

AAI'26

By the Strike of the Gavel.

ALTRAIN

NEW SYRIAN GOVERNMENT

AGENDA ITEM:

OPEN AGENDA

UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL:
MUSTAFA ASLAN

ACADEMIC ASSISTANT:
ÇAĞIN ORKAN BENZEŞ

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1. Letter from the Secretariat

Firstly, it is with immense pride and enthusiasm that I extend my warmest welcomes to all participants of the Antalya Anatolian High School Train Model United Nations Conference 2026, taking place on April 11th-12th in Antalya.

I am Güney Deniz Ala, Secretary-General of this distinguished conference. It is both an honor and a privilege to lead this organization in this position. Model United Nations has always been far more than a simulation, it is a journey. Whether you're a more experienced delegate or a first-timer, with AALTRAIN'26 I promise unparalleled growth and inspiration.

Our Academic Team: Under-Secretary Generals, Academic Assistants, and Board Members, represent the finest minds in Antalya, each meticulously selected to deliver your committees of exceptional caliber. From beginner to advanced committees, every session has been crafted for the maximum impact.

My deepest gratitude goes to our Principal Mr. Kılıç and our dedicated advisor Mrs. Bilici,

whose unwavering support made this vision reality. I extend special thanks to the AALTRAIN'26 participants, whose passion set the standard we strive to exceed, and a personal note of appreciation to my Executive Team whose brilliance knows no bounds.

As we gather, let us draw inspiration from the eternal words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey:

"Ey Türk gençliđi! Birinci vazifen, Türk istiklâlini, Türk Cumhuriyetini, ilelebet muhafaza ve müdafaa etmektir. Mevcudiyetinin ve istikbalinin yegâne temeli budur. Bu temel, senin en kıymetli hazinendir."

To delegates: embrace the challenge, defend your interests, and leave AALTRAIN'26 having elevated your voice on the world stage. I am eager to witness your brilliance.

Sincerely,

Güney Deniz Ala

Secretary-General, AALTRAIN'26

2. Letter from the Under Secretary General

Dear Participants,

First of all, I would like to welcome you all to the AALTRAIN NSG committee.

I am Mustafa Aslan, I'm a senior at Bahçeşehir High School, and I am honored to serve as the Under Secretary General of the committee.

I have been attending Model United Nations conferences in Antalya and many other cities for the last three years and this is my 31th conference.

I would like to thank the executive team, especially Güney for giving me a place at Aaltrain. And also I would like to thank Arda Ađlamış for organizing this conference and my handsome Academic Assistant Çađın Orkan for his dedicated efforts.

If you have previously participated in one of my committees, I generally make special committees. If you have not participated in my committees or a special committee before, there is no need to be nervous. The entire guide was written to ensure this for you.

Besides these, if you have any questions about the committee, please contact me from my contact information below, even for the tiniest thing you want to ask.

We have added all the necessary information in the committee to the study guide as an academic team.

I wish you all success in advance.

Under Secretary General, Mustafa ASLAN

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3. Letter from the Academic Assistant

First of all, hello everyone, and welcome to the AALTRAIN NSG committee. My name is Çağın Orkan Benzeş, I am an 11th-grade student at Kırmızı Çizgi Science High School, and I am honored to be assisting you here as an academic assistant.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to Mustafa Aslan, my Under-Secretary General, and then to Güney from the Executive Team for giving me the opportunity to work at AALTRAIN with such warmth and affection.

Finally, I want you all to know that I will do my best to ensure you all have fun in the committee and gain new skills. Also, if you have any questions about the committee, please don't hesitate to write to me. One last request: I hope you all study the Study Guide and do the necessary research. See you soon.

Academic Assistant Çađın Orkan Benzeř

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4. Procedure of the Committee

In this committee, you will represent the Syrian government, which has almost completely shed its past in recent years, and determine the country's future. Your relations with the country will be discussed in the context of terrorist organizations still active in Syria; the years-long civil war, the activities of Russia and the United States, Turkey's role as a mediator, or countries advancing for strategic interests, as the United States claims, will be part of this, Qatar and Turkey can be cited as an example. Through your relations with these nations, you will discuss and reach a joint decision to heal the deep wounds of your country, which has emerged from so much war and destruction, and to re-enter the international arena. The fate of the country is in your hands

4.1. Communique

This committee's final document will be a communique. A communique is a document of explanation, it does not have a specific format like the resolution paper. In a communique, you

explain the matters you've discussed in the committee carefully and detail your solutions to those issues in paragraphs. It may be seen as a press release, but a formal and longer version.

4.2. Note from the USG

Given that this is my area of interest, I'm doing everything I can to ensure that delegates in my committees engage in real politics, and this committee has the necessary flexibility to implement this comfortably. You are the ones making the decisions, and you will ultimately decide how things turn out. I have no doubt that raising awareness will be more engaging than just talking. Don't let the procedural aspects intimidate you, this committee will be much more fun and rewarding than you imagine, and I'm quite confident it will add value to all of you. It's very important to read the guide and study Syria's history in detail; by working on today's specifics and bringing them to a common point, such as why the government went to war and why it found itself caught between major powers. Also, don't worry about the document; if you've never written a communiqué before, it doesn't matter at all. The format is quite simple compared to a resolution paper; what's important is filling it out with the necessary details. I'll explain this clearly during the committee meeting as well.

5. History of Syria

Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, is a country in West Asia located in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. It borders the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Turkey to the north and northwest, Iraq to the east and southeast, Jordan to the south, and Israel and Lebanon to the southwest. It is a republic under a provisional government and comprises 14 governorates. Damascus is the capital and largest city. With a population of 26 million across an area of 185,180 square kilometres (71,500 sq mi), it is the 56th-most populous and 87th-largest country.

The name "Syria" historically referred to a wider region. The modern state encompasses the sites of several ancient kingdoms and empires, including the Eblan civilization. Damascus was the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate and a provincial capital under the Mamluk Sultanate. The modern Syrian state was established in the mid-20th century after centuries of Ottoman rule, as a French Mandate. The state represented the largest Arab state to emerge from the formerly Ottoman-ruled Syrian provinces. It gained *de jure* independence as a parliamentary republic in 1945 when the First Syrian Republic became a founding member of the United Nations, an act which legally ended the French Mandate. French troops withdrew in April 1946, granting the nation *de facto* independence. The post-independence period was tumultuous, with multiple coups and coup attempts between 1949 and 1971. In 1958, Syria entered a brief pan-Arab union with Egypt, which was terminated following a 1961 coup d'état. The 1963 coup d'état carried out by the military committee of the Ba'ath Party established a one-party state, which ran Syria under martial law from 1963 to 2011. Internal power-struggles within Ba'athist factions caused further coups in 1966 and 1970, the latter of which saw Hafez al-Assad come to power. Under Assad, Syria became a hereditary dictatorship. Assad died in 2000, and he was succeeded by his son, Bashar.

Following the Arab Spring in 2011, Syria became embroiled in a multi-sided civil war with the involvement of several countries, leading to a refugee crisis in which more than 6 million refugees were displaced from the country. In response to rapid territorial gains made by the Islamic State during the civil war in 2014 and 2015, several countries intervened on behalf of various factions opposing it, leading to its territorial defeat in 2017 in both central and eastern Syria. Thereafter, three political entities—the Syrian Interim Government, Syrian Salvation Government, and the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria—emerged in Syrian territory to challenge Assad's rule. In late 2024, a series of offensives from a coalition of opposition forces led to the capture of Damascus and the fall of Assad's regime. By 2025, the war had left Syria's economy in a poor state, following years of international sanctions that were later eased.

A country of fertile plains, high mountains, plateaus, and deserts, Syria is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups. Arabs are the largest ethnic group, and Sunni Muslims are the largest religious group.

