Domestic and external determinants
of the civil war in Syria

In all probability, the revolution which broke out in Syria in March 2011 will be the final act of the Arab Spring. As distinct from the revolts in North Africa, the basis of the Syrian conflict is distinctly more complicated. This means that no clear settlement has been achieved as yet. Moreover, on the one hand, the impasse in the struggles between Baszar al-Assad’s loyalists and the rebels is causing an humanitarian crisis which is becoming steadily more evident while, on the other hand, it is giving rise to an increasingly serious threat to the entire Middle East. In this context, the article undertakes an attempt to indicate the most significant determinants, both domestic and external in kind, which are affecting the specific nature of the conflict. The authoritarian political system, the religious and ethnic divisions, the economic situation, the potential of the government’s army, the presence of chemical weapons and the precarious identity of, and fragmentation within, the Free Syrian Army should all be numbered among the most crucial domestic factors. When describing the external determinants, however, the Syrian conflict should not be perceived purely as a phenomenon which has become a part of the Arab Spring movement, since the course of events in this particular country has become an opportunity for important international actors to jostle for position in both the regional and the global dimensions. This means that both the course of the war and its outcome may have a potentially crucial impact not only on the situation in Syria herself, but also on the entire Middle East.