

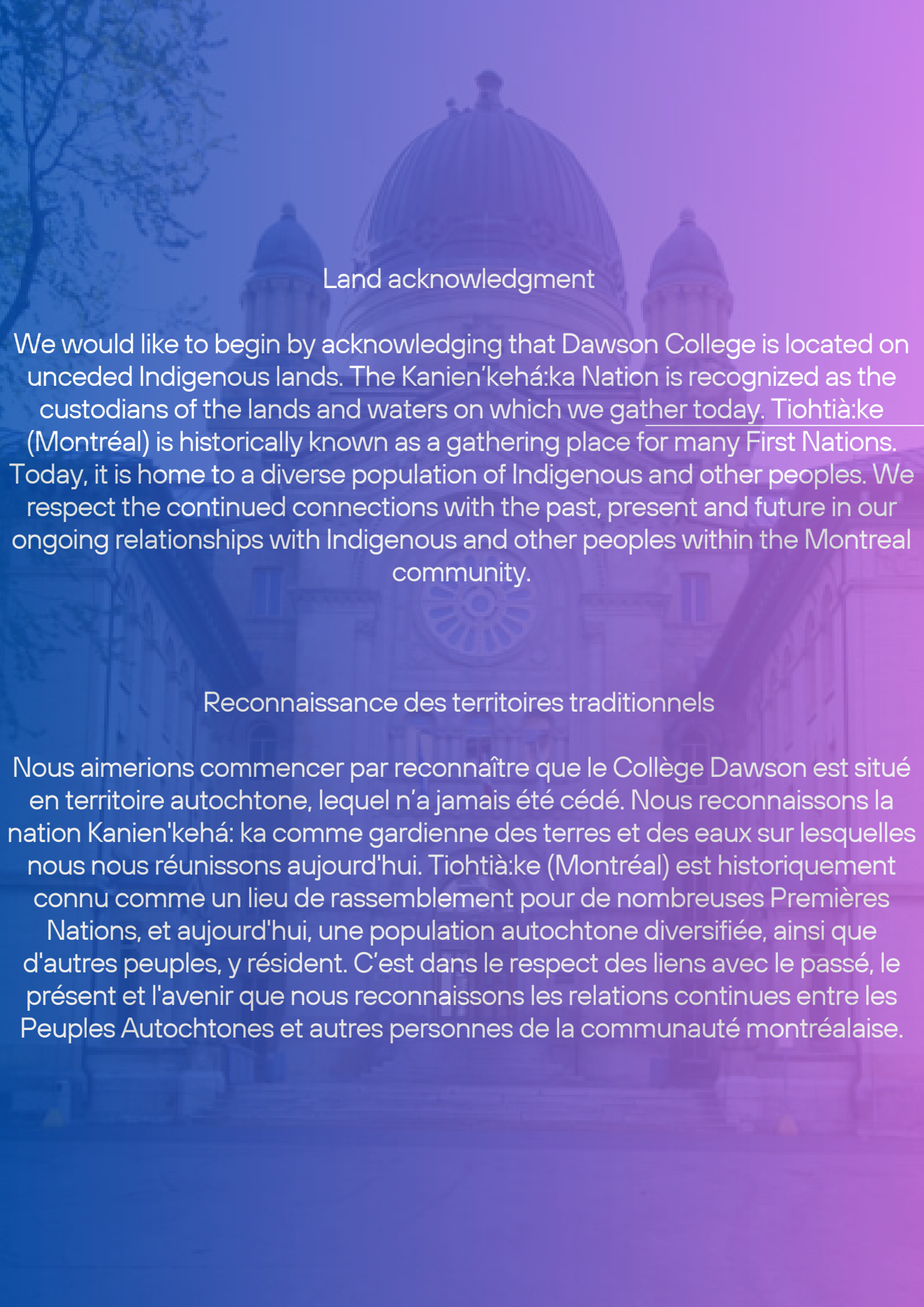


Dawson College Model United Nations Conference

The Syrian Civil War, A Never- Ending Nightmare

Background Guide

AUTHORS: LAYLA KOSARA, RAINA UDDIN



Land acknowledgment

We would like to begin by acknowledging that Dawson College is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke (Montréal) is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

Reconnaissance des territoires traditionnels

Nous aimerions commencer par reconnaître que le Collège Dawson est situé en territoire autochtone, lequel n'a jamais été cédé. Nous reconnaissons la nation Kanien'kehá:ka comme gardienne des terres et des eaux sur lesquelles nous nous réunissons aujourd'hui. Tiohtià:ke (Montréal) est historiquement connu comme un lieu de rassemblement pour de nombreuses Premières Nations, et aujourd'hui, une population autochtone diversifiée, ainsi que d'autres peuples, y résident. C'est dans le respect des liens avec le passé, le présent et l'avenir que nous reconnaissons les relations continues entre les Peuples Autochtones et autres personnes de la communauté montréalaise.

