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Historical United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

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HISTORY OF COMMITTEE

The sheer destructive nature of the First World War shocked the world. Upon the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the formal conclusion of the war, a number of well-known diplomats, led by American President Woodrow Wilson, pushed for the establishment of an international forum where the countries of the world would assemble to peacefully resolve their differences. This proposal eventually became the League of Nations, the direct predecessor to the modern United Nations.

The League of Nations was a significant change from the old international order, introducing more openness and state independence, in a contrast from the pre-war system that had encouraged secret diplomatic relations and monarchial empires.[1] It introduced a number of ideas that are still relevant today, including the concepts of **formal equality** and **collective security** (attacking one member of the League meant attacking *all* members). Though ambitious, the League was hampered by a number of structural flaws that played a key role in its eventual demise. For one, "the two largest nations of the world, the United States and Soviet Russia, [were] not members"[2] for much of League's existence. Moreover, several of the key countries that were members, Germany and Italy especially, viewed the League only as a mechanism to advance their domestic interests, and there was a general distaste for its decision-making mechanism, which a contemporary observer described as such:

> The Great Powers do not like to be overruled by the votes of a large group of small nations; while the latter are reluctant to tolerate the pressure of the Great Powers. This mutual dislike is often exaggerated on both sides.[3]

Finally, the League was toothless, without any real means of keeping its members in check; lacking an enforcement mechanism, it was limited to verbal condemnations that only incited violators to leave the organization altogether, and by the time Adolf Hitler illegally moved troops into the

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[1] Charles Townshend, "The League of Nations and the United Nations," *BBC History*, February 17, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/league_nations_01.shtml.

[2] Eduard Beneš, "The League of Nations: Successes and Failures," *Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 1 (October 1932): 76, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20030484.

[3] Beneš, "The League of Nations: Successes and Failures."

Rhineland in 1936, it had stopped doing even that.[4] As a result, the League of Nations failed to work effectively and was incapable of halting a series of aggressive actions by its members in the 1930s. While the organization was only formally dissolved in 1946, it had practically faded into irrelevance by the start of the Second World War.

At the end of World War II, a renewed effort to establish an international organization emerged, leading to the formation of the United Nations. While the UN, like the League of Nations, sought to become an international forum to manage disputes and prevent yet another world war, it also incorporated contemporary opinions that reflected the new global reality. In the immediate post-war period, there were clear winners and losers, and the most influential diplomats of the time generally agreed that the new peace could best be sustained by "a universal organization...[such that] cooperation among the wartimes allies would continue uninterrupted."[5]

This philosophy was most engrained in the construction of the UN's most powerful organ, the Security Council. Whereas the League of Nations had been powerless to prevent its members from violating peace, the Security Council was meant to be the "teeth" of the new UN,[6] and unsurprisingly, the key Allied victors and their allies were allowed to maintain considerable power on this council. For the founders of the UN, it only made sense to construct a system that "might work with, rather than in opposition to, the realities of power."[7] In other words, giving already-powerful countries special privileges—namely, veto power and permanent representation—was the only way to convince them to support the UN in the first place.

In the early years, the Security Council had just eleven seats: five permanent (the "P5" group) and six elected. At its founding, the P5 included the Republic of China (which, at that time, comprised all of China) and the Soviet Union; neither of their contemporary replacements—the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation respectively—existed yet. In 1965, after much debate, the Council was expanded to include four more elected seats. Coincidentally, this modification raised the vote

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[4] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Why the League of Nations Failed," *The American Conservative*, March 10, 2003, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/why-the-league-of-nations-failed/.

[5] Dimitris Bourantonis, *The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 4.

[6] Bourantonis, *Security Council Reform*, 5.

[7] Bourantonis, *Security Council Reform*, 6–7.

threshold for a resolution to pass, hence requiring more support from elected members and diminishing the influence of the P5.[8] Later, in 1971, the General Assembly voted to replace the Republic of China (Taiwan) with the People's Republic of China as the legitimate representative of "China;" the resolution was primarily opposed by Western powers, who did not want to see another Communist government represented on the Security Council, but nevertheless succeeded due to significant support elsewhere in the world.[9] Finally, in 1991, Russia assumed the seat of the former Soviet Union in the UN, an event that came about both from the efforts of political leaders to frame Russia as a *continuation* of the Soviet Union, and support for the arrangement by the majority of the other former Soviet republics.[10]

Substantively, the agenda of the Council was limited until the last stages of the Cold War. Up until then, severe ideological differences and general dislike between members prevented much cooperation. Beginning in the mid-1980s though, a new political climate emerged that was significantly more conducive to diplomacy. With a more open Soviet leadership, the crumbling of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, there emerged a renewed opportunity for the countries of the world to overcome their particular differences and cooperate with each other; in the words of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, it was once against possible to achieve "the supremacy of the common human idea over the countless multiplicity of centrifugal forces."[11]

Thus, the end of the Cold War marked a revitalization for the Security Council: it "suddenly became extremely effective...emerging as a powerful actor in areas of conflict or potential conflict."[12] Indeed, whereas members were only able to agree on only 17 **peacekeeping missions** from its founding up to 1989, the body has since authorized 51 deployments, and with mandates that typically go beyond military maneuvers to include civilian and societal components as well.[13]

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[8] Bourantonis, *Security Council Reform*, 28.
[9] The Learning Network, "Oct. 25, 1971 | People's Republic of China In, Taiwan Out, at U.N.," *New York Times*, October 25, 2011, http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/oct-25-1971-peoples-republic-of-china-in-taiwan-out-at-un/.
[10] Bourantonis, *Security Council Reform*, 33–34.
[11] Bourantonis, *Security Council Reform*, 32–33.
[12] Bourantonis, *Security Council Reform,* 34.
[13] Zachary Laub, "The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)," Backgrounders, *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 6, 2013, http://www.cfr.org/international-organizations-and-alliances/un-security-council/p31649.

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That said, the successes of the Security Council have not been absolute. For instance, constrained by a lack of political capital, it supported only an extremely limited effort in Rwanda and failed to prevent the genocide in 1995, in which several hundred thousand civilians were killed. Perhaps a more recent case where the Council, thus far at least, has been largely ineffective is the Syrian conflict, where the death toll is now well over 100,000.

Committee Structure

Having remained unchanged since 1991, the Security Council today is made up of representatives from fifteen member states of the United Nations. Of this number, five are permanent members and have held their seats since the Council's founding in 1946; this group comprises China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US, and are collectively referred to as the "permanent five" or P5. The other ten members are elected for non-consecutive two-year terms by the General Assembly.

While the small size of the body evidently means that many countries are unable to participate substantively in the Council's discussions and actions, there are measures in place to ensure that membership is representative of the world and to incorporate the perspectives of smaller countries. Since 1965, elections for the rotating seats have been conducted using a system of "equitable geographic distribution,"[14] so that of the ten spots available, three are allotted to the African group; two to each of the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean, and Western Europe and Other groups; and one to the Eastern European group. Additionally, an Arab seat alternates between the Asian and African groups "by informal agreement."[15]

Each of the P5 wields veto power over substantive votes, meaning that a draft resolution could fail due to the dissension of a single permanent member; in fact, this is not an uncommon occurrence. Abstentions by the P5 are therefore particularly noteworthy, since they suggest that a country, though reluctant, is at least willing to accept a compromise. The exclusive powers accorded to the permanent members unsurprisingly give them considerable diplomatic clout and often make them centers of attention. With that in mind, the presidency of the Council rotates on a monthly basis between the members, so elected members do have some opportunities to bring their priorities onto the world stage too.

The structure of the Security Council itself has increasingly been the subject of debate in recent years; a number of critics point to the fact that the Council has not fundamentally changed in several decades as evidence that it is out of place in today's world. Most proposals to reform the Council

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[14] Laub, "UNSC."
[15] Laub, "UNSC."

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either involve expanding membership to allow for more representatives or extending permanent-member privileges to recent and emerging powers, such as Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil.[16]

Others call for the veto system to be scrapped altogether, arguing that it allows the P5 to place their own interests and foreign objectives above common humanitarian values. Supporters of this idea point to Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda in the 1990s as examples of how the P5's dominance can hamstring the Council from taking action. Indeed, in October 2013, Saudi Arabia was elected to the Security Council but declined its seat, refusing to serve "until the Council is reformed and enabled…to carry out its duties and responsibilities,"[17] though analysts believe other motives may have been at play too.[18] In any case, the high thresholds of support needed for significant changes suggest that the Council will continue in its current incarnation for some time.

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[16] Laub, "UNSC."
[17] Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia, "Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs's Statement on Security Council Membership, October 2013," news release, October 18, 2013, http://www.cfr.org/saudi-arabia/saudi-arabia-ministry-foreign-affairss-statement-security-council-membership-october-2013/p31667.
[18] Laub, "UNSC."

