



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL SR.

— STUDY GUIDE —

Addressing Peacebuilding Efforts in Syria
and the Impact of Foreign Military
Presence.

ANNUAL WORLD SUMMIT 2025

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

The Executive Board of the UNSC welcomes you to the Annual World Summit, 2024. The Annual World Summit is a platform where young leaders get to express their ideas, make new friends and solve nerve-racking situations that have global implications. While this can be quite a daunting experience for first-timers, we here at Jamnabai Narsee School ensure that there is maximum participation and that everyone comes out of the conference having learnt something. This is the perfect platform for amateurs as well as experienced debaters.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a vital organ of the United Nations, responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Comprising 15 member states, including five permanent members with veto power, the UNSC plays a crucial role in global affairs. The committee serves as a platform for diplomatic negotiations, conflict resolution and the promotion of international cooperation, making it an essential body for addressing various global challenges.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The agenda for the UNSC is of great importance in addressing the historical causes and progression of the Syrian conflict, with special emphasis on the impact of foreign military presence. We hope that the delegates emphasise the past of the countries along with the current conflict and are able to come to a peaceful solution. While this agenda gives the delegates a certain framework as to what research needs to be done, it also allows smaller nations to pose their issues and find a global consensus when it comes to finding a solution. This issue is extremely volatile and requires the best of minds when it comes to resolving it. Hence, we aim to give equal opportunity to every delegate present and hope for two days of heated debate.

Yours faithfully,
The UNSC Executive Board.
Chairperson: Annanya Desai
Vice-Chairperson: Zyna Meghani
Moderator: Aanvi Chirania
Rapporteur: Som Sengupta

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INTRODUCTION

The Syrian conflict, now entering a transformative yet turbulent phase following Bashar al-Assad's fall in December 2024, continues to reshape the region in profound and far-reaching ways. What began in 2011 as a struggle against a repressive regime has evolved into one of the most complex humanitarian disasters of the 21st century. Approximately 6,00,000 lives have been lost and millions have been displaced, leaving behind a fractured nation with shattered infrastructure and deep-seated societal divisions. The collapse of Assad's government, while opening a window of opportunity for genuine peacebuilding, has also plunged Syria into an even more challenging landscape, where various factions and international actors fiercely compete for power, resources and territory.

In this new era, power centres have sprung up after the collapse of the regime, changing the face of Syrian politics. One of the most significant developments is the emergence of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which is best described as an offshoot of a once-Qaeda-associated organisation, as the major armed group in several regions.

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The announcement by HTS regarding a transitional government and the inauguration of a national dialogue to tweak a new constitution are throwing mixed sparks of caution and excitement into people who are waiting desperately for change. But the road ahead is riddled with uncertainty because unifying an armed nation deeply divided on sectarian grounds is a daunting task. While HTS pursues its agenda, integration with other major actors like the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and whatever remnants of the Free Syrian Army remain is still fraught with contentiousness, thus complicating any national reconciliation attempt.

The Syrian situation has gained additional layers of complexity because of regional and international powers. The long-term involvement of external actors such as Russia, Iran, Türkiye and Israel has not only led to a protraction of the conflict but has also muddied the waters for a peace process. While Russia and Iran are providing military support to factions of their interest, particularly HTS, Türkiye has been attempting to establish a safe zone in northern Syria and is supporting rebel groups challenged by Kurdish autonomy.

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In the meantime, Israel's military actions targeting Iranian interests only add to the tensions and increase the instability of the already fragile balance. The interplay of these competing interests means that the prospect of a simple military solution is virtually impossible; this creates the need for a substantive, peaceful solution to the conflict through diplomatic means.

This transitional period after the ousting of Assad has stoked the fires of considerable contention concerning the blueprint of the future political system for Syria. An interim government led by personalities formed around HTS and other factions confronts the daunting challenge of trying to bridge a country torn apart by years of civil war. To this end, they have a grand plan that provides for a comprehensive constitutional process that dissolves armed groups to form one national force. However, the real challenge is to overcome entrenched ideological fault lines and ensure the inclusion of all aspects of Syrian society into this process. The ongoing incorporation of Kurdish forces within the new political order is perceived as both crucial toward achieving national unity and potentially the trigger point given Türkiye's suspicion of Kurdish autonomy.

