



United Nations Security Council

MUNUC

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CHAIR LETTER

Welcome delegates! At MUNUC's inaugural conference in the Dominican Republic, you will have the opportunity to participate in a simulation of the United Nations Security Council, one of the world's most powerful deliberative bodies. It is tasked with ensuring international peace and security, and it approaches this task with a unique set of capabilities. You will be able to apply your skills, knowledge, and research to one of the most prominent crises in modern international politics: the Syrian Civil War. *It is important to note that this committee is a historical committee.* Specifically, **this committee is set in the middle of the summer of 2019**. The situation in Syria has changed since then, but this hindsight presents us with a unique opportunity. Looking at what actually transpired in Syria, delegates can and should try to secure better outcomes through the power of diplomacy.

Some of you may have experience with Model United Nations. That is great, but certainly not required. Here are a few useful tips if this activity is new for you. This background guide contains numerous sources. Please consider the websites and articles referenced here as starting places for your own research. Model UN is at its best when every delegate is well prepared to represent their country's positions accurately and passionately, and that requires more than just skimming the background guide. Additionally, there are numerous Security Council resolutions cited in this background guide. Given that the goal of this committee is to produce a resolution, these actual resolutions are excellent guides for both the format to be used and the content which should be included. It is often said that you get out what you put in, and that is especially true with MUN simulations. Don't be afraid to ask questions and discuss vigorously, as that will enliven the debate and make for a more substantial experience. In particular, if you have any questions about the content or format of this committee, feel free to email me at secgen@munuc.org. I look forward to meeting and working with you in a few weeks and wish you the best of luck in your preparations.

Best regards,

Jake Fiedler

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

The United Nations Security Council, or UNSC, is one of the five (active) principal organs of the United Nations. It is composed of five permanent member nations and ten rotating member nations which each serve two-year terms. The five permanent members, also known as the P5, were the major victors of World War II. Today, the P5 is composed of China, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France. Practically speaking, the most important difference between the P5 nations and the ten others is that P5 nations each possess the power to veto any resolution being considered by the body. This means that any action which even one P5 nation disagrees with can be halted by that nation. Despite the power of the P5, the other ten member states (This committee is set in the summer of 2019, so these are the Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, South Africa, Kuwait, Indonesia, Poland, Peru, Dominican Republic, Belgium, Germany) are still able to vote on all matters. Resolutions in the UNSC require the “yes” vote of at least nine out of the fifteen members, so even if no P5 nation exercises its veto power, passage is not assured.

A key aspect of the United Nations Security Council which distinguishes it from the other organs of the United Nations is that it possesses a measure of binding power in its resolution. This is because the UNSC alone is capable of using military power to combat aggressors, through the United Nations Peacekeepers, as described in the United Nations Charter.¹ The UNSC is also capable of imposing sanctions against various nations, which it more frequently makes recourse to than direct military action.² It will be edifying for delegates to research past Security Council resolutions and actions beyond those mentioned in this background guide (for instance, UNSC resolutions on similar international crises) to better understand its role in international relations both past and present.

There are several modifications that will be made in order to run this committee. There are twenty-one delegates attending, so for this simulation there are six extra countries in addition to the current membership of the Security Council. These additional nations are partly drawn from future UNSC members to be installed in 2020, and partly curated based on their unique interests in the conflict.

¹ “Functions and Powers,” United Nations Security Council (2019). <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/functions-and-powers>.

² Ibid.

They are India, Vietnam, Tunisia, Niger, Estonia, and Turkey. *Because of this, a passing resolution will require at least thirteen out of twenty-one "yes" votes instead of nine out of fifteen.* The veto power of P5 states applies without alteration. Any P5 delegate will be able to utilize the veto power to block any resolution. The presidency of the Security Council will not play a role in this simulation, as the two chairs of the committee will facilitate debate instead of a representative from one of the member states.

TOPIC: RESOLVING THE CRISIS IN SYRIA (SUMMER 2019)

Statement of the Problem

It is 2019, and over the last eight years, the Syrian Civil War has ravaged the country. It is presently estimated to be the second deadliest conflict of the 21st century thus far, and it has already caused nearly 500,000 deaths.³ Life expectancy in Syria has been decreased by at least 15 years as a result of this war.⁴ The scale of the humanitarian crisis in the region is difficult to overstate. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 13 million people require aid, and around 5.6 million people have already fled the country.⁵ This is compared to a present population of less than 20 million.⁶

During the course of the war, numerous atrocities have been committed against the civilian population. In 2013, at least hundreds of people were killed and thousands injured by the usage of chemical weapons near Damascus.⁷ In 2017, even after agreeing to destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons, another attack was launched from the stockpiles of the Syrian army, this time killing dozens more.⁸ The Assad regime maintains that it has not utilized chemical weapons, and that the rebels were actually the perpetrators, a claim which is fiercely contested. Although this claim is not refuted by the UN Human Rights Council, that same body has still found that the Syrian government has repeatedly and grossly violated the basic rights of its citizens, committing what amounts to war crimes on multiple occasions.⁹ This is to say nothing of the myriad other factions operating in the

³ "8 Deadliest Wars of the 21st Century," Encyclopedia Britannica (2019). <https://www.britannica.com/list/8-deadliest-wars-of-the-21st-century>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Syria emergency," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2019). <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>.

⁶ "Middle East: Syria," Central Intelligence Agency (2019). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>.