Committee Powers

In order to uphold its mission, the Security Council has a considerable number of powers at its disposal, more so than any other subsidiary of the United Nations. Specifically, the UN Charter endows it with the ability to:

- Call upon belligerents to attempt to resolve their differences peacefully through direct negotiations, mediated talks, arbitration by regional or international bodies, or judicial settlement (Articles 33);
- Investigate potentially problematic situations (Article 34);
- Issue recommendations for conflict resolution to combating parties (Articles 36–38); and
- Directly intervene in violent situations by deploying air, sea, and land resources contributed by members of the UN (Articles 39–51, collectively Chapter VII of the Charter).

The mandate described in the lattermost bullet point is what permits the Security Council to take actions such as referring potential war criminals to the International Criminal Court, instituting blockades, imposing economic sanctions, severing diplomatic relations, cutting communications, and deploying observer and peacekeeping missions. While this category of activities typically receives the most media coverage, it is important to note that it remains a last resort, and as such, is almost always controversial, both among the Council members and in the rest of the world.

Indeed, significant disagreement has arisen about the conditions under which the Security Council can legitimately authorize the use of force. One of the theories that has emerged is the Responsibility-to-Protect doctrine, abbreviated as R2P, which holds that states have a responsibility to their citizens to uphold basic human rights, and that when they fail to do so, the international community can legitimately intervene.[19] Yet R2P has no shortage of critics: many countries believe that it undermines national sovereignty (i.e. the right of a country to govern itself without undue external interference) since there is no clear criteria for what constitutes a sufficiently egregious violation of human rights; as UN analyst Jeffrey Laurenti puts it, "legitimacy is in the eye of the beholder."[20]

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[19] Laub, "UNSC."
[20] Laub, "UNSC."

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Nevertheless, for all its flaws, the Security Council is uniquely positioned as the most influential organ of the United Nations and has the capacity to play a key role in protecting international peace and security. Ultimately, whether the Council lives up to the expectations of the world, or merely remains a disengaged bystander, is entirely dependent on the initiative and resolve of its constituent delegates.

TOPIC A: REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

Statement of the Problem

In the past few years, the conflict in Syria has developed from merely a civil conflict into "a fierce proxy battleground between the Gulf and Western countries on the one hand and the Assad regime, Iran, and Russia on the other."[21] Steven Heydemann, a researcher at the US Institute of Peace, attributes this phenomenon to the fact that:

> Syria sits at the intersection of every major strategic axis in the Arab East. It is a key member of the strategic alliance linking Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah…It has played a central role in the 'resistance front' against Israel…Syria is also deeply enmeshed in regional axes of competition and confrontation…[and] is a long-term strategic ally of Russia and an equally long-term strategic adversary of the US.[22]

Action is thus necessary for a number of reasons. The war has exposed latent tensions in many neighboring states that are already suffering from instability, and the current disorder is a perfect opportunity for ambitious regional actors—including both governments and non-state groups, such as militias—to intervene and push the conflict in a direction that furthers their own interests.

Moreover, a continuation of the war under the current conditions could ultimately result in a kind of tacit stalemate where the country's borders officially remain unchanged, but, in practice, the nation is split along "ethno-sectarian lines…with the regime controlling some remnants of the country…and the opposition [the rest]."[23] This outcome is sometimes colloquially described as Balkanization, in reference to a similar fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire around the time of the First World War. Balkanization might create a short-term stalemate and reduction in violence, but it would likely be unhealthy for the region in the long run: since the underlying issues would remain unresolved, reconciliation and reconstruction work would be difficult, and security, tenuous at best.

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[21] Julien Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon: Containing Spillover from Syria* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2012), http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR61_LEBANON_BRIEF.pdf, 5.
[22] Steven Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising: sectarianism, regionalization, and state order in the Levant" (working paper, FRIDE, 2013), http://www.fride.org/download/WP_119_Syria_Uprising.pdf, 3.
[23] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 6.

While the range of actions that the international community can take with regards to directly resolving the conflict in Syria itself is limited to primarily diplomatic initiatives, the Security Council should find itself with more leeway in taking the first step of containing the conflict within Syrian borders, owing to the relative present stability of Syria's neighbors.
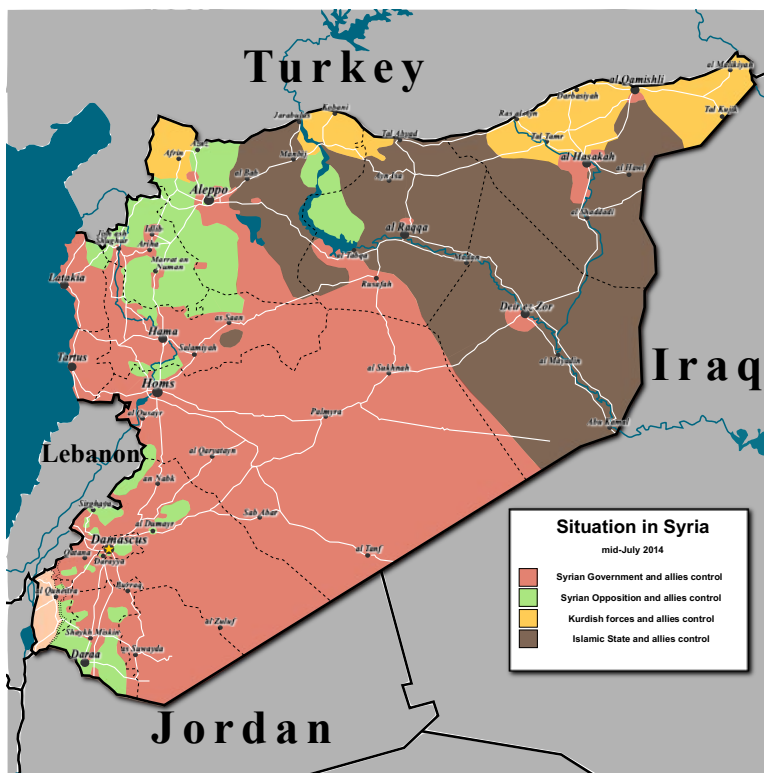
A map of the situation in Syria. [24]

The challenge for this committee will be to find an acceptable arrangement that identifies threats to the security of the region and proactively addresses them through concrete undertakings. In negotiating and debating such a resolution, delegates should keep in mind the various histories, interests, and worries of the countries in this region, recognizing that there exists latent tension between the countries of the Levant that have historically impeded cooperation and caused violence. Namely, in evaluating the situations of the countries listed below, delegates should look for common thematic threads, including:

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[24] Rro16, *Situation in Syria (2014)*, March 29, 2018, graphic, *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Situation_in_Syria_%282014%29.svg.

- Sectarian, religious, and ethnic divisions and resulting violence
- Security issues relating to refugees and refugee camps (see the note at the end of this section),
- The resurgence of domestic political fringe movements,
- The funding, sponsorship, and activities of paramilitary groups, informal militias, and organizations with affiliations to terror networks, and
- The emergence of regional powers and strategic alliances between countries.

Iran

Iran has extremely strong ties with Syria; indeed, the two countries, along with Hezbollah, have jointly identified as forming an "axis of resistance" against international influence,[25] especially that of Western powers. This bloc was solidified by several developments in the past decade, including:

- "The 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the subsequent consolidation of Shi'a political power there," which enabled the creation of a Shiite axis, led by Iran, across the middle of the Levant;
- The 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, which "brought Hezbollah squarely into the mainstream of Lebanese politics, but also deepened the strategic interdependence of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah;" and
- Iran's antagonistic relationship with the West over its nuclear program.[26]

While the alliance is founded in ideology, it is also a pragmatic one; for instance, Iran relies on a friendly government in Damascus to allow it to funnel supplies, fighters, and money through Syrian territory to "crucial…Iranian proxies, including Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad."[27]

Bashar al-Assad has worked well with the Iranian government, so for its own sake, Iran has and will likely continue to support the Assad government against the Syrian opposition; rhetoric from Iranian officials suggests that they see a close link between the endurance of Syria and their own country,

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[25] CNN Wire Staff, "Iran: Syria part of 'axis of resistance,'" *CNN*, August 7, 2012, http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/07/world/meast/syria-unrest/.
[26] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 8.
[27] Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, and Sam Wyer, *Iranian Strategy in Syria* (Washington, DC: AEI's Critical Threats Project and Institute for the Study of War, 2013), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/IranianStrategyinSyria-1MAY.pdf, 9.

with one official quoted as suggesting that "if we [Iran] lose Syria, we won't be able to hold Tehran."[28] Consequently, Iran has consistently provided assistance through a number of channels to Syria, including technical assistance to Syria's chemical weapons program, advisory missions, material support flown in on Iranian commercial airlines,[29] and direct military support. Units from the regular military, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and from more specialized units have been deployed to central and southern Syria, which is held relatively firmly by the regime. This is an indication that Iran will not be shy to explicitly project its military power abroad.

