

SMA Reach-back Report

Denying the Seeds of Future Conflict

Question (R6.1): *What conditions (demographic, political, etc.) should exist on the ground in the Middle Euphrates River Valley and the tri border (Syria/Jordan/Iraq) region to deny the seeds of future conflict from being planted – particularly taking into account the assumed intention of Iranian proxy forces to establish a Shia “land bridge?” Which of these conditions can and should be insisted on as part of a Geneva peace process to end the current conflict in Syria?*

Contributors

Dr. Amir Bagherpour, giStrat; Ms. Jennifer Cafarella, Institute for the Study of War; Dr. Boaz Ganor, InterDisciplinary Center (Israel); Mr. Hassan Hassan, Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy; Mr. Faysal Itani, Atlantic Council; Ambassador James Jeffrey, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Dr. Spencer Meredith III, National Defense University; Alexander O'Donnell, giStrat; Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, University of London; Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Gulf Research Center; Mr. Mubin Shaikh, Independent Analyst; Dr. Martin Styszynski, Adam Mickiewicz University; Ms. Mona Yacoubian, United States Institute of Peace

Executive Summary

Weston Aviles, NSI Inc.

Ambassador James Dobbins and a team from the RAND Corporation contend, “the Syria civil war is approaching, if not a conclusion, at least a hiatus that might be converted into a conclusion.”¹ Major regional players—United States, Russia, and NATO—have a converging interest in ending the conflict and facilitating a stable peace, Dr. Amir Bagherpour of giStrat argues. However, despite an emerging shared preference between Russia and the United States on ending the conflict in Syria, rivalry dynamics between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, and the UAE will likely have a dampening effect on peace prospects as the proxy warfare intensifies following the military defeat of Da’esh. Mr. Hassan Hassan of Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy warns that the worsening of the various conflicts in the region is still a serious possibility.²

As the fight against Da’esh winds down in Iraq and Syria, brewing tensions and conflicts between regional actors and proxy groups is gaining new momentum. We asked thirteen regional experts to identify the top conditions necessary to bring an end to conflict in the region as well as effect a stable peace. Figure 1 captures several thematic categories of conditions posited by the authors in rank order as well as the estimated likelihood of occurrence.

¹ Dobbins, J., Gordon, P., & Martini, J. A Peace Plan for Syria IV. RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE276.html>

² For a brief and concise summary of recent developments in Syria in the past year, visit Hassan’s and Dr. Martin Styszynski’s contribution.

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SME Structured Responses on conditions needed to negotiate a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War ...

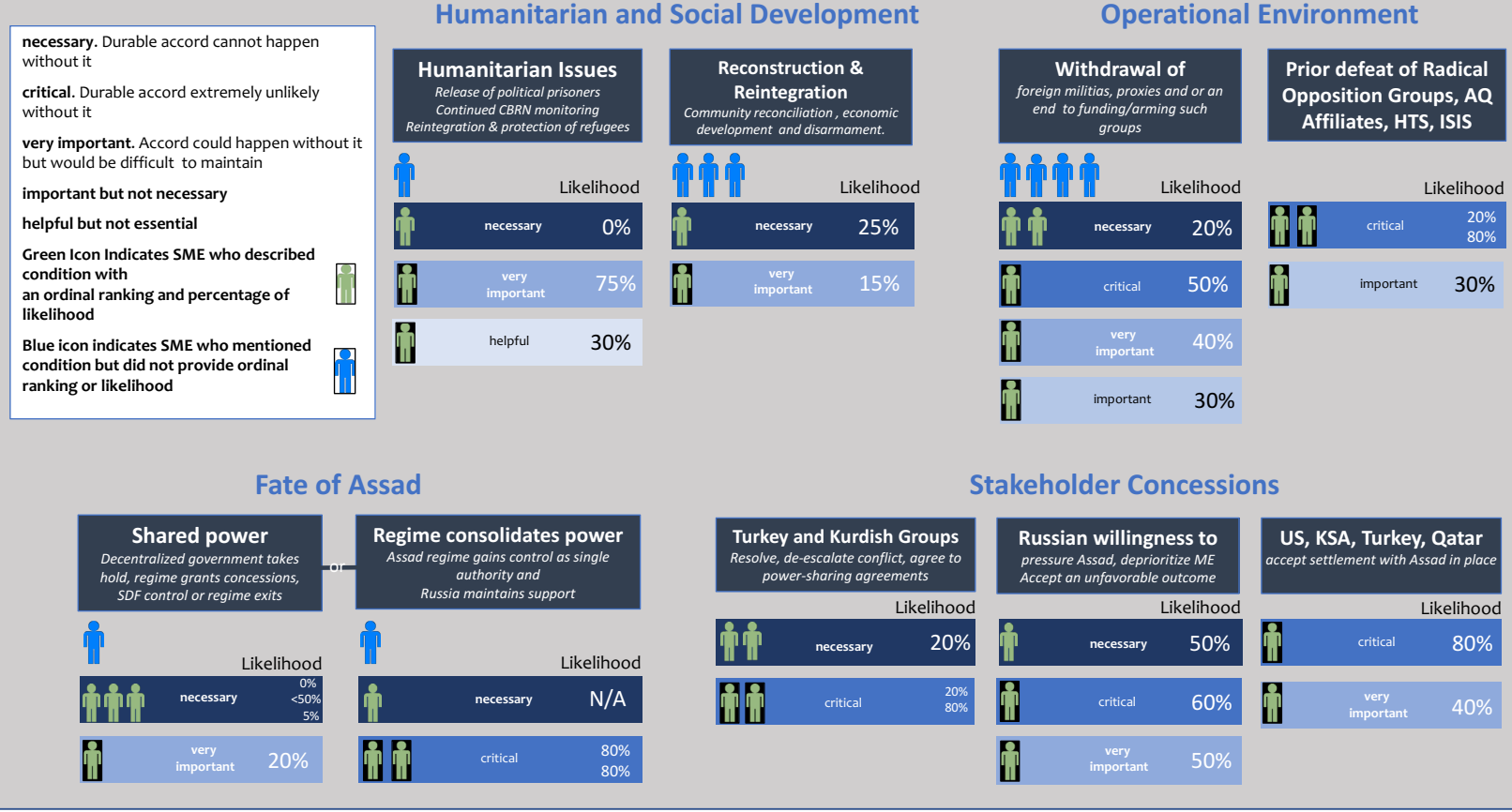


Figure 1 Conditions necessary to end conflict and establish stability in Syria

Reduction in Proxy Forces

GiStrat's computational modeling found that "the most significant factor for creating stabilizing conditions in the Euphrates River Valley is a reduction in proxy support by opposing larger powers," a condition that seven other contributors agree is an essential criterion. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Russia, and the United States all support or fund proxy forces, but several experts emphasize Iranian proxy operations as the primary aggravating obstacle to peace in the region (Cafarella, Ganor, Jeffrey). Mr. Mubin Shaikh,³ an extremism expert, and Dr. Abdulaziz Sager of the Gulf Research Center both write that undermining pro-Iranian militias are the key to disrupting the Shia crescent "land bridge," which Shaikh argues already effectively exists across Iraq and Syria.

Removal of Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)

The removal of Da'esh and Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria is mentioned by three authors⁴ who distinguish these groups from other proxy forces in the region. Dr. Martin Styszynski of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poland argues that the "defeat of ISIS' structures in Syria and failures or withdrawal of Islamist insurgents" has allowed for high-level consolidation of strategic territories between Russia, Iran, and Turkey. Ms. Jennifer Cafarella of the Institute for the Study of War views the removal of Sunni VEOs in the tri border region as fueling the Assad regime's advantage over the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and weakening the likelihood of Assad to negotiate. Both contributors suggest that the demise of proxy groups and VEOs expose the underlying obstacles to a peace accord and the dormant mechanics of any future political settlements.

The Role of the Assad Regime in Peace

Contributors present a spectrum of possibilities on the fate of Assad's continued leadership in the event of a lasting peace in Syria. One school of thought holds that regime change is absolutely necessary to a 2020 Geneva agreement (Ganor, Itani) while another holds a more moderate view that Assad will only need to exit at some point in the future (O'Shaughnessy, Yacoubian). The middle of the spectrum recognizes that the survival of the Assad regime is likely but his power will be constrained (Jeffrey) and concessions will be made to "opposition groups in Northern Syria, Southern Syria, and the Kurdish territory" (Bagherpour). The other extreme assumes that Assad has all but guaranteed a role in post-conflict Syria, that "the surrender of opposition groups is certain," and that Assad will emerge as victor (O'Shaughnessy).

Catalysts and Spoilers of Conditions for Peace

Experts point to Russia and the United States as the two actors with the greatest ability to shepherd though a peace accord in Syria. Conversely, the Assad regime and Iran lead the way as spoilers to these conditions. The Russia/Iran/Syria nexus means, then, that as both a primary usher of peace and the greatest spoiler that they will be better positioned to set the conditions for peace than the United States.

Power Sharing and Territorial Concessions

The fluid and disparate landscape in the tri border region understandingly necessitates a peace process that will be predicated on numerous, multivariate resolutions where stakeholders concede a significant amount of geopolitical capital. Almost all of these concessions described by contributors involve dyadic relationships and are comprised of territorial cessation, decentralizing political governance, or military mobilization/de-escalation. Mr. Faysal Itani of the Atlantic Council lists a territorial partition as absolutely essential to peace while Ms. Cafarella

³ Shaikh also contends that methods of religious reconciliation offer a vital opportunity to reconstruction processes.

⁴ Cafarella, Itani, and O'Shaughnessy.

contends that de-escalation zones (as a precursor to a peace agreement) do not honor their political or humanitarian purpose and only make the Syrian regime less likely to negotiate. There is also a particular emphasis on Russia committing to a “de-prioritization of the Middle Eastern Theater” (Cafarella) and the Turkey/SDF conflict reaching some sort of armistice.

