



## Issue Description

Committee: North Atlantic Council

Issue of: Syrian Civil War

Submitted by: Boglárka Geréb, Deputy Chair of the NAC

Edited by: Márton Levente Sipos, President of the General Assembly  
Csanád Végh, Deputy President of the General Assembly

### Introduction:

Since 2011 the Syrian Civil War has grown to an international and multi-sided conflict between the Ba'athist Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition where the main aim is to build a better, liveable and independent state.

From 2011 until now the conflict escalated into a proxy war where 4 sides are indefatigably fighting against each other, nevertheless, with no result. Each side have foreign backers and their disagreement about whose side are they supporting makes this conflict even more complicated. This never-ending, meaningless bloodshed had become the bloodiest war of the 21st century.

With time the civil war turned into a global dimension. Syria is now an open field for international involvements for such great powers like the Russian Federation and the US who are supporting different sides of the war with money, weapons, aid and shelter. The neighbouring countries are also included in the conflict and had to suffer all the slaughter and refugees fled by Syria. The people of Syria is now divided into 4 parts: the national government, the rebellions, the Tahrir al-Sham and the ISIS.

The Civil War's antecedent was the Arab Spring which stands for the Arabic citizens whose major goal was a participatory and representative political system, better economy and independent judiciary power. In Syria, it meant a peaceful protest which turned into an international war with the first few bullets shot by the Syrian government to its own nation. Since then the parties created different ideologies what a perfect Syria would mean to them, for instance, a democratic or a theocratic Syria.

Since the first bullet was shot 8 years have passed. Until now more than 400 000 innocent lives were taken by the brutal war, terrorist attacks were accomplished all around the globe under the name of ISIS, the Syrian government used chemical weapons on its own nation and the Syrian War had now become a leading international issue.

### Definition of key terms:

#### ASSAD GOVERNMENT

The Ba'ath Syrian Regional Branch Socialist Party holds the governing title since the 1963's successful coup d'état. In 1971 Hafez al-Assad declared himself Prime minister. The Party remained the governing power until now by cause of the lack of participant parties. Bashar al-Assad had become the Prime Minister of Syria after the death of his father. He believes in a strong Syria under a strong government.



The Assad government is the current controlling power and fights against all the oppositions to become the great influence in Syria again. They are supported by the Russian Federation and Iran with money, weapons, military advisers and aid.

## REBELS

Opposition in Syria formed after the 2011 shooting by the Syrian nation who wants to crack down on the Syrian government, Assad. Their main aim is to build a new Syria, based on democracy, led by an elected President. They are highly supported by the US, Turkey and the Gulf States with militants, weapons, money and aid.

## KURDS

Oppositional ethnic group on the Syrian-Turkish borderline who fought for autonomy and now are fighting for independence in a hope of an own state. Approximately 20 million people confess himself as Kurd. Today they are living in the northern segment of Syria called Rojava. The Kurds formed their own military called the YPG which protects the Kurd nation and fight mostly against the ISIS and The Syrian government.

## ISIS

Opposition in Syria formed from dismissed Syrian rebels and Iraqis. Their name stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and started as an al Qaeda splinter group. The group is committed to the Islamic religion and believes in a theocratic Syrian State in the centre of the Koran as their symbol. In 2014 they controlled 34,000 square miles in Syria and Iraq. ISIS does not recognise other religions' existence and destroys other cultures' religious values. The organisation is also involved in international fields with accomplishing 90 global attacks.

## TAHRIR AL-SHAM

Opposition in Syria formed in 2017 from jihadist rebels, approximately between 12 000 and 15 000 militants as members, with extremist views. Their name stands for the Organisation or the Liberation of the Levant abbreviated HTS and is also known as al-Qaeda in Syria, however, the organisation did not claim that officially. They are an active Salafist jihadist militant group involved in the Syrian War and in international issues as well. HTS's main goal is an Islamic Emirate controlled by Tahrir al-Sham or a part of the al-Qaeda.

## YPG

YPG in an acronym translated as the People's Protection Units. After the outbreak of the Qamishli Uprising, in 2004, Kurd locals established their own army in order to give protection to their members. YPG is: 'A democratic socialist organization in which Officers are elected by troops and equality regardless of gender, religion and ethnicity is guaranteed.'