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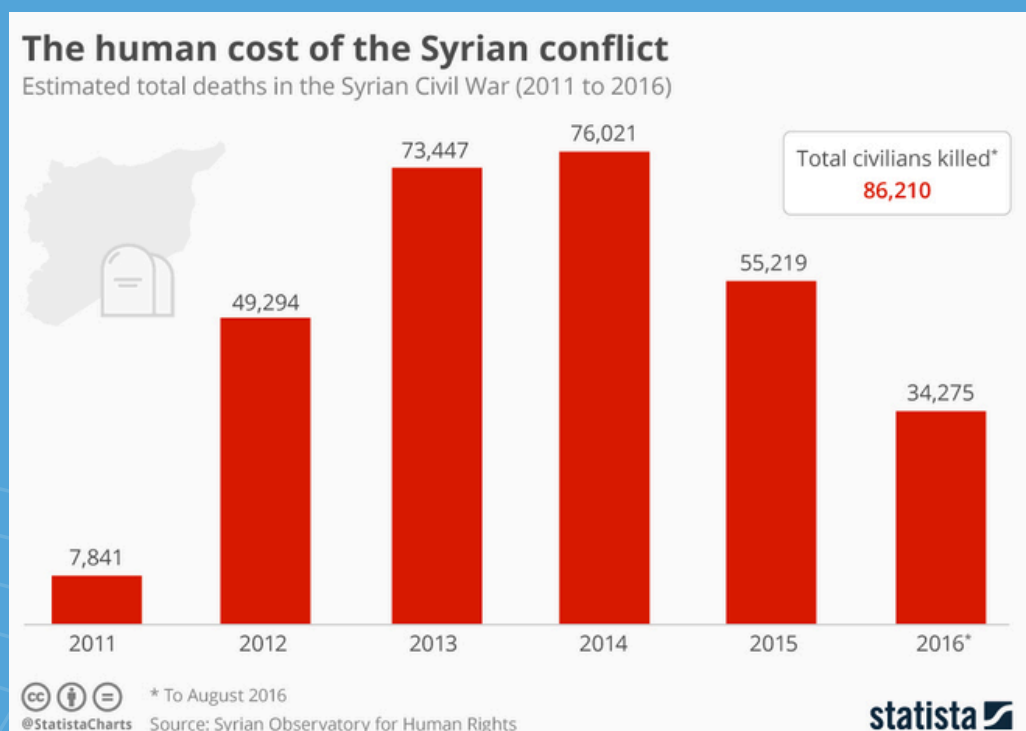
It is in the balance of these setbacks that a bit of cautious optimism exists on the part of international observers and the Syrian civil society. The [United Nations] Security Council reaffirmed its commitment to an inclusive political process according to UNSCR 2254, which entails free and fair elections, human rights respect and the establishment of mechanisms for transitional justice. This international backing is deemed crucial for the long-term recovery of Syria; however, the way forward will necessitate continuous diplomatic engagement and active coordination among global stakeholders and local communities. The balance between external influence and internal agency is faint and the only way Syria could be expected to come out of its conflict is through conversation, reconciling these detainees to compromise and almost a binding commitment to reconstruction.

The current time in Syria stands for a greater global contest for peace in regions that have faced decades of violence. Thus, in Syria's precarious march toward stability and unity, that experience has become an unforgettable witness to humanity's resilience and the greater dream of justice and reconciliation.

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Therefore, the international community must not only be present for humanitarian relief and support diplomatic initiatives but also ensure that the voices of ordinary Syrians are heard in the corridors of power. In this fragile landscape, every little action counts-every dialogue, every negotiation and every tiny act of solidarity inch closer toward a Syria defined by hope, inclusion and lasting peace rather than a Syria plagued by conflict.

In summary, Syria stands at a crossroads where the promise of a new beginning is counterbalanced by the stark realities of its past. The challenge ahead is immense, yet it is precisely in these moments of profound crisis that the seeds of transformation are sown. With coordinated international support and a steadfast commitment to inclusive governance, Syria's turbulent journey may eventually pave the way for a resilient, unified and prosperous nation.



KEY DEFINITIONS

Historical Event –

A historical cause refers to an event or factor from the past that triggers significant changes in societies or civilisations over time.

Progression –

A series of events whose magnitude increases as it continues, or the escalation of a situation.

Conflict –

Conflict arises when two or more groups believe their interests are incompatible. Conflict is not in itself a negative phenomenon. Non-violent conflict can be an essential component of social change and development and is a necessary component of human interaction.

Syrian Conflict –

A multifaceted civil war that began in 2011, marked by political upheaval, sectarian violence, regional power struggles and foreign interventions, fundamentally reshaped Syria's social and political landscape.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Peacebuilding –

The process of establishing lasting peace by addressing the root causes of conflict, rebuilding institutions, promoting reconciliation and fostering economic and social development.

Foreign Military Presence –

The deployment or stationing of military forces from one state within the territory of another, which can be for purposes ranging from intervention and peacekeeping to strategic geopolitical interests.

Proxy-conflict –

An armed conflict where at least one belligerent party is directed or supported by an external third party.