Ms. Mona Yacoubian of the United States Institute for Peace and Dr. Bagherpour contend that greater political autonomy for Sunni minorities in Iraq and ultimately a significant devolution of power to governorates in Syria is a necessary condition for peace. Furthermore, Dr. Spencer Meredith III of National Defense University notes that the “SDF attaining a functional level of governance” is absolutely necessary for conflict resolution.⁵ Dr. Meredith also asserts that the US needs to advocate for strategic communication with Turkey on behalf of the SDF, whereas AMB Jeffrey takes this a step further and argues for a continued American military presence in Syria. AMB Dobbins and the RAND team similarly write of the usefulness of maintaining a US presence in counterbalancing Iranian influence and providing leverage in negotiation over Syria’s longer-term future.

Socioeconomic Reconstruction

As political conventions for peace emerge, plans for the reconstruction of Syria must be correspondingly developed as well. Authors identified three mechanisms of socioeconomic advancement: micro-level community rehabilitation, reintegration, and humanitarian concerns. Both Ms. Yacoubian and the RAND team propose a bottom-up approach⁶ to development within and across communities to accompany an increase in decentralized governance. The RAND team and Dr. Ganor further articulate the importance of reintegrating refugees to forge economic activity and contribute to political participation in Syria. Ms. Cafarella notes the importance of creating mechanisms for DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration) and SSR (security sector reform) for former combatants.⁷ Basic humanitarian challenges are also of primary concern: specifically, the protection of minorities (e.g., Yazidis, Christians, etc.) (Bagherpour), the release of political prisoners and delivery of humanitarian aid (Cafarella), and the “continued monitoring of non-conventional material” (Ganor).

⁵ Contrasting this viewpoint, O’Shaughnessy predicts that the Kurds will “not succeed in attaining their aspirations.”

⁶ Mubin suggests that religion can “exploited in a positive way, for true peace to be achieved.”

⁷ Bagherpour also argues that “Sunni Syrian fighters must be allowed back into local governance roles and given some form of autonomy. Otherwise, the seeds of future conflict will remain.”

Expert Contributions

Dr. Amir Bagherpour

Alexander O'Donnell
giStrat

Date of Analysis: 22 September 2017

What conditions (demographic, political, etc.) should exist on the ground in the Middle Euphrates River Valley and the Tri border (Syria/Jordan/Iraq) region to deny the seeds of future conflict from being planted?

- We tested key factors based on peer reviewed literature pertaining to termination and duration of nearly all civil wars from 1969-2011 (741 observations using UCDP Dataset).
- Results indicate a reduction in weapons and financial support to rebel proxy group (both Islamist and non-Islamist) significantly reduces conditions for conflict when testing for both termination and duration of civil wars. Of all the factors deemed as drivers of conflict termination, three distinguish themselves above the rest in terms of statistical significance. These include:
 - 1) **Support by third parties** (reduces termination conditions)
 - **Required Condition for denying future conflict:** The most significant factor for creating stabilizing conditions in the Euphrates River Valley is a reduction in proxy support by opposing larger powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. The local conditions on the ground are fueled by regional rivalry. Therefore, without a regional agreement or understanding between adversaries, the conditions for denying future conflict will likely not be achieved.
 - 2) **Economic Growth** (increases termination conditions)
 - **Required Condition for denying future conflict:** Investment in infrastructure has been shown to improve growth in many low growth conflict prone countries. Increasing transparency and reducing violence and corruption also significantly decrease conflict conditions (Collier and Cust, Investing in Africa's Infrastructure: Financing and Policy Options 2015).
 - 3) **Ethnic and Religious Fractionalization** (increases termination conditions although also major factor for onset)
 - **Required Condition for denying future conflict:** There are two general approaches to reducing the effects of ethnic and religious fractionalization. 1) An inclusive governance process that protects different groups or 2) A political settlement that provides autonomy and security to different ethnic and religious communities such as Yezidis, Sunnis, and Christians.

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Which of these conditions can and should be insisted on as part of a Geneva peace process to end the current conflict in Syria?

- We combined regression variables with factors pulled from experts to simulate conditions necessary for denying the seeds of future conflict in the Euphrates River Valley. Below are the 7 necessary conditions.

1) A political and territorial agreement between the Assad regime and select opposition groups in Northern Syria, Southern Syria, and the Kurdish territory.

- Under this condition, the Assad regime maintains control of the Damascus corridor and coastal areas while providing some local autonomy to select groups. Autonomy would consist of policing, government services and inclusion in a regional or localized governance structure. Extremist groups such as Nusra Front and ISIS cannot be included. Groups such as Jaish al Islam and Ahrar al Sham will be key to any agreement and will be the most difficult in reaching an agreement based on extremist elements within their ranks.

2) An inclusive process that allows former Sunni fighters in Syria back into local or national government

- Sunnis Syrian fighters must be allowed back into local governance roles and given some form of autonomy. Otherwise, the seeds of future conflict will remain.

3) No regime change (push for secular new government)

- Our simulations indicate regime change against the Assad regime increases proxy fighting, thereby increasing conditions for future conflict.

4) Economic Growth and Reconstruction

- The areas devastated by conflict must be given the ability to rebuild. Investment in infrastructure has been shown to improve growth in many low growth conflict prone countries. Increasing transparency and reducing violence and corruption significantly decrease conflict conditions.

5) Protection of Ethnic Minorities or Groups Not in Power

- The Kurdish question regarding their independence remains a vexing issue for the future of Iraq and Syria. The Kurds remain a key ally in the fight against ISIS but are also contribute to a disintegrating Syria and Iraq because of their ambitions to separate from the countries. Although this is another question altogether, Kurdish commitment to the fight against extremism must be balanced against their self-interested ambitions for independence.

6) Protection of Religious Minorities / or Group Not in Power

- The Yezidis and Christians are the most persecuted groups in the Euphrates River Valley. Although they remain fairly powerless, these groups serve as canary in the coalmine for potential future atrocities. They also have the ability to mobilize global public opinion, which can hurt or help the stabilization effort.

7) Political agreement between Iraqi central government and Sunni populations in Western Iraq

- ISIS had support from the local populations because it was perceived as a better alternative to the Iraqi or Syrian governments. Although ISIS expansion in Iraq has been halted, they remain present in the shadows. As the Shia dominated, Iranian and U.S. backed government in Iraq attempts to reinstitute governance in the territories formerly under ISIS control, local and regional Sunnis will view this through a sectarian lens. Local Sunni populations will remain opposed to Shiite militias and Iraqi government forces if they are continually oppressed. Therefore, a political settlement that will allow for more inclusive governance at the national level along with more local autonomy for Sunnis will be key to stabilization.

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Logistic Regression Model: Testing Factors for All Civil War from 1969-2011

CONFLICT TERMINATION FACTORS	COEFFICIENTS	CONFLICT DURATION FACTORS	COEFFICIENTS
Rebel Troop Support	1.643 (1.045)	Rebel Troop Support	3.634** -2.095
Rebel Territory Support	-0.366 (0.564)	Rebel Territory Support	1.243 -0.422
Rebel Weapon Support	-1.043** (0.430)	Rebel Weapon Support	0.436*** -0.128
Rebel Financial Support	-0.878** (0.435)	Rebel Financial Support	0.323*** -0.105
3 rd Party Intervention	-1.029* (0.544)	3 rd Party Intervention	0.882 -0.295
Government Troop Size(log)	-0.0644 (0.0938)	Government Troop Size(log)	0.751*** -0.0558
Rebel Troop Size(log)	-0.222*** (0.0825)	Rebel Troop Size(log)	0.719*** -0.0446
GDP per Capita(log)	0.574** (0.268)	GDP per Capita(log)	0.994 -0.187
Polity	-0.0545 (0.0792)	Polity	1.188*** -0.0685
Ethnic Fractionalization	1.611* (0.878)	Ethnic Fractionalization	2.267 -1.719
Linguistic Fractionalization	0.166 (0.570)	Linguistic Fractionalization	0.538 -0.294
Religious Fractionalization	1.447* (0.816)	Religious Fractionalization	1.871 -0.985
Population Density	0.000691 (0.00164)	Population Density	0.998* -0.00122
Relative Political Capacity	-0.600 (0.404)	Relative Political Extraction	0.315*** -0.107
Mountainous Terrain	0.00258 (0.00850)	Mountainous Terrain	0.984*** -0.00595
Forest Cover	0.00188 (0.00668)	Forest Terrain	0.983*** -0.0063
Commodity Exporter	0.298 (0.505)	Primary Commodity Exporter	2.037** -0.689
t	-0.233*** (0.0621)	Observations	741
t2	0.00772*** (0.00272)		
t3	-7.17e-05** (3.07e-05)		
Constant	-2.177 (2.890)		

*** p<0.01 (Most Significant), ** p<0.05 (Highly Significant), * p<0.1 (Significant)

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- We tested key factors based on peer reviewed literature pertaining to termination and duration of nearly all civil wars from 1969-2011 (741 observations using UCDP Dataset).
- Results indicate a reduction in weapons and financial support to rebel proxy group (both Islamist and non-Islamist) significantly reduces conditions for conflict when testing for both termination and duration of civil wars. This indicates reduction
- Of all the factors deemed as drivers of conflict termination, three distinguish themselves above the rest in terms of statistical significance. These include:

1) Support by third parties (reduces termination conditions)

Policy Implication: The most significant factor for creating stabilizing conditions in the Euphrates River Valley is a reduction in proxy support by opposing larger powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey.

