UNSC
STUDY GUIDE

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ROYA ALHARİRİ
BOARD MEMBER

MARYAM EL SALEH
BOARD MEMBER

EBRAHİM ABOZAR
ACADEMIC ASSISTANT

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Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to ITUMUN 2026.

By choosing to take part in this conference, you have already done something meaningful: you have chosen dialogue over indifference, understanding over assumption, and engagement over silence. In a world increasingly shaped by division, conflict, and uncertainty, such choices matter.

Today's international landscape is marked by ongoing conflicts, humanitarian crises, and profound global challenges that demand more than rhetoric. They demand informed, open-minded, and principled individuals, particularly from the younger generation, who are willing to listen, to question, and to act responsibly. MUNs offers precisely this space: one where ideas are tested, diplomacy is practised, and perspectives are broadened.

As delegates, you are not merely representing states or institutions; you are actually engaging in the art of negotiation, the discipline of research, and the responsibility of decision-making. Approach this experience with curiosity, respect, and intellectual courage. Learn not only from debate, but from one another.

On behalf of the Secretariat, I sincerely hope that ITUMUN 2026 will challenge you, inspire you, and leave you better equipped to contribute to a more peaceful and cooperative world.

I wish you a rewarding conference and every success in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,
Abdullah Kikati
Secretary-General

Letter from the Board

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Security Council at this edition of ITUMUN. I am honored to serve as your Chair, and I look forward to what I am confident will be a high-level and engaging committee.

I strongly encourage every delegate to do the necessary research for both agenda items. Strong speeches come from strong research, and meaningful solutions require an understanding of both your country's interests and the realities on the ground. I recognize this may feel like a lot of information to digest. However, you were selected to take part in this committee for a reason. Each of you has the ability to handle complex issues, defend policy with confidence, and negotiate under pressure, and I am confident that you will rise to the challenge.

Agenda Item II carries particular weight for me, and I am genuinely excited to see how you engage with it through thoughtful debate.

Warm Regards,
Roya Alhariri, Maryam El-Saleh, Ebrahim Abozar
Board Members, United Nations Security Council

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1.   Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN) and holds the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Established in 1945 following the devastation of World War II, the Council was designed to foster collective security and prevent future conflicts by providing a platform for diplomacy and decisive action. Operating under the framework of the UN Charter, it is one of the most powerful and influential organs within the international system.

The UNSC is unique in its ability to make legally binding decisions that all UN member states are obligated to implement, setting it apart from other UN organs. It is authorised to take a range of measures to address threats to peace, including imposing economic sanctions, approving military interventions, and deploying peacekeeping forces to conflict zones. Its resolutions and mandates are central to international efforts in conflict resolution, crisis management, and the enforcement of international law.

The member states in the council are divided into two categories;

Five permanent members (P5): China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These nations wield the influential power of veto, allowing any one of them to block substantive resolutions regardless of majority support.

Non-permanent members, elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, with seats distributed to ensure geographic representation across different regions of the world.

The UNSC's agenda is extensive and addresses some of the most pressing global challenges, including armed conflicts, nuclear non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and the protection of civilians in war zones. It also plays a significant role in overseeing the implementation of peace agreements and supporting the establishment of post-conflict stability and governance.

2. Agenda Item I: Election of the UN Secretary-General

2.1. Introduction

Article 97 of the United Nations Charter: *The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Organization may require. The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. He shall be the chief administrative officer of the Organization.*

As stated in the UN Charter, the Secretary-General (SG) is the chief administrative officer of the United Nations, responsible for overseeing the work of the UN system. The SG implements mandates issued by the UN's principal organs and serves as a central, diplomatic coordinating figure in international affairs. The election is therefore one of the most consequential responsibilities of the UN Security Council.

Beyond formal administrative functions, the SG wields substantial political and diplomatic influence through mediation, preventive diplomacy, and public advocacy; they generally play a critical role in shaping international responses to conflicts and crises. This is especially crucial in situations brought before the Security Council.

The relevance of this election to the Security Council lies in the Council's exclusive authority to recommend a single candidate to the General Assembly. This process reflects not only procedural requirements but also prevailing geopolitical dynamics and power relations within the council. As such, the selection of a Secretary-General often embodies broader debates concerning reform of the institution as a whole, or the intricate balance of state sovereignty and international intervention.

In this context, the election of the Secretary-General is more than just a procedural decision; it is a strategic decision made by the Security Council on the United Nations' future direction, leadership approach, and political role.

2.2. Candidates

2.2.1. Main responsibilities of the Secretary General

Administrative: the Secretary General is in charge of the UN secretariat which serves as the organization's executive body and manages all aspects of its operations, including media, relations, translation, and research .Over 36,000 people work in the secretariat, and each secretary general has approached his administrative duties in a unique way.The deputy secretary general position was established later on during Annan's administration to manage daily operations.

Human resources: The secretary general appoints undersecretaries to more than fifty UN positions, including heads of organizations like the UNDP and the UN children's fund, after they were already nominated by member states or executive boards. The Secretary General's responsibility in guaranteeing widespread regional representation in UN leadership is highlighted by the frequent pressure by member states to fill these positions with local citizens.

Peacekeeping: The undersecretary in charge of that department, which controls about twelve activities globally, is appointed by the secretary-general's office, which also supervises peacekeeping missions. A peacekeeping mission may be started by the General Assembly or the Security Council, but the Secretariat has operational authority. The UN peace and security framework has undergone a number of modifications under Guterres, including his Action for Peacekeeping plan in 2018. By enacting changes in eight key areas, such as raising gender parity among peacekeepers, enhancing coordination with local governments, and strengthening accountability for mistakes, this initiative seeks to improve peacekeeping operations.