INTRODUCTION

Letter from the Under-Secretary-General of Specialized Agencies



Dear delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you all to this first edition of DCMUN! Whether this is your first ever conference or your 10th, we will be there to guide you and make this a memorable experience for everyone.

This year I have the honor to serve as the Under Secretary General of Specialized Agency and Crisis and I am very grateful for this position. Ever since I started Model UN in my first

semester of cegep, I gravitated towards the theatrics and fast pace of specialized agency and crisis committees and I am so glad I get to share my love for those committees to you through the amazing committees all the incredible chairs and vice chairs have prepared. They have put in countless hours and days into making all of this happen for the past few months and for that I wanted to thank all of them for all the work they have put in. So thank you to Layla Kosara and Raina Uddin for the work they have put into the specialized agency on the Syrian war, Jeannine Kota Leno for the bilingual specialized agency on the Haitian Revolution, Maxime Germain and Benjamin Taylor-Sauvé for the bilingual crisis on the patriation of the Canadian constitution, and finally thank you to Bahara Mominzada and Abisha Premathasan for the work on the Kendrick vs Drake crisis. So thank you to all of you for your immense involvement in making this conference happen.

Whichever committee you are in, whether it be the specialized agency on the Syrian war, or the crisis on the Kendrick and Drake feud, all will teach you valuable things that will help you gain deeper insight on issues present in topics you might or might not be familiar with and give you a broader perspective on the world.

On a final note, some of these committees cover heavy topics and it is important that everyone feels safe and respected, so any sort of discrimination towards another delegate or member of staff is extremely frowned upon. This is a space to be diplomatic and open to different perspectives that can be brought up. And with that, I wish all of you good luck on your research and finally remember to have fun!

Sincerely,
Letitia-Stefania Savulescu
USG of Specialized Agency and Crisis

Letter of Equity

Equity Statement

The Dawson College Model United Nations (DCMUN) Conference is steadfast in its commitment to fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all participants. Upholding the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion is a shared responsibility among delegates, the Dais, the Secretariat, and faculty members. Consequently, DCMUN maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward any actions or behavior that promote hatred, discrimination, disrespect, or conduct deemed inappropriate by the Dais or Secretariat. The commitment to these values aligns with the guiding principles of the United Nations, which emphasize that “the principles of equality and non-discrimination are part of the foundations of the rule of law.” Through this, DCMUN ensures that its conference remain inclusive and respectful spaces where meaningful dialogue and collaboration can thrive.

To uphold this standard, DCMUN reserves the right to impose disciplinary measures on individuals who engage in behaviors including, but not limited to:

- Any form of speech, written work, language, communication, action, behaviour, or resolution that demeans, excludes, or harms individuals or groups based on nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics. This includes microaggressions, stereotyping, and any behavior that creates a hostile environment.
- Any unwanted sexual advances, comments, gestures, or actions, as well as other forms of harassment that create an unsafe or uncomfortable environment for others.
- Any form of speech, language, communication, written work, action, behavior, or resolution that perpetuates prejudice, stereotypes, or discrimination based on race or ethnicity. This includes but is not limited to racial slurs, offensive jokes, cultural appropriation, and behavior that marginalizes or undermines individuals or groups based on their racial or ethnic identity.
- Any form of speech, language, communication, written work, action, behaviour, or resolution that invalidates the experiences of individuals or groups, or trivializes or makes light of sensitive topics such as racism, sexual harassment, violence, war, genocide, or other forms of oppression and discrimination.
- Any other behavior deemed inappropriate by the members of the DCMUN Secretariat.