2) Economic Growth (increases termination conditions)

Policy Implication: Investment in infrastructure has been shown to improve growth in many low growth conflict prone countries. Increasing transparency and reducing violence and corruption are also key to securing infrastructure and investment.(Collier and Cust, Investing in Africa's Infrastructure: Financing and Policy Options 2015)

3) Ethnic and Religious Fractionalization (increases termination conditions although also major factor for onset)

Policy Implication: There are two general approaches to reducing ethnic and religious fractionalization. 1) An inclusive governance process that protects different group or 2) A political settlement that provides autonomy and security to different ethnic and religious communities.

Determining Factors and Most Likely Pathway

Outcome Pathways

	Highly Deteriorating (Direct Conflict Between Regions)	Deteriorating (Conflict Through Proxies and Some Direct Action)	Improving (Conflict Persists with Proxies and Some Direct Action)	Highly Improving (Stabilizing Conditions Improving with Minor Proxy and Term Conditions)	Peaceful Conditions (Peace Agreement or Long-Term Freeze on Conflict)
Assad Regime	Assad and Regime Fall	Assad Falls Regime Continues	Status Quo	Political Agreement	Political and Territorial Agreement
Support for an Islamist Government	Islamist and Non-Inclusive	Islamist and Non-Inclusive	Violently Opposed to Islamic Govt	Islamic and Inclusive	Islamic and Inclusive
Support for a New Secular Government	New Secular with Religious Elements	New Secular with Religious Elements	No Support for New Secular	No Support for New Secular	No Support for New Secular
Economic Growth	Declining	Declining	Declining	Stagnant	Growing
Ethnic Fractionalization	Deteriorating	Deteriorating	Status Quo	Slightly Improving	Significantly Improving
Religious Fractionalization	Deteriorating	Deteriorating	Status Quo	Slightly Improving	Significantly Improving
Iraqi Shiite Government	New Leadership But Continues	New Leadership But Continues	Status Quo	Political Agreement	Political and Territorial Agreement

Overall Results

	1. Highly Improving (Stabilizing Conditions Improving with Minor Proxy and Term Conditions)	2. Improving (Conflict Persists with Proxies and Some Direct Action)	3. Peaceful Conditions (Peace Agreement or Long-Term Freeze on Conflict)	4. Deteriorating (Conflict Through Proxies and Some Direct Action)	5. Highly Deteriorating (Direct Conflict Between Regions)
Influence Driven Outcome	3479.74	0.0	-3611.37	-5178.42	-5834.09
Epistolarian Outcome	3511.69	0.0	-3549.49	-5101.65	-5772.59
Cost of Friction	2144600.32	0.0	152992.37	979729.87	160180.09
Group: Iraq	6968.56	0.0	-1281.19	-5178.41	-5203.24
Group: Syria	4757.72	0.0	1136.09	-2107.48	-3374.27
Group: Regionals	-952.79	0.0	13500.3	-1981.7	749.47
Group: Globals	11883.25	0.0	1779.83	-1839.0	-15262.33

Veto Influence Rankings

	1. Improving (Conflict Persists with Proxies and Some Direct Action)	2. Highly Improving (Stabilizing Conditions Improving with Minor Proxies and Term Conditions)	3. Peaceful Conditions (Peace Agreement or Long-Term Freeze on Conflict)	4. Deteriorating (Conflict Through Proxies and Some Direct Action)	5. Highly Deteriorating (Direct Conflict Between Regions)
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Determining Pathways link the factors necessary for each outcome to occur.

Utility Payoff: The scenario closest to current reality (status quo) is indexed at a score of zero. Any payoff score greater than zero is a better option than the status quo, while any payoff score less than zero is worse than the status quo. giCompute generates group and stakeholder payoffs by first capturing stakeholder preferences across the factors defined in the issue setup. giCompute then sifts through the full combination of possible payoff scores to identify the true payoff corresponding to each scenario outcome.

Based on generalized results from the regression analysis we captured seven broad factors determining conflict condition pathways in the Euphrates Valley:

- Disposition toward the Assad regime
- Disposition toward Islamist governments
- Disposition toward the Iraqi central government
- Disposition toward secular governance
- Extent of religious fractionalization
- Extent of ethnic fractionalization
- Policy preferences for economic growth

Key Finding:

giCompute simulations and net utility results indicate the conditions for conflict termination are improving. Results reveal United States, Russia, and NATO are converging toward a peace process agreement based on similarity of utility payoffs and preferences on terminating the conflict in Syria. Despite an emerging shared preference between Russia and the United States on ending the conflict in Syria, rivalry dynamics between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, and UAE will likely dampen a peace effort as proxy warfare intensifies.

Utility Maximized Payoffs of Country, Region, and Global Clusters:

Syria: Highly improving conditions as terror groups weaken

Iraq: Highly improving conditions terror groups weaken

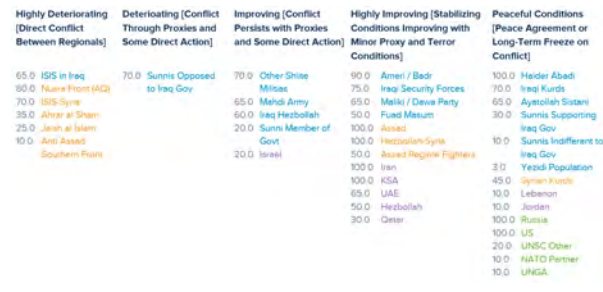
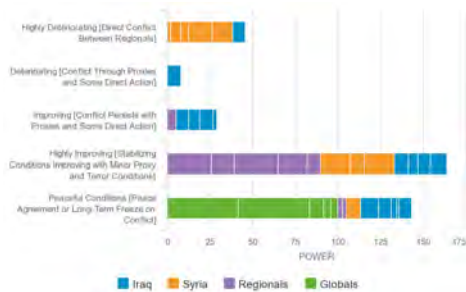
Regional Dynamics (KSA, UAE, Iran, Qatar, Turkey, Jordan): Deteriorating conditions as proxy activities increase regionally and risk of direct conflict increases.

Global Powers: U.S., Russia, NATO, UNSC, UNGA: Collectively seeking conditions for a peace agreement or long-term freeze on the conflict.

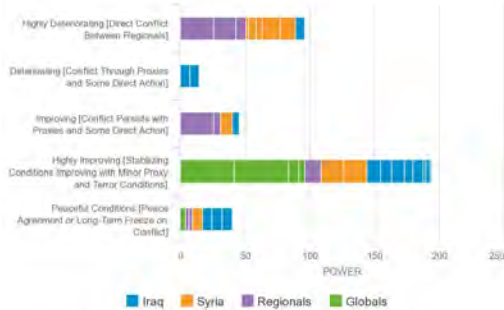
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Conflict Reduction Conditions Are Improving But Will Remain Prolonged

Landscape of Current Stated Positions



Projected Landscape of Positions



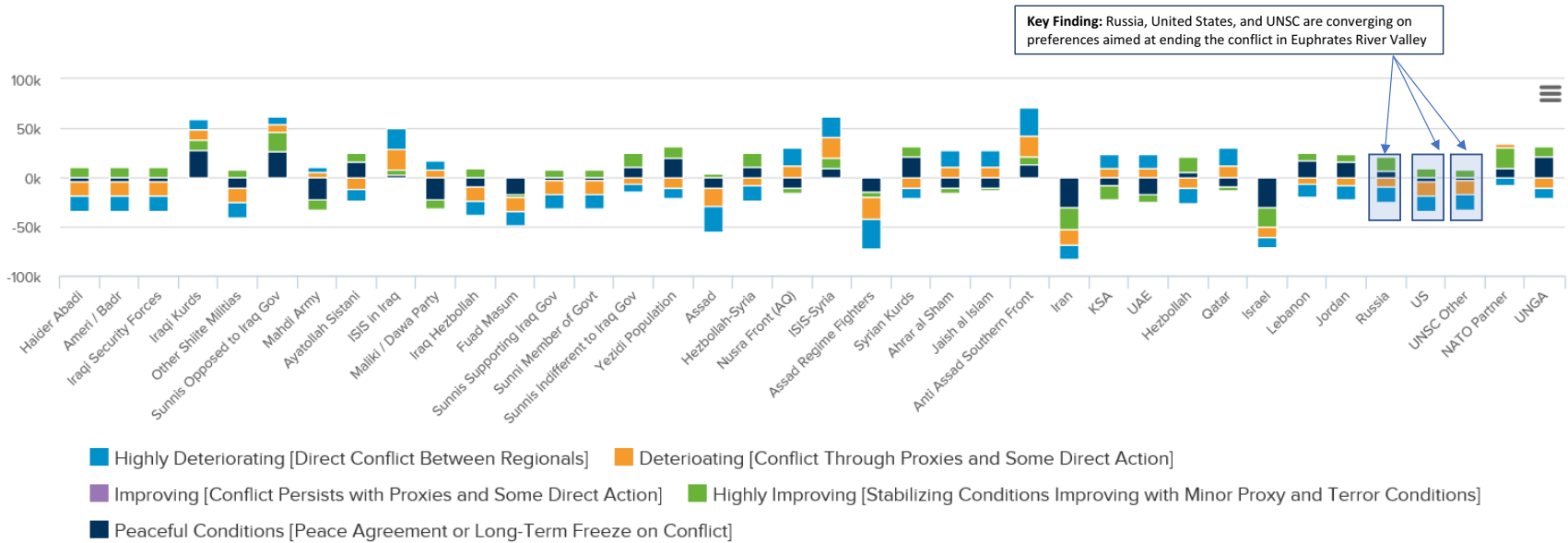
Current vs Projected Landscapes: The charts are a comparison of the current versus projected landscape. The current landscape depicts the stated positions of the various stakeholders or groups across the issue while the projected landscape depicts the likely attainable positions based on real-life constraints and true unstated positions.