Middle Ages

Muhammad's first interaction with the people of Syria was during the invasion of Dumatul Jandal in July 626 where he ordered his followers to invade Duma, because Muhammad received intelligence that some tribes there were involved in highway robbery and were preparing to attack Medina. William Montgomery Watt claims that this was the most significant expedition Muhammad ordered at the time, even though it received little notice in the primary sources. Dumat Al-Jandal was 800 kilometres (500 mi) from Medina, and Watt says that there was no immediate threat to Muhammad, other than the possibility that his communications to Syria and supplies to Medina would be interrupted. Watt says "It is tempting to suppose that Muhammad was already envisaging something of the expansion which took place after his death", and that the rapid march of his troops must have "impressed all those who heard of it". William Muir also believes that the expedition was important as Muhammad followed by 1,000 men reached the confines of Syria, where distant tribes had learnt his name, while the political horizon of Muhammad was extended.

By 640, Syria was conquered by the Rashidun army led by Khalid ibn al-Walid. In the mid-7th century, the Umayyad dynasty placed the capital of the empire in Damascus. The country's power declined during later Umayyad rule; this was mainly through totalitarianism, corruption and the

resulting revolutions. The Umayyad dynasty was overthrown in 750 by the Abbasid dynasty, which moved the capital of empire to Baghdad. Arabic – made official under Umayyad rule – became the dominant language, replacing Greek and Aramaic of the Byzantine era. In 887, the Egypt-based Tulunids annexed Syria from the Abbasids and were later replaced by the Egypt-based Ikhshidids and then by the Hamdanids originating in Aleppo founded by Sayf al-Dawla.

Umayyad fresco from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbî, built in the early 7th century Sections of Syria were held by French, English, Italian and German overlords between 1098 and 1189 during the Crusades and were known collectively as the Crusader states, among which the primary one in Syria was the Principality of Antioch. The coastal mountainous region was occupied in part by the Nizari Ismailis, the so-called Assassins, who had intermittent confrontations and truces with the Crusader States. Later in history when "the Nizaris faced renewed Frankish hostilities, they received timely assistance from the Ayyubids." After a century of Seljuk rule, Syria was largely conquered (1175–1185) by the Kurdish liberator Salah ad-Din, founder of the Ayyubid dynasty of Egypt. Aleppo fell to the Mongols of Hulegu in January 1260; Damascus fell in March, but then Hulegu was forced to break off his attack to return to China to deal with a succession dispute.

A few months later, the Mamluks arrived with an army from Egypt and defeated the Mongols in the Battle of Ain Jalut in Galilee. The Mamluk leader, Baibars, made Damascus a provincial capital. When he died, power was taken by Qalawun. In the meantime, an emir named Sunqur al-Ashqar had tried to declare himself ruler of Damascus, but he was defeated by Qalawun on 21 June 1280 and fled to northern Syria. Al-Ashqar, who had married a Mongol woman, appealed for help from the Mongols. The Mongols of the Ilkhanate took Aleppo in October 1280, but Qalawun persuaded Al-Ashqar to join him, and they fought against the Mongols on 29 October 1281 in the Second Battle of Homs, which was won by the Mamluks. In 1400, the Muslim Turco-Mongol conqueror Tamurlane invaded Syria, in which he sacked Aleppo and captured Damascus after defeating the Mamluk army. The city's inhabitants were massacred, except for the artisans who were deported to Samarkand. Tamurlane conducted massacres of the Assyrian Christian population, greatly reducing their numbers. By the end of the 15th century, the discovery of a sea route from Europe to the Far East ended the need for an overland trade route through Syria.

Ottoman Syria

In 1516, the Ottoman Empire invaded the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, conquering Syria and incorporating it into its empire. The Ottoman system was not burdensome to Syrians because the Turks respected Arabic as the language of the Quran and accepted the mantle of defenders of the faith. Damascus was made the major entrepot for Mecca, and as such it acquired a holy character to Muslims, because of the beneficial results of the countless pilgrims who passed through on the hajj.

Ottoman administration followed a system that led to peaceful coexistence. Each ethno-religious minority—Arab Shia Muslim, Arab Sunni Muslim, Syriac Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Maronite Christians, Assyrian Christians, Armenians, Kurds and Jews—constituted a millet. The religious heads of each community administered all personal status laws and performed certain civil functions as well. In 1831, Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt renounced his loyalty to the empire and overran Ottoman Syria, capturing Damascus. His short-term rule over the domain attempted to change the demographics and social structure of the region: he brought thousands of Egyptian villagers to populate the plains of southern Syria, rebuilt Jaffa and settled it with veteran Egyptian soldiers aiming to turn it into a regional capital, and he crushed peasant and Druze rebellions and deported non-loyal tribesmen. By 1840, however, he had to surrender the area back to the Ottomans. From 1864, Tanzimat reforms were applied on Ottoman Syria, carving out the provinces (vilayets) of Aleppo, Zor, Beirut and Damascus Vilayet; Mutasarrifate of Mount Lebanon was created, and soon after the Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem was given a separate status.

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire entered the conflict as a Central Power. It ultimately suffered defeat and loss of control of the entire Near East to the British Empire and French Empire. During the conflict, genocide against indigenous Christian peoples was carried out by the Ottomans and their allies in the form of the Armenian genocide and Assyrian genocide, of which Deir ez-Zor in Ottoman Syria was the final destination of these death marches. In the midst of World War I, two Allied diplomats (Frenchman François Georges-Picot and Briton Mark Sykes) secretly agreed on the post-war division of the Ottoman Empire into respective zones of influence in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. Initially, the two territories were separated by a border that ran in an almost straight line from Jordan to Iran. However, the discovery of oil in the region of Mosul just before the end of the war led to yet another negotiation with France in 1918 to cede this region to the British zone of influence, which was to become Iraq. The fate of the intermediate province of Zor was left unclear; its occupation by Arab nationalists resulted in its attachment to Syria. This border was recognized internationally when Syria became a League of Nations mandate in 1920 and has not changed to date.

French Mandate

The inauguration of President Hashim al-Atassi in 1936 In 1920, a short-lived independent Kingdom of Syria was established under Faisal I of the Hashemite family. However, his rule over Syria ended after only a few months, following the Battle of Maysalun. French troops occupied Syria later that year after the San Remo conference proposed that the League of Nations put Syria under a French mandate. General Gouraud had according to his secretary de Caix two options: "Either build a Syrian nation that does not exist... by smoothing the rifts which still divide it" or "cultivate and maintain all the phenomena, which require our arbitration that these divisions give".

De Caix added "I must say only the second option interests me". This is what Gouraud did.

In 1925, Sultan al-Atrash led a revolt that broke out in the Druze Mountain and spread to engulf the whole of Syria and parts of Lebanon. Al-Atrash won several battles against the French, notably the Battle of al-Kafr on 21 July 1925, the Battle of al-Mazraa on 2–3 August 1925, and the battles of Salkhad, al-Musayfirah and Sweida. France sent thousands of troops from Morocco and Senegal, leading the French to regain many cities, although resistance lasted until the spring of 1927. The French sentenced al-Atrash to death, but he had escaped with the rebels to Transjordan and was eventually pardoned. He returned to Syria in 1937 after the signing of the Syrian-French Treaty.

Syrian rebels in Ghouta during the Great Syrian Revolt against French colonial rule in the 1920s

Syria and France negotiated a treaty of independence in September 1936, and Hashim al-Atassi was the first president to be elected under the first incarnation of the modern republic of Syria. However, the treaty never came into force because the French Legislature refused to ratify it. With the fall of France in 1940 during World War II, Syria came under the control of Vichy France until the British and Free French occupied the country in the Syria-Lebanon campaign in July 1941. Continuing pressure from Syrian nationalists and the British forced the French to evacuate their troops in April 1946, leaving the country in the hands of a republican government that had been formed during the mandate.