Mediation: As part of the position's "good offices" responsibilities, the secretary-general maintains independence and impartiality in order to prevent and reduce conflict. In the past, UN leaders have acted as mediators, such as Hammarskjöld's support of a ceasefire between Israel and Arab states and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's (1982-1991) efforts to negotiate a ceasefire to end the Iran-Iraq War. The secretary-general also assigns representatives to arrange peace agreements. However, because these representatives answer to the Security Council, their appointments are frequently affected by its members' preferences. In 2017, for example, the United States opposed Guterres' selection of former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as ambassador to Libya. The intervention raised the question of whether such appointments are subject to approval by the Security Council, as the UN Charter authorizes the Secretary-General to make the decision.

<center>**2.2.2. Potential candidates**</center>

1. **Amina J. Mohammed (Nigeria)**

Amina J. Mohammed, a Nigerian British diplomat who is serving as the 5th deputy secretary general of the UN, amina was previously the environmental nigerian minister. With her extensive background in sustainable development, humanitarian coordination, deep UN experience, and institutional continuity, in addition to being a consensus-friendly figure with strong ties to both the global south and Western states, which makes her acceptable to multiple blocs. All these qualifications make her a strong potential candidate; however, the only concern remains here, since she is the current deputy secretary general, she is closely associated with the current UN leadership, which may limit the possibility for change.

2. **Helen Clark (New Zealand)**

Helen Clark is a politician from New Zealand that served as the 37th Prime Minister of New Zealand and then later on as the Administrator of the UNDP. With her extensive UN leadership and work experience, and her strong record in governance reform and crisis management, she is another great potential Secretary General.

3. Michelle Bachelet (Chile)

Michelle Bachelet is a Chilean politician and physician who has served twice as President of Chile and previously as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated strong leadership in both national governance and multilateral diplomacy, combining executive experience with deep engagement in international human rights mechanisms. Her background has given her credibility across both the Global South and developed states, while her tenure at the UN showcased her ability to operate within politically sensitive environments and manage pressure from major powers. Bachelet is often viewed as a consensus-oriented candidate with extensive institutional knowledge of the UN system.

4. Moussa Faki Mahamat (Chad)

Moussa Faki Mahamat is a politician and a diplomat from Chad. He is serving as the chairperson of the African Union Commission. Mr Mahamat has deep experience in regional diplomacy and mediation; he symbolizes strengthened UN and AU cooperation. Additionally, he possesses a strong and in-depth understanding of peace and security challenges in the Global South.

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2.3. Procedure

The election of the Secretary-General follows a two-stage process established under the United Nations Charter, in which the Security Council holds decisive authority by recommending a single candidate to the General Assembly. Therefore, in this committee, delegates are expected to act exclusively within SC's role, simulating the phases of the processes stated below, starting with the recommendation phase.

2.3.1 Security Council Recommendation Process

Within the SC, the recommendation process of a Secretary General for the UN is divided into 3 significant stages. The first stage involves the establishment and circulation of a list of candidates by the President of the Security Council. This list is established based on written nominations from member countries (currently 191) or regional groups and is circulated among Council members. The list may be updated if and when necessary.

Moving to the second stage, it focuses on the search for consensus in informal settings. Discussions and consultations will start among the council members, especially the 5 permanent members,any of whom can exercise a veto to defeat a candidate. Moreover, when the number of candidates is large or when the consensus is unsettled yet, each ambassador represents one of the 15 countries that make up the U.N. Security Council, will be given a stack of white ballot papers marked with the names of the nine candidates who want to lead the organization for the next five years. Rather than vote for one or more aspirants, the ambassadors will indicate whether they "encourage," "discourage," or have "no opinion" on each candidate. However, these straw polls have no formal legal basis under the UN charter, but they become a customary mechanism for evaluating candidates' ability and also identify potential vetoes without showing public positions

The third and final stage of the recommendation process involves the formal adoption of recommendations; however, it is done in private meetings. In these meetings, the council members vote by secret ballot; these ballots are marked "Permanent member" and "Non-permanent member" for the other members. Once a single final candidate secures the required support and ensures a no veto procedure, the council recommends his/her appointment as Secretary General to the General Assembly by a resolution adopted unanimously. Later on, the decision of the Council is communicated to the General Assembly by letter from the Council President to the President of the General Assembly and a communiqué which may indicate the results of the votes taken by the Council and the stage reached.