## FSA

FSA is an abbreviation for Free Syrian Army. As its name also shows this organisation was formed from the national military after the 2011 slathering. A part of the Syrian



army joined the rebellions party and stood up against the Assad government after seeing the consequences of his cruel action. Since then the FSA is operating as an independent organisation whose main goal is to crack down on the government and protect the Syrian Nation.

## SDF

SDF is the Syrian Democratic Force led by the People's Protection Unit. It was founded in 2015 and their main aim is to create a democratic and federal Syria. This organisation is the Kurds defence system.

## ARAB SPRING

Movement in the Arabic Regions in hope of eradicating unemployment, developing economy, democracy and a liveable lifestyle. This movement had begun with a Tunisian setting himself on fire in front of the government's building as a cause of not being able to sell his fruits.

## PROXY WAR

Proxy warfare is a war where the parties are using third sides as behalves which are not directly involved in the armed conflict.

## THEOCRACY

A theocracy is a form of government, which is based on its culture's religion, where priests rule and govern in the name of God.

## DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION OF NORTHERN SYRIA

An unofficial State consisting of Kurdish citizens. The population is reaching the 20 million members mostly from Syrians and Assyrians. This federation is based on democracy whose main goal is to achieve an official Syrian State.

## ROJAVA

Territory in northern Syria occupied by the Kurds. They gained this 50 000 km<sup>2</sup> field in 2012. Rojava is called the Kurdish "home".

## ISLAM

A religion, originated from similar roots as Christianity and Judaism, that is based on the Koran and its leading prophet is called Mohamed. Islam considers Allah as the only and true God.



## General overview:

The Syrian Civil War has grown to an international Security Issue. The involved behalves and great powers generated this conflict even more impenetrable, chaotic and complex, taking into consideration the further disputes according to the disagreement on their antithetical antagonists.

This War has left behind millions of refugees, has taken away hundreds of thousands of innocent lives and has made many Syrian families' life harder not mentioning the deprivation of fundamental human and civil rights.

Syria is a diverse country in many ways. The Syrian nation shares numerous relational identities, for instance, the Islam Sunni and Shias, and different ethnic groups are living in the country.

The Civil war had broken out following the 2011 peaceful protest. At the end of 2010 a movement so-called Arab Spring, a wave of uprisings and revolutions raged in the Arab World hoping for a more democratic government, non-corrupt capitalist economy and more liveable and brighter future. Syrians were protesting against their government, the Assad government, in order to change their current standpoint. Teenagers and children were also taking part in the actions, like anti-governmental graffiti, which led to the arrest of 14 years olds who were involved in the incident.

The peaceful protest started to escalate in front of the government building which was disrupted by the national army's bullet shots towards the crowd. This was the turning point where the originally non-violent uprising turned into a Civil War. By July the protesters started shooting back alongside a part of the national army who turned against the government after the cruel command and favoured the side of the opposition. Today they call themselves the Free Syrian Army (FSA) who are usually fighting beside the opposition called the Rebels.

The Rebels' most important goal is to precipitate Assad from the governing position in the country. With time many protestors joined to the side of the opposition including jihadist extremists. From all around the globe people with similar radical view joined to the jihadist opposition under the invitation of the al-Quade.

Also around that time an ethnic group, called Kurds, after a continues but non-resultant fighting for their autonomy, started to arm against the divided Syrian nation and to count a showdown on the government in order to establish their own State.

This summer was the time when the Syrian Civil War had officially become a proxy war. By 2012 Iran, who has similar and shared past with Syria, was supporting its behalf with numerous weapons and cargo flights day-by-day. The Rebels were also supported by weapons and aid. Their main behalf was the Gulf States through Turkey.

At this point, the war's actions focused mainly on the acts of the two behalves. As a consequence of the Gulf support, Iran decided to send a militia, Hezbollah, to fight alongside the Assad government. The Gulf States answered with sending a major cargo flight that time through Jordan, who also accused the Assad government.

In 2013 the War was clearly divided between Sunni and Shias powers. The media was following the events and this issue became international when the US decided that they would join the conflict. The US's main aim was to protect the rebellions and provide them shelter, aid, and military support in a way, that CIA agents would train members form the rebels to fight. AT this point the Civil war became a Global War.