Yet Iran is almost certainly simultaneously preparing a Plan B in the event that his regime is toppled. One concerning development is the Iranian government's reported complicity in supporting various "pro-government militias in order to develop proxies that will survive Assad,"[30] similar to its creation of Shi'a militias in Lebanon and Iraq. These groups, known as *shabiha*, are not new to Syria and in fact are deeply linked to the al-Assad family: Bashar's predecessor and father, Hafez al-Assad, used *shabiha* over three decades ago to suppress domestic uprisings, and today, they often work alongside official regime forces or carry out attacks on behalf of the government.[31]

Nevertheless, Iranian backing makes them even more lethal and empowers them to cause destruction on a whole new level. As an indication of the scope of the issue, the IRGC is believed to have provided the 100,000-member-strong militia Jaysh al-Sha'bi with "advice, training, weapons, equipment, and 'funding with millions of dollars'...with support from Iran and Hezbollah."[32] These militias clearly threaten the success of any kind of peace deal with the Syrian opposition and their unpredictability and decentralized nature makes them especially difficult to monitor.

If the situation in Syria begins to tilt against the Assad regime however, Iran will seek to protect its influence not just by supporting proxy combatants (*i.e.* militias) in Syria, but also by expanding its gaze to include a broader view of the region: the axis of resistance could well expand beyond the

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[28] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 26.
[29] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 15.
[30] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 9.
[31] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 20.
[32] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 19–20.

Levant to countries such as Yemen, where Iran has already begun shipping relatively sophisticated antiaircraft weapons, explosives, and arms.[33]

Turkey

Over the past fifty years, the Turkish–Syrian relationship has gradually improved from one of antagonism at the height of the Cold War to one of security-centered cooperation beginning with the 1998 Adana Accords.[34] Most recently, Turkey has particularly sought to portray itself as "an indispensable 'peace broker' in the region" and more broadly, "a regional and even a global actor;"[35] the Syrian conflict has challenged both of these roles. Indeed, in spite of its "no problems" isolationist-centered foreign policy, the Turkish government is becoming increasingly entangled in Syria.[36]

Turkey has been forced to take a more aggressive stance in opposing the regime for a number of reasons. Its proximity to the conflict has certainly contributed; while cross-border skirmishes have been relatively limited, the few incidents that have occurred have sparked quick reactions, most notably: Syrian forces firing on a Turkish F-4 jet (June 2012) and shelling a Turkish border town (October 2012), and Turkey shooting down a Syrian MiG-23 warplane (March 2014). It has also been pushed into a sectarian niche as "defender of Syria's Sunni Muslim community;"[37] especially worrying is the fact that this involvement so far has only served to provoke reactions from Iran and Hezbollah and further radicalize and divide the opposition.[38]

Complicating Turkey's involvement is the Kurdish situation. Ankara has traditionally been hostile to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a "militant group leading the fight for Kurdish independence in Turkey and perpetrators of numerous terrorist attacks there," and generally opposed to the creation

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[33] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 27.
[34] Özlem Demirtas-Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 7, 2014): 141, doi: 10.1080/14683849.2014.890412.
[35] Demirtas-Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy."
[36] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 9.
[37] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 9.
[38] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 10.

of an independent Kurdish state.[39] However, the current crisis has made it plausible that Syrian Kurds, who comprise 10–20% of the population, could establish a quasi-independent entity in Syria; indeed, Damascus is believed to have already offered citizenship and additional rights to Syrian Kurds in exchange for their support for the Assad regime.[40]

How Turkey responds will be key. On the one hand, it stands to benefit from a Kurdish entity in Syria, since this would create a new buffer state between it and Syria, contributing to the former's security, and would likely result in a number of infrastructure and development contracts that would mostly go to Turkish companies. On the other, in spite of these incentives, it is far from certain that Ankara will actually pursue this plan, since it would no doubt embolden Turkey's own Kurdish population. The Turkish government undoubtedly is also concerned that a Kurdish state, which would likely be located in Northern Syria, could serve as a base for PKK operations and attacks against Turkey.[41] Either way, the Kurdish situation is yet another vested interest in the Syrian conflict for Turkey.

Iraq

Officially, Iraq has declared itself a neutral party vis-à-vis Syria, yet "except for Lebanon...the effects of regionalization are likely to be felt more deeply in Iraq" than anywhere else since the conflict there very closely parallels Iraq's own ethno-sectarian tensions.[42] Consequently, there has been quiet involvement on both sides: while Nouri al-Maliki's Shia-majority government has continued economic relations with the Assad regime and backed Iranian actions, the minority Sunni opposition has facilitated the transit of fighters and the smuggling of arms through the country into Syria. Iraqi Kurdish communities, predominantly those near the Syrian border in northern Iraq, have also cooperated with Syrian Kurdish groups.[43]

While more mainstream Iraqi groups are treading carefully around the situation in Syria, more radical fringe associations have been far more direct. One of the most notable of these organizations is the

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[39] Soner Cagaptay and Parag Khanna, "Why Syria's Fragmentation Is Turkey's Opportunity," *Atlantic*, October 24, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/why-syrias-fragmentation-is-turkeys-opportunity/263890/.
[40] Demirtas-Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy," 142.
[41] Demirtas-Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy," 142.
[42] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 10.
[43] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 11.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), an al-Qaeda affiliate also known as the Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or simply, the Islamic State (IS). This group seeks to unite Iraq and Syria into a

single state, an ambition rooted in the fact that "historically, both domestic and foreign powers have

treated the [two] areas...as a single territory."[44] In particular, ISIL is now trying to use a growing

dislike of Iran and the ever-increasing number of Sunni deaths in Syria to its advantage and "emerge

as a major political force" in Iraq;[45] jihadists, for instance, could attempt to provoke Iraqi Shiites into

attacking Sunnis, which could cause the Sunnis to turn against the Shia government. ISIL's

operations have been met with resistance by other jihad factions thus far, including Jabhat al-Nusra,

a separate organization with a considerable presence in Syria that ISIL unsuccessfully attempted to

absorb; nevertheless, while the jihadist movement is not a "monolithic bloc...[ultimately] their

shared goals should not be doubted."[46]

In any case, the spread of the Syrian conflict to Iraq—whether through artificial means constructed

by jihadist groups, or naturally as a result of sharing a border—could very plausibly reopen sectarian

wounds among Iraqis and force the government and the opposition to take more polarizing stances.

This kind of tumult in Iraq could also have international consequences due to the country's

importance as an energy supplier; major powers such as India and China are heavily reliant on Iraqi

oil.[47]

Jordan

Since its independence in 1946, Jordan has enjoyed, at best, a strained relationship with Syria

characterized by "mutual suspicions," beginning with the expansionist ambition of Jordan's first

king, Abdullah I (r. 1946–1951), who sought to rule over a "Greater Syria" encompassing Jordan,

Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.[48] This kind of intention is generally indicative of a deep insecurity in

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[44] "Jihadists Seek a New Base in Syria and Iraq," *Stratfor*, May 28, 2013, http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/jihadists-seek-new-base-syria-and-iraq.

[45] "Jihadists Seek a New Base in Syria and Iraq."

[46] Yoram Schweitzer and Gal Toren, "Global Jihad in Syria: Disputes Amidst a Common Goal" (INSS Insight 419, Institute for National Security Studies), http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=164317, 2–3.

[47] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 2.

[48] Joseph Abadi, "The impact of the Syrian civil war on Syrian-Jordanian relations," *Turkish Review* 4, no. 2 (2014): 162, http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=95782649&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

the Jordanian state, which traces its origins to, among other factors, a strong tribal presence, the existence of non-state military groups, scarce natural resources, and an economy heavily dependent on external markets.[49]

The Syrian conflict thus presents a dilemma for the reigning King Abdullah II. For a regime primarily focused on maintaining stability, almost all outcomes to the conflict are problematic: while an Assad victory would mean the continuation of a government that has been generally antagonistic to Jordan in the past, a rebel triumph could result in chaos. To this end, King Abdullah has only reluctantly joined international criticism of the Assad regime.

