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OCULUS PROCALLAE

Eye of The Hurricane

United Nations General Assembly

Deliberating and revitalising infrastructure and development in Syria

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

We welcome you to the United Nations General Assembly committee simulation at the Mayo College Girls' School Model United Nations Conference 2025. The world today faces urgent and complex challenges, with nations struggling against the consequences of war, conflict, and instability. Among these, Syria stands as a profound reminder of the devastation caused by prolonged violence and the pressing need for revitalisation. The destruction of infrastructure, the displacement of millions, and the collapse of essential services demand a concerted global effort—not just to rebuild, but to restore dignity, stability, and hope for millions of Syrians.

Yet as we deliberate on revitalising infrastructure and development in Syria, we must also recognise that no true rebuilding can take place without first addressing the deeper causes of conflict. War is not merely the product of external circumstances; it arises from division, self-interest, and a failure to understand our shared humanity. The crisis in Syria is not just a political or humanitarian issue—it is a fundamental challenge to the principles of peace, cooperation, and ethical responsibility. Reconstruction cannot be reduced to roads and buildings alone; it must be rooted in ending the cycles of division, ensuring justice, and fostering an environment where sustainable development can flourish.

As delegates, you will engage in complex discussions on funding mechanisms, governance structures, and long-term development strategies. However, beyond policy negotiations, this conference is an opportunity to reflect on the deeper human and psychological dimensions of conflict and rebuilding. What prevents nations from effectively mobilising resources for reconstruction? How do self-interest, political agendas, and economic competition hinder meaningful solutions? Can true development occur without compassion, sensitivity, and an understanding of the fundamental nature of human division?

We encourage you to approach this conference with both analytical and ethical depth. Policy alone cannot bring peace unless it emerges from a genuine transformation in how we perceive and relate to one another. The divisions that lead to war—whether political, ideological, or economic—are reflections of the divisions we carry within. If we truly seek to build a resilient Syria, we must also explore how our worldviews, attachments to identity, and lack of empathy shape global responses to crises.

This Model UN is not just an exercise in diplomacy—it is an opportunity to rethink how solutions emerge. We urge you to not only debate strategies for development but to also enquire into the very nature of conflict, governance, and peace. Knowledge must be accompanied by compassion, and policy must be driven by a sincere commitment to the well-being of all. Let this conference serve as a space for deep reflection, insightful discussions, and meaningful solutions that pave the way for a just and prosperous Syria.

We look forward to your contributions and the perspectives you bring to this critical discussion.

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About The Committee - UNGA

Workings of the General Assembly

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main policy-making organ of the Organization. Comprising all Member States, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations. Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.

The UNGA also makes key decisions for the UN, including:

- appointing the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Security Council
- electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council
- approving the UN budget

The Assembly meets regularly from September to December yearly and thereafter as required. It discusses specific issues through dedicated agenda items or sub-items, which lead to the adoption of resolutions. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN General Assembly has been working since 2020 via novel means to guarantee business continuity and mitigate the spread of the disease. Specific examples include using virtual platforms to conduct meetings and the adoption of e-voting through procedures for decision-making when an in-person meeting is not possible. The pandemic is not the only issue the world faces. Racism, intolerance, inequality, climate change, poverty, hunger, armed conflict, and other ills remain global challenges. These challenges call for global action, and the General Assembly is a critical opportunity for all to come together and chart a course for the future.

Forum for Multilateral Negotiation

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Composed of all 193 Members of the United Nations, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. The Assembly meets from September to December each year (main part), and thereafter, from January to September (resumed part), as required to take up outstanding reports from the Fourth and Fifth Committees. Also, during the resumed part of the session, the Assembly considers current issues of critical importance to the international community in the form of high-level thematic debates organised by the President of the General Assembly in

consultation with the membership. During this period, the Assembly also conducts informal consultations on a wide range of substantive topics as mandated by its resolutions.

Functions and powers of the General Assembly

The Assembly is empowered to make recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has also initiated actions — political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal — which have benefited the lives of millions of people throughout the world. The landmark Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, reflect the commitment of Member States to reach specific goals to attain peace, security, and disarmament, along with development and poverty eradication; to safeguard human rights and promote the rule of law; to protect our shared environment; to meet the unique needs of Africa; and to strengthen the United Nations. In September 2015, the Assembly agreed on a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals contained in the outcome document of the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (resolution 70/1: "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States.
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General.
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament.
- Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations.
- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations.
- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational, and health fields.

- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries.
- Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.

The Assembly may also take action in cases of a threat to the peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression when the Security Council has failed to act owing to the negative vote of a permanent member. In such instances, according to its "Uniting for Peace" resolution of 3 November 1950, the Assembly may consider the matter immediately and recommend collective measures to maintain or restore international peace and security to its members.

The search for consensus

Each of the 193 Member States in the Assembly has one vote. Votes taken on designated important issues — such as recommendations on peace and security, the election of Security Council and Economic and Social Council members, and budgetary questions – require a two-thirds majority of Member States, but other questions are decided by a simple majority. In recent years, an effort has been made to achieve consensus on issues rather than deciding by a formal vote, thus strengthening support for the Assembly's decisions. The President, after having consulted and reached an agreement with delegations, can propose that a resolution be adopted without a vote.

Revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly

There has been a sustained effort to make the work of the General Assembly more focused and relevant. This was identified as a priority during the fifty-eighth session, and efforts continued at subsequent sessions to streamline the agenda, improve the practices and working methods of the Main Committees, enhance the role of the General Committee, strengthen the role and authority of the President and examine the Assembly's role in the process of selecting the Secretary-General. During the seventieth and seventy-first sessions, the Assembly adopted landmark resolutions on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly (A/RES/70/305 and A/RES/71/323), which, inter alia, established an oath of office and a code of ethics for the Presidents of the General Assembly and provided for informal interactive dialogues with candidates for the position of President of the General Assembly. The practice of convening high-level thematic debates is also a direct outcome of the revitalisation process. It has become an established practice for the Secretary-General to brief Member States periodically, in informal meetings of the General Assembly, on his recent activities and travels. These briefings have provided a well-received opportunity for exchange between the

Secretary-General and Member States.

General Debate

The Assembly's annual general debate allows Member States to express their views on major international issues. On the opening day of the debate, the Secretary-General presents his report on the organisation's work.

Main Committees

With the conclusion of the general debate, the Assembly begins consideration of the substantive items on its agenda. Because of the great number of items on the agenda, the Assembly allocates items relevant to their work to its six Main Committees. The Committees discuss the items, seeking, where possible, to harmonise the various approaches of States, and present their recommendations, usually in the form of draft resolutions and decisions, to the Plenary of the Assembly for consideration and action.

The six Main Committees are: (i) the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); (ii) the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); (iii) the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); (iv) the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (Fourth Committee); (v) the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); and (vi) the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee). On a number of agenda items, however, such as the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, the Assembly acts directly in its plenary meetings.

Subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

Under Article 22 of the Charter, the General Assembly may establish subsidiary organs necessary to perform its functions.

Regional groups

Various regional groupings have evolved over the years in the General Assembly for electoral purposes as well as vehicles for consultation and to facilitate procedural work. The groups are the African States; the Asia-Pacific States; the Eastern European States; the Latin American and Caribbean States; and the Western European and other States. The post of President of the General Assembly rotates among these regional groups.

Special sessions and emergency special sessions

In addition to its regular sessions, the Assembly may meet in special and emergency_special sessions. To date, the Assembly has convened 32 special sessions on issues that demanded particular attention.

Carrying on the work of the Assembly
The work of the United Nations derives largely from the decisions of the General Assembly and is mainly carried out by the following:

- Committees and other subsidiary organs established by the Assembly to study and report on issues such as disarmament, peacekeeping, decolonisation, economic development, the environment, and human rights.
- The Secretariat of the United Nations – the Secretary-General and his staff of international civil servants.
- The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management serves as the focal point within the UN Secretariat for all matters relating to the General Assembly.

Agenda – Deliberating on Revitalising the Infrastructure and Development in Syria

I. Historical Background of Syria

Syria, located in the Levant region of the Middle East, has a rich history dating back to ancient civilisations such as the Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Phoenicians (Hourani, 1991). It later became a key part of the Roman and Byzantine Empires before falling under Islamic caliphates, including the Umayyads, who made Damascus their capital (Kennedy, 2004). The Ottoman Empire controlled Syria from 1516 until the end of World War I, after which the League of Nations placed it under French mandate. Syria gained independence in 1946 after years of resistance against colonial rule (Gelvin, 2018).