In August 2013 the Assad government used chemical weapons on its own nation. The UN and the US immediately judged the act in the name of deliberate homicide and deprivation of human and civil rights. ‘It is in the National Security interests of the United States to respond to the Assad regime’s use of chemical weapons through a targeted military strike.’, said Barack Obama. The US declared strong support against Assad. For the first time officially, Russia responded to the US commitment and asked the Syrian government for their surrender control over its chemical weapons as soon as possible to avoid US military conflict.

In 2014 a new form of opposition was created: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. ISIS was formed from a part of the rebels, mostly from jihad extremist, and was created by the al-Qaeda, however, they officially denied this statement. This step changed the way of the global proxy war even more. The International opponents were now mostly focusing on IS because of the terror threat.

The US promised to take actions against the extremist organization and end their rule in the region. The United States started to train Rebels fighting against IS. This meant that The United States opposed the ISIS more than the Assad government. However, by the end of 2015, IS controlled nearly half of the country’s territory.

In August Kurdish groups were bombed by Turkey who could not control any more the ethnic group on the Turkish borderline. Turkey believed that their main enemy is the Kurdish group and she did not fight against the ISIS. In contrast, the United States believes that ISIS is the first and main problem in this conflict and, while fighting against IS, they support the Kurds. This disagreement escalated into a major struggle between Turkey and the US. This makes the War even more never-ending and complicated.

In 2015 the Russian Federation joined officially to the War with clearly supporting Assad and sending aircraft to the military with the purpose of bombing the IS, but instead, they end up attacking Americans from the Rebels’ group.

The next year Donald Trump has won the election and became President of the United States. Donald Trump believes that the US has to avoid any further conflict and involvement in the Syrian War and Assad should stay in power by itself.

In 2017 Assad used chemical weapons against its nation again. The United States answered with several tomahawk missile targeting Syrian military basements. This time was the first when the United States directly attacked the Assad government. The United States’ standpoint has changed drastically. Nowadays they are supporting mostly the Kurd ethnic groups.

In 2017 a new form of anti-governmental and anti-rebellion organization has been formed under the name of Tahrir al-Sham. They are a newly joined, slightly extremist group who are fighting against Assad and also the rebels. They want to create their own State based on the Koran, however, yet they do not mean a massive problem.

In the meantime with the cooperation of the US, ISIS has lost nearly all of its territory in the area. At the end of 2017, the US President wrote about his view in a tweet: ‘We have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only reason for being there during the Trump Presidency.’

Today the Syrian Civil War is still growing into international chaos. The opponents in the country are disagreeing with each other they all believe in a different Syrian Future, the behalves as neighbour countries also have contrasting views on who the main enemy is and supports disparate sides, and the internationally involved countries also have distinct opinions on who they should fight against.



## Major Parties Involved:

In the Syrian War 4 different sides are fighting against each other. Each of them has different foreign and internal supporters, considers different parties as enemies and believes in a disparate New Syria.

Assad as the leader of the governmental party believes in a strong Syria under a strong authority. The President has highly socialist views about the leadership, however, at the beginning, in 2000, the Syrian nation was waiting for a promising democratic and bright future as Assad mentioned it in his election program also. However, this liberal program turned into a most likely socialist campaign where Assad, ignoring the fundamental human rights, started to fire into his nation. Besides all these actions, Assad has great allies. Iran is a long-standing partner for Syria who is supporting the country with ammunition and medical aid. Russia as the other behalf of Syria is supporting the country with weapons, military advisors and air forces. Syria plays an important role in Russia's military strategy. If Russia would lose Syria it would mean the end of her influence in the Middle East and she would also lose Tartus. Syria and her allies consider the Rebels as the main enemy and want to crack down on the opposition, however, in the meantime, they are also trying to step up against ISIS as well.

The firstly formed opposition, the Rebels, is fighting for a democratic and economically stable country. They gained support from US, Turkey and the Gulf States from the early stage of the war and are still maintaining the relation as behalves. The US finds National Security interest in the war when Assad for the first time adapted chemical weapons against its nation and started to train the rebellions. Turkey believes that through the rebels they could solve the problem the ethnic group on the Turkish borderline. The Rebels has been resisting against the Assad government and the further extremist groups

The Kurd minority wants to achieve an own and independent State. They also accuse the government of the outbreak of the warfare. Their goal is to form a self-reliant democratic country. They are allies of the US military forces and militate against everyone. Turkey means the most threat for them because of their ensured status at her borderline. This incomprehension incited a conflict between the US and Turkey.