⁷ "Syrian Civil War Fast Facts," CNN (2019). <https://www.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/meast/syria-civil-war-fast-facts/index.html>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic," United Nations Human Rights Council (2014). <https://www.refworld.org/docid/53182eed4.html>.

country (among them the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), many of which have also been responsible for widespread brutal violence against civilians.

Actors in the Region

The main factor which increases the complexity of the Syrian Civil War is that it is not a binary conflict between the government and a group of rebels. There are numerous groups within Syria, possessing differing motivations and tactics. There is also intense international interest in the political situation in Syria, for various reasons, meaning that even a complete accounting of the domestic factions is insufficient. It is beyond the scope of this background guide to delve into a detailed analysis of all of the parties in Syria, but the broad groups are as follows.

The Assad regime: this is the present government of Syria. President Bashar al-Assad has led the country since the year 2000 as the head of an effective one-party state. The conflict has its roots in the 2011 Arab Spring, a wave of protests throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The Syrian government responded violently to these protests, which galvanized opposition to the Assad regime, and eventually led to open war.¹⁰ The Syrian government seeks to reassert its control over the entire nation and prevent regime change.

Free Syria Army: This group of soldiers was formed in 2011 out of former members of the Syrian army.¹¹ They quickly began to combat the regime, working with various smaller militant groups across the country. Initially, they received support from the United States and some European nations, which sought to form a centralized opposition to Assad, but eventually it was found that some FSA affiliates were more radical than had been believed.¹² Thus, the United States and allies were more reluctant to continue supporting the FSA.¹³

ISIS: The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Daesh, and the Islamic State) is a terrorist group which occupied large amounts of territory in both

¹⁰ "What was the Arab Spring and how did it spread," National Geographic (2019). <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/topics/reference/arab-spring-cause/>.

¹¹ "Guide to the Syrian rebels," BBC (2013). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Iraq and Syria starting in earnest in 2014, when it conquered several major cities.¹⁴ It seeks to establish a state in the area it controls, putting it at odds with essentially every other faction in the war. ISIS is known for its particularly brutal tactics, and frequently perpetrated atrocities, however, due to the combined efforts of the other factions, it has decreased dramatically in size in recent years.¹⁵

The Kurds: Kurds are an ethnic group from a region spanning parts of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey.¹⁶ They have been engaged in frequent combat with both ISIS and the Syrian government, the later under the auspices of the Syrian Democratic Forces.¹⁷ Increasingly, they have been seen as the group most closely aligned with the interests of the United States and Europe, partly because they have arguably been the most successful at destroying ISIS. It was Kurdish forces who captured the city of Raqqa in 2017, which had operated as the capital of the Islamic State.¹⁸ However, they are largely opposed to Turkey, given that many Kurds are of the opinion that they have been mistreated by the Turkish government for decades.¹⁹

The United States: The United States has generally been opposed to the actions of the Assad regime. In the early phases of the war, the United States pursued sanctions against Syria.²⁰ Additionally, it has engaged in numerous airstrikes against various targets in Syria, both militant groups and more recently government facilities. After the emergence of ISIS, a large portion of the United States focus shifted to annihilating that organization. The United States, while it is not currently waging a land war, provided covert support and material aid to rebel factions, although this policy has been largely discontinued.²¹ The United States leads a coalition of several likeminded nations, including the United Kingdom.

¹⁴ "ISIS Fast Facts," CNN (2019). <https://www.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/isis-fast-facts/index.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Who are the Kurds," BBC (2017). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

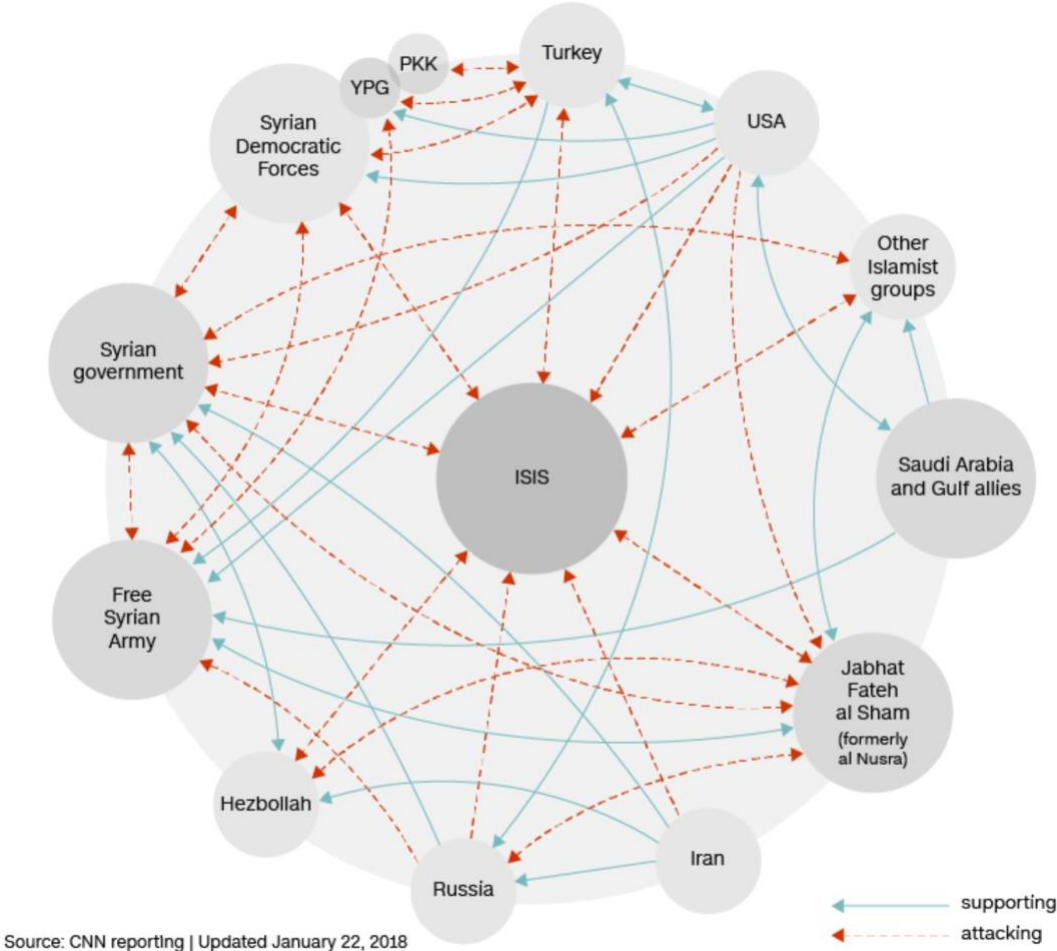
¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Long reach of U.S. sanctions hits Syria reconstruction," Reuters (2018). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-sanctions/long-reach-of-u-s-sanctions-hits-syria-reconstruction-idUSKCN1Ll06Z>.