More concretely, the effects of the war on Jordan have been two-fold. Politically, the reigning king Abdullah II has been forced to make a number of concessions to protestors, which some have rejected as "inadequate."[50] The instability has further emboldened the Muslim Brotherhood in the country to criticize the governing regime and strengthened their opposition, and has created pockets along the Syrian–Jordanian border for al-Qaeda elements to operate, purportedly condoned by al-Assad.[51] The towns of Zarqa and Irbid are particularly close to Syrian cities with strong fundamentalist presences, making a spillover of extremism quite plausible.

Socially, the prolonged presence of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have taken up residence in Jordan has recently begun to wear on locals, who see the newcomers as only contributing to economic hardship.[52] While Jordan is receiving considerable military and economic aid, mostly from the United States, its resources will nevertheless be strained, especially considering the fact that trade with Syria has dropped by at least half.

Lebanon

Like Jordan, Lebanon's primary stake in the Syrian conflict is ensuring its own stability. Internally, central authority is weak and "power is distributed among different [frequently shifting] confessional

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[49] Abadi, "Syrian-Jordanian relations," 162.
[50] Abadi, "Syrian-Jordanian relations," 164.
[51] Abadi, "Syrian-Jordanian relations," 164.
[52] Abadi, "Syrian-Jordanian relations," 165–166.

groups. Exacerbating this underlying fragility is the fact that the opposing regional powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia, essentially view the country as "a battlefield of influence."[53] The government has tried to dissociate itself from the war, adopting an official policy of neutrality, but, beginning with the detention of a prominent anti-regime Sunni activist in May 2012, latent tensions along religious and political fault lines have nevertheless risen to the fore. Indeed, as time has passed, Lebanon has become increasingly embroiled in the conflict, perhaps an inevitable consequence of sharing a 375 kilometer border with Syria; the flow of refugees in one direction and weapons in the other has continued unchecked by authorities.[54] If the government is unable to make concrete improvements and becomes paralyzed, there lies the danger that the political landscape will only become more polarized and that citizens will increasingly look towards non-state actors for protection and social services, further delegitimizing formal political structures.[55]

Yet the situation with these extra-governmental groups is just as tense, if not more so. Lebanon is also the home of Hezbollah, a Shi'ite paramilitary organization that is one of Syria's strongest and most loyal units, having asserted that it would "fight 'to the end' to protect President Bashar al-Assad's regime."[56] Fundamentally, Hezbollah considers "the Zionist entity [Israel]...aggressive from its inception...[that exists] at the expense of the rights of Muslim people," and hence seeks to destroy the Israeli state, establish in its place an Islamic regime, and expel Western influence from the region.[57] Its more concrete interest in supporting Assad stems from a longstanding alliance with the Syrian and Iranian governments, as well as the fact that Syria serves as a key buffer state between Israel and Lebanon and is vital because many of the organization's supply routes go through its territory.[58] While it is indirectly in Hezbollah's interest to maintain support among the Lebanese, and the organization has indeed thus far played "a stabilizing role and...[supported]

[53] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 1.
[54] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 2.
[55] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 5.
[56] Robert Fisk, "Hezbollah's war in Syria threatens to engulf Lebanon," *Independent*, May 26, 2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/hezbollahs-war-in-syria-threatens-to-engulf-lebanon-8632689.html.
[57] Jonathan Masters and Zachary Laub, "Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu'llah)," Backgrounders, *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 3, 2014, http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155.
[58] Fulton, Holliday, and Wyer, *Iranian Strategy*, 21.

national dialogue," further developments in the Syrian conflict may push it to take more drastic action and may loosen the leadership's control over rank-and-file members.[59]

Moreover, Hezbollah's activities are controversial both abroad—the United States and European Union have designated it as a terrorist organization (Masters & Laub, 2014)—and at home. The strongest domestic opponent to Hezbollah is an internationally backed, majority-Sunni coalition known as the March 14 movement, whose leaders may attempt to capitalize on the Syrian crisis to "reverse Hezbollah's ascendancy and reorient the country away from the resistance axis [of Syria and Iran]."[60] The religious aspect of this divide, pitting Shiites against Sunnis, could lead to a worrying escalation of the conflict and, in historian Robert Fisk's terms, poses "the greatest danger to Lebanon's people—not to mention the sovereignty of its sectarian state—since the 1975–90 civil war."[61] Indeed, Lebanese Sunnis, accustomed to "political and economic dominance," have grown restless over the rise of Hezbollah, fuelling the growth of more radical Sunni groups that view the more mainstream March 14 movement as ineffective and "out of touch."[62] Additionally, such radical elements could find willing allies among the 400,000 Palestinian refugees in the country, who have thus far been marginalized and may welcome the opportunity to more assertively voice their grievances.[63]

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's involvement was initially limited, primarily due to its reluctance to support radical groups that could turn against it in the future, its general hesitancy to support popular uprisings owing to domestic concerns, and the scarcity of viable moderate allies. Nevertheless, recent escalations, including a desire to balance out the activities of its rival Iran, have impelled it to be more hands-on, and the government has actively supported the formation of a unified rebel force, mostly through the provision of funds to the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Council.[64] As

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[59] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 7.
[60] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 3.
[61] Fisk, "Hezbollah's war."
[62] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 4.
[63] Barnes-Dacey, *Lebanon*, 4.
[64] "Saudi Arabia Overhauls Its Strategy for Syria," *Stratfor*, February 26, 2014, http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/saudi-arabia-overhauls-its-strategy-syria.

one of the more secure and wealthy nations in the region, it exerts a considerable amount of influence in the Arab League and other political processes, yet thus far it has used this power to unite Muslim organizations against Assad, further segmenting the Syrian opposition along religious lines.[65]

A Note on Refugees

Strictly speaking, the humanitarian aspects of the Syrian conflict lie outside the purview of the Security Council. Thus, delegates in this committee will not be expected to debate the establishment of refugee camps, access to food and water, and other issues relating to the welfare and treatment of displaced persons. However, the mass movement of **refugees**, on the scale that it is occurring in Syria at the time of this committee, does have implications for security, and it is in these areas that the Security Council has a role to play.

Already, there are indications of problems brewing. Over the past few years, Syria's neighbors have had to scramble to accommodate hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians in makeshift camps, further burdening their countries' already strained infrastructure systems. These refugee camps, which are becoming more like cities in size,[66] are by no means secure. Indeed, the lack of policing and their close proximity to the largely unguarded Syrian border allows weapons to be smuggled in with relative ease and creates the potential for these sites to become hotspots of crime. The sheer number of refugees also makes it easy for ill-willed individuals—intelligence agents, human traffickers, insurgents, etc.—to hide themselves among civilians and operate secretly.[67]

Moreover, while locals have generally been sympathetic, as the months stretch on, this goodwill is beginning to fray. One Lebanese resident told the BBC that, "the Lebanese don't have any jobs...because all the Syrians are taking them...[at] a third of the [regular] salary of a Lebanese

[65] Heydemann, "Syria's Uprising," 10.
[66] Michael Kimmelman, "Refugee Camp for Syrians in Jordan Evolves as a Do-It-Yourself City," *New York Times*, July 4, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/world/middleeast/zaatari-refugee-camp-in-jordan-evolves-as-a-do-it-yourself-city.html.
[67] E. A. D., "Syrian refugees in Jordan: Carefully watched," Pomegranate (blog), *Economist*, June 18, 2014, http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2014/06/syrian-refugees-jordan.

person."[68] In Turkey, dissent has evolved into discrimination and open violence; reporter Isil Cinmen recalls "the other day in Ankara when reports came out that Syrians mugged someone, local people stoned the building Syrians lived in and set it alight."[69] Though the current arrangement seems unsustainable, refugees are also unlikely to be able to return to their homes in Syria anytime soon, with the war showing no signs of abating.

The urgency of the situation should not be underestimated; after all, one need not look far to see what can happen when a massive population influx is handled improperly. In 2007, over 1.2 million Iraqis fled to Syria in response to an American troop surge in the war on terror. The subsequent surge in demand for food and housing, and the increased stress placed on social services like education and health care, led to a dramatic increase in the cost of living and a reduced quality of life for not just the refugees, but Syrians too. Joe Landry of the *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* notes that "in retrospect, there is a strong case to be made that the discontent caused by this situation contributed to the later explosion of violence in Syria in 2012" that was the precursor to the current situation.[70]

Clearly, the prolonged presence of large, concentrated numbers of refugees can be problematic, especially for governments already weakened by domestic divisions and murmurs of popular dissatisfaction. That, combined with rising xenophobia and fragile sociopolitical institutions, poses a significant hazard to regional security and should be considered by this committee.