2.3.2 Voting Threshold and Decision-Making

In accordance with Article 27 of the United Nations, a candidate must receive the support of at least 9 of the 15 council members, including each of the P5 members in order to be

recommended. The VETO POWER, a defining power that can only be used by the five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), is one power that constantly flips the roles, so regardless of the total number of votes or the support of the other non-permanent members, one of the main functions of the veto power is to directly disqualify a candidate if any one of these five permanent members gave a negative vote. In a nutshell, the decision-making process extends beyond the numerical voting thresholds and is highly influenced by the political negotiations that aim to avoid vetoes

This dynamic of the decision-making within the council consists of a dual logic where there are formal voting requirements and informal political consensus. So even if the non-permanent members contribute to building validity and momentum around a candidate, the final and decisive factor will remain in the hands of the permanent members, and whether they accept this candidate or not, which highly explains the reason behind the several candidates' elimination during informal discussions and before reaching the formal vote

2.3.3 Customary Practices

Beyond the formal procedures that are established by the UN charter, the election of the Secretary-General is also shaped by some customary practices and informal norms that have been going on for a long time. In addition to that, these practices, regardless of their legality and formality, play a significant role in influencing the council on which candidates are considered politically valid. For example, one of the most important customary practices is the regional rotation, where there has always been an informal expectation that the position of the Secretary-General should rotate among different geographical regions to ensure a fair representation within the UN system. Actually, this practice had always affected the candidate selection, with certain regions receiving stronger consideration depending on the specific election cycle. For example, in recent years, due to the underrepresentation of some regions like Africa, there is a greater call for representation, and they have already gained diplomatic attention

2.3.4 Role of the General Assembly

After the recommendation by the Security Council, the selection process moves to the General Assembly president after receiving a letter from the SC, where the formal appointment of the Secretary General will be made. The Assembly considers the recommendation and votes on it either by acclamation or by secret ballot. Unless the Assembly itself determines that a two-thirds vote is required, the appointment of the Secretary-General is confirmed by a simple majority of the members present and voting in the Assembly meeting. Regardless of not being able to nominate an alternative candidate or amend the SC's recommendation, the general assembly's mission is not purely symbolic. Their vote also serves as the formal expression of the collective will of the whole UN's members. In this way, the assembly will be transforming a politically negotiated recommendation into an appointment that is accepted worldwide.

Historically, the General Assembly has never rejected a candidate that is formally recommended by the Security Council, and this shows the political reality that rejection could lead to serious diplomatic tensions and institutional deference to the Council's authority. However, in recent years, the General Assembly procedures in the selection process have increased. Additionally, the General Assembly's procedural involvement in the selection process has increased in recent years. The Assembly's role in setting expectations for leadership style, accountability, and priorities has been strengthened by reforms intended to increase transparency, such as public discussions with candidates and the distribution of vision statements. These changes increase the Assembly's influence over the standards used to evaluate candidates, even though they do not change the Assembly's legal powers.

2.4. Context of the Election

Delegates of the security council must understand the main reason of why reaching a consensus may be challenging in the current international situation, which includes conflict between major states, concerns about institutional reform,and with the current international situation, which includes the conflicts between major states, concerns about institutional reform, and also changing expectations about the UN's role in global governance and also why some candidates receive more support or opposition even when they meet the formal requirements.

2.4.1. Geopolitical Polarization Affecting the Election

The rising level of geopolitical polarization within the international system is one of the most significant contextual elements affecting the election, especially with the escalating disagreements over concerns like armed conflict, intervention, sanctions, and global governance. In recent years, all of these disagreements have been causing more tension between major powers which is directly affecting the Security council especially among the permanent members.

Geopolitical polarization reduces the selection of candidates considered acceptable by all the permanent members. P5 members usually oppose or threaten to use the veto power against candidates who are considered to be closely associated with the foreign policy stances or interests of a specific power bloc. Therefore, the council is always willing to support candidates who are seen as diplomatically balanced, politically cautious and also able to maintain cooperative relationships across the ideological divisions.

2.4.2. SG Authority Reforms and Backlash

Over time, the UN secretary general's power has been increasing, and he/she has become more involved in agenda setting, public advocacy, mediation, and proactive diplomacy on topics including human rights, climate change, and conflict resolution. Therefore, the ongoing discussions about the Secretary General's power and scope are another

major contextual issue. Some member states consider that this increased involvement is nothing but an abuse of power; many see it as essential to an efficient UN.

Therefore, the calls for changes that would increase the secretary general's authority and independence have been opposed, especially from nations that are worried about independence and sovereignty. This type of conflict affects what type of leadership approach the SC considers appropriate, which in fact also affects the election process. For example, council members might at times favor a candidate who puts more efforts on diplomatic silence and administrative cooperation than into public political involvement.

Delegates should understand here that the outcome of this debate will not just have an impact on the election of the new Secretary General but also on their ability to act independently while in office. As a result, delegates must take this into consideration when choosing candidates.

2.4.3. Expectation of the Elected SG

Another important element of the election's background is the expectations made of the upcoming Secretary General. The Secretary General is expected to serve as both an objective administrator and an ethical leader on the international level in a time of continuous conflicts, humanitarian crises, climate-related instability, and decreasing optimism regarding multilateral institutions.

In addition to that,t having the ability to respond effectively to emerging crisis, Both of the members states and the international public are expecting the secretary general to show diplomatic professionalism, political moderation and ethical credibility, and usually these requests go beyond the official authority of the position, resulting in a gap between the secretary general's legal authority and of the international community.

3.   Agenda Item II: Regional Stability in the Middle East: Post-Revolution Syria and its Implications on Regional Peace and Development

3.1.   Introduction

The post-revolution transitional period in Syria represents one of the most significant political and security transitions in the modern Middle East. This period has had a direct impact on the current regional stability, cross-border security, and international peace. While the end of the centralized Ba'athist rule has created opportunities for political restructuring and reconstruction, the transitional phase remains highly fragile due to fragmented governance, the continued influence of armed non-state actors, and foreign military presence. However, the situation in Syria is not confined to domestic affairs. Developments within Syrian territory continue to shape regional dynamics for many reasons, most notably the involvement of regional and international powers and transnational security threats. Furthermore, disputes over sovereignty, including cross-border operations and recurring violations of territorial integrity, raise urgent concerns regarding escalation and border destabilization across the Middle East.