²¹ "The End of American Support for Syrian Rebels Was Inevitable," The Atlantic (2017). <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/trump-syria-assad-rebels-putin-cia/534540/>.

Russia: Russia is an ally to the Assad regime. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has become wary of the influence that the United States exerts in the Middle East, and consequently seeks to block its influence by stymieing its efforts in the region.²² To that end, Russia constructs airstrikes against United States backed rebel groups in the region, to aid the Syrian government in reclaiming its territory.²³ Iran has also allied itself with the Assad regime, for essentially the same purpose. To summarize and display the complex nature of the factions in the Syrian Civil War, this graphic illustrates the alliances and antagonism between the various parties involved.²⁴



²² "Putin Officials Said to Admit Real Syria Goal Is Far Broader," Bloomberg (2015). <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-19/putin-officials-said-to-admit-real-syrian-goals-are-far-broader>.
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ "The free-for-all in Syria will make your head spin," CNN (2018). <https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/25/middleeast/syria-isis-whos-fighting-who-trnd/index.html>.

The Task of Delegates

The main concern of the United Nations has been and remains achieving peace and improving the humanitarian situation in Syria. There is no way to fully accomplish this without definitively ending the civil war, which is an extremely demanding task. Therefore, it would be reasonable and more realistic for delegates to attempt to make incremental progress towards this goal instead of resolving the war in one fell swoop. There are numerous facets of the crisis which may be addressed. Perhaps the most pressing is the humanitarian portion, which is also not particularly controversial amongst the member states of the UNSC, at least in abstract. That is, every member of the UNSC believes that something must be done to ameliorate the situation in Syria. This becomes more interesting and less straightforward when one considers the specifics though. How will aid be obtained and distributed in regions with active conflict? What sorts of aid will be employed? How does one deal with the threat of militant groups operating in the same region as humanitarian workers? Will this necessitate deploying UN peacekeepers, or perhaps some other military group? What policy can be implemented regarding Syrian refugees in neighboring countries? There will be substantial disagreement in the body even on these questions.

The disagreement only increases when one considers the objective of achieving peace. Two P5 nations support two opposite sides in the Syrian Civil War. Almost any discussion of the first steps towards peace will have this as a roadblock. However, that is what makes this topic interesting. The fundamental question is “how should delegates balance the ideas in a resolution that achieve the most good with the ideas that are the most likely to be passed”. Addressing this question is the substance of the committee simulation.

History of the Problem

Pre-Mandate Syria

The nation of Syria has a long and unique history, beginning 5000 years ago at the dawn of civilization. Historically, the term “Syria” referred to the territory of the modern nation plus the nation of Lebanon and the Turkish province of Hatay, both of which were later separated from Syria. It was ruled by many empires - with origins both Syrian and foreign - over the course of its history, including the Assyrian and Roman empires among a dozen others.²⁵ The region was conquered from the Eastern Roman Empire by Muslim forces in 637 AD. This led to the population consisting mostly of Sunni Muslims, although there are also minorities of Shia Muslims, Greek Orthodox Christians, Maronite Christians, Armenian Christians, and Jews.²⁶ In 1516 the Ottoman Empire annexed Syria. Although some cities like Damascus flourished under Ottoman rule, most of Syria was poor, with the population dropping significantly and many villages disappearing entirely.²⁷ It was during Ottoman rule that Syria began to fall under European influence, with the British, French, and Russian Empires gaining rights to trading ports as well as rights to protect various religious minorities.²⁸ Lebanon was separated from Syria in 1860 due to a revolt by Maronite Christian peasants against the landlord class, which included both Maronite and Druze landlords. This resulted in a massacre of over 10,000 peasants, after which the French invaded and forced concessions from Ottoman authorities, which gradually led to Lebanon falling under French administration.²⁹ Discontent with the Ottoman Empire rose through the nineteenth century as the empire grew weaker, creating a wave of Arab nationalism that sprung during the First World War.

World War One and French Mandate

With the outbreak of the First World War, the Ottomans enacted a regime of terror to suppress the Syrian population. On May 6, 1915, twenty-one Arabs were publicly hanged in Damascus and Beirut

²⁵ “Syria,” History.com (2017). <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria>.