Disciplinary measures may include, but are not limited to, verbal warnings, disqualification from award consideration, or removal from the conference entirely. While this list is not exhaustive, it serves as a framework to ensure all participants uphold the highest standards of equity and respect. These guidelines reflect our commitment to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all delegates, staff, and attendees throughout the duration of the conference.

Sincerely,
Kenneth Clarence Oledan and Victoria Ormiston
Directors of Equity



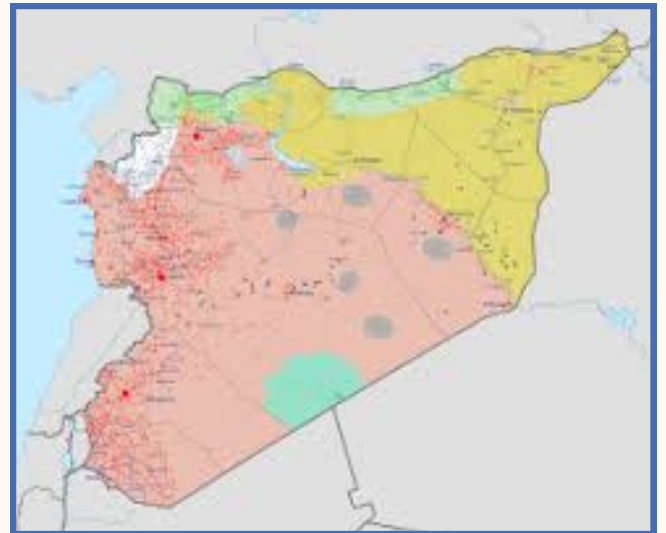
Note

This background guide will follow a different format, as the guide was created and worked on before the format was set. Have a great reading!

Ce guide de référence suivra un format différent, car le guide a été créé et travaillé avant que le format ne soit défini. Bonne lecture !

The Syrian Civil War: A Never-Ending Nightmare

May 7th 2012



by Layla Kosara
and Raina Uddin





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Personal Introductions

Dear Delegates,

I am Layla Kosara, a Dawson alumna who graduated last year in liberal arts. Currently, I am taking a gap year before heading off to university in the fall of 2025. As you read this, I am in Spain teaching English as a second language to primary students and will return to Canada a week before the conference.

Although I am Syrian, I was born in Saudi Arabia. My parents were among the fortunate few who left Syria before the war broke out, as many realised that a second civil war was imminent. Sadly, I lost many family members, and I still have relatives living in Damascus.

During my time at DCMUN, I attended 11 conferences and was pained to see that none focused significantly on issues concerning the Arab world. With the help of Raina, I decided to create this committee on a topic that deeply affects me but is essential to address.

Dear Delegates,

My name is Raina Uddin and I am a second-year student at Dawson College in Psychology. I have a strong passion for helping people and am particularly interested in how psychological principles can help improve mental health and overall well-being.

This is my second year being part of DCMUN but also Model UN in general. I got into MUN as I believed it would help me break out of my shell, being a very introverted person. And it did! This experience has tremendously helped me overcome my fear of public speaking and has boosted my confidence in general. My love for helping and listening to people further solidified my love for Model UN as it is an outlet for expressing ideas and forming solutions to global issues.

The Syrian civil war is a particularly devastating conflict that has resulted in immense suffering and displacement for millions. Layla and I have worked countless hours to perfect this committee, and we hope that it brings you a deeper understanding on the issue in order to come up with effective and diplomatic solutions. We look forward to meeting you all!





How This Committee Runs

This SA will be a hybrid between a standard SA and a crisis element. It will follow the structure of a typical SA, but instead of focusing on drafting a single, large-resolution paper at the end, the main goal will be to produce multiple smaller-resolution papers, similar in length to crisis directives.

In a crisis, directives are frequently passed throughout each session to keep the storyline moving. They are usually 1 to 2 pages long but there is no maximum length. We won't require a specific format for directives; as long as they are coherent and clearly outline the next steps the committee will take, including necessary information such as funding, they will be accepted and voted on like any other resolution paper. Once a directive is passed by a majority vote (half plus one), there will be a 5 to 10-minute recess for the chair to determine the outcome of the directive.

Unlike typical crisis committees, we **WILL NOT** have backroom notes. Backroom notes are when individuals try to pass their ideas without the knowledge of other delegates. Everything you wish to propose must be discussed publicly, or in groups of at least three delegates to form a Joint Private Directive (JPD).