Regional stability in the Middle East is directly influenced by Syria's evolving conditions because of several interlinked factors. Firstly, Syria remains a critical geographic and strategic node: it borders Türkiye, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel-occupied territories, meaning that insecurity inside Syria has a direct spillover effect on surrounding states. Secondly, the Syrian crisis has already generated a mass humanitarian crisis with significant displacement and refugee numbers that have placed economic and social burdens on host countries that have consistently amplified political tensions within them. Lastly, Syria's territory continues to serve as a contested space in which states pursue military, political, and intelligence objectives, raising the probability of escalation.

Aside from security challenges, Syria's post-revolution transition is also a major test of economic recovery and sustainable development. Years of conflict have weakened infrastructure, national institutions, and most (if not all) public services. This has made stability dependent on the ability of the interim governance structures to restore security and deliver basic services in addition to building political inclusion. Without stabilization, Syria is at major risk of an "instability corridor" enabling arms trafficking, organized crime, illicit economies, and extremist recruitment that have all historically threatened peace and development in the Middle East.

The main focus of this agenda is navigating the challenge of supporting a stable and sovereign transition by balancing security interests, humanitarian obligations, regional alliances, and international law. The post-revolutionary environment also escalates controversial debates on sovereignty and intervention, since many foreign operations and externally supported forces might be justified through counterterrorism or border security

objectives, but are also concerned with long-term fragmentation. This transition is further shaped by debates over transitional justice, where accountability for past crimes must be balanced against priorities of reconciliation and political stability. It is also shaped by the question of minority protection, as periods of domestic uncertainty and regional tension can expose communities to insecurity, displacement, or politicization.

From the UN's perspective, Syria remains one of the most complex regional issues shaped by extensive involvement yet constrained by geopolitical tensions. The topic must be approached as a security, legal, and diplomatic issue in addition to being a major humanitarian and reconstruction-based issue. The debate is anticipated to be over sovereignty vs intervention and accountability vs stability. Ultimately, regional peace depends on whether Syria can achieve a balanced transition combining security consolidation, political legitimacy, and sustainable development, and the council's aim should be to propose feasible measures that reduce escalation risks and support long-term stability.

3.2. Key Terminology

Ba'athism: A pan-Arab political ideology that emerged in the mid-20th century, calling for Arab unity, free from foreign, specifically Western, influence. It emphasizes Arab identity and nationalism, often combined with the concept of state-led development and strong centralized governance.

Syrian Ba'athism: Shaped by Syria's internal political history, the interpretation prioritized centralized authority and national sovereignty. In practice, it became closely associated with the ruling state and security institutions, maintaining political control through a strong executive system.

Assadism: a neo-Ba'athist political system shaped by the policies of Hafez al-Assad after the 1970 coup, which institutionalized the Assad family's leadership over Syria through a highly personalized, centralized model of rule. It relied on the Ba'ath party and state institutions, especially the military, security forces, and bureaucracy, to control political and social life, create a "coup-proof" governance structure, and preserve the regime's dominance. This was done through loyalty networks and favoritism, with the ruling class and most influential figures being part of the Alawite community, a minority sect of Islam.

Hay'at Tahrir Al Sham (HTS): Translated to " Organization for the Liberation of al-Sham," is an armed political-military coalition that emerged from earlier government-opposition factions (including Al Nusra) during the Revolution and became a major force in parts of the freed northwestern Syria. Led by Ahmed Al Sharaa, HTS developed significant influence in northwest Syria, operating not only as a military force but also as a governance actor through administrative and security structures in areas under its control. Following the liberation of Syria, it has since been formally dissolved and integrated into emerging state institutions, ending its status as an independent armed organization.

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Al Nusra Front: A key precursor to HTS, partly led by Ahmed Al Sharaa, is a major armed faction that emerged during the early days of the Syrian conflict and became one of the most organized Salafi-jihadist forces operating in Syria, fighting against the government. It gained influence through battlefield effectiveness and alliances with local armed groups.

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): A Kurdish-led coalition formed in 2015, controlling large areas in northeastern Syria, including 3 provinces. With many alleged violations against civilians and detainees, including reports of arbitrary detention and abuse, it remains a central actor in Syria's post-conflict landscape due to its pursuit of political autonomy / decentralized self-governance within Syria.

Druze: A religious and cultural community in the Middle East, with a distinct identity and traditions. In Syria, the Druze population is present mainly in Southern Syria (especially Suwayda province). Since the liberation, they have emphasized local autonomy and decentralized governance. Israel's hostile actions in Southern Syria have often been framed as protection of Druze communities, shaping a politically sensitive dynamic.

Non-State Armed Actor: An armed group that fights or controls territory outside the official state military. In Syria, many such groups influence security, governance, and territorial control.

Transitional Justice: A set of political and legal processes used after conflict or authoritarian rule to address past abuses, including accountability, reparations, and institutional reform. In Syria, transitional justice debates focus on war crimes, detention abuses, enforced disappearances, and how to balance justice with reconciliation during the transition.

Political Pluralism: As a political philosophy, it is the diversity within a political body, which is seen to permit the peaceful coexistence of different interests, convictions, ideologies, and lifestyles.