Key Findings:

- **Projected Landscape:** Improving Conflict reduction conditions in Euphrates River Valley.
- The projected landscape indicates conflict reduction conditions are improving, particularly with a convergence of interests between the United States and Russia regarding Syria. Despite improving conditions, the conflict will persist as the regional rivalry between KSA and Iran escalates.
- Although the conflict will persist because of regional rivalry dynamics, the simulations reveal that conflict termination conditions are improving as ISIS has lost significant territory and now relegated to a terror group instead of a quasi-state.

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Estimating Degree of Stakeholder Convergence



Degree of Convergence: The chart above shows the range of utility payoffs for the stakeholders across the various defined scenarios. Misalignment of the bars and colors within the bars indicates disagreement between stakeholders. Alignment indicates agreement.

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Testing Overall Likelihood of Conflict Conditions

Outcome Reliability

Sensitivity Type: Randomize by Level

Number of Futures: 40

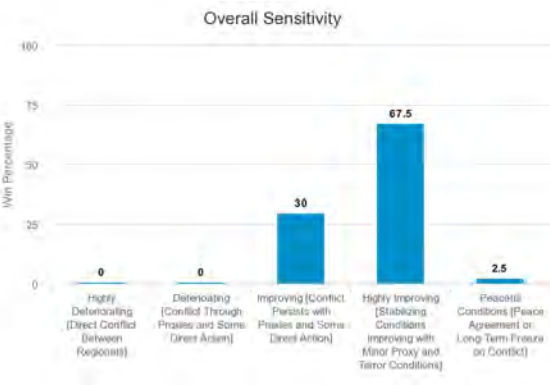
Influence Percent Variance: 15

Factor Level: 2

Factor Option Level: 2

Shock Probability: 80

Update



Monte Carlo simulations test how the outputs react to randomly generated inputs over many trials. Monte Carlo simulations were conducted across 40 alternative futures with a 80% variance probability and a change of $\pm 15\%$ in stakeholder influence.

*Based on 2 random factor and 2 factor option pair sensitivity

Results from Most to Least Likely:

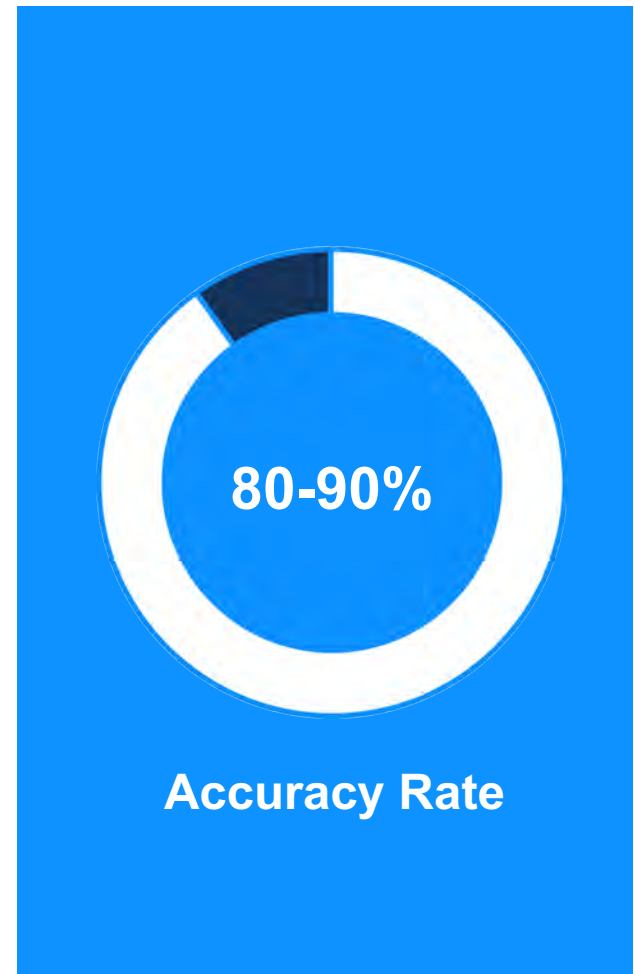
1. Highly improving (67.5%)
2. Improving (30%)
3. Peaceful Conditions (2.5%)
4. Highly Conducive to Termination (2.5%)

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About giCompute

giCompute is a cloud-based technology platform that combines decision algorithms from the fields of game theory and decision science with the pooled judgment of analysts to forecast with high accuracy and speed the likely outcomes of complex political, economic, and commercial issues.

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giCompute Capabilities

Auto-Aggregation and Integration of Multiple Analyst and Operator Inputs

Leverages human-machine teaming through a platform that organizes, pools, and processes analyst, expert, and practitioner inputs about any multi-factor and multi-stakeholder issue. Users can also choose to manually capture information.

Identification of Stakeholder Preferences and Future Actions

Uses a reliable decision engines to identify, synthesize, and analyze inputs about stakeholder preferences, influence, and likely courses of action. The platform translates qualitative inputs into quantitative data points about the state of play of any given scenario.

Mapping of Current Landscape for an Issue

Automatically generates a visual stakeholder map showing the relative positions and influence of individuals and groups.

Reliability and Sensitivity Testing

Qualitative human judgement is subject to error and no matter how reliable our information, the world is affected by elements of randomness and uncertainty. To control for these factors, giCompute has a built-in Monte Carlo simulations and sensitivity analysis functions that can test robustness and reliability of inputs and outcomes.

Anticipating Future Impact of Current Actions

Shows the likely impact of current actions on future outcomes. The platform graphically depicts the potential future landscape of stakeholder positions while providing a quantitative basis to predict likely actions.

Optimizing Strategies and Actions

Users can assess whether the likely outcome matches their desired future, and if not, they can simulate alternative scenarios. Users can identify and select the right mix of partners, including the timing and sequence of actions to negotiate optimal solutions.

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The conditions listed are in no particular order.

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition? 1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain 4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?

					but not required for success 7= conditionally important	
Assad or his regime compelled to grant concessions including release of political prisoners and delivery of humanitarian aid	Syrian population Syrian opposition US UN Turkey Qatar Saudi Arabia Jordan	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran Russia Al Qaeda ISIS	U.S., possibly with support from: Turkey Qatar Saudi Arabia Jordan	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran Russia	1	0%
Al Qaeda and ISIS defeated	Syrian population Syrian opposition Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran Russia US Saudi Arabia Jordan	Turkey Qatar	U.S. Syrian opposition Syrian tribal notables Iran Russia	Turkey Syrian opposition + tribal notables could choose NOT to aid anti-Al Qaeda or anti-ISIS operations	2	20%
Withdrawal of Iran and Iranian proxy forces	Syrian population Syrian opposition U.S. Israel Saudi Arabia Jordan	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran Russia Possibly: Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon	U.S. Israel	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran Russia	1	20%
Creation of mechanisms for DDR (disarmament,	Syrian population Syrian opposition	Assad + loyalists Iran Russia Turkey	Assad + loyalists Iran Russia Turkey	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran Russia	1	25%

demobilization, and reintegration) and SSR (security sector reform)				Turkey		
De-escalation between Turkey and the PKK/YPG	Turkey U.S. Israel Jordan	PKK/YPG Assad + loyalists Russia	U.S.	Russia Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran	1	20%
Russian de-prioritization of the Middle Eastern Theater	Syrian population Syrian opposition U.S. Israel Saudi Arabia Jordan Turkey	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran	Russia US	Assad + loyalists Hezbollah Iran	3	50%

Please feel free to contribute any additional comments, concerns, analysis, insights, or references below.

The primary obstacle to a negotiated settlement of the Syrian Civil War remains the unwillingness of Bashar al Assad and his regime to negotiate on terms remotely acceptable to the Syrian opposition. Time favors Assad, which is why he continues to refuse to negotiate. The radicalization of the opposition towards al Qaeda and ISIS makes a negotiated settlement even less likely, as these groups argue that Syrians must reject negotiations and instead defeat the regime by force of arms.

Current US policies make it nearly impossible to achieve, on current course, a meaningful negotiated settlement that ends the civil war, sets conditions against its resumption, and avoids major sacrifices to US national security such as the preservation of Iranian proxy militias in Syria.

1. **Defeating ISIS does not inherently remove an obstacle to a negotiated settlement**, despite such comments from US officials. The second order effect of the US-led anti-ISIS campaign has actually been to strengthen and embolden Assad even more by propping up an anti-ISIS force he can coopt (the Syrian Kurdish YPG plus the larger Syrian Democratic Forces that it leads) and by allowing Assad to expand his control in eastern Syria including over key oil and gas infrastructure. Assad is less likely than ever to negotiate on terms acceptable to opposition groups that have local influence.

2. **Under current conditions, use of de-escalation zones as a stepping-stone toward a political resolution of the war will create the opposite outcome.** The US-backed de-escalation zones have allowed the pro-regime coalition to free up manpower for a land and resource grab in eastern Syria and to re-arm for a future push in western Syria. These gains make Assad less likely to negotiate, as noted above. Assad, Iran, and Russia routinely violate these zones including with airstrikes against markets and hospitals in order to continue to punish the civilian population, moreover. Assad refuses to provide humanitarian access and maintains a vicious siege around some “de-escalated” areas. He has also historically excluded key rebel strongholds such as Darayya from the de-escalation agreements in order to allow him to starve them into submission unchallenged. Trump’s deal with Russia for a de-escalation zone in southern Syria fit this model. It was a strategic surrender in return for only the promise of a tactical concession: the withdrawal of Iranian forces from the zone. That withdrawal never happened.
3. **The Russian diplomatic effort in Sochi is an effort to subvert and coopt the UN. The US should not support it.** Russia seeks to subvert and coopt the UN process for a diplomatic settlement in order to preserve Russia’s client regime. Russia is using Sochi to fracture the Syrian opposition delegation and to water it down with regime-tolerated opposition in order to set conditions for a settlement that falls far short of the original demands of the 2012 Geneva communique. Russia and Assad will rig an election, if it occurs. Assad already rigged his re-election in 2014. The Syrian population that rebelled against Assad did not rebel in pursuit of elections, moreover. The core demand of Syria’s rebelling population and Syrian opposition groups has been for a fundamental restructure of the regime including a dismantling of the regime’s tools of repression and torture: its various intelligence services. The opposition has demanded the release of political prisoners and delivery of humanitarian aid as key confidence building steps required to move forward with negotiations. Assad has granted neither demand on an acceptable scale.

