic regions in the world. A set of conflicts and crises are constantly expanding, and the efforts of the international community aimed at enhancing regional security has not brought the desired results.

Secondly, the developments in the region indicate that the current crisis and the problems tend to be more and more interdependent.

The conflict in Syria will have a lasting impact on the country and the region regardless of its outcome. The large presence of refugees is expected to take a significant financial toll on and influence security environments of the various states along Syria's border. Sectarian tensions exacerbated by the war will remain elevated for the medium-term and will serve to influence political systems and international relationships. These influences are expected to be largely negative and pre-existing tensions, particularly in Lebanon and Iraq, could worsen further and develop into open conflict.

All this leads to the need of developing qualitatively new strategies for action on issues of regional security, a departure from traditional assessments, approaches and schemes, which, as it turns out, do not give significant progress in terms of creating stable and predictable interactions of the countries this region.

Talking about an effective security system is only possible when it will have region-wide character and will meet the needs of all countries in the region. To develop such a comprehensive program it is required to analyze reasons for lack of success or insignificant results in finding a peaceful settlement of the current crisis and conflict situations. It's important to ensure a peaceful adjustment of the Middle East and adjacent regions, and operational crisis management through the fullest possible involvement of political and diplomatic means.

In any case, no matter how active were regional players – now the Middle East very important transformation is taking place, that will bring a new balance of power, a new structuring, and the new balance will be a very important component of all regional situation in the short term.

More and more it demands a comprehensive solution to the problems of the Middle East region's security through the adoption of collective action program of Middle East countries and the international community as a whole. The instability of the Middle East has a direct impact on Ukraine, because it primarily creates obstacles for normal development of relations with countries in the region. Furthermore, given the geographical proximity to the Middle East, in the case of aggravation of the situation in Syria, we can predict increased flow of refugees which will move transit to Western Europe.

References

1. А. А. Волович // О планах демократизации Ближнего Востока. [Электронный ресурс] – Режим доступа: <http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2004/19-08-04.htm>.
2. Парахонський Б. О. Близький Схід: міжнародна безпека, регіональні відносини та перспективи для України: Монографія. / Відп. редактор Б. О. Парахонський. // К. : ПЦ «Фоліант». – 2008. – С. 208-220.
3. Швед В. І. Близькосхідні пріоритети зовнішньої політики України // Україна: стратегічні пріоритети. Аналітичні оцінки / За ред. А. С. Гальчинського. – К. : НІСД, 2003. – С. 68-83.
4. Abdullah Ashaal The Arab world and messes the conflict in Syria [Электронный ресурс] / Abdullah Ashaal // Thursday, 28/06/1434 – corresponding to 09/05/2013 AD (updated) at 14:05 (Mecca), 11:05 (GMT) – Режим доступа: <http://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/pages/99d95a41-c749-44c8-a68a-c2994e5673a8>.
5. Maitham al-Janabi Syria and the problem of its position in the Arab and global conflict [Электронный ресурс] / Maitham al-Janabi // Civilized dialogue – Issue: 3645 – 2012/2/21 – 12:31 – Режим доступа: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=296117>.

6. Richards A. Long-Term Sources of Instability in the Middle East. Critical Issues Facing the Middle East. Security, Politics and Economics. / Richards A., James A. Russell. // New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. – P. 13-37.
7. The conflict in Syria: U.S. military chief presents five options for intervention / Last Updated: Tuesday, July23, 2013. 09:23 GMT [Електронний ресурс] Режим доступу: http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2013/07/130723_us_syria_military_options.shtml.
8. Yehiav A. The Anti-Iranian Front: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan // The Middle East Review of International Affairs. – 2007. – № 1. – P. 18-33.
9. Zisser E. What does the Future Hold for Syria? // The Middle East Review of International Affairs. – 2006. – № 2. – P. 68-80.