Post-Independence and Ba'athist Rule

Following independence, Syria faced a series of coups and political instability, struggling to establish a stable democratic system. The rise of pan-Arab nationalism in the mid-20th century saw Syria briefly unite with Egypt under the United Arab Republic (UAR) from 1958 to 1961, a union that eventually dissolved due to political differences (Seale, 1988). In 1963, the Arab

Socialist Ba'ath Party seized power, ushering in a centralised and authoritarian regime. The Ba'athists implemented socialist policies, nationalised industries, and limited political freedoms (Hinnebusch, 2001).

After an internal coup in 1970, Hafez al-Assad took control, establishing a one-party state and maintaining it through a powerful security apparatus (Van Dam, 2011). His rule was marked by both economic development and suppression of dissent. Syria's involvement in Lebanese politics further complicated its regional stance, as it played a significant role in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) (Fisk, 2001). When he passed away in 2000, his son, Bashar al-Assad, inherited the presidency, initially introducing some economic reforms but maintaining his father's authoritarian governance style. However, growing economic hardship, political dissatisfaction, and regional tensions set the stage for future unrest (Droz-Vincent, 2014).

II. Roots of the Syrian Civil War

Arab Spring and Political Unrest

The Arab Spring of 2011 sparked widespread protests across the Middle East, including Syria. Inspired by movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, Syrians took to the streets demanding political reforms, greater civil liberties, and an end to government corruption (Lynch, 2012). Protests began in Daraa after the arrest and torture of teenagers accused of anti-government graffiti. The Assad regime responded with violent crackdowns, arrests, and military actions, turning peaceful demonstrations into an armed uprising (Phillips, 2016).

Rise of the Civil War and Sectarian Conflict

As violence escalated, defectors from the Syrian military formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA), signalling the beginning of armed resistance (Lister, 2015). The conflict soon became deeply sectarian, with the Sunni-majority opposition pitted against Assad's Alawite-led government. As factions grew, extremist groups capitalised on the instability, further fracturing the opposition (Baczko, Dorronsoro, & Quesnay, 2018). By 2012, the war had drawn in regional and global powers, with Iran and Hezbollah backing Assad, while Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar provided support to opposition groups. The conflict turned Syria into a battleground for competing geopolitical interests (Holliday, 2012).

The Emergence of ISIS and Foreign Involvement

Amidst the chaos, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged as a dominant force, seizing large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. The group imposed a brutal rule based on extremist interpretations of Islamic law (McCants, 2015). In response, a U.S.-led coalition launched airstrikes against ISIS positions, while Russia intervened militarily in 2015 to bolster Assad's forces (Cockburn, 2016). The presence of multiple actors—Turkey in the north, U.S. forces supporting Kurdish fighters, and Russia backing Assad—turned Syria into a highly fragmented battlefield (Hinnebusch & Imady, 2017).

Use of Chemical Weapons and International Condemnation

The Syrian government was accused of using chemical weapons against civilians in multiple incidents, the most infamous being the Ghouta attack in 2013, which killed over 1,000 people (UN, 2013). The international community responded with widespread condemnation, and under U.S.-Russia negotiations, Syria agreed to dismantle its chemical arsenal under OPCW supervision. However, subsequent attacks, such as in Douma in 2018, led to retaliatory airstrikes from Western powers, highlighting ongoing concerns over Syria's chemical weapons program (Trapp, 2020).

UN Involvement and International Diplomacy

The United Nations played a crucial role in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. The Geneva and Astana peace processes sought to broker ceasefires and establish political frameworks, but disagreements among stakeholders often stalled progress (De Mistura, 2018). Meanwhile, humanitarian aid efforts, facilitated by UNHCR, WFP, and WHO, provided essential relief to displaced populations (UNHCR, 2022). The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also monitored Syria's nuclear-related activities due to concerns over covert programs (IAEA, 2018).

III. Current Conflict with Israel and Regional Tensions

Syria and Israel have been adversaries since Israel's creation in 1948. The two nations have fought multiple wars, including the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948, 1967, and 1973. The Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967, remains a disputed territory, with Syria repeatedly demanding its return (Shlaim, 2017). Recently, tensions have escalated due to Israel's airstrikes targeting Iranian and Hezbollah-linked sites within Syria. Israel argues that these strikes are preemptive measures to prevent Iran from establishing a permanent military presence in Syria (Kober, 2021).