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Dr. Boaz Ganor

Dean and the Ronald Lauder Chair for Counter-Terrorism at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy
InterDisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya (Israel)

Founder and Executive Director
Institute for Counter-Terrorism

The conditions listed are in no particular order.

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition? 1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain 4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally important	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?
Marshall Plan to reintegrate the Syrian refugees (those from Syria, neighborhood countries and	Gov of Iraq Jordan Saudi Arabia Turkey	Hezbollah Iran	Gulf States US EU Saudi Arabia	N/A	5	30%

those from Europe and other countries)						
Withdrawal of all outside forces from Syria (with focus on Iran and Hezbollah)	Israel	Iran Hezbollah RCC	Iran Hezbollah	Iran Hezbollah	4	30%
Continued monitoring of non-conventional material	Iraqi Kurds Syrian Kurds Kurds Sunni Tribal Elites Free Syrian Army	Syria (Assad)	USA Russia Turkey Syria (Assad)	Syria (Assad)	3	75%
Governmental reforms & change of regime	Jordan Iraqi Kurds Syrian Kurds Kurds Qatar Lebanon Sunni Tribal Elites Free Syrian Army	Syria (Assad)	USA Russia Turkey Syria (Assad)	Iran Syria (Assad)	1	50%
Demilitarization of the Syrian side of the border with Israel	Israel	Iran Hezbollah RCC	Syria (Assad) Iran Hezbollah	Iran Hezbollah	4	30%

Mr. Faysal Itani

Atlantic Council

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition? 1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain 4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally important	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?
Negotiated political exit for Bashar Assad and replacement with power-sharing mechanism	-Syrian opposition -Turkey -Israel -United States -Saudi Arabia -United Arab Emirates -Qatar	-Iran -Regime leadership and inner circle - Syrian Kurds (potentially)	-United States -Russia -Syrian Armed opposition -Turkey -Syrian Kurds	-Iranian asymmetric or direct escalation to protect regime core -Syrian Kurds refuse to risk a new political formula that	1	10%

				might empower opposition -Russian duplicity		
Agreement on territorial boundaries (or division) of Syrian state	All parties except those with vested in continued fighting	Transnational jihadist militants e.g. Jabhat al Nusra; ISIS	-United States -Russia -Turkey -Jordan -Israel -Armed opposition -Syrian government forces -Syrian Kurds	-Iranian asymmetric or direct escalation - Dissent or strong opposition by any of the parties in Column 4	1	35%
Negotiated exit of foreign militias	Syrian opposition Jordan Israel United States Syrian Kurd Russia	Iran	Iran United States Russia Syrian opposition Syrian Kurds Israel Jordan		2	50%
Defeat of Jabhat al Nusra / HTS	Syrian regime Russia Iran United States Jordan Israel ISIS Most armed opposition groups	Jabhat al Nusra Opposition groups allied with Jabhat al Nusra	Russia Turkey United States Syrian regime Armed opposition groups Syrian Kurds Jordan Israel	Alliance of armed opposition groups and Jabhat al Nusra Turkish counter-pressure, sheltering of Jabhat al Nusra	4	80%
Reconstruction plan	All Syrian factions All countries hosting refugees (Lebanon, Jordan,	Regime factions that had hoped to 'cleanse' certain opposition	United States Gulf Arab states European allies	Resumption of hostilities Resource capture	3	35%

	Turkey, Iraq)	neighborhoods		by local (especially armed) actors		
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Ambassador James Jeffrey

Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition? 1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain 4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally important	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?
Condition 1 Decide what U.S. means by a 'durable end'. If it means long-term absence of major internal	The Syrian people; neighboring states; all those beneficiaries of the regional security order; Western Europe (drop in refugee	Russia, Iran, Assad regime, VEO's and Hezbollah. But note that the impact is limited. Those actors do not lose anything they had in	Clear explanation to all involved including the U.S. population of what the U.S. goals are. US commitment to use military	Refusal of parts of Syrian population to accept Assad rule; unhappiness of regional actors—Turkey and Israel—with desired, limited outcome. Most importantly—refusal	1.	Unknowable. It is a complex, difficult endeavor but well within U.S. military and diplomatic capabilities. But it is in the 'hard' category both in

<p>uprisings, a governing system that meets minimum state needs, then that suggests one approach (not too different than the outcome of the Lebanon civil war.)</p> <p>But this author's assumption is that what is meant by 'durable' is more like the Balkans post 1999—a stable and durable end to violence within Syria AND the denial of Syria to Iranian power projection, rise of new VEO's, or refugee crises</p>	<p>flows, terrorism)</p>	<p>2011—and in case of Russian Syria a presence and prestige gain, rather their opportunities for major 'wins' are curtailed. Both Iran and Russia have repeatedly 'lived' with such outcomes.</p>	<p>presence and if necessary force, diplomacy and reconstruction (as lever) to achieve those goals.</p> <p>Willingness of Russia and Iran to accept 'half a loaf' rather than challenge the U.S.</p> <p>Limited nature of U.S. 'goals'/'asks' on one hand and absolute clarity the U.S. will fight for them will reduce possibility of next above challenge.</p>	<p>of Russia and Iran.</p>		<p>risks and resources, and the necessity to accept a less than perfect outcome. The Trump Administration has yet to be tested on a 'hard' category crisis or action.</p>
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that endanger the region and undercut the U.S.-led regional security order. Comments are thus directed at this per next below.						
Condition 2 A return to status-quo ante 2011: Assad in power but power constrained, general relationship with Hezbollah and Iran as in 2011. No new Iranian or Hezbollah military presence or capabilities in Syria.	See above	See above	See above	See above	See above	See above
Condition 3 U.S. Military presence in Syria	Syrian people, regional partners. US security partners on ground (SDF, FSA?)	Iran, Assad regime Russia, Hezbollah, VEO's, possibly Turkey	U.S. government. Needs a justification tied to CT and 2001 AUMF.	Absence of entry (Turkey, Iraq and to some degree KRG only options) U.S. Congress and public reaction.	1	60%

				Russian/Iranian/Syrian military opposition U.S. unwilling to counter. Refusal of local allies (SDF) to support a U.S. presence		
Condition 4 Turkey accepts U.S. presence in SDF areas.	Same as above plus Turkey	Same as above minus Turkey	U.S. has to live up to guarantees to Turkey and explain what its goals are in Syria. In view of Turks (and their view, not objective truth, is what's relevant) this has not been done.	PYG element of SDF not necessarily able to accept this given ideological conflict with Turkey.	1	80%
Condition 5 Russia willing to accept a "limited win" even if opposed by Iran and its allies	All but Iran, Assad regime and Hezbollah.	Iran, Assad regime and Hezbollah, but this would represent only a limited defeat that they presumably could tolerate.	Russia's core interests in Syria must be protected—bases and a friendly regime that will not throw Russians out. Russian interest in neither regional chaos nor, necessarily, a vastly more powerful Iran enabled by Russian air and air	Inability of U.S. to practice classic diplomacy. Dying art as it requires self-limitation of goals when winning (first Gulf War) and acceptance of interests of potential adversaries (Russia and to very limited degree Iran coalition). Russia—if this is seen either as a 'defeat' or step one of a process	1.	50%

			<p>defense power, must be separated from Iranian interest in moving towards hegemony. In a nutshell, Russia must recognize it will have to pay a heavy price and accept significant risks vis-à-vis U.S. and others to advance Iranian coalition interests not necessarily its own, but can have U.S. coalition protect its core interests. This is classic diplomacy.</p>	<p>that will drive Russia out of the Middle East.</p> <p>Iran Coalition—will pressure Russia to 'chose,' U.S. or Iran.</p> <p>U.S. allies. Israel may balk at anything less than Iranian withdrawal. Turkey from acceptance of Assad regime.</p>		
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Dr. Spencer Meredith III

College of International Security Affairs
National Defense University

The conditions listed are arranged from most to least critical.