²⁶ “Syria,” GPO for the Library of Congress (1987). <https://www.countrystudies.us/syria/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

by Ottoman authorities; to this day, May 6 is celebrated in Syria and Lebanon as Martyr's Day.³⁰ Syrian Arabs participated in revolts against the Ottomans with British aid including officers such as the famous Lawrence of Arabia. However, despite implying to the Syrians that they would be granted independence due to their help against the Ottomans, the British secretly conducted the Sykes-Picot agreement with the French in 1916, which asserted imperial control over the Arab lands controlled by the Ottomans.³¹ This agreement defined the modern borders of the Middle East, with the French taking control of modern-day Syria and Lebanon while the British took control of modern-day Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq. Promises of Arab freedom were further complicated by the British Balfour Declaration, which proclaimed that Zionists would have a "national home" in Palestine.³² After the war, the inland parts of Syria declared independence while the coastal parts were controlled by garrisoned French forces (although the local populace revolted against French rule). In executing the Sykes-Picot agreement, French soldiers marched inland from Beirut to Damascus and occupied the country, destroying the independent Syrian government led by King Faisal.³³

France imposed total imperial control upon Syria including use of the franc (which was controlled and manipulated by wealthy French bankers) as currency, hegemony of the French language, and a French curriculum in schools and universities. The Syrian people struggled against the French Empire for independence over the course of the next few decades, including a major revolt in 1925 that ended with French bombing of the city of Damascus, with an estimated death toll of over 5,000 people.³⁴ French concessions to Syria during this period include the formation of the People's Party in 1925, the creation of Lebanon as an independent nation in 1926, the formation of the National Bloc in 1928, the establishment of a constitution in 1930, and finally the Syrian-French Treaty of Alliance in 1936 (although this treaty was never approved by the French National Assembly and therefore never went into effect). In 1939, the French gave away the province of Hatay to Turkey, including the major cities of Alexandretta (now Iskenderun) and Antioch (now Antakya).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Independence and post-Independence

When Paris was captured by the Nazis in 1940, the Syrian mandate (along with other French possessions) fell into the control of the collaborationist Vichy French state.³⁵ Syria was recaptured by a combination of forces loyal to the British, the Free French, and the Transjordan Arab Legion, and control of the region was transferred to the Free French. Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French, argued that the French mandate should remain the legal authority until the end of the war, but he promised eventual independence to Syria.³⁶ In 1944 the French relinquished most of their control to local authorities, including customs and some economic functions; however, they maintained control of cultural, social, and educational affairs as well as the French Levantine Special Forces, a French military group. The United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union recognized the independence of Syria and Lebanon in 1944, but it was not until after the war (and one more French bombing of Damascus in 1945 and 1946) that France finally withdrew, and Syria gained independence for the first time in over 500 years.

The time after independence was plagued by instability, coups, and wars. Different groups ranging from ethnic minorities to business interests were united in opposition to the French while they ruled over Syria; once the French were gone, there was no major uniting force within the country.³⁷ There were coups in 1949, 1954, 1961, 1963, and 1966, as well as wars against Israel in 1948, 1967, and 1973. As a result of the Six-Day War in 1967, the border region of Golan Heights was occupied by Israel; this area is still occupied by Israel and claimed by Syria today. The final coup was in 1970, in which Syrian minister of defense Hafez al-Assad took power.³⁸ A combination of secular policies and authoritarian rule led to the uprising of the right-wing Muslim Brotherhood in 1976-1982. This uprising was brutally suppressed, with various assassinations and atrocities committed by both sides, until it was ended when the Muslim Brotherhood took control of the city of Hama, and the government responded by bombing the city and killing tens of thousands of people.³⁹

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Syria," History.com (2017). <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Syria Under Bashar al-Assad

When Hafez al-Assad died in 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad took power. To facilitate this, the Syrian constitution was amended to bring the minimum presidency age down from 40 to Bashar al-Assad's age, 34.⁴⁰ The younger Assad is the current president of Syria. Despite the release of 600 political prisoners at the beginning of Assad's reign, he largely continued his father's practice of using threats, arrests, and violence to suppress political dissent.⁴¹

The Syrian Civil War started in 2011 with a revolt against Assad's government. Pro-democracy protestors took to the streets, inspired by Arab Spring protests that had developed in nearby countries, and these protests were violently suppressed by the government.⁴² The Syrian Civil War is very complicated, with numerous different factions and foreign interests intervening in the war. The main faction opposing the government was the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a coalition formed in 2011.⁴³ The first act of chemical warfare was a sarin gas attack carried out outside of Damascus in 2013: The United States blamed the Syrian government for the attack, while the Syrian government blamed US-backed rebel forces.⁴⁴ Western governments such as the United States and the United Kingdom offered financial and military support to these "moderate rebels", though they dialed back their support through 2013 and 2014 as many of the "moderates" were actually Islamic fundamentalist groups.⁴⁵ The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, took over significant amounts of territory in Iraq and Syria in 2014.⁴⁶ There is evidence that the United States provided support to this group in 2012, before they were known by their current name.⁴⁷ Since 2014, most of the U.S. effort in the country has been dedicated to attacking ISIS forces.⁴⁸ Other foreign powers involved in the conflict include Iran and Russia, who have declared themselves allies of the Syrian government. Russia began a campaign of airstrikes against rebel forces in 2015, while Iran is believed to have deployed troops and

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Why is there a war in Syria," BBC (2019). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

⁴³ "Syria," History.com (2017). <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Now the truth emerges: how the US fuelled the rise of Isis in Syria and Iraq," The Guardian (2015). <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/us-isis-syria-iraq>.