[68] Sima Kotecha, "Lebanese struggle to welcome desperate Syrian refugees," *BBC News*, November 21, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25020251.
[69] Isil Cinmen, "Syrians in Turkey face growing discrimination," trans. Timur Goksel, *Al-Monitor*, May 31, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/05/turkey-syrians-discrimination-refugees.html.
[70] Joe Landry, "Displaced populations and their effects on regional stability," *Forced Migration Review* no. 43 (May 2013): 11, http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=88419179&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

History of the Problem

History of Syria and the Levant

Modern-day Syria first came into existence in 1916 with the Sykes-Picot agreement, which divided the former-Ottoman territories in the Middle East between Britain and France.
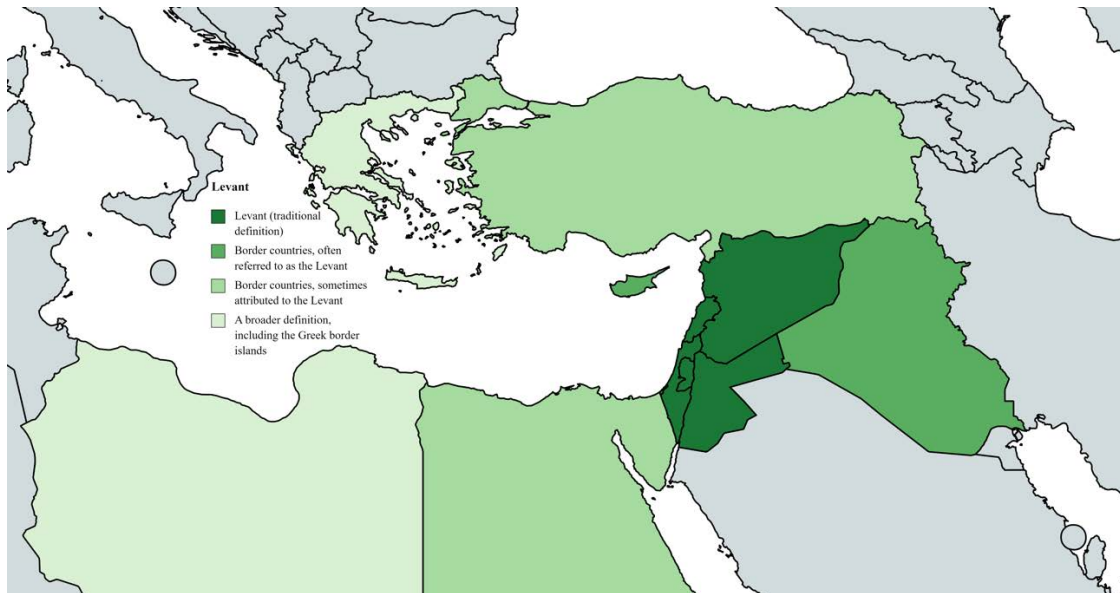
A map of the Levant and its differing interpretations.[71]

Geopolitically, Syria's location makes it the crossroads of the Levant, a position that, historically, has made it particularly vulnerable; Reva Bhalla of Stratfor notes:

> Syria will always find itself in an unfortunate position surrounded by much stronger powers. The rich fertile lands…to the north, the Nile River Valley to the south and the land nestled between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the east give rise to larger and more cohesive populations.[72]

Additionally, mountain chains along Syria's coastline have allowed minority sects (including Alawites, Christians, and Druze) to isolate themselves from outsiders, of whom they are generally

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[71] Iktsokh, *Levant (definitions)*, July 2, 2023, graphic, *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Levant_%28definitions%29.png.
[72] Reva Bhalla, "The Geopolitics of the Syrian Civil War," Geopolitical Weekly, *Stratfor*, January 21, 2014, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/geopolitics-syrian-civil-war.

distrustful—hardly conducive to international unity. The French government, which held the country as a colonial possession from 1923 through 1946, capitalized on and exploited these divisions, the effects of which linger even today. After the conclusion of World War I, many of the colonial possessions of the losers—Germany and Ottoman Turkey—were apportioned to the victorious Allied nations, and Syria; this mandate system "was a compromise between the Allies' wish to retain the...colonies and their pre-Armistice declaration that annexation of territory was not their aim."[73] Upon receiving control of the former Turkish province of Syria, the French, "masters of the minority manipulation strategy," favored the Maronite Christians and the Alawites (renamed such from the "Nusayris" by the French to bolster religious legitimacy), granting them special legal privileges and tax exemptions in exchange for support, to secure its own rule.[74]

The legacy of French interference persisted after Syria became an independent state in 1946: while Sunni officials quickly filled the vacated high level government positions, Alawites installed in lower level posts and the military retained its offices, a composition that not only fed ambitions among the Alawites to seize power for themselves, but also gave them the means to do so.[75] These latent tensions were actualized in a bloodless coup in 1970 led by Hafez al-Assad, which created the "anomaly of a powerful Alawite minority ruling Syria," a structure that persists to this day.[76] Indeed, the current President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, directly succeeded his father, in 2000.

The Evolution of the Current Conflict

In late 2010, a Tunisian man named Mohamed Bouazizi lit himself on fire to protest unfair police treatment and corruptness in the government, setting off waves of protests throughout Tunisia and a general sentiment of revolutionary discontent that quickly spread throughout the Arab world, resulting in a series of uprisings and revolutions collectively referred to as the Arab Spring. While the specific nature of the protests and the grievances of opposition movements varied by country, most

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[73] Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s. v. "mandate (League of Nations),"
        http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/361608/mandate.
[74] Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s. v. "mandate (League of Nations)"; Reva Bhalla, "Making Sense of the Syrian Crisis,"
Geopolitical Weekly, *Stratfor*, May 5, 2011, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110504-making-sense-syrian-crisis.
[75] Bhalla, "Making Sense of the Syrian Crisis."
[76] Bhalla, "The Geopolitics of the Syrian Civil War."

expressed a longstanding dissatisfaction with bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, poor living conditions, and political oppression and called for political reform and greater civil liberties.

The Syrian branch of the Arab Spring began in March 2011 with protests in Dera'a, a city in the southern part of the country near the Jordanian border. The unrest quickly spread beyond the confines of the city, sparking similar rallies throughout the country. In response, Syrian government forces took a belligerent stance towards the protestors and attempted to forcibly clear the streets. President al-Assad's aggressive tactics were quite possibly inspired by his father's successful use of overwhelming force, most notoriously in 1982, when he shelled the city of Hama for twenty-seven consecutive days to quell a Muslim Brotherhood uprising, killing tens of thousands of civilians in the process. In the modern case however, while government forces were able to suppress the demonstrations in several isolated instances, they were unable to quell the underlying popular dissatisfaction with the regime and the perceived brutality of their actions had only the effect of magnifying dissent.[77] Throughout the early months, the capital, Damascus, remained relatively peaceful due to the high concentration of security forces and a heavily pro-regime population, but by September 2011, Homs, the country's third-largest city, had become the center of armed resistance against the regime.

From there, the situation quickly degenerated, as isolated outbursts of violence evolved into uninterrupted, widespread fighting and large parts of the country fell out of the control of the government; even Damascus was no longer assuredly safe. By 2012, the conflict had shifted "from an insurgency to a civil war," a distinction Joseph Holliday from the Institute for the Study of War explains:

> In this case, counterinsurgency describes the Assad regime's attempts to regain control over the whole of its territory, an objective it likely abandoned by the fall of 2012. By contrast, civil war implies that controlling the entire territory is no longer feasible because armed opposition has become strong enough to stop government advances consistently.[78]

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[77] Joseph Holliday, *The Struggle for Syria in 2011: An Operational and Regional Analysis* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2011), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Struggle_For_Syria.pdf, 7.
[78] Holliday, *Struggle for Syria*, 9.

Since then, while the casualties continue to mount and the number of refugees fleeing into neighboring territories steadily rises, little has changed in terms of the complexion of the conflict.

A major development in the war did come in August 2013, when news broke that chemical weapons had been used in an attack against the rebel stronghold of Ghouta. The commission of this war crime—for which the international community has generally held the Syrian government responsible—did shock the world into revisiting the possibility of a military intervention. Ultimately, a resolution was reached with the Syrian government in which Damascus would surrender its considerable chemical weapons arsenal to international inspectors for destruction, a process that is currently underway, though some critics allege that the regime, no longer under the microscope of the world, has quietly resumed its use of these weapons.[79] Apart from this however, the story in Syria has remained fundamentally unchanged: battles for control of large swaths of the country rage on, with neither side possessing sufficient manpower or resources to deliver a coup de grâce to the other.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the regime has been staunchly opposed to comprehensive reforms, at least to the degree that the protestors (in the early stages, at least) demanded. This obstinacy is in large part because of the Alawite anomaly: "representative government in Syria would lead to the regime's downfall because Ba'ath party rule represents a narrow faction of Syrians."[80] Rather, the regime has continued to assert itself as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, engaged in a war against terrorists; al-Assad himself has maintained that "the majority of those fighting [against the regime]…[are in fact] carrying out terrorist operations on the ground" and that their donors and supporters are effectively "exporting terrorism."[81]

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[79] Ruth Sherlock, "Syria chemical weapons: the proof that Assad regime launching chlorine attacks on children," *Telegraph*, June 26, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10796175/Syria-chemical-weapons-the-proof-that-Assad-regime-launching-chlorine-attacks-on-children.html.
[80] Holliday, *Struggle for Syria*, 9.
[81] Bashar al-Assad, "Bashar al-Assad Interview: The Fight against Terrorists in Syria," by Agence France Presse, Global Research, January 21, 2014, http://www.globalresearch.ca/bashar-al-assad-interview-the-fight-against-terrorists-in-syria/5365613.