3.3. Historical Background

3.3.1. Foundations of Authoritarian Governance

Modern Syrian governance was decisively shaped after Hafez al-Assad assumed power in 1970, consolidating what became a highly powerful centralized political system. The state was reorganized around a strong executive authority, with the ruling structure relying heavily on the Ba'ath party, the military, and an extensive security and intelligence apparatus. At the time, the goal of creating a strong, unified government was to prevent fragmentation of the country by creating stability for the government. The creation of this stability effectively restricted any political competition and pluralism.

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Hafez al-Assad's system of government established what analysts describe as a "coup-proof" state; specifically, he created a situation where key military and security appointments were made in a way that limited internal threats to his rule and prevented the emergence of alternative power centres. The loyalty networks established under Hafez al-Assad provided avenues for political advancement, institutional preservation, and strengthened his personal rule as well as the long-term survival of his regime. This created a political culture in which the regime and the state were treated as one, upheld through security institutions.

While the Assad era expanded state capacity in certain sectors and promoted narratives of sovereignty and Arab nationalism, its governance model also contributed to long-term structural weaknesses. The limited space for political opposition, restricted civil society, and centralization of authority meant that socioeconomic and political grievances were often managed through security-driven approaches rather than inclusive political mechanisms. These conditions formed part of the deeper background behind Syria's later crisis.

3.3.2. Pre-Revolution Ba'athist Regime

In the decades preceding the 2011 uprising, Syria remained governed under the Ba'athist state framework shaped by the Assad-era institutional design. What characterized this era of politics was centralized decision-making and the significant weakening of political pluralism. At the same time, the security and intelligence apparatus were regulating and controlling public activity. While stability was presented as a national priority, the system faced growing structural pressure due to governance limitations and growing public dissatisfaction.

Another key characteristic of this period was the expansion of governmental corruption and patronage-based governance. Access to employment, permits, contracts, and economic opportunity often depended on personal connections and loyalty networks rather than transparent institutions. This increased public distrust significantly and reinforced inequality within the population, creating marginalized regions and groups towards which public services and opportunities were limited. Over time, corruption became not only an economic issue but also a political one, shaping how communities viewed the legitimacy of state authority.

From an economic standpoint, Syria had experienced an uneven pattern of economic growth, resulting in significant amounts of social strain. Increasing unemployment, poverty levels, and declining public services, with a growing concentration of wealth among those connected to the ruling elite, had heightened the level of grievance throughout the country. With limited channels for meaningful political participation and accountability, social frustration increasingly accumulated without institutional release. By the late 2000s, the reliance of the Syrian government on security enforcement and elite loyalty structures created conditions in which regional political upheaval and localised protests could rapidly escalate into a national crisis.

3.3.3.   Start of the Revolution

The Syrian revolution commenced at the start of 2011, within the context of the Arab Spring protests that spread across the region. These movements questioned the authority of governments in various Arab countries. In Syria, the first protests were mainly peaceful and led by civilians who wanted political and socio-economic improvements. Demonstrators marched, calling for dignity, accountability, and reform, expressing their longstanding discontent over limited political involvement and corruption, as well as the lack of socio-economic development.

The government's response to the escalating protests was a major factor in how the crisis unfolded. Authorities relied on heavy security measures that included mass arrests and the use of force against demonstrators. Rather than containing unrest, this approach deepened public anger and widened the scale of mobilization across different regions of the country. The absence of a credible political pathway for dialogue further accelerated the breakdown of trust between society and state institutions.

This situation paved the way for a larger conflict. As the government used force and peaceful protests appeared ineffective, the opposition turned to armed resistance. The initial local demonstrations grew into a nationwide crisis with major effects on the region. External parties initiated engagement through the provision of political support, funding, and military aid. The early stages of the uprising are key to understanding Syria's situation after the revolution.

3.3.4.   Key Events of the Revolution

As events had begun to escalate, the protest movement had shifted into a complex armed conflict as a defense against the government's response. Escalation to armed conflict, fragmentation of authority (freed regions etc), foreign intervention, humanitarian consequences. The militarization of opposition forces developed over time, shaped by the failure of political containment and the belief among many groups that armed resistance had become necessary for survival.

The Assad regime's response greatly contributed to this escalation as authorities relied increasingly on heavy military and security measures to suppress dissent, combined with mass arrests and the extended detention of peaceful protesters. The continued use of mass arrests, extended and unlawful detention practices, in addition to violence against demonstrators and civilian communities, led to the rapid breakdown of trust and made the population unwilling towards the possibility of de-escalation.

Over the following years, the conflict became defined by large-scale violence and sustained pressure on civilian populations. Reports of siege tactics, bombardment of populated areas, and attacks affecting civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools deepened the crisis and triggered repeated cycles of displacement. Detention and torture allegations also became a major element of the conflict's human rights dimension, contributing to political polarization and growing demands for accountability. These patterns strengthened narratives of state repression and influenced the legitimacy debates that remain central in Syria's post-revolution transition.

By the mid-2010s, Syria was becoming increasingly fragmented in terms of territorial control and governance. Various regions were eventually controlled by various factions, including the government, rebel forces, and additional militant organizations neither aligned with the state nor the resistance. This fragmentation of power created numerous authoritative bodies and weakened the country's unity. Some areas under oppositional control sought to establish autonomous regional administrations and governance methods; however, they encountered challenges due to conflict, factional disputes between different armed groups, and insufficient resources. The breakdown of basic services and infrastructure made the situation worse, weakening the government's ability to help and increasing the gap between authorities and civilians.