Arab Spring –

The wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011, challenging some of the region's entrenched authoritarian regimes. Such violent crackdowns were also observed in Syria.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Uprising-

In March 2011, Syria's government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, faced an unprecedented challenge to its authority when pro-democracy protests erupted throughout the country. Protesters demanded an end to the authoritarian practices of the Assad regime, in place since Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, became president in 1971. The Syrian government used violence to suppress demonstrations, making extensive use of police, military and paramilitary forces. Opposition militias began to form in 2011 and by 2012, the conflict had expanded into a full-fledged civil war. In late November 2024, as the government's support from military allies collapsed, it was unable to stave off a rapid offensive by opposition forces and in early December, Assad fled the country. The civil war continued after Assad's fall as a new government took shape and worked to assert control over all of Syria.

In January 2011, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was asked in an interview said that he expected the wave of popular protest then sweeping through the Arab world, which had already unseated authoritarian rulers in Tunisia and Egypt, to reach Syria. Assad acknowledged that there had been economic hardships for many Syrians and that progress toward political reform had been slow and halting, but he was confident that Syria would be spared because his administration's stance of resistance to the United States and Israel aligned with the beliefs of the Syrian people, whereas the leaders who had already fallen had carried out pro-Western foreign policy in defiance of their people's feelings.

The environmental crisis also played a role in Syria's uprising. Between 2006 and 2010, Syria experienced the worst drought in the country's modern history. Hundreds of thousands of farming families were reduced to poverty, causing a mass migration of rural people to urban shantytowns.

It was in the impoverished, drought-stricken rural province of Daraa, in southern Syria, that the first major protests occurred in March 2011.

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A group of children had been arrested and tortured by the authorities for writing anti-regime graffiti; incensed local people took to the streets to demonstrate for political and economic reforms. Security forces responded harshly, conducting mass arrests and sometimes firing on demonstrators. The violence of the regime's response added visibility and momentum to the protesters' cause, and within weeks, similar nonviolent protests had begun to appear in cities around the country. Videos of security forces beating and firing at protesters—captured by witnesses on mobile phones—were circulated throughout the country and smuggled out to foreign media outlets.

By the summer of 2011, Syria's regional neighbours and the global powers had both begun to split into pro- and anti-Assad camps. The United States and the European Union were increasingly critical of Assad as his crackdown continued and the US President Barack Obama and several European heads of state called for him to step down in August 2011. An anti-Assad bloc consisting of Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia formed in the last half of 2011. The United States, the EU and the Arab League soon introduced sanctions targeting senior members of the Assad regime.

Civil War–

In early November 2011, Syrian officials agreed to an Arab League initiative calling for the Syrian government to stop violence against protesters, remove tanks and armoured vehicles from cities and release political prisoners. In December 2011, the Syrian government agreed to permit a delegation of monitors from the Arab League to visit Syria to observe the implementation of the plan. The observer mission quickly lost credibility with the opposition as it became clear that not enough monitors and equipment had been sent and that the Syrian government had presented the monitors with orchestrated scenes and restricted their movements. Amid concerns for the monitors' safety, the Arab League ended the mission on January 28.

A second agreement, this time brokered by former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and sponsored by the UN and the Arab League, produced a short partial ceasefire in April 2012. But violence soon resumed and reached higher levels than before, and the UN team of monitors, like their Arab League predecessors, had to be withdrawn for security reasons.

The summer and fall of 2012 saw a string of tactical successes for the rebels. Government troops were forced to withdraw from areas in the north and east, allowing the rebels to control significant territory for the first time. In July, rebels attacked Aleppo, Syria's largest city, establishing a foothold in the eastern part of the city. By early 2013, though, the military situation appeared to be approaching stalemate. Rebel fighters kept a firm hold on northern areas but were held back by deficiencies in equipment, weaponry and organisation. Meanwhile, government forces, weakened by defections, also seemed incapable of making large gains. Daily fighting continued in contested areas, pushing the civilian death toll higher and higher.

The United States, which had been reluctant to send weapons for fear of inadvertently arming radical jihadists who would someday turn against the West, eventually started a modest program to train and equip a few vetted rebel groups. The Syrian government continued to receive weapons from Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. By late 2012, Hezbollah had also begun sending its own fighters into Syria to battle the rebels.

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The Rise of Nusra Front and ISIS–

In 2013, Islamist militants began to take centre stage as the non-Islamist factions faltered from exhaustion and infighting. The Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nuṣrah), an al-Qaeda affiliate operating in Syria, partnered with a variety of other opposition groups and was generally considered to be one of the most effective fighting forces.

Although the coalition was later transformed into Hay'at al-Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)—the rebel group that led the successful overthrow of Assad in 2024—it was soon overshadowed in 2013 by a group entering the fray from Iraq: in April, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, declared that he would combine his forces in Iraq with the Nusra Front under the name Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Nusra Front rejected the merger, and the two groups ended up fighting with each other as ISIS began competing for dominance in eastern Syria, beginning with an area in the Euphrates valley centred on the city of Al-Raqqah and expanding along the Iraq-Syria border.