⁴⁶ "Syria," History.com (2017). <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria>.

⁴⁷ "Now the truth emerges: how the US fuelled the rise of Isis in Syria and Iraq," The Guardian (2015). <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/us-isis-syria-iraq>.

⁴⁸ "Syria," History.com (2017). <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria>.

spent billions of dollars to assist Assad.⁴⁹ One major rebel coalition is the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Kurdish and Arab militias that controls a significant amount of territory in eastern Syria, and that has fought against IS and against the Syrian government.⁵⁰ The United States has coordinated with the SDF against IS since 2014. Turkey, which shares a border with Syria, has provided aid to various rebel groups, but it is staunchly opposed to the Kurdish elements of the SDF.⁵¹ Other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Israel, have also provided various aid to rebel forces.⁵² In 2017, the United States launched a direct military attack against Syrian forces for the first time in response to an alleged chemical attack committed by Syria against its civilians.⁵³ In March 2019, the SDF declared the total defeat of IS in Syria.⁵⁴ The conflict has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than half of Syria's population: an estimated 6.2 million Syrians are internally displaced, while 5.7 million have fled the country.⁵⁵ Much of Syria's infrastructure has been destroyed by the war, as well as much of Syria's cultural heritage, including all six of Syria's UNESCO World Heritage sites.⁵⁶ Below is a map of the current (as a reminder, current at the time this committee is set) situation in Syria.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ "Why is there a war in Syria," BBC (2019). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Syria," History.com (2017). <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/the-history-of-syria>.

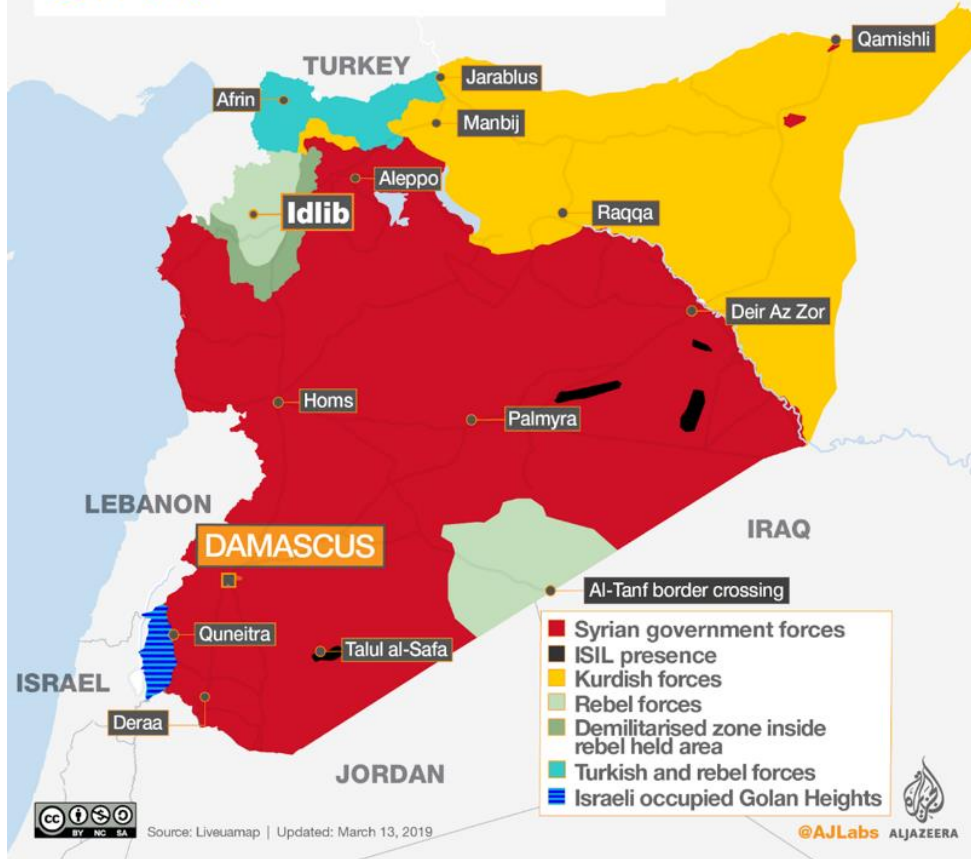
⁵⁴ "ISIS has lost its final stronghold in Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces says," CNN (2019). <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/23/middleeast/isis-caliphate-end-intl/index.html>.

⁵⁵ "Why is there a war in Syria," BBC (2019). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Syria's war: Who controls what," Aljazeera (2019). <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html>.