Meanwhile, foreign nations had intervened further, transforming the Syrian conflict into a more complex situation with regional and global implications. Foreign involvement was characterized by military operations, funding, and political support, each possessing a distinct set of interests. This internationalization deepened the conflict and limited the ability of Syrian actors to reach a unified political outcome. It also increased the risk of escalation across borders, especially as Syria became linked to broader regional competition and security calculations.

The humanitarian consequences of the revolution were catastrophic. Syria witnessed one of the largest displacement crises in modern history, with millions forced to leave their homes as refugees or internally displaced persons. The destruction of infrastructure and a protracted financial collapse, along with challenges in obtaining essential services such as healthcare and education, compromised safety for an extended period that continues to affect stability in Syria and neighboring countries. The influx of refugees exerted considerable economic and political strain on the host countries, and the ongoing instability rendered the whole region more dangerous.

Collectively, these factors transformed the situation in Syria from a national uprising into a long-term conflict where authority was fragmented, legitimacy was questioned, and institutions collapsed. These dynamics continue to shape the post-revolution stage, including debates over governance, sovereignty, humanitarian recovery, and regional peace.

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3.3.5.   Deterrence of Aggression Operation (December 2024)

In December 2024, the "Deterrence of Aggression" operation marked a decisive turning point in the Syrian revolution and the broader regional security landscape. The operation was led primarily by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in coordination with other Syrian opposition factions, reflecting a period of unification and joint military action among several armed actors operating in opposition-held regions. Its stated objective was the liberation of Syrian territory and the removal of Assad-era control from contested areas, as a strategic effort aimed at ending the Assad regime's authority and disrupting its military and administrative presence.

The operation led to rapid battlefield developments and the collapse or retreat of regime positions in multiple areas, accelerating a shift from a prolonged conflict to a post-regime transitional stage. This created a new political reality, where transitional authorities gained momentum, and opposition forces expanded influence over governance and security. Regionally, the operation reshaped calculations among neighboring states due to its impact on border security, population movement, and the balance of power among armed actors. It also intensified debates over sovereignty, legitimacy, and the future political order of Syria, making it a central event in understanding Syria's post-revolution transition and its implications for regional peace and development.

3.4.   Current Situation

Syria's post-liberation phase is shaped by a transition from a long phase of authoritarian rule and conflict into a fragile and highly contested process of rebuilding political authority. The fall of the Assad regime did not instantly create a stable state. Instead, it opened a complex reality where competing visions for Syria's future now interact with deep security problems and weakened institutions. These deep-rooted issues within the foundation of a new government, coupled with the severe humanitarian and economic exhaustion that the country has suffered, make for a challenging starting point for the new liberated state.

The current situation is defined by several overlapping dynamics: the emergence of interim governance structures attempting to consolidate authority, continued territorial fragmentation with armed actors, and unresolved sovereignty disputes due to foreign military presence and cross-border operations. At the same time, Syria continues to face one of the most severe humanitarian crises in modern history. Millions remain displaced, infrastructure remains damaged or destroyed, and public services remain limited, making stabilization dependent not only on political arrangements but also on economic survival and governance capacity.

In this transitional context, authority is now shaped not only by political claims but also by the ability to deliver security, manage institutions, provide justice, and respond to the population's expectations after years of suffering. This stage also raises urgent questions of

accountability for the crimes of the old regime, transitional justice, and the protection of communities vulnerable to instability. The outcome of Syria's transition will directly influence regional peace and development through refugee flows, border security, economic reintegration, and the balance of power among neighboring states.

3.4.1. Interim Governance

Following the liberation and the collapse of the Assad-era authority, Syria entered a transitional phase defined by the rapid establishment of interim governing arrangements in order to prevent institutional collapse and a security vacuum. During this period, Ahmed al-Sharaa emerged as the dominant political figure of the new order, positioned as the de facto leader of the post-liberation administration. The initial phase of the changeover focused on keeping essential government services running while shifting power from the old Assad government. The aim was to handle immediate needs until a more permanent political system could be created.

A major step during this time was the creation of a temporary government under Mohammed al-Bashir, who was given a central role in the transition after the liberation. At the same time, the new authorities worked to bring the military under central control, uniting different armed groups into official state forces. This involved deals to disband these groups and combine them into a central defense force. This period also saw the first appointments to new government bodies, showing a move from revolutionary military control to a more structured administration.

In January 2025, armed groups gathered in Damascus and announced plans to dismantle key political and legal structures from the Assad era. These plans included dissolving the old constitution and the ruling party. United Nations reports regarding the shift stated that the interim leadership pledged to establish a transitional government that represents Syria's diversity and to lay the groundwork for future elections. The reports stressed that this political transition requires inclusion and solid institutional rebuilding.

By March 2025, Syria shifted from temporary arrangements to a more formal transitional structure with the announcement of a transitional government, including ministers and policy plans. UN briefings stressed that the interim government's success will depend on security control, institutional legitimacy, inclusion, the rule of law, and the shift from armed authority to accountable state governance. This period is crucial for Syria's stability, as international involvement, reconstruction, and domestic legitimacy will primarily rely on the transitional government's ability to take control while addressing the political and humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

3.4.2. Transitional Justice

Following the liberation, transitional justice has become one of the most sensitive and consequential issues in Syria's transition. For many Syrians, justice is a central demand after years of imprisonment, torture, disappearances, group punishment, and attacks on civilians. At the same time, transitional justice is politically complex because new authorities must balance accountability with stability, reconciliation, and the risk of renewed conflict.