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition? 1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain 4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally important	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?
SDF attains functional level of governance – border patrol is one key	Kurds, other anti-Assad forces in Syria; Assad regime IF it accepts SDF as	Turkey most of all based on current escalatory rhetoric; Iran, then Iraq to lessor	US – need bilateral work with Turkey most of all, but this is not dependent on US alone –	Russia – keep Assad regime from accepting it as necessary condition for	1	<50%

<p>element; additional elements include PATIENCE of population to PARTICIPATE in POWER & accept that this is a long process; need sustenance, then rebuilding economic livelihoods – not impossible challenges but really hard with so many pressures = need for strategic communication to them (by US) and from them (to population)</p>	<p>necessary lower cost risk compared to ouster from power</p>	<p>degrees; Russia less so given goal of maintaining key role defining conditions & outcomes IF Kremlin sees Turkey’s position weakening – Kremlin may open this possibility more strongly for Assad to accept it</p>	<p>Erdogan’s domestic power play necessitates internationalization of hard lines to “strangle” SDF border force</p>	<p>regime survival; Iran by instigating overwhelming regional actors to counter; Iraq by escalating conflict with Kurds and forcing SDF into more hostile position vis-à-vis non-Kurd potential partners</p>		
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Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy

University of London

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition?	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?
<p>The achievement of the final wipeout of IS and the Nusra Front in Idlib and the remaining areas.</p>	<p>The Assad regime, which will remain in power with Assad at the helm, although he may subsequently be induced to leave.</p>	<p>The Turks and Saudis, negatively. They have been humiliated in their failed drive to overthrow Assad.</p>	<p>Russian intervention has caused this and it represents a loss of face for Turks and Saudis and negatively impacts perception of their power.</p>	<p>The assassination of Assad, perhaps, and emergence of a less vindictive regime.</p>	<p>1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain</p>	<p>FINAL WIPEOUT OF IS: 80% CERTAIN</p>
<p>The recognition among the other opposition groups that further resistance is futile given the impact of Russian help and the determination of the Alawite regime to succeed. The acceptance by the Saudis that the triumph of Assad is inevitable.</p>	<p>The Russians, positively, as well as the Iranians.</p>	<p>The Kurds also negatively in relation to what they have put into the war effort- they will gain something, but not enough. IS/ Nusra Front also losers as well as the non-Islamist opponents of Assad.</p>	<p>The lack of incentive for negotiation parties to acknowledge the Kurds' contribution. The Kurds represent a</p>	<p>Also pressure from Russia itself on Assad to compromise.</p>	<p>4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally</p>	<p>SURRENDER OF OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS 80% CERTAIN</p>
<p>Russian pressure on the Assad regime is also a key factor: the war has been a great</p>	<p>The US-ambivalent, neither success nor failure. Its role here is more residual but deft and</p>	<p>IS/ Nusra Front also losers as well as the non-Islamist opponents of Assad.</p>	<p>The lack of incentive for negotiation parties to acknowledge the Kurds' contribution. The Kurds represent a</p>	<p>Possibly too the use of reconstructive aid as a bargaining tool</p>	<p>4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally</p>	<p>SURRENDER OF OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS 80% CERTAIN</p>

<p>economic drain on Russia and there have been some costs to its international standing. It could therefore force compromise on certain areas, even induce Assad to place a limit on his presidency as a precondition for the emergence of a more civic state, one less tainted by the associations with his butchery.</p> <p>The position of the Kurds is problematic and also a moral one. They have done much of the fighting but are likely losers in the diplomatic bargaining. They will deeply resent this.</p>	<p>subtle diplomacy by the US and the strategic use of hard and soft power may well enable it to emerge with its position in the middle east enhanced.</p>		<p>threat to them on various levels.</p>	<p>The Kurds can cause trouble in various ways as they have a quasi-national territory in Iraq and straddle a number of countries. They have tough seasoned forces whose future militancy can frustrate peace processes.</p>	<p>important OUTCOME: 2, CRITICAL BUT EXTREMELY UNLIKELY</p> <p>OUTCOME 2: A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME IS UNLIKELY FOR THE KURDS</p>	<p>SUCCESSFUL RUSSIAN PRESSURE FOR COMPROMISE 60% CERTAIN</p> <p>LIKELIHOOD OF ASSAD GOING LATER ON 30% CERTAIN</p> <p>KURDS DO NOT SUCCEED IN ATTAINING THEIR ASPIRATIONS 80% CERTAIN</p>
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Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

Gulf Research Center

The key condition will have to be the withdrawal of all foreign militias in Iraq that have been established by foreign powers. This is the only way to ensure that Iranian influence in Iraq is lessened. The move to disbanding of militias, in the ideal case backed by the resolution of the UN Security Council, should also be part of the Geneva peace process. What is required here is an international framework given both the need for a monopoly of forces by the armed forces of a legitimate government and the current lack of inter-state agreement in the region. Iranian efforts to establish a Shia “landbridge” can also only be undermined if militias are dissolved given that such a corridor cannot be established without them and that it can only be secured through the protection of militias. The key thus is to rally international support behind a move to ban all militia activity.

Mr. Mubin Shaikh

Independent Analyst

Unfortunately, seeds of future conflict of already been planted in the region. The interplay between the sectarian and political and tribal conflicts means this shall carry into future generations. A suggestion to mitigate and lessen the intensity and longevity of such conflicts is to encourage representatives from the various religious denominations, Christian and Muslim to chart a very public course of their communities with open celebration of mutual religious traditions. There are various pro-interfaith organizations within UN and EU political decision-making circles to facilitate this within a Geneva peace process mechanism. I respectfully submit that religion plays a vital role – a core and key role – and deserves to be exploited in a positive way, for true peace to be achieved.

With respect to the Shia land bridge, this is no longer intention. Iran has successfully established its land route in this regard, fortified by “popular militia” throughout Iraq and Syria, including of course, Hezbollah, Hamas (the Shia & Sunni groups respectively are both under direction of Iran) and the IRGC, They have largely free access throughout Iraq and Syria into Lebanon and not coincidentally, in range of Israel.

Dr. Martin Styszynski

Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland)

1. What conditions (demographic, political, etc.) should exist on the ground in the Middle Euphrates River Valley and the Tri border (Syria/Jordan/Iraq) region to deny the seeds of future conflict from being planted – particularly taking into account the assumed intention of Iranian proxy forces to establish a Shia “land bridge?” Which of these conditions can and should be insisted on as part of a Geneva peace process to end the current conflict in Syria?

Recent developments in the Middle East, including Gulf countries demonstrate growing proxy wars between the regional powers: Saudi Arabia supported by the US and Iran supported by Russia. This type of conflict relies on warfare in neighboring countries instead of direct conflict with the enemy. In fact, the alternative conflicts avoid disastrous consequences of conventional war and they put pressure on each opponent. Moreover, the proxy war in the Middle East relies on Shia-Sunni religious disputes which enable to justify and define certain zones of political, economic and military influences according to Shia or Sunni populations in particular countries.

Recently, Iran has established its final presence in Syria, especially after the pact between Russia, Turkey and Iran including Al-Asad regime. The new allies started talks in Sochi and they agreed to divide their influences in strategic territories and provinces in Syria. In fact, the defeat of ISIS’ structures in Syria and failures or withdrawal of Islamist insurgents reinforced the pact. The alliance launched new approaches in the Middle East and reinforced the Iranian-Russian domination in the Mediterranean countries like Lebanon, Palestine or Iraq with major Shia population. The Russian military base in Syrian coast of Tartus is a good example in this context. Besides, the cooperation between the new allies is encouraged by future exploitation of rich mineral resources such as gas and petrol in the Mediterranean Sea.

On the opposite side, some efforts in the Middle East are headed by so-called the "quartet" composed of Sunni ruled countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. They are supported by the US and other Western countries. For example, this political block has different point of view toward the Syrian conflict, especially in the context of Al-Assad political future or involvement of various political and ideological forces in the peace process. Those questions are often pointed out during negotiations in Geneva.

The polarization between the two blocks are also obvious in other parts of the Middle East. For instance, in Yemen Houthi militias supported by Iran have been fighting since 2015 with government forces in Aden represented by president Abdu Mansur Hadi who is supported by Saudi Arabia and international communities. The situation reached an impasse, especially after the death of former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh who was killed by Houthis on December 4, 2017. The situation became worse after the launch of ballistic missiles fired on November 4, 2017 at towards an area near *Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport and al-Yamama* royal palace in Riyadh on December 19, 2017. However, fights in Yemen have intensified and numbers of casualties have increased as well. Peace negotiations were blocked and reconciliation missions of the UN representatives are still unsuccessful.

GCC countries are also affected by Qatar crisis, which weakens the stability of the organization and membership of each country. The crisis is exploited by main regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran. Riyadh sustains economic blockade and ban of land or air transportation for Qatar's companies. Food or medical supplies were replaced by Tehran and Oman. Iran also declared that it is ready to intensify bilateral relations with Doha. Qatari monarchy has also decided to withdraw its troops from Yemen. Moreover, the Qatar crisis might be used by US opponent in the Gulf- Russia, which tries expand its economic presence in the Gulf, especially in exploitation of Qatari gas fields shared by Iran. The long-term Russian scenario in the Middle East assumes expansion of gas pipelines from the Gulf through gas fields in Iraq, Iran or Syria and the Mediterranean Sea. This scenario creates potential threats and economic competitions for other Gulf States and their Western allies.

The rivalry between the regional and worldwide superpowers is also evident in Lebanon. The Lebanese prime minister Saad al-Hariri declared his resignation during his visit to Saudi Arabia in November 2017. Some local rumors stated that Saad al-Hariri couldn't leave Saudi Arabia and he was forced to condemn Shia political allies in Lebanon represented by Hezbollah. *Saudi Arabia* accused Lebanon of *declaring war* against it because of Hezbollah that cooperates with Iran and interfere in regional affairs of Middle East countries. In fact, the pressure on Saad al-Hariri aimed at weakening Shia Hezbollah and strengthening Sunni allies in Lebanon.

Bahrain also became a new arena of competition. On November 10, 2017 the major oil pipelines in the country was attacked by Shia insurgents. Saudi security forces captured some rebels and accused Iran of coordination of the attack.

Moreover, Shia populations living in the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia also became a useful platform for foreign interferences of Iran. The regular attacks against local security services in Qatif city and surveillance of local Shia clerics aim at destabilizing the situation of the Kingdom. For example, in December 2016 the local cleric Mohammad al-Jirani was kidnapped by unknown group. According to investigations al-Jirani supported local Shia interests instead of Shia populations living abroad. Recently, Saudi police has captured two insurgents involved in series of terrorist. Al-Jirani was killed in late December 2017 by an unknown group acting in the region of Qatif.

To sum up, it should be noted that the international community are forced to recognize the new Middle East order that define certain geopolitical zones of influences according to regional and Western interests. Paradoxically, the proxy wars are still better than conventional war that could cause terrible and *irreversible consequences* for international security.

Ms. Mona Yacoubian

United States Institute of Peace

The conditions listed are in no particular order.