Independent Syrian Republic

Main articles: Second Syrian Republic, United Arab Republic, and 1963 Syrian coup d'état

Upheaval dominated Syrian politics from independence through the late 1960s. In May 1948, Syrian forces invaded Palestine, together with other Arab states, and immediately attacked Jewish settlements. President Shukri al-Quwwatli instructed his troops in the front, "to destroy the Zionists". The invasion's purpose was to prevent the establishment of the state of Israel. Toward this end, the Syrian government engaged in an active process of recruiting former Nazis, including several former members of the Schutzstaffel, to build up their armed forces and military intelligence capabilities. Defeat in this war was one of several trigger factors for the March 1949 Syrian coup d'état by Colonel Husni al-Za'im, described as the first military overthrow of the Arab World since the start of the Second World War. This was soon followed by another overthrow, by Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi, who was quickly deposed by Colonel Adib Shishakli, all within the same year.

Shishakli eventually abolished multipartyism altogether but was overthrown in a 1954 coup, and the parliamentary system was restored. However, by this time, power was increasingly concentrated in the military and security establishment. The weakness of Parliamentary institutions and the mismanagement of the economy led to unrest and the influence of Nasserism and other ideologies.

There was fertile ground for various Arab nationalist, Syrian nationalist, and socialist movements, which represented disaffected elements of society. Notably included were religious minorities, who demanded radical reform.

In November 1956, as a direct result of the Suez Crisis, Syria signed a pact with the Soviet Union. This gave a foothold for communist influence within the government in exchange for military equipment. Turkey then became worried about this increase in the strength of Syrian military technology, as it seemed feasible that Syria might attempt to retake İskenderun. Only heated debates in the United Nations lessened the threat of war.

United Arab Republic

On 1 February 1958, Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli and Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the merging of Egypt and Syria, creating the United Arab Republic, and all Syrian political parties, as well as the communists therein, ceased overt activities. Meanwhile, a group of Syrian Ba'athist officers, alarmed by the party's poor position and the increasing fragility of the union, decided to form a secret Military Committee; its initial members were Lieutenant-Colonel Muhammad Umran, Major Salah Jadid and Captain Hafez al-Assad. Syria seceded from the union with Egypt on 28 September 1961, after a coup and terminated the political union.

Land reform

Agrarian reform measures were introduced which consisted of three interrelated programs: legislation regulating the relationship between agriculture laborers and landowners; legislation governing the ownership and use of private and state domain land and directing the economic organization of peasants; and measures reorganizing agricultural production under state control. Despite high levels of inequality in land ownership these reforms allowed for more progress in redistribution of land from 1958 to 1961 than any other reforms in Syria's history, since independence.

The first law passed (Law 134; passed 4 September 1958) was in response to concern about peasant mobilization and expanding peasants' rights. This was designed to strengthen the position of sharecroppers and agricultural laborers in relation to land owners. This law led to the creation of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which announced the implementation of new laws that would allow the regulation of working condition especially for women and adolescents, set hours of work, and introduce the principle of minimum wage for paid laborers and an equitable division of harvest for sharecroppers. Furthermore, it obligated landlords to honor both written and oral contracts, established collective bargaining, contained provisions for workers' compensation, health, housing, and employment services. Law 134 was not designed strictly to protect workers. It also acknowledged the rights of landlords to form their own syndicates.

Ba'athist Syria

Main article: Ba'athist Syria

The instability which followed the 1961 coup culminated in the 8 March 1963 Ba'athist coup. The takeover was engineered by members of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, led by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar. The new Syrian cabinet was dominated by Ba'ath members. From the 1963 seizure of power by its Military Committee to the fall of the regime in 2024, the Ba'ath party ruled Syria as a dictatorship which was frequently described as totalitarian, although some scholars rejected this description. Ba'athists took control over country's politics, education, culture, religion and surveilled all aspects of civil society through its powerful *Mukhabarat* (secret police). The Syrian Arab Armed Forces and secret police were integrated with the Ba'ath party apparatus; after the purging of traditional civilian and military elites by the regime.

The 1963 Ba'athist coup marked a "radical break" in modern Syrian history, after which the Ba'ath party monopolised power in the country to establish a one-party state and shaped a socio-political order by enforcing its state ideology. On 23 February 1966, the neo-Ba'athist Military Committee carried out an intra-party rebellion against the Ba'athist Old Guard (Aflaq and Bitar), imprisoned President Amin al-Hafiz and designated a regionalist, civilian Ba'ath government on 1 March. Although Nureddin al-Atassi became the formal head of state, Salah Jadid was Syria's effective ruler from 1966 until November 1970, when he was deposed by Hafez al-Assad, who at the time was Minister of Defense.

The coup led to the schism within the original pan-Arab Ba'ath Party: one Iraqi-led ba'ath movement (ruled Iraq from 1968 to 2003) and one Syrian-led ba'ath movement was established. In the first half of 1967, a low-key state of war existed between Syria and Israel. Conflict over Israeli cultivation of land in the demilitarized zone led to 7 April pre-war aerial clashes between Israel and Syria. When the Six-Day War broke out between Egypt and Israel, Syria joined the war and attacked Israel as well. In the final days of the war, Israel turned its attention to Syria, capturing two-thirds of the Golan Heights in under 48 hours. The defeat caused a split between Jadid and Assad over what steps to take next. Disagreement developed between Jadid, who controlled the party apparatus, and Assad, who controlled the military. The 1970 retreat of Syrian forces sent to aid the Palestine Liberation Organization led by Yasser Arafat during the "Black September (also known as the Jordan Civil War of 1970)" hostilities with Jordan reflected this disagreement.

Hafez al-Assad, president of Syria from 1971 until his death in 2000

The power struggle culminated in the November 1970 Syrian Corrective movement, a bloodless military coup that installed Hafez al-Assad as the strongman of the government. Assad transformed a

Ba'athist party state into a dictatorship marked by his pervasive grip on the party, armed forces, secret police, media, education sector, religious and cultural spheres and all aspects of civil society. He assigned Alawite loyalists to key posts in the military forces, bureaucracy, intelligence and the ruling elite. A cult of personality revolving around Hafez and his family became a core tenet of Ba'athist ideology, which espoused that the Assad dynasty was destined to rule perennially.

On 6 October 1973, Syria and Egypt initiated the Yom Kippur War against Israel. The Israel Defense Forces reversed the initial Syrian gains and pushed deeper into Syrian territory. The village of Quneitra was largely destroyed by the Israeli army.

In the late 1970s, an Islamist uprising by the Muslim Brotherhood was aimed against the government. Islamists attacked civilians and off-duty military personnel, leading security forces to also kill civilians in retaliatory strikes. The uprising had reached its climax in the 1982 Hama massacre, when more than 2,000 to 25,000-40,000 people, including civilians, were killed by Ba'athist Syrian troops and allied paramilitaries. It has been described as the "single deadliest act" of violence perpetrated by any state upon its own population in modern Arab history.

In a major shift in relations with both other Arab states and the Western world, Syria participated in the United States-led Gulf War against Saddam Hussein. The country participated in the multilateral Madrid Conference of 1991, and during the 1990s engaged in negotiations with Israel along with Palestine and Jordan. These negotiations failed, and there have been no further direct Syrian-Israeli talks since Assad's meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Geneva in 2000.

