

SUMMARY

Subject of the graduation research paper: Analysis of Weapons of Mass destruction (WMD) Proliferation Threats in the Context of the Modern Syrian Conflict.

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Topicality of the research subject: The modern conflict in Syria has become a “Gordian knot” of international politics. The conflict began in March 2011 as peaceful protests against four decades of rule by President Bashar al-Assad's family, but turned into an armed insurgency whose sectarian dimensions have reverberated across the Middle East. According to the UN statistics the death toll in Syria’s conflict has risen to at least 130 000, more than a third of them civilians on both sides of the conflict.

The conflict in Syria causes increased concern among members of the international community because of the risks associated with the non-proliferation of WMD. A report by UN inspectors confirms that chemical weapons have been used at least five times during the Syrian conflict.

The conflict in Syria has facilitated the emergence and expansion of a significant jihadist insurgency, which itself has demonstrated markedly more pragmatic modes of operation. IHS Jane’s Terrorism & Insurgency Centre analysts estimate that approximately 1 000 militant groups have emerged as operational entities across Syria and comprise approximately 100 000 fighters. These units incorporate a wide range of ideological perspectives, from apolitical nationalist groups to fighters affiliated to Al-Qaeda.

To date Russia, the US and other members of international community have managed to persuade Syria to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention and put its chemical weapons under international control for destruction. The model of cooperation, primarily between Russia and the US is of particular value to the international community and confirms that it is possible to control and mitigate risks associated with the WMD without military intervention, even in the most complex international situations.

The above-indicated reasons determined the research topic of the final paper.

The goal of the research is to conduct a comprehensive study of the origins, risks and challenges of the modern conflict in Syria with the focus on threats arising from the use and further proliferation of chemical WMD.

Tasks of the research:

- To analyze the problem of WMD proliferation from the perspective of the international political science;
- To review and analyze the existing scientific approaches to the study of conflicts and their resolution in international relations;
- To conduct root cause analysis and study the development of the Syrian conflict as well as to focus on the problem of WMD proliferation in the light of the conflict;
- To study experience and efforts of the international community to control and minimize risks related with the problem of WMD proliferation in the Syrian conflict as well as to identify the prospects of finding a settlement to the Syrian conflict.

Scientific novelty of the graduation research paper:

- The author examined the current theoretical approaches of foreign scholars and experts on the problem of WMD proliferation which have not received adequate coverage in the Russian literature.
- The author proposed a new research perspective, according to which, the WMD per se and constituent elements of the WMD complex of a state are considered by external actors (other states and actors not affiliated with the state) as a leverage or tool to advance their interests;

- The author conducted a “root and branch” international political analysis of the modern conflict in Syria and identified a range of international prerequisites necessary to peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict.

Practical applications of research findings. The results can be used by qualified Russian experts, politicians and diplomats to formulate, carry out and increase effectiveness of foreign policies related to the situation in the Middle East, the conflict in Syria, the problem of WMD proliferation. The paper can be used to develop lecture courses and practical training programs on a number of international political disciplines.

Texture includes introduction, two chapters (two paragraphs each), conclusion, literature list and appendix.

Summary. The so-called Arab Spring was started by people who were inspired by universal ideals to put an end to authoritarian rule and corruption and to demand liberty, dignity and social justice. Although these demands have transcended the borders of various Arab countries, their trajectories and outcome have differed because Arab regimes are diverse among themselves in terms of their ruling mechanisms, domestic power structures, international relations, and the societies they have ruled.

The “Syrian Spring” began gradually in March 2011, but escalated into a violent conflict that drew in regional and international actors and various competing opposition and regime forces. The ensuing bloodshed and deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Syria, the failure of the United Nations Security Council to reach a consensus on what action to take, as it did on Libya, and the involvement of contending external actors partially reflect the complexity of the current impasse. The ruthless rule of the Baathist regime that has held its grip on power through decades of repression and torture, and the army’s brutal repression of the protest movement since March 2011, have led to the gradual disintegration of the state and the shredding of Syria’s social fabric.

In the middle of 2013 the conflict in Syria significantly escalated because of the multiple uses of chemical weapons by the conflict parties. According to the UN report chemical weapons (sarin) were likely used in five out of seven attacks investigated by U.N. experts in Syria. The report noted that in several cases the victims included government soldiers and civilians, though it was not always possible to establish with certainty any direct links between the attacks, the victims and the alleged sites of the incidents. The author proposed a number of arguments which stipulate that it were opposition forces who had used the WMD to provoke the US intervention and topple the Syrian regime.

In August 2013, the Obama Administration threatened military action against Syria in response to chemical weapons use in Syria. In a diplomatic solution that resulted in the Administration withdrawing the threat, Syria agreed to join the international Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which requires Syria to destroy all of its chemical weapons stocks and production facilities. Based on a joint U.S.-Russian proposal, the Executive Council of the OPCW, an intergovernmental body tasked with implementation of the CWC, approved a destruction plan under which Syria is required to destroy all chemical weapons by June 30, 2014.

Overall the peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict is determined by internal and external factors, such as:

- The ability of the official Damascus forces to effectively counter terrorist groups;
- The effective implementing of the current Syrian government policy of “local pacifications” and the creation of a constructive dialogue with the opposition.
- Whether or not regional and global players (primarily Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as well as the U.S. and Russia) reach an agreement aimed at the stabilizing Syria situation and cessation of military support to opposition forces.