Religious Dimensions

The population of Syria is majority Sunni Arab (60%), and the remaining 40% is a combination of Alawites, Sunni Kurds, Druze, and Orthodox Christians.[82] While the minority status of the ruling Alawites has unified them, kept them intensely loyal to the Assad regime, and allowed them to ally with other minority groups who similarly fear the consequences of a Sunni-dominated government, it has also made them view events through the lens of "an existential struggle for...[their] survival."[83] It was therefore far from inconsequential for supporters of al-Assad that the majority of the initial demonstrators, in spite of their declared secularism, were "overwhelmingly Sunni." Given the dramatic escalation of the situation since those early days, the fear of religious-based retribution is almost certainly strong enough to outweigh any other considerations.[84]

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[82] Holliday, *The Struggle for Syria*, 10.
[83] Holliday, *The Struggle for Syria*, 10.
[84] Holliday, *The Struggle for Syria*, 10.

Past Actions

From the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the Security Council has consistently been divided on the issue. France, the UK, and the US have generally favored measures aimed at weakening President Bashar al-Assad and his government and moving towards a peaceful transition, while China and Russia have staunchly opposed any coercive measures.[85]

A key part of why compromise has been so difficult is the fact that the positions taken by members on the Security Council, especially the P5, are founded in broader strategic interests. The countries leading the charge against the Assad regime—the US, UK, and France—are caught between two opposing forces. Having taken on a kind of moral responsibility for enforcing basic human rights around the world, most recently in Libya in 2011, politicians in these countries cannot simply ignore the atrocities being committed in Syria.[86] Moreover, al-Assad's government has long been hostile to Westerners; the US State Department has officially considered Syria a state sponsor of terrorism since 1979. Yet none of these Western countries has any direct interest in Syria, and, with intervention increasingly unpopular at home anyway, the kind of boots-on-the-ground strategies previously used in the Middle East are essentially off the table. This bloc has been impelled to action by the former consideration, but its extreme reluctance to use force reflects the latter constraints.

On the other side of the divide, Russia's support for the Syrian regime is both practical and ideological in nature. Analysts estimate the Russian defense industry has signed over 4 billion dollars' worth of arms contracts with Syrian government forces; additionally, Damascus has been happy to lease to Russia a naval facility at Tartus, on the Mediterranean coast, giving it a foothold in a strategically important location.[87] Moreover, though, Moscow is also wary of ever-expanding

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[85] Rick Gladstone, "Veteran Algerian Statesman to Succeed Annan as Special Syrian Envoy," *New York Times*, August 17, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/18/world/middleeast/lakhdar-brahimi-algerian-statesman-to-succeed-kofi-annan-as-special-syrian-envoy.html.

[86] John Giokaris, "Syria Facts: The Complete Guide to All the Global Players Involved in the Syrian Conflict," PolicyMic, August 29, 2013, http://mic.com/articles/61461/syria-facts-the-complete-guide-to-all-the-global-players-involved-in-the-syrian-conflict.

[87] Holly Yan, "Syria allies: Why Russia, Iran and China are standing by the regime," *CNN*, August 29, 2013, http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/29/world/meast/syria-iran-china-russia-supporters/.

American influence and will be inclined to view Western proposals as subtle attempts to shape the region to Western inclinations.

While China has adopted the same posture as Russia, its motivations are less directly linked to the conflict per se. Beijing certainly places some value on the 2 billion dollars of trade it does with Damascus annually, but weighing more heavily on its calculations is a more fundamental dislike of interventionist schemes. Indeed, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which underpin modern Chinese foreign policy, emphasize sovereignty; three of the principles are mutual respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, and non-interference in a nation's internal affairs.[88] Nearly all options to expedite the conclusion of the Syrian conflict, such as increasing support to the rebel forces to stack the odds in their favor and against President al-Assad, would fly in the face of this philosophy.

In any case, this split among the veto powers has prevented the Council from crafting a decisive response and limited it to mostly issuing general condemnations of the events. To supplement the work of the Security Council, the UN and the Arab League created a new, *ad hoc* envoy position, hoping that their appointee, as an individual and not an organization, would have more success initiating talks between the belligerents; this initiative, too, has not panned out as hoped.

With the UN and the international community at large finding it difficult to deal with the situation in Syria itself, delegates in this committee will be asked to shift their focus to the spinoff effects of the Syrian conflict on neighboring countries, an issue on which there may prove more ground for compromise.

Annan as UN Envoy

In February 2012, the United Nations and the Arab League appointed Kofi Annan to the post of Joint Special Envoy to Syria. In his six months of service, Annan, a former Secretary-General of the UN, focused on using diplomacy to bridge the gaps between the anti-regime bloc, primarily comprising

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[88] Andrew J. Nathan, "Principles of China's Foreign Policy," Asia for Educators, Columbia University, 2009, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1950_forpol_principles.htm.

the US, European nations, and Turkey, and Assad's allies, most notably Russia and China. The primary product of his tenure was a six-point plan to create an internationally monitored ceasefire and spark open political dialogue, calling on the Syrian authorities to:

1. Commit to working with the envoy,
2. Jointly commit to a ceasefire along with opposition groups,
3. Ensure the provision and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance,
4. Release arbitrarily detained citizens in a timely manner,
5. Protect the freedom of transit of journalists, and
6. Respect the right to demonstrate peacefully.[89]

While Annan sought the support all countries, including, controversially, Russia and Iran, he came to face criticism from all sides. In particular, the Syrian opposition movement, along with several Arab politicians, accused him of "acting as Syria's foreign minister" and promoting Russian and Iranian interests.[90] With his six-point plan floundering, Annan resigned shortly thereafter. In his final days, he claimed that the inability of the international community to reach any consensus made his job "Mission: Impossible."[91]

Brahimi as UN Envoy

In August 2012, Lakhdar Brahimi, a senior Algerian diplomat, was appointed to succeed Annan in the position of joint special envoy to Syria. In an attempt to take the first steps towards a diplomatic solution for Syria, Brahimi convened an international conference in June 2012 (Action Group for Syria, or Geneva I) that brought together the foreign ministers of the P5 nations and representatives from various Middle Eastern countries. Delegates, however, were unable to agree on the primary issue—the fate of President Bashar al-Assad—and the declaration that was ultimately produced took a weaker position, merely calling for "the formation of a national unity government...[to] oversee

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[89] L. Barkan, "Amidst Accusations Of Collaborating With Assad, Russia, And Iran, UN Envoy Annan Resigns In Failure" (Inquiry & Analysis Series Report no. 867, Middle East Media Research Institute, August 2, 2012), http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/6562.htm.
[90] Barkan, "UN Envoy Annan Resigns In Failure."
[91] Gladstone, "Veteran Algerian Statesman."

the drafting of a new constitution and elections" and reaffirming Annan's previously proposed six-point plan.[92]

While global reaction to Geneva I was largely skeptical of the ability of the final communiqué to have any practical impact, a second conference (Geneva II) was nevertheless scheduled for January 2014. In attendance were representatives from over 40 countries and organizations, including delegations from both the Syrian government and opposition. While Iran was originally invited to the conference, severe opposition by the United States and the Syrian National Coalition led the Secretary-General to rescind the invitation.

This second round proved even more unproductive than the first, ending without any agreement at all due to a general unwillingness to compromise. The Syrian regime continued to characterize the opposition as "traitors" and "terrorists,"[93] while the opposition for its part refused to discuss a peace deal without first agreeing on a plan to remove Assad from power.[94]

Not unlike his predecessor, Brahimi resigned in May 2014, citing the bleak prospects for future progress and the lack of support from the international community, including the Security Council and the Syrian government.[95]

The Ghouta Chemical Attacks

In 2012, the notion that the transport and deployment of chemical weapons represented a "red line" in the Syrian conflict first emerged.[96] The claim was such weapons, which have long been banned

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[92] Nick Cumming-Bruce and Rod Nordland, "Talks Come Up With Plan for Syria, but Not for Assad's Exit," *New York Times*, June 30, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/world/middleeast/future-of-syria-on-agenda-as-countries-gather-in-geneva.html.