In the Syrian context, transitional justice refers to the set of processes used in the post-conflict states to address past violations, mainly focusing on:

- **Detention system crimes:** addressing systematic torture, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances, and the issue of missing records and unidentified victims, including the need to reveal the fate of detainees and missing persons.
- **Mass killings and massacres:** investigating large-scale incidents of civilian killing, including collective punishments, forced displacement campaigns, and violations committed during major battles and siege periods.
- **War crimes and major violations:** documenting and prosecuting grave violations committed throughout the conflict, including attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and other breaches of humanitarian norms.
- **Rebuilding trust between the institution and the people:** restoring public confidence through reforms that ensure the security sector, judiciary, and administrative institutions operate legally and professionally.
- **Restoring legitimacy and international recognition:** strengthening the credibility of the transitional government through justice-based governance, which directly affects diplomatic recognition, reconstruction opportunities, and discussions regarding the lifting or restructuring of sanctions.

Ultimately, transitional justice will shape Syria's stability because it determines whether the transition is perceived as legitimate and whether society believes the state will protect citizens rather than repress them.
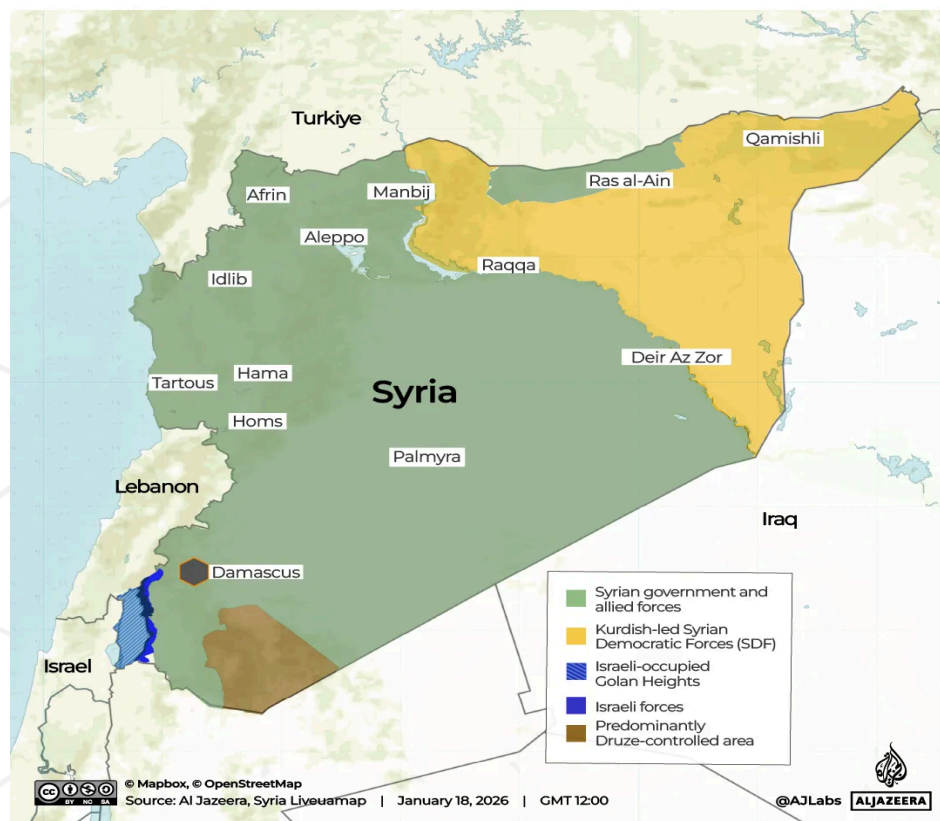
3.4.3. Territorial Fragmentation, Sovereignty Violations, and Escalation Risks

Syria's post-liberation situation remains volatile due to three primary factors: territorial fragmentation, continued sovereignty violations, and growing regional escalation risks. While interim governance has been formed, control and authority are still contested across multiple regions. At the same time, external military actions and border dynamics continue to shape Syria's transition, making the situation not only a domestic state-building challenge but also a regional security file.

Source:https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2026/1/18/syria-fighting-live-sdf-braces-for-raqqa-assault-as-govt-troops-march-on

a. Territorial Fragmentation

Despite the political transition, the country remains divided into different territories with different armed factions. The core of the challenge that the current government faces is the

establishment of unified military and security institutions without triggering any detrimental conflicts.

SDF-controlled Territories in North-East Syria
The most prominent territorial challenge currently remains in the Syrian Democratic Forces, which control a large area of northeastern Syria in a strategic and economic area spanning over 3 provinces, containing a large amount of the nation's natural resources. They have maintained armed capacity and local governance after the liberation, and they seek political autonomy and decentralized self-rule within Syria. It remains linked to the sensitive ISIS detention and camp system, which continues to raise humanitarian and security concerns. It is treated as not only a military issue, but a state structure question.

b. Sovereignty Violations

Syria remains exposed to repeated sovereignty violations currently, particularly through Israeli strikes and constant threats.