SYRIA: Who controls what



Past Actions

Since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, the United Nations Security Council has passed multiple resolutions concerning the conflict. The first such resolution was passed in 2012, and contained several clauses pertinent to securing a ceasefire, which has broadly speaking been the aim of the Security Council. In part, UNSC resolution 2042 (2012) “calls upon all parties in Syria, including the opposition, immediately to cease all armed violence in all its forms”.⁵⁸ More specifically, it asked the Syrian Government to “to (a) cease troop movements towards population centres, (b) cease all use of heavy weapons in such centres, and (c) begin pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres”.⁵⁹ The Security Council’s initial resolution came at the urging of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who attempted to implement a plan for peace in the nation. However, within mere weeks, there were numerous violations of the ceasefire by both the government and the opposition, which put the established framework in jeopardy.⁶⁰

In response to the aforementioned 2013 Ghouta chemical attacks, the UNSC passed resolution 2118 (2013), which called for the destruction or removal of all chemical weapons in Syria.⁶¹ This disarmament was to be monitored by neighboring nations and international observers, pursuant to the standards set forth by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).⁶² The Security Council is uniquely capable of making binding UN resolutions, and this resolution did compel President Assad to destroy his government’s stockpiles of these weapons in a reasonable timeframe. However, the resolution did not authorize the usage of coercive measures by the UNSC to ensure that its goals were met.⁶³ The Assad government managed to destroy most of the known stockpile before the June 30th deadline, although verification of complete destruction remained difficult.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ “Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2042 (2012), Authorizing Advance Team to Monitor Ceasefire in Syria,” United Nations (2012). <https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10609.doc.htm>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “UN: Both sides in Syria are violating the truce,” CBS News (2012). <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/un-both-sides-in-syria-are-violating-the-truce/>.

⁶¹ “Security Council Requires Scheduled Destruction of Syria’s Chemical Weapons, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2118 (2013),” United Nations (2013). <https://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Syria ‘still holds chemical weapons’,” Aljazeera, (2014). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/syria-still-holds-chemical-weapons-2014427124419756364.html>.

In particular, the UNSC has advocated for unhindered access for humanitarian workers to regions of conflict. During the late stages of the Battle of Aleppo, one of the largest engagements of the war, UNSC resolution 2328 (2016) urged the Syrian government to allow humanitarian efforts to proceed unimpeded.⁶⁵ This resolution also required that the Syrian government allow UN personnel to observe the evacuation of citizens and distribution of aid in Aleppo. Resolutions 2332 (2016) and 2336 (2016) followed shortly after and reaffirmed the Security Council's resolve to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria.^{66 67}

The most recent UNSC resolution concerning the Syrian Civil War is resolution 2401 (2018), which mandated a thirty-day ceasefire in the country.⁶⁸ Although the ceasefire was enacted, violence in Syria is ongoing. Additionally, the United Nations General Assembly has passed resolutions concerning the Syrian Civil War. In particular, in 2017, the General Assembly decried the usage of chemical weapons in Syria and committed to continued monitoring of the human rights situation in the country.⁶⁹ Despite the best efforts of the United Nations, the crisis in Syria remains dire, and it is pressingly important that during this session of the UNSC, more substantive progress is made to ensure a durable and substantial peace for the region.

⁶⁵ "Resolution 2328 (2016)," United Nations Security Council (2016).

[https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2328\(2016\)](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2328(2016))

⁶⁶ "Resolution 2332 (2016)," United Nations Security Council (2016).

[https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2332\(2016\)](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2332(2016))

⁶⁷ "Resolution 2336 (2016)," United Nations Security Council (2016).

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2336>.

⁶⁸ "Security Council Demands 30-day Cessation of Hostilities in Syria to Enable Humanitarian Aid Delivery, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2401 (2018)," United Nations (2018). <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13221.doc.htm>.

⁶⁹ "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2017," United Nations General Assembly (2018). <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/72/191>.

Possible Solutions

The Syrian Civil War does not admit any simple solution. Even if one nation had unilateral authority in the Security Council, it would be difficult to address every facet of the issue in an effective manner. Complicating the situation is the existence of a diversity of countries on the Security Council, possessing a diversity of viewpoints. Even amongst just the P5 nations, there are radically disparate views. As previously mentioned, the United States has provided material support to Syrian rebels and has conducted missile strikes against Syrian government targets.⁷⁰ Russia has consistently supported the Syrian government, even after international bodies have concluded that it has utilized chemical weapons. Therefore, delegates should try to begin by identifying and focusing on points of commonality.

It is important to ask how the UNSC can increase the amount of humanitarian aid reaching people in Syria most afflicted by the war. Note that the UNSC has the ability to request the help of other portions of the UN in its resolutions, so consider carefully which other UN agencies may be able to aid with any portion of your solution. This may be useful in terms of increasing the amount of aid the UNSC is able to furnish to Syrian citizens, by leveraging the capabilities of other bodies. However, this does not answer the question of what type of aid is to be provided. Should the focus be on providing for immediate essential needs, or rebuilding crucial infrastructure damaged in the war? Additionally, how does the aid actually reach the intended recipients in a war zone? One possible response is the deployment of UN peacekeepers, although this is not likely to be popular with some of the members. However, there are also obvious drawbacks to leaving workers and observers unprotected in regions of conflict.

Another angle to consider in crafting a solution is laying down seeds for a future peace. What are the largest impediments to peace in Syria now, from the perspective of each country? Are any of these impediments agreed upon by most member states? For instance, opposition to ISIS is universal in the Security Council, so it is possible that a resolution focuses on developing ideas based on that commonality. It is also possible that another resolution has a slightly more controversial plan for peace, involving limiting international backing of local forces for instance. There is no one right

⁷⁰ "Syria war: Why was Shayrat airbase bombed," BBC (2019). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39531045>.

solution, and even if such a solution existed, unfortunately it would likely be voted down. Despite this challenge, delegates still have a substantial opportunity to collaborate on and construct a lasting and beneficial plan for Syria.