International Intervention and the Invasion of Russia Forces–

ISIS's sudden advances in Iraq, which were accompanied by a steady stream of violent and provocative propaganda, added urgency to the international community's calls for action. On August 8, the United States launched air strikes in Iraq to prevent ISIS from advancing into the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq and to shield Christian and Yazīdī communities there. On September 23, the United States and a coalition of Arab states expanded the air campaign to strike ISIS targets in Syria.

In the summer of 2015, Russia began to take a more active role in the conflict, deploying troops and military equipment to an air base near Latakia. In September, Russia launched its first airstrikes against targets in Syria. Russian officials originally claimed that the air strikes were targeting ISIS, but it quickly became clear that they were targeting mostly rebels fighting against Assad, intending to bolster their ally.

While government forces continued to gain ground, Western governments increasingly intervened in the conflict. After a chemical weapons attack was carried out in Khān Shaykhūn in April 2017, the United States barraged Shayrat air base near Homs with 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles. A year later, after the Syrian government used chemical weapons in Douma, the United States, British and French forces launched more than 100 strikes targeting chemical weapons facilities near Damascus and Homs.

Israel targeted the Iranian military in Syria in 2018. After Iran shelled the Golan Heights in response, Israel launched its heaviest barrage in Syria since the civil war began. Dozens of Iranian military sites were targeted and Israel claimed to have destroyed nearly all of Iran's military infrastructure in Syria.

Complex Syrian and Palestinian ties–

Syria's relationship with the Palestinians and the Hamas group is long and complicated.

Hamas' origins lie in the trans-national Muslim Brotherhood group, which believes politics should be guided by religion and which undertakes social welfare and community activities, but also has an armed wing.

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In Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood opposed the Assad family's decades-long hold on power. In 1982, while Bashar Assad's father, Hafez, was in power, Syrian troops put down a revolt led by the Muslim Brotherhood in the central Syrian city of Hama, killing between an estimated 10,000 and 30,000 locals.

Later, the Syrian government took pride in supporting the Palestinian cause, one which has always been close to many locals' hearts. Damascus became a refuge for Palestinians fleeing Israel and home to around half a million of them. Syria also hosted one of Hamas' leaders-in-exile, Khaled Meshaal, for years. This was, although the Assad family often found itself at odds with Hamas, even while it used the group to further its foreign policy aims.



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Civilian Casualties and Displacement of People–

Over the past 14 years of conflict and crisis, hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been killed or injured and more than 13 million have been forced from their homes – half of the pre-war population. Over 7 million Syrians are displaced inside the country, while more than 6 million are living as refugees, mainly in neighbouring countries including Türkiye, Lebanon and Jordan, but also in Europe and other countries around the world.

In addition, between late September and late November, Syria received more than half a million people fleeing Israeli airstrikes in neighbouring Lebanon. About 60 per cent were returning Syrians, while the rest were Lebanese. Since a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon went into effect on 27 November, some 40,000 Lebanese refugees have returned to their country.

After more than a decade in exile, many refugees no longer have homes or jobs to return to in Syria. Years of conflict have devastated their country's economy and infrastructure, leaving 90 per cent of the population relying on some form of humanitarian aid.

Regardless of how the situation unfolds, millions of Syrians will need help with shelter, food and water to get through the coming winter and beyond.

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Overview of Current Situation/Recent Developments–

After foreign assistance for government forces was significantly reduced, a fresh rebel attack occurred in 2024. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine during the Russia-Ukraine War has already reduced the amount of assistance it provided. Iran, another significant friend of the regime, had difficulties in 2024 as a result of its involvement in the Israel-Hamas War. Iranian friends and strategic assets in the region, particularly inside Syria, suffered severe losses as a result of Israeli strikes. Israeli bombardment of Lebanon from September to November weakened Hezbollah in particular, a vital element in Assad's campaign against the rebels.

HTS started moving forward in the Aleppo and Idlib provinces on November 27. Government soldiers were forced to leave Aleppo when HTS members stormed into the city centre on November 29. The following day, Russian aircraft launched airstrikes against HTS, but within a week, HTS was able to continue its assault on Hama. After Daraa and Homs were taken over on December 7, Damascus was essentially shut off from ports and bases that would have allowed the Syrian army to resupply and strengthen its fortifications. Assad was discovered to have already left, and in an effort to preserve government institutions, opposition forces and Assad's prime minister tried to set up a stable handover of power.

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MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Russia –

Russia has a major involvement in the Syrian crisis. In September 2015, when it launched airstrikes in support of President Bashar al-Assad's government. Russia justified its actions as a fight against terrorism, targeting groups like ISIS and al-Nusra. However, Western nations accused Russia of primarily attacking opposition forces, helping Assad regain lost territory. Russian President Vladimir Putin has benefited from his country's presence in Syria and has supported the Assad regime in challenging the power and dominance of the West in the region. In exchange, Russia was granted 49-year leases on a naval facility and an air base, which served as a vital crosspoint for the movement of Russia's military contractors in and out of Africa. Russia's overall involvement in the Syrian civil war signified an important shift in Russia's policy to assert itself as a global power, previously focusing its efforts on nations that were once in the Soviet bloc.