ISIS the extremist group whose main aim is to establish an Islamic Theocracy and relegate all the other religions from the area. The originally part of the Rebels' party was created by the al-Quade where they gained most of their people who joined the ISIS. They consider all parties, organizations and countries who do not practice Islam as an enemy. Although, some may say that ISIS was defeated, as they lost all of their territory in Syria, terrorism is still intimidation worldwide.

A newly joined association was formed back in 2017. They call themselves the Tahrir al-Sham, they are fighting against the Assad government and the Rebels as well in order to create a new Syria based on Islam and the Koran. Their main supporter is Saudi Arabia who has similar interest in the Arabic region.



## Timeline of events:

- March 2011** Violence flares in Daraa after a group of teens and children are arrested for writing political graffiti. Dozens of people are killed when security forces crack down on demonstrations.
- April 21, 2011** Assad lifts the country's 48-year-old state of emergency. He also abolishes the Higher State Security Court and issues a decree 'regulating the right to peaceful protest, as one of the basic human rights guaranteed by the Syrian Constitution.'
- September 2, 2011** The European Union bans the import of Syrian oil.
- October 2, 2011** A new alignment of Syrian opposition groups establishes the Syrian National Council, a framework through which to end Assad's government and establish a democratic system.
- October 4, 2011** Russia and China veto a UN Security Council resolution that would call for an immediate halt to the crackdown in Syria against opponents of Assad. Nine of the 15-member council countries, including the United States, voted in favour of adopting the resolution.
- November 27, 2011** Foreign ministers from 19 Arab League countries vote to impose economic sanctions against the Syrian regime for its part in a bloody crackdown on civilian demonstrators.
- November 30, 2011** Turkey announces a series of measures, including financial sanctions, against Syria.
- December 19, 2011** Syria signs an Arab League proposal aimed at ending violence between government forces and protesters.
- February 2, 2012** A UN Security Council meeting ends with no agreement on a draft resolution intended to pressure Syria to end its crackdown on anti-government demonstrators.
- February 4, 2012** A UN Security Council resolution condemning Syria is not adopted after Russia and China vote against it.
- February 6, 2012** The United States closes its embassy in Damascus and recalls its diplomats.
- February 16, 2012** The United Nations General Assembly passes a nonbinding resolution endorsing the Arab League plan for Assad to step down. The vote was 137 in favour and 12 against, with 17 abstentions.



- April 1, 2012** At a conference in Istanbul, the international group Friends of the Syrian People formally recognizes the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people.
- November 11, 2012** Israel fires warning shots toward Syria after a mortar shell hits an Israeli military post. It is the first time Israel has fired on Syria across the Golan Heights since the 1973 Yom Kippur War.
- November 11, 2012** Syrian opposition factions formally agree to unite as the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.
- April 25, 2013** US Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel announces the United States has evidence that the chemical weapon sarin has been used in Syria on a small scale.
- May 27, 2013** EU nations end the arms embargo against the Syrian rebels.
- June 13, 2013** US President Barack Obama says that Syria has crossed a “red line” with its use of chemical weapons against rebels. His administration indicates that it will be stepping up its support of the rebels, who have been calling for the United States and others to provide arms needed to battle Assad’s forces.
- August 18, 2013** A team of UN weapons inspectors arrives in Syria to begin an investigation into whether chemical weapons have been used during the civil war.
- August 22, 2013** The United Nations and the United States call for an immediate investigation of Syrian activists’ claims that the Assad government used chemical weapons in an attack on civilians on August 21. Anti-regime activist groups in Syria say more than 1,300 people were killed in the attack outside Damascus, many of them women and children.
- September 9, 2013** Syria agrees to a Russian proposal to give up control of its chemical weapons.
- September 14, 2013** The United States and Russia agree to a plan to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria.
- September 27, 2013** The UN Security Council passes a resolution requiring Syria to eliminate its arsenal of chemical weapons. Assad says he will abide by the resolution.
- September 30, 2013** At the UN General Assembly in New York, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem says that Syria is not engaged in a civil war, but a war on terror.