In summary, this SA will operate like a traditional SA, with moderated and unmoderated caucuses, but to pass directives or Joint Private Directives.



Background Information

The Syrian Civil War was not a sudden and unforeseen crisis. There were many events leading up to the instability and mistrust of the people in their government. The history of Syria is long and convoluted, going back hundreds of years. For the sake of this committee, we will start with background information from the 1970s. Throughout the early 1970s, Syria lost multiple wars against Israel, along with their allies Egypt and Jordan at that time. After many failed attempts in a smaller conflict, Hafez al-Assad, the authoritarian leader of Syria, sought totally with the USA. This proved to be an unpopular decision, not just among other countries but also with the local population. (Into The Shadows)

A smaller civil war (1976 to 1982) broke out due to the multiple failures of the government to protect its civilians and the growing mistrust and discontent among the population (Into The Shadows). During this brutal civil war, when al-Assad was combating the uprising of the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria, the Hama massacre took place. Al-Assad, using extreme force, laid siege to the city of Hama, culminating in the deaths of an estimated 40,000 civilians. (Remembering the Hama Massacre)

On June 10, 2000, Hafez al-Assad passed away, but he had already set a plan in motion to maintain the dictatorship. His son, Bashar al-Assad, won a rigged election in which he was the sole candidate, becoming the 19th president of Syria (Into The Shadows). Like his father, Bashar used extreme force to control and silence any discontent among the population. Widespread police brutality and unrecorded inhumane interrogation methods are just a few examples (Into The Shadows).

The second civil war began to boil over in 2011-2012, as tensions escalated between Bashar al-Assad's government and the population. Citizens sensed the mounting strain even before protests erupted (Syrian Civil War). Inspired by the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions of the Arab Spring, which appeared to be successful, Syrians took to the streets (Kahf). The protests began peacefully, led by students on March 15, 2011 (Staff). However, violence quickly escalated as opposition groups and extremist parties began to intervene (Kahf)

At first, the violent clashes were merely isolated incidents, until an armed flank emerged on July 29, 2011. (Kaft) By September 2011, the protests shifted from peaceful citizen-led protests to a movement full of militarized rebellion and armed clashes. (Syrian Civil War)

Background Information

Summary of what the population are protesting against:

- The dictatorial four-decade rule of the Assad family (Syria's War and the Descent into Horror)
- The brutal use of power by the police and the torture of civilians
- The heavy censorship of the media
- Demand for a non-interventionism government policy. (Kahf)

Important dates and events for context purposes

In November 2011, 18 out of the 22 Arab League members voted to suspend Syria from the organisation and impose sanctions. However, this did not deter the Syrian government, which continued its attack on civilians in opposition-held cities. Assad continued to cut them off from food, water, medicine, and electricity. His tactics have also included attacking schools and hospitals, and Assad has often prevented access to opposition areas for international relief organizations (Green).

On December 19, 2011, the Syrian government agreed to allow Arab League monitors to observe the conflict as part of an agreement made in November. However, when the first monitors arrived on December 22, the Syrian oppositional groups objected to the head of the delegation, Mustafa al-Dabi, a Sudanese general accused of committing human rights violations.

By February 2012, the population had decreased by 1 million. On February 4, China and Russia vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that condemned the Assad regime and called for a transition to a democratic political system. According to officials from both countries, they vetoed the resolution because it placed excessive pressure on the Assad government, reducing the likelihood of a political settlement.

On February 26, as the brutal violence continued, the Syrian government held a referendum on a new draft constitution (1 Draft Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic) (Syrian Arab Republic's Constitution of 2012). While the Constitution purported to establish a democratic state, its language was extremely vague and repetitive. On February 27, Syrian officials announced that the referendum had passed, claiming nearly 90% approval. They also asserted that voter turnout was very high. However, the opposition rejected the referendum, arguing that it was conducted on extremely short notice and amid widespread violence, which prevented many people from voting—either because they were dead or too preoccupied with survival.