Israeli Attacks on Damascus (and other areas)
Israel has conducted multiple operations in Syrian Territory, including high-impact strikes in and around the capital of Damascus, including sites described as strategic military infrastructure. They are generally framed as security-driven, while Syrian authorities have stated that they are violations of Syria's territorial integrity and an attempt at destabilization. These attempts are not isolated incidents but represent a pattern of consistent military pressure inside Syrian territory that has played a part in shaping the weak national consolidation during the transition and keeping the Syrian file tied to regional confrontation. The effects that these attacks have are political as well as security-focused:
- They undermine the perception that the current government (or non-Assad) can fully protect national sovereignty.
- They force the nation to deal with escalation and a possible impending regional conflict while still consolidating governance.
- They raise the risk of retaliation and expanding regional confrontation beyond Syrian borders.

So this all raises the question: Are Israeli strikes purely preventative security actions, or are they an escalation strategy designed to shape and hinder Syria's transition and future state capacity?

c. Southern Syria and Druze Dynamics

Southern Syria represents a sensitive destabilization zone because local instability overlaps with minority politics and cross-border narratives. Particularly in the Suwayda area, the Druze community's priorities have been stated as community-based protection, as they fear that the transition will negatively impact them and community values. They have demanded local autonomy, decentralized governance, and a reduction in external interference in local

affairs. At the same time, this issue has gained a cross-border dimension, as Israel has at times presented itself as acting in favor of protecting Druze communities during instability. This creates a highly sensitive situation in which minority protection intersects with sovereignty disputes, and the risks of external involvement also deepen local fragmentation.

3.4.4. Humanitarian Conditions

Syria is still grappling with a critical humanitarian challenge post-liberation, largely due to the longstanding impact of the conflict. The conflict caused major damage to housing, hospitals, schools, water systems, and energy infrastructure, leaving millions unable to meet basic needs. Although liberation created hope for recovery, humanitarian conditions remain critical due to institutional collapse, economic exhaustion, and unstable security in several regions.

A central challenge remains mass displacement. Millions of Syrians are still internally displaced or living as refugees abroad. Their return depends on more than political change alone; it requires safety on the ground, functioning services, and realistic livelihood opportunities. In addition, the displacement crisis has broader regional implications, as neighboring states continue to carry social and economic pressure linked to refugee hosting.

For the UNSC, Syria's humanitarian crisis is not separate from security. When humanitarian conditions deteriorate, instability becomes harder to manage: local tensions rise, aid delivery becomes more difficult, and civilians are exposed to greater risk. As a result, humanitarian access, protection of civilians, and the conditions necessary for safe return remain key issues linked to international peace and security.

Finally, humanitarian conditions are directly tied to legitimacy in the transition. Interim governance will be judged by the population's lived reality, including whether security improves and whether daily life begins to stabilize. Without visible recovery, the humanitarian crisis risks becoming a long-term driver of renewed instability, both within Syria and across the region.

3.5. Major Parties Involved

External Actor	Region	Reason	Impact
Türkiye	Northern Syria border zones	Border security, counterterrorism, and preventing spillover	Shapes northern governance reality and affects national territorial consolidation

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United States	Northeastern Syria (especially areas linked to SDF presence)	Counter-ISIS operations, stabilization	Strengthens SDF security structure and complicates reintegration of NE Syria into a centralized state
Russian Federation	Strategic sites, air assets, political influence channels	Stability support, counterterrorism, prior alliance to Assad regime	Major geopolitical actor shaping international diplomacy and post-conflict security architecture
Iran + aligned militias	Multiple zones of influence historically linked to regime support	Strategic deterrence, regional influence, security cooperation	Contributes to regional power competition and affects escalation patterns
Israel	Primarily air operations (including around Damascus); southern Syria focus	Deterrence, preventing hostile buildup	Repeated sovereignty violations and one of the strongest escalation triggers in the agenda
International Coalition (general)	Varies by mission partners	Counterterrorism	Adds international military weight to the Syria file and affects legitimacy debates
Gulf States (political/diplomatic role)	Mostly diplomatic and economic engagement	Stabilization, reconstruction influence	Impacts recognition, reintegration, and reconstruction negotiations (non-military but strategic)

3.6. Possible Action to be Taken

The discussion in this committee will be based on Syria's transition through three lenses: **Legitimacy and governance, Security and sovereignty, AND Humanitarian recovery.**

a. De-escalation and Sovereignty Protection
Strategies may be explored to reduce cross-border escalation, particularly in response to repeated strikes and actions that risk widening regional conflict. This includes discussing what practical deterrence mechanisms exist in UNSC diplomacy, and whether escalation management should rely on monitoring, deconfliction arrangements, or political pressure.

b. Framework for Territorial Consolidation
This committee can examine how national coherence can be restored while managing the reality of a post-conflict fragmentation. Governance models can be explored that

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balance central authority with local administration, such as transitional decentralization arrangements that prevent renewed violence or regional destabilization.

c. Addressing the SDF and detention issue

This issue can be treated as both a sovereignty question and a security-based one. A negotiated reintegration of the north-east may be explored, including phased integration of forces into national structures. A key dimension of this issue is the detention and camp system created in the aftermath of ISIS defeat, which remains a long-term risk factor for radicalization and instability if left unresolved.

d. Humanitarian Stabilization

Humanitarian recovery may be treated as a core stability requirement, not a secondary issue. Reducing displacement pressures and enabling safe return require service and institutional recovery. This committee's action could support early recovery without turning the debate into funding reconstruction.

e. Transitional Justice and Accountability

We can consider transitional justice approaches that avoid the following 2 risks: impunity that destroys legitimacy, and revenge justice that destabilizes the transition. The UNSC's role here is political and strategic, since justice frameworks strongly influence refugee return, national reconciliation, and international recognition.

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