Moscow's involvement included providing military advisors, weapons and diplomatic backing to the Syrian government. The intervention significantly shifted the war's dynamics, leading to major victories for Assad's forces, including the recapture of Aleppo in 2016. Russia also established military bases in Syria, securing long-term regional influence. Following the recent escalation of hostilities, Bashar al-Assad escaped to Moscow in December 2024 and the Russian government offered him political asylum. HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa stated on "We do not want Russia to depart in a manner unbefitting its long-standing relationship with our country". Russian President Vladimir Putin has benefited from his country's presence in Syria and has supported the Assad regime in challenging the power and dominance of the West in the region.

USA –

The United States steps into the role of peacebuilding in Syria after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in 2024. The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) stresses the need for conflict-sensitive humanitarian aid, support for local governance and accountability for war crimes. The main recommendations include pursuing inclusive democracy, strengthening civil society and conducting multilateral diplomacy to ease tension between Türkiye, Israel and Iran. Yet, foreign military presence and clashing global interests become deterrent factors.

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The AfP stands for flexible funding for grassroots peacebuilders, with UN-led transitional governance, to stabilise the region.

Since 2011, the United States has channelled over \$1.3 billion in stabilisation aid, very strongly targeting counter-terrorism actions, chiefly through the Global Coalition against ISIS. Kurdish-led operations by the Syrian Democratic Forces against ISIS considerably helped the US interests, aside from straining US.-Türkiye relations. Sanctions instituted under the Caesar Act sought to designate the Assad regime as a pariah, but instead, they worsened the humanitarian situation. The US. troop withdrawal of 2019 raised fears about the resurgence of ISIS in a context of counter-terrorism - versus-stability that continues to haunt the US. in Syria.

Türkiye –

Türkiye has been a steadfast supporter of the Syrian opposition. Türkiye's actions in Syria reflect a complex interplay of geopolitical ambitions and security concerns. Ankara has backed rebel groups, most now operating under the Syrian National Army (SNA), by providing arms, military aid and political support. Its top priority has been countering what it sees as a Kurdish threat along its southern border. Turkish-backed rebels have targeted the Kurdish YPG militia, which Türkiye claims is a branch of the PKK, a banned Kurdish insurgent group. The YPG is the largest militia within the Kurdish-led, US-backed

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Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which controls much of northeastern Syria. While the SDF largely avoided clashes with Assad's forces, Turkish troops and their rebel allies seized territory from the SDF and YPG near Syria's northern border.

Beyond its anti-Kurdish agenda, Türkiye has supported opposition groups to shape Syria's political future and counter Russian and Iranian influence. In 2020, Türkiye and Russia brokered a ceasefire to halt the Syrian government's offensive to reclaim Idlib, the last major rebel stronghold. The Islamist militant group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which played a key role in the rebellion against Assad, controlled Idlib. While Türkiye denies supporting HTS, many believe the offensive could not have happened without its approval. Meanwhile, fighting continues in northern Syria, with the SNA launching a separate offensive on SDF-held areas alongside the HTS operation.

The presence of thousands of Syrian refugees has also placed financial and social strain on Türkiye, fueling debates on reforming refugee and asylum policies, particularly regarding burden-sharing both domestically and internationally.

Israel –

Despite its limited geographic length, Israel is among the most prominent and powerful players in the Middle East. Its relationship with Syria has been troubled since the

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1967 Six-Day War, when Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria, a move whose illegal annexation in 1981 has been recognised only by the USA. Israel's engagement in Syria reflects its strategic aims of thwarting the entrenchment of Hezbollah and Iran, seeking to prevent the transfer of cutting-edge weapons and the formation of a hostile front near its borders through targeted attacks. Throughout the conflict, Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes against targets in Syria connected to Iran, primarily focusing on military objectives while rarely assuming responsibility for extraterritorial force. Following Assad's overthrow, Israel continued launching strikes, targeting Syria's naval fleet, military installations and weapons manufacturing facilities, to prevent arms from reaching extremists. In addition, Israel has seized control of the demilitarised buffer zone in the Golan Heights, claiming that the 1974 disengagement pact with Syria had "collapsed" due to the rebel takeover, although it denies advancing toward Damascus and insists that its operations occur only at a few additional points outside the buffer zone. Frequent airstrikes in Syria aim to disrupt Iranian weapons transfers to Hezbollah by targeting airports and military sites and while avoiding direct confrontation with Russia, Israel opposes Assad's rehabilitation and supports Kurdish autonomy as a strategic buffer against Tehran. The 2025 strike on the Tishreen Dam, which disrupted water supplies to millions, underscored the risks of escalation

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amid Syria's fragmentation.