[93] Ian Black, "Geneva II talks on Syria: key participants," *Guardian*, January 24, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/24/geneva-ii-talks-syria-key-participants.

[94] George Baghdadi, "Syria peace talks in Geneva end in failure," *CBS News*, February 14, 2014, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-peace-talks-in-geneva-end-in-failure/.

[95] Somini Sengupta and Michael R. Gordon, "U.N. Mediator on Syria Quits; French Envoy Says Chemicals Were Used," *New York Times*, May 13, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/14/world/middleeast/Syria-war-abuses.html.

[96] Mark Landler, "Obama Threatens Force Against Syria," *New York Times*, August 20, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/world/middleeast/obama-threatens-force-against-syria.html; Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," news release, August 20, 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps.

under various international agreements including the Hague Convention of 1899 and the Geneva Protocol of 1925, represent the threshold at which the world can no longer refrain from taking direct action.

These strong affirmations, from countries that had otherwise hesitated to commit to action, stemmed from a long-standing stigma surrounding the use of lethal gases. While most rules become mere guidelines or forgotten altogether in wartime, the ban on chemical weapons has remained mostly intact throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, owing to "the shocking scale on which they can kill and the insidious and indiscriminate way in which they spread."[97] In the post-World War II era, they have become known as "the weapon that not even Hitler would use."[98]

However, this norm was put to the test in September 2013 when UN weapons inspectors found "overwhelming and indisputable" evidence that nerve gas had been used in a lethal attack the prior month in Ghouta, a suburb of the Syrian capital, Damascus.[99] While the UN report did not point to the perpetrator of the attack (nor did it seek to do so), many nations drew their own conclusions and declared the Syrian government responsible, based off knowledge of the regime's considerable chemical weapons stockpiles and other circumstantial evidence.

In the aftermath, while many nations felt the need to respond to the regime's flagrant war crime, the number of options seemed limited to a politically unpalatable full-scale intervention;[100] the preferred option, aerial strikes, was evidently not feasible since "chemical weapons sites cannot be safely bombed."[101] Ultimately, after close to a month of tense negotiations, the international community agreed on a proposal by Russia in which the Syrian government would surrender its entire chemical arsenal.

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[97] E. H., "Why is the use of chemical weapons taboo?," The Economist explains (blog), *Economist*, September 15, 2013, http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/09/economist-explains-4.

[98] H., "Why is the use of chemical weapons taboo?"

[99] Josh Levs and Holly Yan, "'War crime': U.N. finds sarin used in Syria chemical weapons attack," *CNN*, September 16, 2013, http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/16/politics/syria-civil-war/.

[100] David Remnick, "Going the Distance," *New Yorker*, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2014/01/27/140127fa_fact_remnick.

[101] David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt, "US Shifting Its Warning on Syria's Chemical Arms," *New York Times*, December 6, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/07/world/middleeast/syrias-chemical-weapons-moves-lead-us-to-be-flexible.html.

Accordingly, in late September, the Security Council took its "first legally binding action on Syria" since the beginning of the situation in 2011 and unanimously approved Resolution 2118, authorizing the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to inspect Syrian chemical stockpiles and oversee their destruction.[102] Since then, the actual process of removing weapons from Syria and transporting them for safe destruction has been slow; there have also been allegations that the Syrian government has continued to launch chemical attacks in that time.[103] To date, Resolution 2118, on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, remains the only resolution with concrete measures that the Council has approved.

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[102] Colum Lynch and Anne Gearan, "UN resolution near approval on Syrian chemical arms," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-approval-near-on-syrian-chemical-arms/2013/09/27/da007544-27aa-11e3-9372-92606241ae9c_story.html.
[103] Sengupta and Gordon, "U.N. Mediator."

Possible Solutions

The conflict in Syria has profound implications for the overall security of the region, and it is therefore the responsibility of the Security Council to tackle as many aspects of the problem as possible. In particular, the Council must be sure to address both short-term and long-term issues surrounding the conflict, from resolving the ongoing fighting within Syria to re-establishing the security infrastructure of the region. In addition, the Council must consider the other actors in the region, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, when crafting any sort of definitive action. Delegates should also keep in mind that each of the P5 has the ability to veto any resolution that is up for a vote. Therefore, regardless of how popular a particular course of action is within the Council as a whole, it will only pass so long as no member of the P5 disapproves.

An important factor to keep in mind is the role of sectarian divisions between various groups involved in the conflict. This is particularly significant when crafting solutions with long-term goals or that involve other regional players in the Levant, governmental or otherwise. Specifically, delegates should think about the split between Sunnis and Shiites and understand how the consequences of that split pervade both the conflict itself and relations between the countries in the region.

Ongoing Fighting in Syria

The Syrian government and opposition forces are still vying for control in various parts of Syria, so preventing any further conflict is one of the more immediate problems facing the UNSC. The most direct method through which the Security Council could intervene is by sending peacekeeping forces into the region. This would allow the Council to carry out more specific missions within Syria. However, not only would Russia and China likely be opposed to such an interventionist solution to the problem,[104] but the deployment of peacekeeping troops into Syria could lead to those forces simply being caught-up in the conflict, without leaving any sort of lasting impact. For this approach to have any sort of positive effect on the current situation, the UNSC would likely have to coordinate

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[104] Yan, "Syria allies: Why Russia, Iran and China are standing by the regime."

with either other powers in the region or with one of the sides in the conflict directly. However, either method would likely involve the Council choosing one side to support.

The Council could also attempt a slightly more diplomatic approach. For instance, the Security Council could demand that the Syrian government and the opposition negotiate a peace deal with one another. However, in order for both sides to communicate with one another, they would need to have legitimate reasons for doing so. This is especially true given that previous peace talks have ended unproductively,[105] so both the government and the opposition would likely not be optimistic about a simple proposition for a peace conference. As such, a diplomatic approach would likely have to involve either some form of coercion of the parties involved in the conflict, to which Russia and China may be opposed.

One of the biggest questions still facing the Council is what actions should be taken regarding Bashar al-Assad. Indeed, the international community, including the powers of the Security Council, has been unable to reach a consensus on that question. Any sort of action that may either allow al-Assad to retain power or prevent him from maintaining control is likely to divide the Council, because such action would involve choosing a side to support in the conflict. However, so long as the international community does not reach a consensus on this question, the fighting will probably not subside unless one side manages to gain a massive advantage over the other.

Security of the Border Regions

The fighting in Syria has made the regions along Syria's borders much less stable. As refugees leave the country *en masse*, criminals are able to hide within the crowds and operate in secret, partaking in illicit and terrorist activities.[106] In particular, these criminals are in an able position to traffic arms illegally, which both fuels the conflict and destabilizes the border regions further. It is up to the Security Council to make these regions around Syria more secure.

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[105] Baghdadi, "Syria peace talks in Geneva end in failure."
[106] E. A. D., "Syrian refugees in Jordan: Carefully watched."

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The Security Council could take a direct approach and deploy peacekeeping troops in order to police the border around Syria. Of course, it is up to the Council to determine the specific role that such troops would play in the region. For example, such a direct approach could be used to keep tabs on the refugees leaving Syria, to reduce the number of arms being trafficked into Syria, or to patrol the border regions so that criminals would not be able to operate so openly. However, delegates should keep in mind the hazards of giving the peacekeepers too broad a mission; peacekeeping forces would not be able to police the entirety of the border regions without encountering a myriad of logistical issues.[107] In addition, such a direct approach may be opposed by both members of the Security Council and by countries in the Levant that are opposed to such interventionist measures. As such, the UNSC may need to cooperate with other powers in the area to promote the border security of the region.

Thus, the possibility of working with the countries that control the regions bordering Syria merits consideration by the Security Council. With the help of other countries, the Council would not need to spread its own resources thin, so this approach has the potential to be broader in its impact on the security of the border regions. However, this approach is not flawless. The most obvious issue is that the relevant countries are decentralized from one another. As such, the UNSC would have to play some role in coordinating efforts to bring stability to the border. However, if the Council enters such a coordinator role, some countries may view this approach as being too interventionist. Another issue is that the countries around Syria are not completely stable, either, so whether or not they are willing or even able to supply sufficient resources to manage their border with Syria is an open question.