- December 2, 2013** UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay says that a UN fact-finding team has found “massive evidence” that the highest levels of the Syrian government are responsible for war crimes.
- February 23, 2014** The UN Security Council unanimously passes a resolution boosting access to humanitarian aid in Syria.
- June 3, 2014** Assad is re-elected, reportedly receiving 88.7% of the vote in the country’s first election since civil war broke out in 2011.
- September 22-23, 2014** The United States and allies launch airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria, focusing on the city of Raqqa.
- September 14-15, 2015** A Pentagon spokesperson says the Russian military appears to be attempting to set up a forward operating base in western Syria, in the area around the port city of Latakia. Russian President Vladimir Putin says that Russia is supporting the Syrian government in its fight against ISIS.
- October 30, 2015** US White House spokesman Josh Earnest says that the US will be deploying “less than 50” Special Operations forces, who will be sent to Kurdish-controlled territory in northern Syria. The American troops will help local Kurdish and Arab forces fighting ISIS with logistics and are planning to bolster their efforts.
- March 15, 2016** Russia starts withdrawing its forces from Syria. A spokeswoman for Assad tells CNN that the Russian campaign is winding down after achieving its goal of helping Syrian troops take back territory claimed by terrorists.
- September 15, 2016** At least 23 people, including nine children, are killed during airstrikes in Syria, with the United States and Russia accusing each other of violating the ceasefire in effect since September 12.
- July 7, 2017** Trump and Putin reach an agreement on curbing violence in southwest Syria during their meeting at the G20 in Hamburg, Germany. The ceasefire will take effect in the de-escalation zone beginning at noon Damascus time on July 9.
- October 17, 2017** ISIS loses control of its self-declared capital, Raqqa. US-backed forces fighting in Raqqa say “major military operations” have ended, though there are still pockets of resistance in the city.
- March 6, 2018** More than 1,000 children have been killed or injured this year across Syria, UNICEF regional communications chief Juliette Touma tells CNN. In all, 342 children were killed and 803 were injured in Syria in the first two months of 2018, Touma says, citing multiple sources.



- April 7, 2018** Helicopters drop barrel bombs filled with toxic gas on the last rebel-held town in Eastern Ghouta, activist groups say. The World Health Organization later says that as many as 500 people may have been affected by the attack.
- September 17, 2018** Russia and Turkey announce they have agreed to create a demilitarized zone in Syria's Idlib province, potentially thwarting a large-scale military operation and impending humanitarian disaster in the country's last rebel stronghold. The zone, which will be patrolled by Turkish and Russian military units, will become operational from October 15.
- December 19, 2018** US President Trump tweets, 'We have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only reason for being there during the Trump Presidency.' A US defence official and an administration official told CNN that planning for the 'full' and 'rapid' withdrawal of US military from Syria is already underway.

(CNN – Syrian Civil War Fast Facts)



## Previous attempts to solve the issue:

This Issue previously appeared in the UN Security Council, with no results. After multiple attempts, Russia and China using their veto right prevented the resolution from passing as a whole. Russia also created many draft resolutions but because of the lack of majority, there is no possibility of passing them.

The main issue is the use of chemical weapons, the allied forces against the government, the assignment of the government and the protection of the citizens. However, since the absence of mutual agreement, the UN is unable to move forward to end this bloody warfare.

Examples for previous attempts:

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/syria/>

## Possible solutions and approaches:

### **Declaring the common antagonist**

To achieve any result, unlike in the UN Security Council, the participant countries have to agree on who the real threat and enemy is. Without the cooperation in the Council, the international proxy war will continue.

### **Organize a special commando**

With the participation of all the participant countries organizing a special commando with common goals to protect the Syrian civilians could be a relevant approach.

### **Sending Humanitarian aid**

Support the civilians with humanitarian aid in order to give them the possibility to live a liveable and safe life in the War Zone.



## Bibliography:

1. <https://news.un.org/en/focus/syria>
2. <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/civil-war-in-syria>
3. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War/Introduction>
4. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/meast/syria-civil-war-fast-facts/index.html>
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian\\_Civil\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War)
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFpanWNgfQY>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv6AcnwnBhM>
8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnM2bQJitjw>
9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op0t6RePeZY>
10. <https://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-nationalism/peoples-protection-units-ypg/>
11. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html>
12. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>
13. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>
14. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>
15. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13288.doc.htm>
16. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/syria-war-explained-what-s-behind-the-conflict>
17. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBanx17c9mc>