Country Positions

United States

The United States has provided material support to Syrian opposition groups, in addition to passing sanctions against the Assad regime. Presently, the United States is most closely linked to the Kurdish faction in the war, largely because of their shared opposition to ISIS. Under the Trump administration, the United States has both directly intervened against the Syrian government and scaled back its aid to the Syrian opposition, while maintaining criticism of the regime.⁷¹ Presently, the United States continues to conduct military operations against the Islamic State, leading a coalition of various nations including the United Kingdom.⁷²

United Kingdom

As mentioned, the United Kingdom is a member of the United States led coalition, which is presently engaged primarily in operations against the remnants of ISIS. The United Kingdom has the stated goal of pursuing a political solution which provides for a “democratic Syria”.⁷³ Additionally, it has condemned “the brutal violence of the Asad regime” [sic].⁷⁴

China

The Chinese government has taken a less clear position on Syria than either of the United States or Russia. In general, it supports limiting international involvement, and has consequently voted against United States backed sanctions.⁷⁵ China has often vetoed resolutions on Syria in concord with Russia in the UNSC.⁷⁶

⁷¹ “Statement from Pentagon Spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis on U.S. strike in Syria,” U.S. Department of Defense (2017). <https://dod.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/1144598/statement-from-pentagon-spokesman-capt-jeff-davis-on-us-strike-in-syria/>.

⁷² “Operation Inherent Resolve,” U.S. Department of Defense (2018). <https://dod.defense.gov/OIR/>

⁷³ “Syria and the UK,” GOV.UK (2019). <https://www.gov.uk/world/syria/news>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “China’s role in Syria’s endless civil war,” South China Morning Post (2017).

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2085779/backgrounder-chinas-role-syrias-endless-civil-war>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

France

As Syria's former colonial overlord, France has a unique and complicated relationship with Syria. According to President Emmanuel Macron, "France's priorities in Syria have been constant: finishing the fight against Daesh, enabling humanitarian assistance to civilian populations, and triggering collective momentum to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict so that peace can return to Syria and to ensure the region's stability."⁷⁷ France strongly opposes the Assad regime, and called for military action against it as a result of the chemical attack in 2013.⁷⁸ France has also conducted airstrikes against IS forces and IS-controlled oil rigs, and in 2015 it drafted an anti-IS United Nations Security Council resolution.⁷⁹ France also participated in the US-led airstrikes on April 14, 2018, carried out against Syrian research centers and alleged chemical weapons facilities in response to the Douma chemical attacks on April 7, 2018.⁸⁰ This was the first time that France used military force against the Syrian government.

Russia

Russia has been a strong ally of Syria for decades. It has supported the Syrian government with military and financial aid since the beginning of the war.⁸¹ In September 2015, Russia launched a massive bombing campaign against rebel forces that drastically turned the tide of the war. It recently announced that 63,000 military personnel had received combat experience, including air force personnel and troops on the ground.⁸² It strongly opposes and has also carried out military action against IS. Russia has a few geopolitical interests in Syria, including an important air force base and a Mediterranean naval base, as a result of its close relationship with the Syrian government.

⁷⁷ "War in Syria: Understanding France's position," France Diplomatie (2018).

<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/syria/war-in-syria-understanding-france-s-position/>.

⁷⁸ "France more active than rest of the west in tackling Syria," The Guardian (2015).

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/14/france-active-policy-syria-assad-isis-paris-attacks-air-strikes>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Syria: US, UK and France launch strikes in response to chemical attack," The Guardian (2018).

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/14/syria-air-strikes-us-uk-and-france-launch-attack-on-assad-regime>.

⁸¹ "Syria conflict: What do the US, Russia, Turkey and Iran want," Deutsche Welle (2019). <https://www.dw.com/en/syria-conflict-what-do-the-us-russia-turkey-and-iran-want/a-41211604>.

⁸² "Russia says 63,000 troops have seen combat in Syria," BBC (2018). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45284121>.

India

India has taken a relatively subtle approach to the Syrian conflict. Although it has condemned some human rights abuses committed by the Syrian government, it has notably refrained from calling for regime change.⁸³ This is consistent with India's routine opposition to and/or unwillingness to support Western-backed regime change, as in Libya and Iraq. Furthermore, the Syrian government recognizes Kashmir as a part of India.

Belgium

Belgium is one of several countries which has severed its diplomatic relations with Syria.⁸⁴ Belgium also remains committed to providing humanitarian aid to victims of the regional violence.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has not taken a particularly strong stand on the Syrian crisis. During its tenure on the UNSC, it has abstained from voting in favor of briefings on the human rights condition in Syria, making it ambiguous whether the country sees this crisis as a very high priority.⁸⁵

Dominican Republic

Historically, the Dominican Republic has found itself frequently aligned with the United States in matters of international politics, although it has not expressed strong opinions on Syria. However, it did vote in favor of a condemnation of the use of heavy weapons by the Syrian government in the General Assembly of the UN.⁸⁶

⁸³ "Understanding India's response to the Syrian civil war," Observer Research Foundation (2017).
https://www.orfonline.org/research/understanding_india_response_syrian_civil_war/.

⁸⁴ "Assad Takes a Page Out of Russia's Book in His War Against Rebels," Haaretz (2012).
<https://www.haaretz.com/1.5183068>.

⁸⁵ "Cote d'Ivoire: Will Ivorians Take a Stand for Syria's Victims," Human Rights Watch (2018).
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/10/cote-divoire-will-ivorians-take-stand-syrias-victims>.

⁸⁶ "General Assembly, in Resolution, Demands All in Syria 'Immediately and Visibly' Commit to Ending Violence that Secretary-General Says Is Ripping Country Apart," United Nations (2012).
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/ga11266Rev1.doc.htm>.