The 2023 Israel-Hamas Conflict and its Implications for Syria

The outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in 2023 further exacerbated regional tensions, with concerns that Syrian territory might be used to channel arms and fighters into the conflict. The Syrian government has condemned Israeli airstrikes, while Iran and Hezbollah have continued their operations within Syria, increasing the likelihood of broader regional instability (Al-Khatib, 2024). These renewed hostilities add another layer of complexity to Syria's post-war reconstruction and geopolitical standing.

Recent Timeline of Israel-Syria Relations

- January 2024: Israeli airstrikes targeted Damascus International Airport, allegedly destroying Iranian weapon shipments intended for Hezbollah.

- March 2024: Syrian air defences intercepted Israeli missiles over Homs, marking one of the largest escalations in months.

- May 2024: Reports emerged of increased Iranian military presence in Syria, prompting further Israeli preemptive strikes.

- July 2024: Hezbollah forces, backed by Syria, were accused of launching cross-border attacks on Israeli positions in the Golan Heights.

- September 2024: Israel conducted air raids on Syrian military installations suspected of hosting Iranian-backed militias.

- November 2024: Syria filed a complaint at the UN Security Council against Israel, citing violations of sovereignty and acts of aggression.

- December 8, 2024: Following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, Israel invaded the buffer zone in southwestern Syria adjacent to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, initiating an aerial campaign targeting Syrian military capabilities.

- December 18, 2024: Reports emerged of over 100 Syrian families being forcibly expelled from the Golan Heights by Israeli forces, with United Nations peacekeepers intervening.

- February 23, 2025: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demands the complete demilitarisation of southern Syria.

The Role of the United Nations in Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding, Reconstruction, and Redevelopment

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) has played a crucial role in global peace and security since its founding in 1945. The organisation's primary mandate is to prevent conflicts, mediate disputes, and rebuild war-torn nations to ensure lasting stability (United Nations, 2023). Over the decades, the UN has expanded its operations beyond traditional peacekeeping to include peacebuilding, reconstruction, and redevelopment. Additionally, it plays a significant role in conflict prevention, mediation, disarmament, humanitarian aid, human rights protection, governance support, counterterrorism, climate security, and refugee assistance (Weiss & Daws, 2018). These functions work interdependently to address global conflicts and crises effectively.

Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping is one of the most visible roles of the UN, involving the deployment of military personnel, police, and civilian staff to maintain peace in post-conflict regions (Bellamy & Williams, 2021). The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) oversees peacekeeping missions based on three core principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence (UN Peacekeeping, 2023). UN peacekeepers help monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, support disarmament, and assist in political transitions.

Notable examples of UN peacekeeping missions include:

- The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), established in 1978 to monitor the Israeli-Lebanese conflict.
- The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which focuses on civilian protection and disarmament.
- The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), aimed at protecting human rights and supporting state-building efforts (United Nations, 2022).

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding involves efforts to prevent the recurrence of conflict by strengthening political, social, and economic structures. The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) plays a crucial role in ensuring long-term stability by focusing on governance, reconciliation, and economic development (Boutellis & Zahar, 2017).

Key peacebuilding efforts include:

- Reintegrating former combatants through disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programs.
- Facilitating reconciliation processes such as truth commissions in Rwanda and South Africa.
- Strengthening state institutions by promoting democracy and rule of law (Call, 2012).

The UN's peacebuilding efforts have been instrumental in post-conflict states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Colombia, where sustained engagement has helped prevent renewed violence (Guterres, 2021).

Reconstruction and Redevelopment

Reconstruction refers to rebuilding a nation's infrastructure, governance, and economy after conflict, while redevelopment focuses on long-term socio-economic growth. The UN collaborates with organizations like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and regional development banks to rebuild war-torn societies (Duffield, 2019).

Key UN reconstruction roles include:

- Restoring governance and judicial institutions in countries such as Kosovo and Afghanistan.
- Rebuilding infrastructure like roads, schools, and healthcare systems in Iraq and Haiti.
- Reviving economies through job creation and economic support programs in Bosnia and Timor-Leste (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022).

Additional UN Roles in Global Stability

Beyond these four primary roles, the UN is engaged in other critical areas that contribute to long-term peace and development.

Conflict Prevention

The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) plays a vital role in preventing conflicts through diplomacy and early warning mechanisms. UN Special Envoys mediate disputes in regions like Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen to prevent full-scale wars (Gowan, 2019).