Involvement of Lebanese war

Main article: Syrian occupation of Lebanon

Hafez al-Assad died on 10 June 2000. His son, Bashar al-Assad, was elected president in an election in which he ran unopposed. His election saw the birth of the Damascus Spring and hopes of reform, but by autumn 2001, his government had suppressed the movement, imprisoning some of its leading intellectuals. Instead, reforms were limited to some market reforms. On 5 October 2003 Israel bombed a site near Damascus, claiming it was a terrorist training facility for members of Islamic Jihad. In March 2004, Syrian Kurds and Arabs clashed in al-Qamishli. Signs of rioting were seen in Qamishli and Hasakeh. In 2005, Syria ended its military presence in Lebanon. The assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005 led to international condemnation and triggered protests in Lebanon, which forced the Assad regime to end its 29-year-old military occupation in Lebanon. On 6 September 2007, foreign jet fighters, suspected as Israeli, reportedly carried out Operation Orchard against a suspected nuclear reactor under construction by North Korean technicians.

Syrian revolution and civil war

Nepotism of ruling elites and authoritarian regimes caused the Syrian revolution as part of the wider Arab Spring. Public demonstrations across Syria began on 26 January 2011 and developed into a nationwide uprising. Protesters demanded the resignation of Assad, the overthrow of his government, and an end to nearly five decades of Ba'ath Party rule. Beginning in spring 2011, the Syrian government deployed the Syrian Army to quell the uprising, and several cities were besieged, though the unrest continued. According to some witnesses, soldiers, who refused to open fire on civilians, were summarily executed by the Syrian Army. The Syrian government denied reports of defections, and blamed armed gangs for causing trouble. In early autumn 2011, civilians and army defectors began forming fighting units, which began an insurgency campaign against the Syrian Army. The insurgents unified under the banner of the Free Syrian Army and fought in an increasingly organized fashion; however, the civilian component of the armed opposition lacked an organized leadership.

The Arab League, the United States, the European Union states, the Gulf Cooperation Council states, and other countries have condemned the use of violence against the protesters. China and Russia have avoided condemning the government or applying sanctions, saying that such methods could escalate into foreign intervention. However, military intervention has been ruled out by most countries. The Arab League suspended Syria's membership over the government's response to the crisis, but sent an observer mission in December 2011, as part of its proposal for peaceful resolution of the crisis.

By 2024, the Syrian civil war had resulted in more than 600,000 deaths, with pro-Assad forces causing more than 90% of the total civilian casualties. Between March 2011 and March 2021, more than 306,000 civilians were killed in the civil war. The war led to a massive refugee crisis, with an estimated 7.6 million internally displaced people (July 2015 UNHCR figure) and over 5 million refugees (July 2017 registered by UNHCR). The war has also worsened economic conditions, with more than 90% of the population living in poverty and 80% facing food insecurity.

Rise and fall of Islamic State and factional escalation

Main articles: War against the Islamic State and Foreign involvement in the Syrian civil war

Taking advantage of the ongoing civil war, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) won many battles against the rebel factions and the Syrian government in 2014. ISIS was able to seize control of large parts of Eastern Syria, prompting a United States-led coalition to launch an aerial bombing campaign against ISIS, while providing ground support and supplies to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-dominated coalition led by the People's Defense Units (YPG).

In August 2016, Turkey launched a multi-pronged invasion of northern Syria, in response to the creation of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava, while also fighting ISIS and government forces in the process. During this time, Turkey helped establish the Syrian National Army (SNA) out of remnants of the Free Syrian Army. Iran and later Russia also intervened in the civil war on behalf of the Assad government to help defeat ISIS and attack both SDF and SNA. The ISIS eventually lost its territory after the fall of IS in Mosul and increasingly resorted to more terror bombings and insurgency operations that continues in present.

In December 2024, violence flared up once again. Rebel factions, led by the Islamist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), took control of Aleppo in a lightning offensive, prompting a retaliatory airstrike campaign by Syrian regime forces, supported by Russian aviation assets. The strikes, which targeted population centers and several hospitals in the rebel-held city of Idlib, resulted in at least 25 deaths according to the White Helmets rescue group. NATO issued a joint statement calling for the protection of civilians and critical infrastructure to prevent further displacement and ensure humanitarian access. They stressed the urgent need for a Syrian-led political solution, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which advocates for dialogue between the Syrian government and opposition forces.

The rebel offensive, which had begun on 27 November, continued its advance into Hama province following their capture of Aleppo. On 30 November, Brigadier General Hossam Louka, director of the General Security Directorate, attempted to stage a coup in Damascus while Bashar al-Assad was in Moscow, but would be foiled by Bashar's younger brother Maher. On 4 December, fierce clashes erupted in Hama province as the Syrian army engaged rebel forces in a bid to halt their advance on the key city of Hama. Government forces claimed to have launched a counteroffensive with air support, pushing back rebel factions, including HTS, around six miles from the city. However, despite reinforcements, the rebels captured the city on 5 December. The fighting led to widespread displacement, with nearly 50,000 people fleeing the area and over 600 casualties reported, including 104 civilians.

Rebel forces reached the outskirts of Homs on 5 December, beginning a three-day battle for the city. Simultaneously, an HTS-coordinated mass uprising led by a coalition of Druze tribes and opposition forces captured the southern cities of Sweida and Daraa by 6 December, and rapidly advanced northwards to encircle Damascus over the following day. Homs was captured by rebel forces by the early morning of 8 December, leaving no major regime strongholds between the rebel advance and Damascus itself.

Cut off from the Alawite heartland of Tartus and Latakia governorates, faced with a rebel pincer from both north and south bearing down on Damascus, and with no hope of foreign intervention from the

regime's Russian and Iranian benefactors, Assadist authority over remaining regime-held territories rapidly disintegrated. The Syrian Arab Armed Forces melted away as its soldiers abandoned their weapons and uniforms, many deserting across the border to Iraq and Lebanon. Opposition forces captured the capital Damascus on 8 December, toppling Bashar al-Assad's government and ending the Assad family's 53-year-long rule over the country. Assad fled to Moscow with his family, where he was granted asylum.

Post-Ba'athist and transitional period

Following the fall of the Assad regime, Assad's ninth prime minister Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali, with support from the opposition and Ahmed al-Sharaa, remained at his post in a caretaker capacity until a caretaker government led by Mohammed al-Bashir was formed the following day. Al-Jalali called for fresh elections so that the Syrian people may choose their new leaders.

Prior to the fall of the Assad regime, Mohammed al-Bashir headed the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) formed in the province of Idlib by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist militant organization which led the overthrow of Assad in December 2024. In general, the formation of the Transitional Government was scaling of the SSG "to the whole of Syria", as the composition of the new government was almost the same as that of the SSG. According to a report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, critics and opponents of the HTS were subject to repression in forms of enforced disappearances and tortures. Shortly after the fall of the Assad regime, Israel commenced a ground invasion of the Purple Line buffer zone near the Golan Heights, as well as commencing a series of airstrikes against Syrian military depots and naval bases. The Israeli Defense Forces claims that it is destroying Ba'athist military infrastructure, including chemical weapons plants, so that the rebels cannot use them.

Despite the collapse of the Assad regime, Turkish-backed Syrian National Army fighters in northern Syria continued their offensive against U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) forces until a ceasefire was reached on 11 December. In February 2025, the SDF, the Autonomous Administration, and the Syrian Democratic Council decided in a meeting that SDF would merge with the Syrian Armed Forces. The International Coalition against ISIS voiced support for continued dialogue between the SDF and the new Syrian government as well.

The prime minister of the transitional government, Mohammed al-Bashir, has promised to allow Christians and other minorities to continue practicing their religion without interference. However, this has been met with doubts as many rebel forces had previous connections to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The use of a variation of the *Tawhid* flag by the new government alongside the opposition flag also raised worries, as it implies that the new state may be less secular. Aisha al-Dibs was appointed as the Minister of Women's Affairs on 22 December 2024. On 12 December 2024, a

spokesman of the transitional government speaking to Agence France-Presse said that during the government's three-month term, the constitution and parliament would be suspended and that a 'judicial and human rights committee' would be established to review the constitution, prior to making amendments. On 29 January 2025, during the Syrian Revolution Victory Conference in the Presidential Palace, the Syrian General Command appointed Ahmed al-Sharaa as president for the transitional period after he had served as the *de facto* leader following the fall of the Assad regime.