Regarding refugee camps, delegates should keep in mind that camps serve as hubs of crime because of their lack of security. It is these camps' lack of security that allows for criminals to operate in secret. As such, the Council should not forget to tackle the issue of how to make refugee camps more secure when considering what to do about the border regions around Syria. That being said, the issue of refugee camp security is closely related to that of border security, so the Council should not think of them as entirely separate issues. In addition, it is not the responsibility of the UNSC to

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[107] David Schenker, "Preserving UN Peacekeeping in the Levant," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, June 6, 2012, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/preserving-un-peacekeeping-in-the-levant.

handle the more specific humanitarian aspects of this crisis, so debate should not stray into that territory.

Other Powers in the Region

The ongoing conflict and its future trajectory have implications for the security of the region around Syria as a whole. For this reason, it should be no surprise that other powers around Syria have chosen to support specific sides in the conflict. In particular, Iran has chosen to side with the Syrian government, while Saudi Arabia has been supplying the opposition groups.[108] As this has the effect of destabilizing Syria further, the Security Council should consider reducing or stopping the flow of resources from other powers into Syria.

One way in which the Council could prevent other countries from sending resources into Syria is by imposing economic sanctions on those countries. This would not only put international pressure on those countries to stop funding the conflict, but it would also incentivize them to be more careful about how they manage their resources. More specifically, if a country that relies heavily on trade is suddenly economically cut-off from the international community, then that country would need to focus more on supplying itself with whatever resources it has. However, when considering this approach, there are multiple factors that delegates must take into consideration. First, the Council should consider to what extent economic sanctions would actually impact a particular country's policies. For example, Iran has continued to support al-Assad's regime despite facing economic sanctions over its nuclear ambitions.[109] And sanctioning a country like Saudi Arabia would likely be unfeasible given its close economic ties to the United States.[110] Second, the Council should also consider how to enforce any sanctions. Because imposing sanctions is a unilateral action, the UNSC would need to dedicate its own resources to enforce such measures. In addition, because imposing economic sanctions can produce rippling consequences that would negatively impact other

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[108] Ashish Kumar Sen, "Proxy War Between Iran, Saudi Arabia Playing Out in Syria," *The Washington Times*, February 26, 2014, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/feb/26/proxy-war-between-iran-saudi-arabia-playing-out-in/.
[109] Ruth Sherlock, "Iran Boosts Support to Syria," *The Telegraph*, February 21, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/10654144/Iran-boosts-support-to-Syria.html.
[110] Paul Lewis, "Obama Lands in Saudi Arabia to Help Soothe Relations with Key Ally," *The Guardian*, March 28, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/28/obama-saudi-arabia-relations-key-ally.

countries in the region, members of the Security Council, particularly Russia and China, may be opposed to harsher implementations of this action.

The UNSC could also approach the problem diplomatically and engage with the countries in the region to regulate the flow of supplies into Syria. Although this method is likely to be viewed as a more collaborative approach, its effectiveness is dependent on how willing the countries in the region are to work with the Security Council and its members. In addition, this approach does not necessarily consider the sectarian divides that underlie this situation. As it is these divides that motivate the countries in the Levant to contribute resources to the conflict, such a diplomatic approach would need to involve other incentives that would prompt the relevant powers to stop supplying the forces in Syria.

Bloc Positions

Western Allies: Australia, France, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, United States

This group favors the removal of Bashar al-Assad and his government from power to allow for a peaceful transition toward a more stable, democratic Syria.[111] From this bloc's perspective, the aggressive actions that the Syrian government took in response to the protests beginning in 2011 in Dera'a only served to turn a relatively peaceful movement into an opposing military force.[112] To these countries, not only do these events reflect the totalitarian nature of al-Assad's government, but they also demonstrate how al-Assad and his forces cannot be trusted to bring lasting stability to Syria. In addition, the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons against the opposition demonstrates that the former's conflict with the latter is not justifiable.

These powerful, wealthy democracies also believe that the transition in Syria towards a stable, more democratic government should be led by the international community. While al-Assad and his government certainly cannot be trusted by this bloc, the situation in Syria will not be easily resolved if the current government is replaced by another group. This is particularly true because the opposition to al-Assad consists of multiple groups, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which have vastly different goals.[113] While the opposition is united by their shared goal of ousting al-Assad from power, they will need a more stable hand to guide them if that goal is actually achieved. Some examples of countries that could help bring stability and democracy to Syria are Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as both countries are stable and relatively friendly to this bloc and to the broader international community.

[111] Ian Black, "Bashar al-Assad's Pitch for Anti-ISIS Pact with West Falls on Closed Ears," The Guardian, September 4, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/04/assad-anti-isis-pact-west-cameron-syria.
[112] "Syria: Timeline of Key Events Since Mid-March," *IRIN News*, April 26, 2013, http://www.irinnews.org/report/92464/syria-timeline-of-key-events-since-mid-march.
[113] Katie Zavadski, "A Guide to the Many Groups Fighting in Iraq and Syria," *New York Magazine*, October 17, 2014, http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/10/guide-groups-fighting-iraq-and-syria.html.

Eastern Allies: People's Republic of China, Russian Federation

This group hopes to work with al-Assad and his government to bring an end to the fighting, so that stability may be restored to the region. From the perspective of this bloc, if al-Assad falls, because of the divided nature of the opposition, Syria runs the risk of "Balkanizing," or internally fragmenting along sectarian lines. Without a centralized authority, the sectarian conflicts between the various groups in Syria that have played roles in shaping the conflict would only go unresolved, so the region would remain destabilized. In addition, the Syrian government has been a trusted partner to the members of this bloc both economically and diplomatically, so these countries believe that al-Assad can be trusted.[114]

Furthermore, this group believes that al-Assad and his government, not just the international community, should be in charge of directing the transition towards a more stable Syria. The Syrian government's quick and continuous response to the rebels has demonstrated, in the view of this bloc, that the regime is interested in bringing stability to the region. Meanwhile, these three countries are unlikely to trust the international community with taking the lead on that particular mission. For example, two of the relatively stable countries in the vicinity of Syria, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have demonstrated opposition to al-Assad's legitimacy. Saudi Arabia has even been overtly supporting the rebel fighters,[115] which this bloc views as an approach that is destabilizing the country even further.

Non-Aligned Movement: Argentina, Chad, Chile, Jordan, Nigeria, Rwanda

These countries, associated with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), an organization of developing countries, seek to bring long-term stability to the region in the form of non-militaristic, diplomatic measures that address the underlying factors of the conflict in Syria. While the Non-Aligned Movement has expressed political support for Iran in the past, it has remained reluctant to support

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[114] "Syria Crisis: Where Key Countries Stand," *BBC News*, February 18, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23849587.
[115] "Saudi Arabia Overhauls Its Strategy for Syria," *Stratfor*, February 26, 2014, http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/saudi-arabia-overhauls-its-strategy-syria.

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the al-Assad government of Iran's ally Syria.[116] The general consensus of this group is that, while the ongoing fighting in Syria only serves to threaten the security and stability of the Levant as a whole, militaristic intervention would primarily serve to escalate the current situation.[117] That is, this bloc is of the view that military intervention would not deal with the factors that led to the current crisis in Syria. Diplomacy, however, offers a method through which long-term conflicts and tensions can be addressed by both the Syrian government and the opposition. This course of action could lead to compromise, resulting in lasting peace between the two sides.

The NAM is also wary of the intentions of the P5—the non-rotating members of the UNSC—and does not fully trust that these powerful permanent members will seek a long-term strategy for lasting stability in Syria. The P5 each have strategic interests in the Levant as a whole. However, the NAM fears that the P5 countries will not pursue solutions that address the underlying factors of the current situation and lead to lasting peace in Syria and the broader region.

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[116] Thomas Erdbrink, "Nonaligned Nations Back Iran's Nuclear Bid, But Not Syria," The New York Times, August 31, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/01/world/middleeast/iran-criticizes-egypts-mohamed-morsi-over-syria-comments.html?_r=0.
[117] W. Alex Sanchez, "Latin America's Anti-Intervention Bloc," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, October 4, 2013, http://fpif.org/latin-americas-anti-intervention-bloc/.

Glossary

Collective security: An agreement within a group of states to cooperate in security affairs and come to each other's defense, so that attacking one member effectively means attacking all members of the group. Examples of modern-day collective security organizations include the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Equal sovereignty: The idea that all states should be entitled to the same rights and carry the same obligations, regardless of their wealth, size, or any other difference. Under this doctrine for instance, a small state without much traditional influence would have the same voting power as a large, economically powerful country.

Peacekeeping mission: An operation authorized by the Security Council designed to maintain peace in volatile regions of the world. The mandate of a mission varies according to the particular situation, but can involve assisting in the implementation of a ceasefire, facilitating political negotiations, overseeing disarmament efforts, and helping with reconstruction efforts. Peacekeepers are only deployed with the consent of the belligerents and are always impartial.

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