

STEPS Students Report

Hiroshi Komikado (B3)
Department of Civil Engineering

I researched on the Syrian Civil War during study in Russia by reading Russian newspaper and interviewing professors and students. My motivation for the research was simple. It was to clarify the reason Russia intervened Syria and how Russians thought of it. At the beginning of my stay, my professor in Russia said to me as follows. *"The Syrian Conflict is one of the most complex problems in the world. There are many kind of reason, for example, religious, economical and national defensive one. And all of Russians do not agree with the intervention in Syria. You have to know that situation during this stay."* I would understand what he meant later.

In the first two weeks of my stay, I read many articles from 5 Russian newspapers and web sites, such as Russian Direct, Valdai Club, Russian International Affairs Council, Moscow Times and Moscow News and then clarified the relationship among countries involved. Then, in the last two weeks, I did some interviews on my friends of Russian. By reading articles, I understood what happened and was happening in Syria and how Russian medias are reporting the nation about it. By interviewing, I grasped the idea of Russian people about the Syrian Civil war.

First, I grasped the relationship among countries involved in the Syrian Civil War. As figure 1 shows, there are four main sectors, Government Force, Free Syrian Army, Al Qaeda and ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant). There is a conflict between every two countries among them except Al Qaeda and Free Syrian Army, which is one of the biggest problems of the complexity. Moreover, another biggest problem is that every sector has supporting countries. Government Force is supported by Russia, Lebanon and Iraq. Free Syrian Army by London 11 including US, EU and Turkey. ISIL and Al Qaeda by Gulf Countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and Katar. The supporting countries are opposed to each other because of matters of economic, resources, religion, geography and national defense.

The Russian military intervention in the Syrian Civil War began in September 2015 after an official request by the Syrian government for military help against rebel and jihadist groups. The intervention consisted of air strikes primarily in north-western Syria against militant groups opposed to the Syrian government, including ISIL and Al Qaeda. Prior to these operations, Russian involvement was composed of mainly supplying the Syrian Army and their objective, they said, is to help the Syrian government

retake territory from various opposition groups. In his televised interview broadcast on 11 October 2015, Vladimir Putin said the military operation had been thoroughly prepared in advance; he defined Russia's goal in Syria as "stabilizing the legitimate power in Syria and creating the conditions for political compromise".

Second, I got several opinions and characters of Russian about the Syrian matter from the interview survey. In this report, I introduce interesting one of them, most of Russians object the government policy in Syria but are strongly supporting the government itself. One interviewee said that Russian involvement with Syria was illegal intervention.But, there was no government more than the Russian Government. This attitude for the government is rare because, for example in US or Japan, the opposition to the policy means the opposition to the government.

As shown above, I got to know much not only about the Syrian Civil War but also Russian interesting viewpoints or lifestyle through the daily life in St. Petersburg. I am deeply grateful to who gave me a great opportunity and care of my stay.

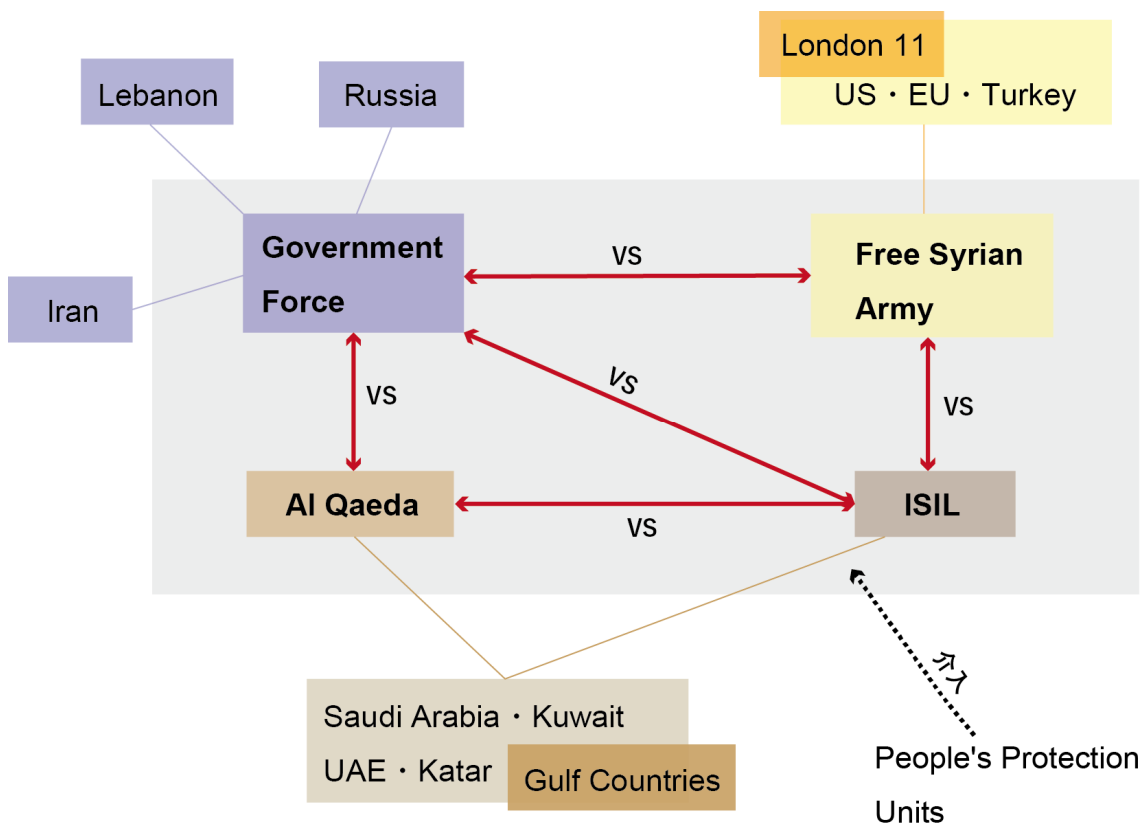


Figure1. The relationship among countries involved

PHOTOS IN ST. PETERSBURG