Description of conditions to reach a durable accord to end Syrian Civil War by 2020	Which actors are impacted positively?	Which actors are impacted negatively?	Who is necessary or can cause this condition to occur?	Who/what can bar its occurrence?	How critical to the outcome is this condition? 1 = absolutely necessary. Outcome cannot happen without it 2 = critical. Outcome extremely unlikely/difficult to happen without it 3 = very important. Outcome could happen without it but would be difficult to negotiate/maintain 4 = important 5 = Moderately important. Very helpful but not	On a scale of 0% = never to 100% = with complete certainty, what do you believe to be the likelihood of this condition occurring as needed to support the outcome prior to 2020?

					essential 6 = Could make the process easier but not required for success 7= conditionally important	
Syrian regime consolidates and possibly expands its gains on the ground, i.e. there is one clear actor who comes out ahead	Syria(regime), Hezbollah, Iran, Government of Iraq, Russia, Jordan, Turkey?	ISIL, other Sunni extremists (eg Nusra), FSA, Israel, Qatar, Saudi, Turkey?, Syrian Kurds, US	Russia, Iran maintain strong support	Saudi/Qatar dramatically increase support to Syrian opposition; deepening conflict with Iran lays bare new conflict lines	2	80%
Russia and Iran maintain strong support for the regime. (As necessary for above)	Syrian regime, Hezbollah	ISIL, other Sunni extremists (eg Nusra), FSA, Israel, Qatar, Saudi, US	Russia, Iran		2	80%
Power sharing aspects are put into place that devolve some power to sunni/moderate opposition elements; decentralized governance model put in place; Assad potentially out in 2021 elections	Moderate Syrian opposition elements, Syrian civilians, Syrian Kurds, possibly FSA	Syrian regime, ISIL, other extremists, possibly Turkey	Russia, Iran, US, UN	Syrian regime, ISIS, extremists,	3	20%
U.S., Saudi, Turkey,	Russia, Iraq,	ISIL, other Sunni	U.S., Saudi,	Not clear. This	3	40%

<p>Qatar acquiesce to settlement with Assad in place, but insist on decentralized government and agree to cease all funding/arming of opposition groups</p>	<p>Jordan, possibly Iran depending on what power decentralization looks like</p>	<p>Extremists, FSA</p>	<p>Turkey, Qatar</p>	<p>won't happen without the acquiescence of actors in previous.</p>		
<p>Decentralized governance on the ground begins to take hold; new "bridge" actors stake out greater position in Damascus, e.g. Abdallah Dardari; dialogue/reconciliation at grassroots level begin to take place within and across communities.</p>	<p>Syrian opposition, Syrian civilians, Syrian Kurds</p>	<p>Syrian regime, ISIL, other Sunni extremists</p>	<p>U.S., Russia, Iran, empowered local elements</p>	<p>Extremists such as ISIS, Nusra; potentially Turkey if threatened by Kurds</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>15%</p>

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Biographies

Dr. Amir Bagherpour

Dr. Amir Bagherpour is a founding partner and Chief Analytics Officer of giStrat. He is an expert in the application of quantitative methods to social science with a particular emphasis on game theory and international relations. He is also a non-resident scholar at the University of Virginia's Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy. Dr. Bagherpour served as the Director of Data Analytics in the Office of the Secretary of State.

Prior to that he served as a Senior Conflict Analyst and Advisor to the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, where he led an interagency team responsible for predictive analysis. He is recognized by the Quadrennial Diplomacy Development Review for pioneering the application of computational analytics for the advancement of diplomacy and development. Prior to that Dr. Bagherpour was an application engineer and project manager for NSK, a Japanese owned global manufacturer of industrial and automotive motion control products. Dr. Bagherpour served in the U.S. Army as an Armor Officer and is the first Iranian-born graduate of West Point. He has a PhD in Political Science from Claremont Graduate University and an MBA specializing in market research from the University of California Irvine

Ms. Jennifer Cafarella



Jennifer Cafarella is the Senior Intelligence Planner at the Institute for the Study of War, where she is responsible for shaping and overseeing the development of ISW's detailed plans and recommendations on how to achieve U.S. objectives against enemies and adversaries and in conflict zones. As a former Syria Analyst at ISW, she has written on ISIS in both Syria and Iraq, tracking their efforts to consolidate power in eastern Syria, while at the same time connecting their Syrian-Iraqi northern fronts. Ms. Cafarella served as a coauthor on ISW's recent Planning Exercise for a U.S. Grand Strategy to

defeat ISIS and Al Qaeda including; [Al Qaeda and ISIS: Existential Threats to the U.S. and Europe](#), [Competing Visions for Iraq and Syria: The Myth of an Anti-ISIS Grand Coalition](#), and [Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS: Sources of Strength](#). In addition, she has written on and researched various opposition groups in Syria, particularly focusing on the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra and their military capabilities, modes of governance, and long-term strategic vision.

Ms. Cafarella's essays have been published by The Hill and Fox News, among other outlets. She has appeared extensively in the media. Her analysis has been cited by The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Newsweek, CNN, NPR, Voice of America, the BBC, and USA Today. In 2015, she participated in a multi-week assessment mission in the Middle East focused on the conflicts in Iraq and Syria at the invitation of senior U.S. Army commanders. She has also designed and led briefings and simulation exercises for various U.S. military units deploying overseas. Jenny is a graduate of ISW's Hertog War Studies Program and was ISW's first Evans Hanson Fellow. The Evans Hanson Fellowship draws from the

outstanding alumni of the ISW Hertog War Studies Program and helps develop the next generation of national security leaders. Ms. Cafarella received her B.A. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in Global Studies with a focus on the Middle East. She is proficient in Arabic.

Dr. Boaz Ganor

Prof. Boaz Ganor is the Dean and the Ronald Lauder Chair for Counter-Terrorism at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy, as well as the Founder and Executive Director of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel. Prof. Ganor serves as the Founding President of the International Academic Counter-Terrorism Community (ICTAC), an international association of academic institutions, experts, and researchers in fields related to the study of terrorism and counter-terrorism.



Prof. Ganor previously held positions at Stanford University, U.C. Berkeley, the Hoover Institution (Koret Distinguished Visiting Fellow), the Monterey Institute of International Studies, MIPT (The National Memorial for the Prevention of Terrorism), Hebrew University and Bar Ilan University. He was also a member of the International Advisory Team of the Manhattan Institute (CTCT) to the New York Police Department (NYPD).

Prof. Ganor is a member of the International Advisory Council of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Nanyang Technological University, The Republic of Singapore. He is also a co-founder of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), a partnership between the University of Pennsylvania, USA; the Interdisciplinary Center, Israel; King's College, London; and the Regional Center on Conflict Prevention (RCCP), Jordan. Since 2014, Prof. Ganor has been a Member of the Executive Committee of the Academic Advisory to the Institute for the Study of Global Anti-Semitism and Policy (ISGAP)

Prof. Ganor has given briefings and/or testimonies to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), the Australian Parliament, the United States Congress, the US Army, the FBI, the US Department of Homeland Security, as well as numerous intelligence, security and police services throughout the world. He has given hundreds of guest lectures at top universities and research centers throughout the world including at Columbia University, Syracuse University, Georgetown University, the Wilson Center, RAND and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

In 2001, Prof. Ganor was appointed as a Member of the Advisory Committee of the Israel National Security Council on Counter-Terrorism, and he has previously served as a Member of the Israeli Delegation to the Trilateral (American-Palestinian-Israeli) Committee for Monitoring Incitement to Violence and Terror. Prof. Ganor also advised the Israeli Delegation for Peace Negotiations with Jordan on Transportation Safety, the Israeli Counter-Terrorism Coordinator at the Prime Minister's Office and the Israeli Ministry of Defense. In 1995, he was a consultant to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on his book "Fighting Terrorism – How democracies can defeat domestic and international terrorism".

Prof. Ganor has published numerous articles on terrorism and counter-terrorism. His book, "The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle – A Guide for Decision Makers" (Transaction Publishers, 2005), is used as a

text book in universities worldwide and his upcoming book: "Global Alert: Modern terrorism rationality and the challenge to the democratic world" will be published by Columbia University Press. He has published several articles in "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism", "Terrorism and Political Violence", "Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflicts", Orbis and the International Law Studies.

He is also the editor of "Countering Suicide Terrorism" (2001) and "Post-Modern Terrorism" (2006). He is the co-editor of "ISC 2005 – Security, Terrorism and Privacy in Information Society" (2005), "Trends in International Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism" (2007), "Hypermedia Seduction for Terrorist Recruiting" (2007), "Terrorism Informatics – Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security" (2008), and "The Global Impact of Terrorism" (2008). Prof. Ganor is a Member of the editorial board of Springer Intelligence & Security Informatics (ISI) journal. Prof. Ganor has contributed book chapters for many publications, including to Oxford University Press, Routledge, Springer, and the U.S. Institute for Peace.

Prof. Ganor chairs ICT's International Conferences: World Summit on Counter-Terrorism, and co-directed several research projects for NATO and the Ministry of Public Security. Prof. Ganor is a frequent media and television commentator and has appeared on the BBC, CNN, CBS, ABC, the New York Times, the Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, the Jerusalem Post, Haaretz and many other Israeli and international publications.

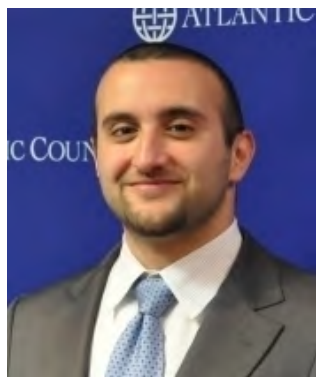
Mr. Hassan Hassan



Hassan Hassan is a senior fellow at TIMEP focusing on militant Islam, Syria, and Iraq. He was previously an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Program in London, a research associate at the Delma Institute in Abu Dhabi, and a deputy opinion editor for the *National*, the leading English language daily in the Middle East. Working in journalism and research since 2008, Mr. Hassan focuses on Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf States, and he has written extensively on Sunni and Shia movements in the region, including for think-tanks such as the European Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Chatham House, and the Brookings Institution.