Equatorial Guinea

The delegation from Equatorial Guinea has expressed concern for the deterioration of the human rights condition in Syria. In particular, they stress the need for “an urgent solution for the welfare of the population”.⁸⁷

Germany

Germany generally takes a similar position to the United States and the United Kingdom with respect to the crisis in Syria, although it has been somewhat less bellicose than the United States in terms of desiring direct action.⁸⁸

Indonesia

Indonesia has remained neutral on the Syrian conflict, calling for “all sides” to show restraint and opposing the government’s use of chemical weapons.⁸⁹

Kuwait

Kuwait has taken a mostly neutral stance on the Syrian conflict. It withdrew its Syrian embassy and criticized the government at the outbreak of the war, and it has since donated billions of dollars of humanitarian aid to Syria.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ “Intervention by Equatorial Guinea at UN on current situation in Syria,” Government of Equatorial Guinea (2018). <https://www.guineaecuatorialpress.com/m/noticia.php?id=11092&lang=en>.

⁸⁸ “Germany rejects Trump’s call for ground troops in Syria,” Reuters (2019). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-germany/germany-rejects-trumps-call-for-ground-troops-in-syria-idUSKCN1U3111>.

⁸⁹ “Indonesia maintains its stance on Syria following pressure from US and its allies,” Arab News (2018). <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1288951/world>.

⁹⁰ “Kuwait’s Apprehension about Normalizing Relations with Syria” Atlantic Council (2019). <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/kuwait-s-apprehension-about-normalizing-relations-with-syria>.

Peru

Peru has remained neutral on the Syrian conflict. Like many neutral nations, it condemned the use of chemical weapons but also called for a response within the bounds of international law in the wake of the chemical attacks and US response in April 2018.⁹¹

Poland

Poland has been neutral in Syria, providing humanitarian aid and calling for conflict de-escalation within the bounds of international law.⁹²

South Africa

South Africa has remained neutral, condemning both the use of chemical weapons and the coalition airstrikes in response.⁹³

Estonia

Estonia has remained neutral, calling for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.⁹⁴

⁹¹ "Peru seeks political solution to Syrian conflict," Editora Peru (2018). <https://andina.pe/ingles/noticia-peru-seeks-political-solution-to-syrian-conflict-706679.aspx>.

⁹² "Poland to look for ways to end conflict in Syria: FM," Radio Poland (2018). <http://archiwum.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/360869>.

⁹³ "Syria: South African government officially declares opposition to air strikes," The South African (2018). <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/sa-government-oppose-air-strikes-syria/>.

⁹⁴ "Estonia backs plan to freeze conflict in Syria," Republic of Estonia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.). <https://vm.ee/en/newsletter/estonia-backs-plan-freeze-conflict-syria>.

Niger

Niger has not yet been seated on the Security Council, as it will take its place on January 1st, 2020. Consequently, it does not have a substantive voting record on the Syrian Civil War, but its views may be colored by the presence of some domestic insurgency, and the fact that it has been a “key U.S. counterterrorism partner”.⁹⁵

Vietnam

Vietnam is considered to have relatively strong relations with the government of Syria, and maintains formal diplomacy with it, unlike numerous other nations.⁹⁶

Tunisia

Although Tunisia initially severed diplomatic relations with the Syrian government at the start of the Syrian Civil War, of late it has moved more towards a normalization of relations.⁹⁷ Presently, Tunisia has expressed interest in seeing Syria readmitted to the Arab League.⁹⁸

Turkey

Turkey strongly opposes the Assad regime, and has been greatly involved in the Syrian conflict. It played an important role in the formation and training of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), and it participated in the US coalition airstrikes against IS. Border regions of northwest Syria are currently occupied by Turkish forces and Turkish-backed rebel groups. Turkey is vehemently opposed to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and has carried out airstrikes against Kurdish targets in territory controlled by the SDF.⁹⁹ Turkey claims that the SDF and Kurdish militias within it are tied to the

⁹⁵ “The Real Reason U.S. Troops Are in Niger,” *Foreign Policy* (2017). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/27/the-real-reason-u-s-troops-are-in-niger/>.

⁹⁶ “Al-Moallem Receives Credentials of Vietnam’s Non-Resident Ambassador to Syria,” *The Syria Times* (2019). <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/41316-al-moallem-receives-credentials-of-vietnam-s-non-resident-ambassador-to-syria>.

⁹⁷ “Russia Lobbies Tunisia to Support Syria’s Arab League Return,” *Bloomberg* (2019). <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-01-26/russia-lobbies-tunisia-to-support-syria-s-return-to-arab-league>.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ “Syria war: Why Turkey’s battle for northern Syria matters,” *BBC* (2018). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42818353>.

Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK), a far-left militant group of Turkish Kurds that is considered a terrorist group by Turkey, the European Union, and the United States.¹⁰⁰ This anti-Kurd position has caused tensions between Turkey and the United States: although the two countries are allies as part of NATO, Turkey is directly attacking US-backed forces.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ “Syria conflict: What do the US, Russia, Turkey and Iran want,” Deutsche Welle (2019). <https://www.dw.com/en/syria-conflict-what-do-the-us-russia-turkey-and-iran-want/a-41211604>.

¹⁰¹ “Turkey condemns UN’s deal with YPG, outlawed PKK’s Syria offshoot,” Hurriyet Daily News (2019). <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-condemns-uns-deal-with-sdf-to-end-recruitment-of-minors-144629>.