France –

France has taken an active role in Syria by combining military intervention with robust diplomatic initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict. Paris has been a vocal critic of the Assad regime and has pushed for stronger international actions, including sanctions, a proposal for a UN resolution designed to protect civilians from the barrel bombs used by Syrian government forces and humanitarian interventions to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. France's policies reflect its commitment to regional stability and the protection of human rights, as well as its strategic interests in curbing extremist movements.

Iran–

Iran's role in Syria is part of a bigger plan to challenge Saudi and American interests and boost its power in the Middle East. It supports the survival of its "Axis of Resistance," which includes groups like Hezbollah, by backing Assad. This support has helped Assad's forces through the work of Iranian-backed militias. Iran also aims to create a lasting presence in Syria by investing in rebuilding projects and infrastructure. Media reports suggest that Iran has spent billions of dollars and sent many troops to aid pro-Assad forces, including thousands of Shia fighters who are armed, trained and funded by

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Iran. Along with its rivalry with the Saudi-led coalition, Iran's strong opposition to Israel has shaped its policies in Syria. However, ongoing conflicts have weakened Iran's overall power, reducing its support for Assad. Groups backed by Iran, such as the Fatemiyoun Brigade, have been accused of committing sectarian violence and taking control of important economic areas. Iran rejects UN-led political efforts and instead promotes a "resistance axis" to counter Western and Israeli influence, a stance that has led to frequent Israeli airstrikes on Syrian infrastructure, further destabilising the country.

Saudi Arabia –

Saudi Arabia has shifted from arming anti-Assad rebels to cautiously exploring normalisation with Damascus, driven by shared concerns over Iran's regional dominance. Riyadh conditioned its engagement on Assad curtailing drug trafficking and reducing Iranian influence, but the regime's collapse in 2024 disrupted these efforts. Saudi Arabia now channels aid through the Arab Red Crescent and advocates for Sunni representation in Syria's transitional government. It aligns with Jordan and Egypt to counter Turkish and Qatari influence, emphasising stability over democratic reforms.

Qatar-

Qatar funds opposition groups and humanitarian initiatives in northern Syria, countering Saudi and Emirati influence. Doha rejects normalisation with Assad and leverages its ties to Muslim Brotherhood affiliates to shape post-conflict governance. Its mediation efforts, including hostage exchanges between HTS and Damascus, highlight its role as a pragmatic but contentious player.

China-

China has played a significant role in the Syrian conflict through diplomatic support, economic investments and political engagement. Utilising its veto power in the United Nations Security Council, China, alongside Russia, has blocked multiple resolutions critical of the Assad regime, emphasising the importance of Syria's sovereignty and opposing external interference. In 2022, Syria's inclusion in China's Belt and Road Initiative further solidified its economic ties. Politically, China has maintained its diplomatic presence in Damascus throughout the conflict, advocating for a negotiated political settlement and opposing foreign interventions. However, the unexpected overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024 exposed the limitations of

China's Middle East diplomacy, challenging its strategic investments and influence in the region. In response, China has cautiously engaged with Syria's new leadership, aiming to safeguard its interests while promoting regional stability.

Jordan-

Jordan balances hosting 1.3 million Syrian refugees with security cooperation against drug smugglers linked to Assad. Amman advocates for a “step-for-step” normalisation process, tying reconstruction aid to reduced Iranian presence and refugee returns. Its intelligence-sharing with Israel and the US targets pro-Iranian militias in southern Syria but risks provoking retaliatory attacks.

Arab League-

The Arab League readmitted Syria in 2023 after a decade-long suspension, reflecting a regional push to reintegrate Damascus. Egypt and Jordan champion this normalisation to curb Iranian influence and address cross-border drug trafficking, while Qatar and Kuwait resist, citing unresolved war crimes. The League’s 2024 Amman Declaration calls for phased elections and refugee returns but lacks enforcement mechanisms, leaving Syria’s political future contingent on rival regional agendas.

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United Kingdom –

The United Kingdom has engaged in the Syrian conflict both directly and indirectly through its role in the international coalition against ISIS and its diplomatic efforts. British involvement has focused on counter-terrorism, humanitarian aid and promoting a political solution to the conflict. London's stance has consistently emphasised human rights and the need for multilateral cooperation to address both security threats and the extensive humanitarian fallout in Syria.



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TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1946-1970:

Post Syria's independence, there was a lot of political instability with frequent coups and weak civilian governments. The Ba'ath Party seized power in a military coup, establishing a one-party dictatorship that promoted Arab nationalism, socialism and secularism. General Hafez al-Assad (Bashar al-Assad's father) seizes power in another coup, establishing an authoritarian regime.

1970-1990:

Hafez al-Assad consolidates power, becoming President for Life and ruling with an iron grip. Syria intervenes in the Lebanese Civil War, sending a force of 25,000 soldiers to Lebanon to prevent the defeat of right-wing Christian militias. This lasted until 2005, entangling Syria in regional conflicts.