In March 2025, the UK-based SOHR reported that Syrian security forces and pro-government fighters had committed a massacre of more than 1500 Alawite civilians during clashes in western Syria.

On 10 March 2025, the SDF agreed to merge with the Syrian Armed Forces after SDF leader Mazloum Abdi met with al-Sharaa. Three days later, al-Sharaa signed an interim constitution covering a five-year transitional period.

On 29 March 2025, the Syrian transitional government was announced by Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa at a ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Damascus, in which the new ministers were sworn in and delivered speeches outlining their agendas. The government replaced the Syrian caretaker government, which was formed following the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024. Since then, a number of Western governments have lifted the sanctions on Syria, most notably the United States and the United Kingdom.

Between 6 and 11 January 2026, fighting in Aleppo between Syrian government forces and the Kurdish armed group Syrian Democratic Forces had resulted in the deaths of 23 people and displaced 148,000 residents

5.1. Syrian civil war period

The **Syrian civil war** was an armed conflict that began with the Syrian revolution in March 2011, when popular discontent with the Ba'athist regime ruled by Bashar al-Assad triggered large-scale protests and pro-democracy rallies across Syria, as part of the wider Arab Spring. The Assad regime responded to the protests with lethal force, which led to a series of defections, the emergence of armed opposition groups, and the civilian uprising descending into a civil war. The war lasted almost 14 years and culminated in the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. Many sources regard this as the end of the civil war. Post-war clashes and disputes have continued into 2026.

The Syrian opposition to Bashar al-Assad began as an insurgency, forming groups such as the Free Syrian Army. Anti-Assad forces received arms and training from Qatar, Turkey, a United States-led program, and others. Pro-Assad forces received financial and military support from Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah: Iran launched a military intervention in support of the Syrian government in 2013, and

Russia followed in 2015. By this time, rebels had established the Syrian Interim Government after capturing the regional capitals of Raqqa in 2013 and Idlib in 2015. Use of chemical weapons during the war, predominantly by Syrian government forces, was the deadliest since the Iran–Iraq War. The Ghouta sarin attack was followed by unsuccessful international attempts to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons through military action or diplomacy.

In 2014, the Islamic State (IS) seized control over Eastern Syria and Western Iraq, prompting a United States-led coalition to launch an aerial bombing campaign against the IS, while providing ground support and supplies to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-dominated coalition led by the People's Defense Units (YPG). In 2016, Turkey launched an invasion of northern Syria in response to the creation of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (Rojava), while also establishing the Syrian National Army (SNA) to help it fight ISIS and pro-Assad forces.

The 2016 victory of pro-Assad forces in the four-year Battle of Aleppo marked the recapture of what had been Syria's largest city before the war. In Idlib Governorate, the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militia formed the Syrian Salvation Government, a technocratic, Islamist administration that governed the region from 2017 until 2024. Meanwhile, IS was territorially defeated in the Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor campaigns. In December 2019, regime forces launched an offensive on Idlib province, which resulted in a ceasefire lasting from 2020 until November 2024. During this period, there were regular clashes between pro-Assad forces and HTS.

HTS launched a major offensive in November 2024, joined by the SNA. Aleppo fell in three days, giving momentum to revolutionaries across the country. HTS soon captured Hama and began to advance south towards Homs. Southern rebels and the Syrian Free Army launched their own offensive, capturing Daraa, Suwayda, and Palmyra. On 8 December, Bashar al-Assad fled to Moscow as Homs fell to HTS while southern rebels entered Damascus. Assad's prime minister remained in Damascus and transferred power to a provisional government. Israel launched an invasion of Syria's Quneitra Governorate (including the UN buffer zone) from its 58-year occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights.

At the Syrian Revolution Victory Conference held at the Presidential Palace in Damascus in January 2025, the new government announced the dissolution of several armed militias and their integration into the Syrian Ministry of Defense, as well as the appointment of former HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa as president of Syria. Later that year, a Druze insurgency formed in the southern Suweida Governorate following clashes with the government and alleged sectarian violence.

The war has been fought by several factions. From 2011 to December 2024, the Syrian Arab Armed

Forces, alongside its domestic and foreign allies, represented the Syrian Arab Republic and Assad's Ba'athist government. Alternative governments rose in opposition to Assad's rule, including the Syrian Interim Government, a big-tent alliance of pro-democratic, nationalist opposition groups whose military forces consisted of the Syrian National Army (SNA) and allied Free Syrian militias. Another is the Syrian Salvation Government, whose armed forces were represented by a coalition of Sunni militias led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Independent of them is the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), also known as Rojava, whose military force is the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a multi-ethnic, Arab-majority force led by the Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG). Other competing factions include jihadist organizations such as al-Qaeda's Syrian branch Hurras al-Din (the successor of Al-Nusra Front) and the Islamic State (IS).

The civil war has also served as a proxy war as a number of foreign countries—including Turkey, Iran, Russia and the United States—have been directly involved in the conflict, providing support to opposing factions. Iran, Russia and Hezbollah supported Assad's government militarily, with Iran intervening in 2013 and Russia conducting airstrikes and ground operations in the country beginning in September 2015. In 2014, the US-led international coalition officially began conducting air and ground operations—primarily against the Islamic State, al-Qaeda elements such as Hurras al-Din and the Khorasan group and occasionally against pro-Assad forces—and has been militarily and logistically supporting factions such as the Syrian Free Army and the SDF. Turkish forces occupied parts of northern Syria and have fought the SDF, Assad government and Islamic State alike while actively supporting the SNA. Between 2011 and 2017, fighting from the Syrian civil war spilled over into Lebanon as opponents and supporters of the Syrian government traveled to Lebanon to fight and attack each other on Lebanese soil. While officially neutral, Israel exchanged border fire and conducted repeated strikes against Hezbollah and Iranian elements inside Syria, whose presence in the country it viewed as a security threat.

Violence in the war peaked during 2012–2017 amid rebel and government offensives and sectarian and Islamist violence. International organizations had accused virtually all sides involved—the Assad government, the Islamic State, opposition groups, Iran, Russia, Turkey and the US-led coalition—of severe human rights violations and massacres. The conflict had caused a major refugee crisis, with millions of people fleeing to neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan; however, a sizable minority also sought refuge in countries outside of the Middle East, with Germany alone accepting over half a million Syrians since 2011. Beginning in 2011 a number of peace initiatives were launched, including several led by the United Nations, but fighting continued.

The Siege of Deraa

The uprising initially began as a civil revolt against corruption and human rights abuses, starting with small demonstrations in January 2011, influenced by the Arab Spring. Widespread demonstrations emerged in the southern city of Deraa on March 15, 2011, hence Deraa was later referred to as the "Cradle of the Revolution"; these demonstrations quickly spread nationwide. These protests in Deraa erupted on March 6, when 15 young students, including Muawiya Sayasna, were imprisoned and tortured for writing anti-government graffiti. The graffiti included a sentence that directly alluded to the recent overthrow of the regimes of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt through popular protests, and to Bashar al-Assad, who had previously studied ophthalmology in the United Kingdom:

The children also spray-painted the slogan of the Arab Spring: "The people want the regime to be overthrown" ("الشعب يريد إسقاط النظام" "Eṣ-ṣaab yurid iskat'en-nizam"). Security forces, under the command of the city's security chief and President Assad's cousin Atif Najib, responded swiftly by rounding up the alleged perpetrators and holding them in detention for over a month. This triggered large-scale protests in Daraa Governorate that quickly spread to other provinces. According to those interviewed by Human Rights Watch, the protests in Daraa began largely peacefully. Demonstrators often carried olive branches, unbuttoned their shirts to show they were unarmed, and chanted "peace, peace" to indicate they posed no threat to security forces.

