Abstract

In 2010, the Arab Spring started in Tunisia and expanded to other countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East. In Syria, it led to one of the most severe conflicts nowadays which turned into an international struggle with several external actors involved. Whereas most of the European countries, the United States and the Gulf countries oppose the Syrian government, Russia has supported the Assad-regime since the outbreak of the conflict.

This present master thesis investigates Russia’s role and motivation in the Syrian crisis and the country’s support of the current Assad-regime. Due to the current relevance of classical geopolitics in Russia, the author took this approach for the investigation, complemented by some concepts from a current geopolitician.

There seems to be evidence that Russian foreign politics is influenced by classical geopolitics and the approach explains, at least in part, the drivers for Russia’s Syria policy. The qualitative analysis used primary and secondary sources, such as Foreign Policy Concepts, Security Reports, reports from key conferences, political speeches, letters and statements.

The analysis revealed evidence, that Russia’s engagement is driven by security issues, channelled by its own domestic terrorist fears. Additionally, the country seems to be aiming for increasing its power position in the international system. To investigate the second driver, six additional countries, involved in Syria, were considered and their role in the conflict investigated.