The US State Department designates Syria a state sponsor of terrorism, citing its alleged support for Palestinian militant groups.

Islamist forces briefly take over the city of Hama. The Syrian military launches a full-scale assault to put down the rebellion.

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1990:

Syria's economy stagnates, with rising unemployment and inflation. Corruption spreads, with Assad's family and inner circle controlling wealth. Rural areas suffer neglect, fueling anger toward the government.

2000-2010:

Bashar al-Assad is declared President. The government cracks down on activists, arrests opposition leaders and shuts down independent newspapers. Corruption worsens, with the Assad family and business elites monopolising industries. Syria experiences its worst drought in decades, devastating agriculture in northern and eastern Syria. 1.5 million farmers and their families are displaced, migrating to cities in search of work. The government ignores the crisis. Inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, opposition groups in Syria began organising protests against Assad's rule.

2011:

It marks the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War.

February 2011:

Several small demonstrations are held in Syria to call for reform and to show solidarity with pro-democracy protesters in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. Syrian security forces are able to contain the demonstrations.

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March 15, 2011:

Anti-government protests erupt in Daraa, sparked by the arrest and torture of teenagers who painted revolutionary graffiti. The Syrian government, led by Bashar al-Assad, responds with brutal force, leading to nationwide protests.

April 2011:

Security forces open fire on demonstrators, killing thousands. The crisis escalates into a full-blown civil uprising. The European Union (EU) imposes an arms embargo and applies travel restrictions and asset freezes to 13 senior Syrian officials. The sanctions do not apply to Assad personally.

May 19, 2011:

The United States imposes new sanctions against Syrian officials. The new sanctions, which include asset freezes and travel bans, extend to Assad himself.

July 2011:

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed, consisting of defected Syrian soldiers and opposition fighters, marking the beginning of the armed rebellion.

September 15, 2011:

Following a four-day conference of Syrian opposition activists in Istanbul, 140 people were selected to form the Syrian National Council, a council claiming to represent the Syrian opposition.

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2012:

Iran and Hezbollah (Lebanese militant group) start sending military advisors, weapons and fighters to support the Assad regime. The United Nations (UN) proposes a ceasefire, but both government and rebel forces violate the agreement. The US, UK, France and Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE) support Syrian opposition groups, providing arms and financial assistance.

2013

August 21, 2013:

The Ghouta chemical attack occurs, killing over 1,400 people. Western intelligence agencies accuse Assad's forces of using sarin gas, sparking international outrage.

September:

The US threatens military action, but Russia brokers a deal under which Syria agrees to surrender its chemical weapons stockpile.

December:

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) rises to power, capturing major Syrian territories.

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2014:

ISIS captures Raqqa, making it their de facto capital. The US-led coalition, including the UK, France and Arab allies, begins conducting airstrikes against ISIS. Kurdish forces (YPG/SDF) emerge as a major player in the fight against ISIS, receiving support from the US and Western allies. Turkey refuses to help the Kurds, viewing them as linked to the PKK (a Kurdish separatist group in Turkey).

2015:

Russia officially intervenes, launching airstrikes targeting both ISIS and Syrian opposition forces. While Russia claims to be fighting terrorists, most strikes hit rebel-held areas, strengthening Assad.

2016–2017:

The Battle of Aleppo ends with Assad's forces retaking the city. Turkey launches "Operation Euphrates Shield", targeting ISIS and Kurdish fighters near its border. The Khan Shaykhun chemical attack killed over 80 people. The US responds by launching 59 Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian airbase. ISIS is defeated in Raqqa by US-backed Kurdish forces (SDF), marking the collapse of the ISIS caliphate in Syria.

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2018:

April:

The Douma chemical attack occurred, killing dozens. The US, UK and France launch coordinated airstrikes against Assad's military bases.

July:

Israel escalates airstrikes, targeting Iranian military positions in Syria. After a series of Israeli strikes targeting the Iranian military in Syria, Iran shells the Golan Heights from Syrian territory. Israel responds with a barrage against dozens of Iranian military sites in Syria.

September:

Russia and Türkiye negotiate a ceasefire for Idlib province, preventing a large-scale Assad offensive against the last rebel stronghold. The agreement is meant to de-escalate a potentially devastating attempt by the government to capture the last rebel-held territory.

2019:

February:

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launch an offensive against ISIS's last stronghold in Bāghūz.

March:

ISIS is officially been declared defeated in Syria.

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April-June:

Idlib comes under assault from Syrian government forces backed by Russian air strikes, but rebel forces are able to push the fighting back into the neighbouring province of Hama.

October:

The US withdraws troops from northeast Syria, allowing Türkiye to launch "Operation Peace Spring", an offensive against Kurdish forces (SDF). Russia and Turkey broker a ceasefire, but Turkish forces occupy parts of northern Syria.