As the uprisings continued, the Syrian government launched large-scale military operations to suppress the resistance. On April 25, Daraa, which had become the focal point of the uprising, was one of the first cities to be besieged by the Syrian Army. An estimated 100 to 6,000 soldiers were deployed in the Daraa Siege, firing live ammunition at protesters and killing hundreds in a house-to-house search. The Shabiha mercenaries, loyal to the Assad dynasty, were also deployed by the Assad regime to towns and cities across the country to perpetrate violence against Syrian civilians. They looted the homes, businesses, and economic assets of the populations targeted by the Baathist military apparatus. Tanks were used against protesters for the first time, and snipers were positioned on the roofs of mosques. Mosques, used as headquarters by the protesters, were specifically targeted. Security forces began cutting off water, electricity, and telephone lines, and confiscating flour and food. Clashes between the army and opposition forces, including armed protesters and deserters, resulted in hundreds of deaths. By April 28, the Syrian Arab armed forces had cut off all communication channels and completely besieged the city of Daraa, leading to forced starvation of its inhabitants.

On April 29, a 13-year-old boy named Hamza Ali al-Khatib was arrested by Ba'athist intelligence forces during protests in the village of Saida. Hamza was held in police custody for about a month, where he was regularly subjected to torture and mutilation. On May 24, Ba'athist intelligence handed

over Hamza Ali al-Khatib's tortured and mutilated body to his family. A video of Hamza's mutilated body was uploaded to the internet, leading to large-scale protests in Deraa. During these protests, residents defied the military blockade and took to the streets in large groups to protest police repression.

On Friday, May 6, 2011, the Syrian army launched an attack and occupation of Homs, Syria's third-largest city with a population of 650,000, using tanks and soldiers. By May 12, they reportedly killed 37 residents, cut off water and sanitation services, conducted house-to-house raids to arrest hundreds of residents, and bombed the city. On May 13, 20, 21, 27, and 29, another 21 protesters were reportedly killed by security forces.

On May 7, Syrian Army units besieged Baniyas from three directions. Sunni neighborhoods were heavily shelled during the operation. On May 8, Syrian Navy boats took up positions near the city's coastline, while special forces entered the northern part of the city and opened fire heavily. The siege, which ended on May 14, resulted in the deaths of 10 protesters by the Ba'ath regime.

On May 15, 2011, the Syrian Arab Army began besieging the town of Telkele. Eight civilians were killed, and at least 2,000 people attempted to flee the city to Lebanon. Later, reports emerged that Syrian Arab Army units had massacred town residents.

In June and July 2011, protests continued with government forces repeatedly opening fire on protesters, using tanks against demonstrations, and carrying out arrests. In early June, the towns of Er-Resten and Telbise were besieged. Regime forces launched brutal attacks against the residents of Er-Resten, displacing over 80% of the population. Describing the displaced civilians as "armed terrorist groups," the Syrian Arab Armed Forces expanded their attacks on civilians who had sought refuge in nearby areas, resulting in the deaths of 127 people.

On June 3, approximately 30,000 protesters marched in Jisr al-Shughur. Security forces dispersed the crowd by firing tear gas and into the air. On June 4, 2011, the Syrian Arab Army launched a military offensive on the city of Jisr al-Shughur, killing hundreds of civilians. The city's inhabitants tried to repel the invasion by forming human shields. When Baathist commanders ordered the firing on the demonstrators, hundreds of soldiers refused to obey and deserted the army. As the Syrian army lost control of the situation, the Assad government sent helicopters to fire on the fleeing soldiers and the crowd of demonstrators. The assault on the city continued until June 12, 2011.

On July 3, Syrian tanks were deployed to Hama, two days after the city witnessed its largest demonstration against Bashar al-Assad. By the end of July, at least 95 civilians had been killed in

Hama after Baathist military forces opened fire on the crowds of residents and bombed the city streets with tanks and heavy weapons. By the end of July, the UN human rights organization estimated the number of civilian deaths to be around 2,000.

On July 29, 2011, a group of officers who had defected from the Syrian Armed Forces, led by Colonel Riyad Asad, formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The FSA aimed to protect protesters and ultimately overthrow the Bashar al-Assad regime.

On July 31, a nationwide operation called the "Ramadan Massacre" resulted in the deaths of at least 142 people and injuries to hundreds. On August 23, a coalition of anti-government groups, the Syrian National Council, was formed, based in Türkiye.

Throughout August 2011, government forces raided major urban centers and surrounding areas, continuing to attack protesters. On August 14, the Siege of Latakia continued with the Syrian Navy's first involvement in military intervention. Ground forces and security forces, supported by armored units, raided various neighborhoods, while warships fired heavy machine guns at coastal areas of Latakia. Ramadan celebrations, which began at the end of August, fell silent after security forces opened fire on protesters gathered in Homs, Daraa, and the Damascus suburbs.

By September 2011, Syrian rebels were conducting an active insurgency campaign across many parts of Syria. A major clash occurred in al-Rashtan between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Syrian Armed Forces. Between September 27 and October 1, Syrian government forces, supported by tanks and helicopters, launched an assault on the town of al-Rashtan in Homs Governorate to drive out deserters. The 2011 Battle of al-Rashtan between government forces and the FSA was the longest and most intense conflict to date. A week later, the FSA was forced to withdraw from al-Rashtan. To avoid government forces, FSA leader Colonel Riyad Asad retreated to Türkiye. Most of the rebels fled to the nearby city of Homs.

In October 2011, the FSA began receiving active support from the Turkish government, allowing the rebel army to manage its command and headquarters from Hatay province in southern Syria, near the Syrian border, and its field command from inside Syria.

In October 2011, clashes between government forces and deserting army units were regularly reported. In the first week of the month, ongoing fighting was reported in Jabal al-Zawiya in the mountains of Idlib Province. Syrian rebels also captured most of Idlib city.

In early November 2011, clashes between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and security forces escalated in Homs as the siege continued. Following six days of bombardment, the Syrian Army attacked the city on November 8, leading to fierce street fighting in many neighborhoods. Resistance in Homs was

far greater than in other towns and cities, with some opposition groups calling it the "Capital of the Revolution." Unlike events in Daraa and Hama, operations in Homs failed to quell the unrest.

In November and December 2011, as the number of opposition forces increased, there was a surge in rebel attacks. Within two months, the FSA launched deadly attacks on an air force intelligence complex in the Harasta suburb of Damascus, youth headquarters of the Ba'ath Syrian Regional Branch in Idlib Province and Damascus, an air base in Homs Governorate, and an intelligence building in Idlib. On December 15, opposition fighters killed 27 soldiers in one of the largest attacks to date against security forces, ambushing checkpoints and military bases around Daraa. The opposition suffered a major defeat on December 19 in Idlib Governorate, when a failed escape attempt resulted in the deaths of 72 deserters.

In January 2012, Assad began using large-scale artillery operations against the uprising, leading to the destruction of many civilian homes due to indiscriminate bombardment. By this time, daily protests had diminished, overshadowed by the spread of armed conflict. In January, fighting intensified in the suburbs of Damascus, with the Syrian Army expanding its use of tanks and artillery. Clashes in Zabadani began on January 7 when the Syrian Army attacked the town in an attempt to eliminate the Free Syrian Army presence. After the first phase of the war ended with a ceasefire on January 18 and the FSA took control of the town, the FSA launched an attack on nearby Douma.[120] Fighting in the town continued between January 21 and 30 until the rebels were forced to retreat as a result of a government counter-offensive. Although the Syrian Army managed to retake most of the suburbs, sporadic fighting continued. On January 29, fighting resumed in Resten; dozens of soldiers stationed at the town's checkpoints deserted and opened fire on government-aligned troops. Opposition forces took full control of the town and surrounding suburbs on February 5.