Background Information

On March 22, 2012, all 15 members of the United Nations Security Council (Azerbaijan, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Guatemala, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Portugal, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Togo, the United Kingdom, and the United States) agreed to a statement threatening Syria with further intervention if it failed to end the violence (UN membership). Finally, on May 7, 2012, the Syrian government-held legislative elections, which the opposition dismissed as illegitimate and meaningless because they were held in the middle of ongoing violence and the Syrian People's Assembly had been weekend by the war. As we speak, it is currently May 7, 2012, during the first committee session. Time will progress with every directive signed and passed.

Key figures and their motivations (Syria: Seven Years of War Explained):

1. Bashar al-Assad and His Allies: Russia, Iran, and a Smaller Shia Military Group
 - a. Bashar al-Assad's primary motivation has always been to remain in power, just like his father. He is prepared to do anything necessary to achieve this, including the indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas and the use of illegal chemical weapons. Assad is Russia's closest ally, and if he were to fall, Russia would lose its foothold in the Middle East, including Tartus its only Mediterranean port. Russia is determined to prevent this outcome.
 - b. Iran is also one of Assad's oldest allies, motivated both by personal ties and a broader goal of countering Saudi Arabia's influence in the region while expanding its own. Together, Russia and Iran not only want Assad to win but will take decisive action to ensure that he does.
2. The Rebel Groups (or, in the Eyes of Bashar, "Terrorist Groups")
 - a. Each rebel group have its own distinct goals, but they share a common objective: to overthrow the Assad government. Most of these groups emerged in response to the brutal attacks by the government on peaceful protesters in 2011. Many of these rebel factions have received support from Turkey and the United States.
 - b. An example of a rebel group:-
 - i. Free Syrian Army is made up of Syrian Army officers who rebelled against the army and encouraged others and defect so they could also defend civilian protesters from violence by the state.
3. The Kurds
 - a. The Kurds are an ethnic group spread across northern Syria, southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, and northern Iraq. They have never had their own country, and their primary goal is to gain autonomy and self-rule in their regions, particularly against the Islamic State.

Background Information

4. Turkey

- a. Turkey collaborates with rebel groups such as the “Free Syrian Army” while opposing Kurdish factions like the YPG, fearing that their success could inspire separatism within Turkey. The country has provided shelter to millions of Syrians fleeing the conflict and supports the Free Syrian Army, which has been accused of funding jihadists. Despite being a NATO member, Turkey has been working closely with Russia due to its opposition to the YPG, which is backed by the USA.

5. Israel

- a. Israel aims to acquire more territory from Syria while also being concerned about Iran’s growing influence in the region.

6. The United States

- a. The USA provides air support, special forces assistance, training, and weapons to Syrian rebels and Kurdish groups. It aims to combat terrorist organisations like ISIL and ISIS by actively collaborating with various rebel factions.

All these tensions ultimately result in a “global” war breaking out within Syria, which consequently takes the lives of innocent civilians (Syria: Seven Years of War Explained)

Topic 1: The Population Stuck In The Middle.

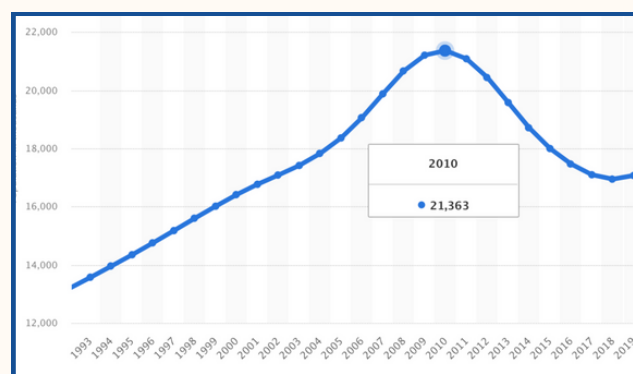
Civilians are often caught in the crossfire of conflicts, and the Syrian Civil War is no exception. War disrupts education, healthcare, and the economy, leading to food shortages and the spread of diseases. As the conflict progressed, many were forced to put their lives on hold, constantly questioning whether they would survive the night. They faced difficult decisions: stay and endure the hardships, or flee and become refugees, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

As the war escalated, the civilian population became one of the most affected groups, enduring not only the violence of the battlefield but also the collapse of social services, infrastructure, and basic human rights. The indiscriminate nature of conflict means that no one is safe, whether from government airstrikes, opposition attacks, or the rise of extremist groups.