2020:

Türkiye and Russia negotiate a ceasefire in Idlib, but violations continue. US troops remain in Syria, mainly to secure oil fields and support Kurdish forces.

2021:

President Joe Biden maintains a limited US military presence in Syria to prevent the resurgence of ISIS. The UN-led Geneva peace talks stall, as Assad refuses to make political concessions.

2022:

Israel increases airstrikes, targeting Iranian and Hezbollah assets. Türkiye threatens the Kurdish forces.

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2023:

Iran expands its influence in Syria, constructing military bases and increasing ties with Assad. The UN struggles to enforce peace negotiations, as Syria remains deeply divided. Arab leaders seek to normalise relations and cooperate with Syria on international matters, including the return of refugees.

2024:

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the leading rebel force, launches a new offensive. Within days, the group entered Aleppo's city centre and government forces fully withdrew from the city. After several clashes, the HTS took control of the city. HTS took control of Daraa and Homs, effectively isolating Damascus. Hours later, as reports surfaced that Assad had fled. Rebel forces declare Damascus "liberated", and Assad is toppled. HTS establishes an interim government led by Mohammed al-Bashir.

2025:

The interim government proclaims Ahmed al-Sharaa, the head of HTS, as president and calls for the dissolution of all armed factions, including HTS. The interim government reached an agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces districts of the city hit by artillery and sniper fire, causing large numbers of civilian casualties.

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RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

1. Resolution 2043 (2012) - Establish UN supervision mission in Syria
2. Resolution 2118 (2013) - Implement Syria chemical weapons elimination
3. Resolution 2165 (2014) - Authorise cross-border humanitarian aid deliveries
4. Resolution 2254 (2015) - Syrian-led political transition and ceasefire
5. Resolution 2336 (2016) - Humanitarian cross-border assistance operations renewed
6. Resolution 2401 (2018) - Thirty-day ceasefire for humanitarian relief
7. Resolution 2744 (2024) - UN extends Golan peacekeeping mandate
8. Annan Plan (2012) - Six-point Syrian ceasefire plan proposed
9. US-Russian Agreement Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons (2013)
10. Geneva Communiqué (June 2012) - Syrian political transition negotiations initiated
11. Astana Peace Talks (2017) - Astana talks establish de-escalation zones
12. Russian Military Intervention (2015)

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QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

1. What specific measures can the UNSC implement to establish a sustainable peace process in Syria amid ongoing foreign military interventions?
2. How can the Security Council ensure that Syria's transitional government is inclusive and representative of all ethnic, sectarian and displaced populations?
3. In what ways can the UNSC reconcile the competing strategic interests of external actors, such as Russia, Iran, the United States and Türkiye, to foster a unified approach toward peace in Syria?
4. How can humanitarian aid be secured and effectively delivered to civilians in Syria while respecting national sovereignty and mitigating the impacts of foreign military operations?

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5. How can the UNSC ensure accountability for external military support that exacerbates conflict and what steps can be taken to deter further violations of international humanitarian law?

6. How can economic sanctions, legal frameworks and international instruments be leveraged to pressure foreign actors to support a peaceful resolution in Syria?

7. What strategies can be employed to prevent the resurgence of extremist groups in the power vacuums created by both the conflict and foreign interventions?

8. How can foreign military interventions be recalibrated to support, rather than hinder, sustainable peacebuilding?

9. What strategies can be employed to cease hostilities, initiate a political transition and dismantle chemical weapons?

10. What framework is proposed for Syria's political transition?

11. What provisions are included to address the massive displacement and civilian suffering resulting from the conflict?

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MODERATED CAUCUS TOPICS

1. Evaluate the successes and failures of ongoing peace processes, including local ceasefire agreements and international peacekeeping missions.
2. Analyse the influence of neighbouring and regional powers in determining the political and security landscape of Syria.
3. Address the challenges associated with disarming and reintegrating various armed groups into civilian society.
4. Discuss the impact of foreign military interventions on Syria's sovereignty and the prospects for long-term peace.
5. Evaluate strategies to address extremist groups while promoting peace and security in the region.
6. Consider how international sanctions and tariffs affect rebuilding efforts and the overall economy in post-conflict Syria.

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7. Addressing Revenge Killings and Sectarian Violence in Post-Conflict Syria.

8. Chemical Weapons Disarmament and Compliance with International Norms.

9. Impact of Western Sanctions on Syria's Post-War Reconstruction and Civilian Livelihoods.

10. Foreign Military Presence and Its Impact on Syrian Sovereignty.

11. External Backing of Armed Factions in the Syrian Civil War.

12. Cross-Border Military Strikes in Syria: Counter-terrorism vs. Violations of Territorial Integrity.

13. Israeli Security Concerns and Preemptive Strikes in Syrian Territory.

14. Türkiye-Israel Relations and Their Strategic Implications for Syria.

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