On February 3, the Syrian Army launched a major offensive in Homs to retake rebel-held neighborhoods. In early March, after weeks of artillery bombardment and intense street fighting, the Syrian Army captured the rebel stronghold of Baba Amr district. By the end of March, the Syrian Army had regained control of half a dozen districts, controlling 70% of the city. On March 14, Syrian forces recaptured Idlib from rebels after days of fighting.

The Arab League observer mission, launched in December 2011, failed in February 2012 as Syrian Ba'athist forces and rebel militants continued fighting across the country, and the Syrian Ba'ath regime prevented foreign observers from visiting active battlefields, including besieged rebel strongholds. Kofi Annan served as the UN-Arab League Special Envoy for Syria in early 2012. On April 12, both sides, the Ba'ath regime and the Free Syrian Army, entered into a UN-brokered ceasefire process.

However, this process failed. The peace plan effectively collapsed in early June, and the UN mission withdrew from Syria. Annan officially resigned in disappointment on 2 August 2012.

The ceasefire effectively collapsed on May 25, 2012, with the Hula Massacre, in which 108 people were executed, and the subsequent nationwide offensive by the Free Syrian Army against the Ba'ath regime. On June 5, clashes erupted in Haffa and surrounding villages in Latakia Province. Ba'ath regime forces, supported by helicopter-equipped armed ships, engaged in the heaviest fighting in the province since the uprising began. The Ba'ath regime seized the area after days of fighting and artillery fire. On June 6, 78 civilians were killed in the al-Qubair Massacre. The Ba'ath regime reportedly began bombing the village before the Shabiha militias entered. On June 12, 2012, the UN declared the conflict in Syria a civil war. On June 22, a Turkish F-4 fighter jet was shot down by the Ba'ath regime, killing both pilots. Bashar al-Assad publicly apologized for the incident, and no intervention took place.

On July 10, rebels captured al-Qusayr in Homs province after weeks of fighting, and by mid-July, they had captured Saraqib in Idlib province. Fighting intensified in Damascus, and a major rebel offensive began to seize the city. On July 18, Syrian Defense Minister Daoud Rajiha, former defense minister Hassan Turkmani, and the president's brother-in-law, General Asif Shawkat, were killed in a suicide bombing attack in Damascus claimed by the Liwa al-Islam, a Free Syrian Army unit.

By mid-July, rebels attacking Damascus were repelled within two weeks, but fighting continued on the outskirts. After that, the focus shifted to the struggle for control of Aleppo. On September 19, opposition forces seized a border crossing between Syria and Turkey in Raqqa province. This crossing was expected to provide strategic and logistical advantages to the opposition forces due to Turkish support for the rebels, whose headquarters were later moved from southern Türkiye to northern Syria. In October, opposition forces seized control of Ma'arret al-Nu'man in Idlib province, on the highway connecting Damascus to Aleppo, and captured Duma, increasing their influence in Rif Damascus.

Lakhdar Brahimi arranged a ceasefire in late October during Eid al-Adha, but it quickly collapsed. Following the expiration of Lakhdar Brahimi's ceasefire agreement on October 30, the Ba'ath regime expanded its air bombardment of Damascus. The bombing of Jobar district in Damascus was the first instance of a warplane being used to bomb Damascus. The following day, Syrian Air Force commander General Abdullah Mahmoud al-Khalidi was killed by rebels in the Rukneddin district of Damascus. In early November 2012, rebels made significant gains in northern Syria. The capture of Serakib in Idlib province, located on the M5 highway, further isolated Aleppo. Due to a shortage of anti-aircraft weapons, rebel forces attempted to neutralize the Ba'ath regime's air power by destroying helicopters and planes landing at air bases.

On November 18, after weeks of intense fighting, rebels seized control of Base 46 in Aleppo province, one of the largest bases of the Ba'ath regime in northern Syria, killing approximately 300 regime soldiers. On November 22, rebels captured the Mayadin military base in Deir ez-Zor province in the east of the country, gaining control of a large area east of the base, stretching to the Iraqi border. In late December, rebel forces advanced towards Damascus, seizing control of the adjacent Yarmouk and Palestinian refugee camps. They launched an offensive on Hama capturing three-quarters of Hama's western countryside and, around the same time, the town of Haram near the Turkish border in Idlib province.

Syrian opposition groups, including the al-Nusra Front, seized full control of the Taftanaz airbase on January 11, 2013, the town of al-Tawrah in Raqqa province and the nearby Tabqa Dam, Syria's largest dam and a major source of hydroelectric power, on February 11, the following day the Jarrah airbase, 60 kilometers (37 miles) east of Aleppo, and on February 14 the town of Shaddadah in al-Hasakah Province near the Iraqi border.

On March 2, fierce fighting broke out between opposition and Ba'ath regime forces in Raqqa city, with numerous casualties reported on both sides. On March 6, opposition forces captured Raqqa city, making it the first provincial capital lost by the Ba'ath regime.

On March 18, the Syrian Air Force launched its first attack on opposition positions in Lebanon. The attack took place in the Wadi al-Hail Valley area near the town of Aarsal. On March 21, a suspected suicide bombing at the Iman Mosque in the Mazraa region killed 41 people, including the pro-Baath regime Sunni cleric Sheikh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti. On March 23, several opposition groups seized the 38th Division air defense base in the southern Daraa province near a highway connecting Damascus to Jordan. The following day, they captured a 25 km strip of land near the Jordanian border.

6. The future plans of the new Syrian Government

The new administration, beginning with the restructuring of the political system and the state, was modeled as a transitional period. Parliamentary elections were planned during this period, but with a portion of the parliament elected by the people and the remainder directly appointed by the government. This is considered a model of controlled transition and the preservation of central authority, alongside the classic democracy we all know. The long-term goals were to create a new constitution and establish a more inclusive system. The main plan

was to reorganize the military and administrative integration within the country, reunifying the state as a single entity; this was the greatest desire of the state leaders. The primary goal was to achieve a ceasefire with the SDF and conclude integration agreements. Some of the plans included: ensuring the integration of local administrations into the central government, unifying the SDF's military structure within the state, and then transferring control of oil and gas fields to the state. However, this process was very fragile and fraught with crises; these things could not be accomplished due to ongoing trust issues and the continuing risk of conflict between the parties. Next came security and military strategies. The initial aim was to create a single army throughout the country and disband armed groups. In ethnic and social policies, the new government granted some rights to the Kurds, such as cultural rights and language and identity reforms, but simultaneously maintained military pressure and forced integration. In short, there was a balance of "grant rights, but don't lose control." In economic and resource management, regaining state control over oil, gas, etc., and turning the lifting of sanctions into an opportunity were among the top priorities.