Before the war, in 2010, Syria's population peaked at 21 million people. However, with the outbreak of hostilities in March 2011, civilians began to face increasing displacement, uprooting entire communities (O'Neill). Cities like Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus quickly became centres of large populations and burgeoning ideas, turning into hotspots of violence (Conflict in Syria). By 2012, the population of Syria had decreased by approximately 1.5 million.

While each actor in the conflict has its motivations—some prioritise power or territorial gains, while others claim to fight for the population—ordinary Syrians continue to bear the brunt of the consequences. Long before the USA officially joined the war in Syria in September 2014, it faced pressure from other countries to "do something." This occurred while protests across the West urged against intervening in the affairs of other nations (Protests Held in US Over Syria Intervention).

The introduction outlined the main players in the conflict and their motivations. However, beyond your own goals, it's crucial to remember that the world is watching closely. Other countries are threatening to impose heavy sanctions or even intervene by supporting your opposition. To gain the backing of other governments and their populations, you must present yourself favourably while also fulfilling the promises made to your political group and your people (O'Neill)



Topic 2: Future of the Country and Governmental Powers.

Political Parties

The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party has continuously ruled in Syria since 1963 which had, at the time, operated within the framework of the National Progressive Front. However, since the uprisings in 2011, new political parties, coalitions, and movements emerged.

Nationalist Parties

I. Arab Parties

a. Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party: dominates and leads the National Progressive Front (1972), and has the authority to designate positions within its ranks, choose ministerial candidates and occasionally distribute ministries without defined portfolios. The 1973 constitution, under Article 8, declared the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party as the guiding force of the state. A lot of the activities of "Front Parties" within Syria are controlled and conducted under Ba'ath directives. Since the party is a merger between Arab Nationalism and Arab Socialism, it believes in "a popular nationalist revolutionary movement dedicated to achieving Arab unity, freedom and socialism". In other words, it believes in the unity and freedom of the Arab nation, entitled to exist within a single state and freely utilise its resources. By 2005, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party adopted a "Social Market Economy" strategy which meant that the private sector would be responsible for economic growth and job creation. To ensure its presence across all government-controlled areas, the organisational framework consists of mini-central leadership, a central committee, provincial branches, city divisions, and rural teams. In conclusion, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party's dominance has often led to authoritarian practices, economic inequality, and limited political freedom which has caused social and political discontent across Syria.

II. Kurdish Parties

Kurdish Parties have been actively engaged in politics since the 1950s. As nationalist ideologies started emerging in Syria and Iraq in the 1960s, Syrian Kurds formed leftist political parties opposing the Ba'ath regime. Despite being repressed by the Ba'ath regime, Kurdish elites managed to organise and adapt their political structures. Here are the parties:

- a. Democratic Union Party (PYD)
- b. Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (PDK-S)
- c. Yekiti Kurdistan Party - Syria (PYK-S)
- d. Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria (Yek-Dem)
- e. Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria (PDPKS)

Topic 2: Future of the Country and Governmental Powers.

III. Other Nationalist Parties

a. Assyrian Democratic Organization

It serves as a political voice for Assyrians in Syria, with around 5000 members. It is a part of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and Peace and Freedom Front.

b. Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party advocates for pan-Syrian nationalism, promoting a “Greater Syria”, which would include Syria, parts of Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. Since the SSNP focuses on connecting with various communities and building a strong national economy, it has branches both in Syria and Lebanon. Since its creation in 1932, the party has split into three distinct wings, each with their views on Syrian government alliances:

1. The Hardan Wing

1. Supports pan-Syrian nationalism while maintaining a pro-Ba’ath stance and advocating for collaboration with the Syrian government in achieving its goals.

2. The Intifada Wing

1. Rejects the Ba’ath party and promotes secular and nationalist visions for Syria, seeking to address public issues without government affiliations

3. The Markaz Wing

1. Although its beliefs are less publicised, it focuses on SSNP’s core ideology of pan-Syrian nationalism as well.

Leftist Parties

1. People’s Will Party

The People’s Will Party, also known as the Communist Will Party, is part of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation. Initially allied with various opposition groups, it did not achieve formal government recognition. Qadri Jamil, the founder of the Party, had connections to both the Russian and Syrian governments and played a role in drafting a new constitution in 2012. Jamil also ran for election but rejected the results, claiming they had been tampered with.

Topic 2: Future of the Country and Governmental Powers.