Mr. Hassan is the author, with Michael Weiss, of *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, a New York Times bestseller chosen as one of the *Times* of London's Best Books of 2015 and the *Wall Street Journal's* top ten books on terrorism. He is a weekly columnist for the *National* and has contributed to the *Guardian*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *Financial Times*, and the *New York Times*, among others. He has appeared on flagship television programs, such as the O'Reilly Factor, Amanpour and the Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell. Mr. Hassan received an M.A. in international relations from the University of Nottingham. You can follow him on Twitter: [@hxhassan](https://twitter.com/hxhassan).

Mr. Faysal Itani



Faysal Itani is a resident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, where he focuses primarily on the Syrian conflict and its regional impact. He is also an adjunct professor of Middle East politics at George Washington University.

Itani was born and grew up in Beirut, Lebanon and has lived and worked in several Arab countries. Before joining the Atlantic Council, he was a risk analyst advising governments, corporations, and international organizations on political, economic, and security issues in the Middle East. Itani has repeatedly briefed the United States government and its allies on the conflict in Syria and its effects on their interests. He has been widely published and quoted in prominent media including *The New York Times*, *TIME*, *Politico*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *US News*, *Huffington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Itani holds an MA in strategic studies and international economics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, a certificate in public policy from Georgetown University, and a BA in business from the American University of Beirut.

Ambassador James Jeffrey

Ambassador James F. Jeffrey is the Philip Solondz distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute where he focuses on U.S. diplomatic and military strategy in the Middle East, with emphasis on Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

One of the nation's most senior diplomats, Ambassador Jeffrey has held a series of highly sensitive posts in Washington D.C. and abroad. In addition to his service as ambassador in Ankara and Baghdad, he served as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor in the George W. Bush administration, with a special focus on Iran. He previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, where his responsibilities included leading the Iran policy team and coordinating public diplomacy. Earlier appointments included service as senior advisor on Iraq to the secretary of state; chargé d'affaires and deputy chief of mission in Baghdad; deputy chief of mission in Ankara; and ambassador to Albania.



A former infantry officer in the U.S. army, Ambassador Jeffrey served in Germany and Vietnam from 1969 to 1976

Dr. Spencer Meredith III

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III is a professor of national security strategy at the US National Defense University. With a doctorate in Government and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, and two decades of research and work on post-Soviet regions and the Middle East, his expertise bridges scholarly and practitioner communities. To that end, he has published widely on strategic topics related to democratic development, conflict resolution, and special operations. He is a Fulbright Scholar and a regular advisor and contributor to several DoD and interagency projects, including multiple Joint Staff Strategic Multilayer Assessments, intelligence community workshops, and JSOC efforts supporting the joint warfighter in the areas of governance, human factors of conflict, and influence operations.



Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy



Nicholas O'Shaughnessy is Professor of Communication at Queen Mary, University of London, UK and latterly director of their Marketing and Communications Group; Visiting Professor (2016-) in the Department of War Studies at King's College London, and a Quondam Fellow of Hughes Hall Cambridge University. Earlier in his career he taught for eleven years at Cambridge. Nicholas is the author or co-author or editor of numerous books on commercial and political persuasion.

Ultimately his concern is with the 'engineering of consent'- the troubling matter of how public opinion can be manufactured, and governments elected, via sophisticated methodologies of persuasion developed in the consumer economy.

A co-authored book, *Theory and Concepts in Political Marketing*, was published in April 2013 with Sage. *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand* (Hurst) was published in September 2016, and a second volume – *Marketing The Third Reich: Persuasion, Packaging and Propaganda*- has been out since September 2017 with Routledge. 'Key Readings In Propaganda' (with Paul Baines, four volumes, Sage London 2012): Volume One: Historical origins, definition, changing nature. Volume Two: The psychology and sociology underpinning Propaganda. Volume Three: Propaganda in military and terrorism contexts. Volume Four: Advances and contemporary issues in Propaganda.

Other topics in propaganda are pursued in numerous journal articles such as *Selling Terror: The Symbolization and Positioning of Jihad* (with Paul Baines), *Marketing Theory* Volume 9 (2) (pp 207-221) 2009. *The Dark Side of Political Marketing, Islamist Propaganda, Reversal Theory and British Muslims* with Paul Baines et al, *European Journal of Marketing*.V44 3/4 2010. *Al Qaeda message evolution and positioning, 1998- 2008: Propaganda analysis re-visited*, Baines and O'Shaughnessy, *Public Relations Inquiry* pp 163-191 May 2014. *Putin, Xi, And Hitler: propaganda and the paternity of pseudo democracy*. *Defence Strategic Communications* (the official journal of NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence) Vol 2 Spring 2017. *The Politics of Consumption And the Consumption of Politics: How Authoritarian Regimes Shape Public Opinion By Using Consumer Marketing Tools*. *Journal of Advertising Research*, June 2017, 57 (2). His perspective has always been that persuasion is the hidden hand of

history, its core dynamic. And certainly it is the case that propaganda has become again an important part of our global public and civic discourse.

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

A Saudi expert on Gulf politics and strategic issues, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager is the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, a global think tank based in Jeddah with a well-established worldwide network of partners and offices in both the Gulf region and Europe.



In this capacity, Dr. Sager has authored and edited numerous publications including *Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, *The GCC's Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq* and *Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions*. He is also a frequent contributor to major international media channels and appears regularly on Al-Arabiya Television, France 24 and the BBC. In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Sager is actively engaged in track-two and mediation meeting. For example, he has chaired and moderated the Syrian opposition meetings in Riyadh in December 2015 and November 2017.

In addition to his work with the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Sager is President of Sager Group Holding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is active in the fields of information technology, aviation services and investments. Furthermore, he holds numerous other appointments including on the Makkah Province Council, Advisory Board of the Arab Thought Foundation, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Faculty of Economics and Administration at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Ministry of Education, Geneva Center for Security Policy and German Orient Foundation. Dr. Sager has also sat on the advisory group for the UNDP Arab Human Development Report, and participates in the Think Tank Leaders Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr. Sager holds a Ph.D. in Politics and International Relations from Lancaster University and an M.A. from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University.

Mr. Mubin Shaikh



Born and raised in Canada, **Mubin Shaikh** grew up with two conflicting and competing cultures. At the age of 19, he went to India and Pakistan where he had a chance encounter with the Taliban before their takeover of Afghanistan in 1995. Shaikh became fully radicalized as a supporter of the global Jihadist culture, recruiting others but the 9/11 attacks forced to him reconsider his views. He spent 2 years in Syria, continuing his study of Arabic and Islamic Studies and went through a period of full deradicalization.

Returning to Canada in 2004, he was recruited by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and worked several CLASSIFIED infiltration operations on the internet, in chat-protected forums and on the ground with human networks. In late 2005, one of those intelligence files moved to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) for investigation. The "Toronto 18" terrorism case resulted in the conviction of 11 aspiring violent extremists after testifying over 4 years, in 5 legal hearings at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

Shaikh has since obtained a Master of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (MPICT) and is considered an SME (Subject Matter Expert) in national security and counterterrorism, and radicalization & deradicalization to the United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate, NATO, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), CENTCOM, various special operations forces, the FBI and others. He has appeared on multiple U.S., British and Canadian media outlets as a commentator and is extensively involved with the ISIS social media and Foreign Fighter (including Returnees and rehabilitation) file. Shaikh is also co-author of the acclaimed book, *Undercover Jihadi*.

Email: mubinshaikh6450@gmail.com

Twitter: @MrMubinShaikh

LinkedIn: <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/mubins>

Dr. Martin Styszynski

Marcin Styszynski (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. He also served as the cultural and scientific attaché in the Embassy of Poland in Egypt (2009-2012) and the second secretary in the Embassy of Poland in Algeria (2012-2014). In 2016 he started new duties of Consul in the Embassy of Poland in Riyadh.



Ms. Mona Yacoubian



Mona Yacoubian joined the U.S. Institute of Peace after serving as deputy assistant administrator in the Middle East Bureau at USAID from 2014-2017 where she had responsibility for Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Prior to joining USAID, Ms. Yacoubian was a senior advisor at the Stimson Center where her work focused on the Arab uprisings with an emphasis on Syria. Prior to joining the Stimson Center, Ms. Yacoubian served as a special advisor on the Middle East at the U.S. Institute of Peace where her work focused on Lebanon and Syria as well as broader issues related to democratization in the Arab world.

Ms. Yacoubian's research focuses on conflict analysis and prevention in the Middle East, with a specific focus on Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Her interests also include fragility and resilience.

Ms. Yacoubian was a Fulbright scholar in Syria where she studied Arabic at the University of Damascus from 1985 to 1986. She has held an international affairs fellowship with the Council on Foreign

Relations (CFR) and is currently a CFR member. Ms. Yacoubian earned an MPA from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a BA from Duke University.

Mr. Weston Aviles

Weston Aviles is an analyst at NSI, Inc. He studied criminology and political science at Arizona State University (BS) with minors in Middle Eastern history and economics, and certificates in political thought and leadership, international studies and religion and conflict. Weston then studied Government at the InterDisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel graduate school with a focus in counter-terrorism and security studies (MA). His graduate studies focused on Arab Spring dynamics, international security in the MENA region and radical Islam. Weston is an alumni of the University of Virginia's Semester at Sea program and has participated in several academic programs in Israel to study terrorism and counter-terrorism. Weston is now an analyst for NSI and continues a research focus on Middle Eastern politics and conflict studies.