6.1. Domestic Play

I'd like to reiterate what I'm about to discuss, even though I mentioned it above: if we're going to specify power consolidation, the aim is to rebuild the state's weakened authority. It aims to completely eliminate armed groups, limit the independence of local governments, and consolidate all military structures under a single army. They want to initiate a transformation process from a multi-centered structure to a single-centered state. One of the most important aspects to mention is the controlled political system. The new administration is not transitioning to full democracy; the planned structural development involves partial election systems along with partial appointments, but these appointments are designed to be made at critical times. Working with leader-focused systems, often referred to as strong executives, means this model provides short-term stability but carries the risk of authoritarianism in the long term. In terms of ethnic and sectarian balance, Syria's fragmented cultural structure plays a critical role in domestic politics. Initially, the Kurds are prioritized, with their political and military autonomy still restricted despite the granting of rights. The preservation of the Arab majority as the main pillar of the state can lead to conflicts among these ethnic groups. Subsequently, attempts are made to integrate other groups—Alawites, Druze, and Christians—into the system, but central control is never relinquished. Regarding the security-oriented state approach, the new government's domestic policy is forced to prioritize security because the perception of internal threats is high, and intelligence and military structures are strengthened, while opposition elements are subjected to very strict control. They strive to increase public support and promote a discourse of

stability and security by maintaining social control and legitimacy, and the media plays a crucial role in this. Control is being exercised through national unity rhetoric and the use of external threats. In terms of transitional policies, this government is proceeding with a transitional administration structured in a way that will not result in a permanent system. The reason for this is the preparation of a new constitution and the creation of an electoral infrastructure.

7.2. Military Policy

The fundamental doctrine was to ensure a transition to a single army and a single command. This required the disbandment of militia groups, followed by the elimination or integration of opposition armed structures, and the subordination of local forces to central command. This was an attempt to correct the fragmented military structure that had persisted in Syria for years. Then there are the SDF/YPG policies, which can be considered the most critical aspect. The issues of the Democratic Forces in northeastern Syria are at the center of this policy. The plans here involve limiting heavy weapons, integrating these elements into the Syrian army, and then completely transferring regional control to the state. Internal security priorities include these situations, not with a classic army, but with a structure focused on internal security, suppressing rebellions, combating terrorism (we will address this in a later section), and the security of cities. In the regional military control strategy, the goal is to gradually take over all regions one by one, using diplomacy, agreements, and limited operations. Regarding external actors, the balance of power policy is a major factor. Following Türkiye, the US, Russia, and Israel will try to win through small, low-profile operations and diplomacy until they can consolidate their military capacity, avoiding direct, large-scale conflict. Especially against Israel, deterrence rhetoric will be used instead of direct war, but the current limitations of actual capacity are a problem. Army modernization is part of a long-term plan; it aims for a transition to professional armies, reorganizing the command and control chain, and consolidating air power and armored units. However, the reality is that they do not have the economic capacity to support this, and... In the new administration, asymmetric warfare capacity does not rely entirely on conventional force, but rather on expanding irregular warfare intelligence networks and prioritizing hybrid warfare doctrines.

6.2. Foreign Policy

The new government had several plans in place to put itself at the forefront of international recognition, followed by legitimacy initiatives. The most important goals were official recognition

and the development of diplomatic relations with all countries, aiming for the complete lifting of sanctions imposed on their country. Following this, they expected further developments, expectations that were definitely desired by the state. These expectations included diplomatic openings with European countries, a return to regional organizations, and participation in international conferences, thus strengthening their foreign policy and establishing greater connections with the world. The shortcomings in foreign policy would continue to cause significant domestic and international problems; therefore, the new government prioritized foreign policy.

Firstly, establishing new relations with Turkey was a key objective. The primary goal was to fully secure the border and eliminate terrorist elements. Secondly, there was the return of refugees from Türkiye to the country, a situation that would both address some domestic issues and... While causing security problems, the newly formed government, wanting its own people to trust them, began calling on them to return to their country. And, adding to the previous sentence, they argue that Türkiye should take significant steps in northern Syria to ensure a military balance in the region. The expected developments here are: increased diplomatic talks with Turkey, followed by the creation of joint security mechanisms, and finally, efforts to reach a common ground on the SDF/YPG issue.

Following this, the initiation of normalization processes with the US is desired, with the lifting of sanctions being the main goal, alongside the establishment of key negotiating areas regarding the SDF. The expectations here are a gradual increase in diplomatic contacts and confidence-building measures, along with limited cooperation in the energy and security sectors. The only problem is that a full alliance is not expected in the current situation, and a more controlled relationship is being sought.

Following these two countries, efforts should be made to re-establish a balance of power with Russia. This idea has been discussed again since the new government came to power. Although Russia was the biggest supporter of the old regime, the new government does not want to completely sever relations with Russia, but rather to reduce dependence on it. The expected developments here are to reconsider and decide on the status of military bases, and then proceed accordingly. The biggest strategy here is Russia. The aim was to pursue such a policy with the goal of making the country independent without losing its statehood. Following this, managing tensions with Israel became one of the biggest problems. The new government did not want to directly wage war with Israel and wanted to work with them to reduce border tensions. The expectation was to reduce tensions slightly through indirect contacts while maintaining a firm rhetoric. In short, while there was a de facto reduction in tension, the rhetoric would remain firm.

Finally, there was the initiation of economic development with the Gulf and Arab countries. The goal

here was to attract investment through innovations and then finance new construction projects. Expectations included support for infrastructure projects, investments in the country's energy sector, and the provision of financial support packages. In summary, it was stated that a multifaceted balancing act was being attempted, a policy that would prevent the country from becoming completely dependent on anyone.

6.3. Terrorist Situations Within the Country

One of the new government's biggest problems was the terrorism issue. One reason this problem remained unresolved was that the definition of "terrorist" varied widely, preventing a solution. The fundamental goals here stemmed from the elimination of armed groups and their integration into the state. The main approach, in short, was to leave no independent armed forces. The strategy involves disbanding armed groups, integrating those who surrender into the system, and conducting military operations against resisting organizations. In short, it's a "join or be killed" strategy. The main groups targeted fall into two categories: firstly, radical organizations whose policies involve direct military operations, complete elimination, and international cooperation, and who are heavily funded by various states. Secondly, there are structures like the SDF and YPG, which are defined as Syria's democratic forces. Although the new government doesn't define them as terrorists, their armed autonomy is absolutely unacceptable, and they are constantly pressured into integration with the state. In short, the government is trying to control them without eliminating them. Regarding the methods to be applied, military operations will initially focus on targeted operations, followed by regional cleansing operations and increased concentration in border regions. Secondly, there is the focus on intelligence and security networks. The primary goal here is to improve internal intelligence and, in the case of cell-type organizations, to dismantle that intelligence network. Thus, urban security control will be ensured, and amnesty and integration policies will be continued. These policies will allow them to be pardoned, join the army, and then transition to public service. International cooperation is also being sought; while receiving support from the US against ISIS, assistance is received from Türkiye regarding border security and the YPG, and military and intelligence assistance is received from Russia. Looking at the legal and political dimensions, the new government wants to revise the anti-terrorism laws and even supports the opening of new courts for this purpose, and in addition, they can use broad powers under the name of national security. Finally, we will mention propaganda and ideological struggles; these help prevent radicalization, from taking control in education and media to legitimizing the authority of the state.

7. Promises of the New Government

Finally, I would like to summarize the promises made by the state in a few sentences. One of these

promises was that the unity and territorial integrity of Syria would be preserved, meaning that the country is now absolutely opposed to division. This means that federal structures or independent regions are definitely not wanted. Following this, there was the slogan "ONE ARMY, ONE STATE," used both militarily and politically, meaning that everyone in the country would fight for one place. Then came the idea that there is no place for terrorism in Syria. With the spread of this idea throughout the state, unity and solidarity began to increase. And one of the most important promises was offering an inclusive state for all Syrians. This means that Kurds, Arabs, and other minorities will be included, but control will remain with the central government.

8. Questions to be Addressed

- What strategies should the new Syrian government adopt to eliminate remaining terrorist organizations while maintaining civil stability?
- How should Syria redefine its diplomatic relations with neighboring and regional countries?
- How should the Syrian government manage the return and reintegration of millions of refugees?
- What decision will the government make regarding the prosecution and forgiveness of war criminals?

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