1. Syrian Democratic People's Party

The Syrian Democratic People's Party, originally known as the Syrian Communist Party-Political Bureau, shifted from a Marxist-Leninist party to a socialist democracy, maintaining a central secretariat that keeps member identities confidential due to safety concerns. It has joined several coalitions, including the National Democratic Rally and Syrian National Council and advocates for left-wing national thought, a free economy, social development and Arab Unity. Its structure includes a Central Committee, General Secretariat, National Council and a national conference held every three years. The party aligns with the Global Progressive Alliance as it promotes peaceful engagement and supports military aid for the opposition under certain conditions.

1. Communist Labour Party

The communist Labour Party, previously known as the League for Communist Action, attracts students and Arab Nationalists with its non-dogmatic approach. It embraces internationalism, critiques Soviet regional policies and is one of Syria's most ethnically and religiously diverse leftist parties, with significant female participation, although there are limited leadership opportunities for women. After the Soviet Union's collapse, some members of the Party shifted from Marxism to liberalism. During the 2011 uprising, it co-founded the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change.

Islamist Parties

1. Muslim Brotherhood in Syria

The Muslim Brotherhood has been involved in Syria's politics since 1946, holding seats in the People's Assembly until the Ba'ath Party took over in the 1960s and banning them in 1964 in hopes of reducing their influence. In response to opposition in 1979, Assad enacted Law 49, in which being an active member of the party was now punishable by death. In October 2011, it played a role in forming the Syrian National Council in Istanbul and was also key in establishing the National Coalition of the Syrian Revolution Council. Their political vision promotes a civil state based on Islamic values, pluralism, democracy and citizenship. In March 2012, they released a Covenant and Charter outlining aspirations for a post-Assad Syria, which included a modern, democratic and pluralistic civil state. The party also has ties with Turkey and Qatar.

Topic 2: Future of the Country and Governmental Powers.

Non-partisan political alliances and formations

1. National Progressive front

The National Progressive Front is a coalition of 13 political parties and trade union federations, including the Ba'ath Party, Arab Socialist Union, Syrian Communist Party, Arab Socialist movement and many more. It operates under a central command led by the Regional Secretary of the Ba'ath party, Bashar al-Assad, who holds more than 25% of the seats in the People's Assembly.

Conclusion

Given the variety of parties and movements, the choice of governance ultimately lies with the delegates. They can draw inspiration from existing political structures or create new ones that best align with their political stance.

Questions to consider:

1. What are my government's (political group) interests?
2. What are the long-term solutions my government can propose for peace in Syria?
3. What should be prioritized in the committee's short directives—humanitarian aid, governance reform, or ceasefire agreements?
4. What are the potential obstacles to achieving consensus within the committee, given the diverse perspectives on Syria's future?
5. In what ways could sanctions, diplomatic pressure, or military intervention from international bodies influence the outcome of the conflict?
6. How can the committee manage conflicting alliances, such as Turkey's support of certain rebel groups while opposing Kurdish factions?
7. To what extent should foreign intervention be considered legitimate or helpful in resolving Syria's internal issues?
8. What steps can be taken to prevent extremist groups from exploiting the political vacuum within Syria?
9. How can the committee ensure that the rights and safety of civilians are protected amid ongoing conflict?

Characters list:

- 
1. United States of America
 2. Russia
 3. Turkey
 4. Iran
 5. Egypt
 6. Saudi Arabia
 7. Qatar
 8. Jordan
 9. Iraq
 10. Hezbollah
 11. Kurdish forces (YPG/YPJ)
 12. Aka Syrian Democratic Forces
 13. Mohammed Badie
 14. Qadri Jamil
 15. Abdul-Aziz al-Khair
 16. Riad al-Turk

A more descriptive list of characters will come soon!



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See you soon!





Position papers need to be submitted at dawsoncollegemun.official@gmail.com before January 17, 2025, 12:00 AM.

Les exposés de position doivent être envoyés à dawsoncollegemun.official@gmail.com avant le 17 janvier 2025, 00:00.

Must be written in size 12, Times New Roman font, one page maximum. More details on writing a position paper in the delegate handbook

Doit être rédigé en olice Times New Roman, taille 12, et ne doit pas dépasser une page. Plus de détails sur la rédaction d'une prise de position dans le manuel du délégué.