Mediation and Conflict Resolution

UN-led peace negotiations have been critical in resolving conflicts such as the 1995 Dayton Accords in Bosnia and the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan (Fortna, 2020). Mediation efforts continue in places like Libya and Myanmar.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

The UN helps former combatants transition into civilian life by dismantling armed groups and providing vocational training. Successful DDR programs have been implemented in Colombia, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Knight, 2017).

Humanitarian Assistance

The UN's humanitarian efforts are coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These agencies provide food, shelter, and medical assistance in conflict zones such as Yemen and Syria (Barnett, 2018).

Protection of Human Rights

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) investigates war crimes and supports justice mechanisms like the International Criminal Court (ICC). Examples include the Rwandan Genocide Tribunal and investigations into human rights violations in Myanmar and Palestine (Donnelly, 2021).

Governance, Democracy, and Rule of Law

The UN assists in electoral processes, judicial reforms, and anti-corruption initiatives in post-conflict states. In Kosovo and East Timor, the UN helped establish interim administrations and democratic governance structures (Paris, 2004).

Counterterrorism

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) leads global efforts against terrorism through intelligence-sharing, deradicalization programs, and counterterrorism financing measures (Neumann, 2020). The UN also implements Security Council Resolutions 1373 and 2396, which mandate international cooperation against terrorist threats.

Climate Security and Environmental Protection

The UN integrates climate security into peacebuilding by addressing environmental challenges that fuel conflict. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) restores war-damaged ecosystems, as seen in Iraq, Syria, and Sudan, where environmental degradation has exacerbated instability (Dalby, 2018).

Refugee and Displacement Assistance

The UNHCR leads global refugee protection efforts, providing resettlement, legal aid, and humanitarian assistance. The UN has been instrumental in managing the Syrian refugee crisis, Rohingya displacement, and South Sudanese humanitarian needs (Betts & Collier, 2017).

Conclusion

The UN plays a multifaceted role in global peace and security, extending beyond traditional peacekeeping to include peacebuilding, reconstruction, and redevelopment, along with conflict prevention, mediation, disarmament, humanitarian aid, human rights protection, governance support, counterterrorism, climate security, and refugee assistance. Despite challenges such as funding constraints and geopolitical tensions, the UN remains an indispensable force in fostering international stability and addressing the root causes of conflict (Weiss & Daws, 2018). Moving forward, strengthening global cooperation and reinforcing the UN's mandates will be crucial in ensuring sustainable peace in a rapidly evolving world.

The Role of the United Nations in Syria Amidst the Ongoing Israel Conflict: Strategies for Infrastructure Revitalization and Development

Introduction

Syria has remained engulfed in conflict for over a decade, first due to the civil war that began in 2011 and more recently because of escalating tensions with Israel. The United Nations (UN) has played a multifaceted role in addressing Syria's crises through peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, reconstruction efforts, and diplomatic mediation. However, the recent cross-border hostilities have compounded these challenges, disrupting ongoing UN initiatives. This paper examines how the UN can enhance its role in revitalizing infrastructure and development in Syria by drawing on lessons from past post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Current UN Involvement in Syria

1. Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Relief

The UN, through agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), provides critical humanitarian aid in Syria (UNHCR, 2023). However, the recent hostilities with Israel have exacerbated humanitarian needs, necessitating a reassessment of aid delivery mechanisms.

How the UN Responds:

- Food Security: The WFP delivers emergency food supplies to millions of Syrians. However, increased food insecurity due to border closures necessitates more localized food production initiatives (WFP, 2023).
- Medical Aid and Healthcare: The World Health Organization (WHO) collaborates with local partners to establish mobile medical units. Expanding telemedicine services could enhance access to healthcare in conflict zones (WHO, 2023).
- Cross-Border Aid Mechanisms: The UN continues to use cross-border humanitarian corridors, particularly through Turkey, to deliver aid to non-government-controlled areas. Expanding these operations despite geopolitical resistance remains critical (OCHA, 2023).

- Support for Refugees: UNHCR coordinates refugee assistance in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, though political and economic constraints in host countries require more sustainable solutions such as refugee self-reliance programs (UNHCR, 2023).

2. Mediation and Diplomacy

The UN has historically facilitated negotiations between Syrian factions, but recent Israeli-Syrian tensions have shifted focus to broader regional security issues (UNSC, 2023).

How the UN Can Improve Diplomatic Mediation:

- Geneva Process Revitalization: The Geneva talks must adapt to incorporate Israeli-Syrian tensions into broader conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Regional Diplomatic Engagement: The UN Special Envoy for Syria should intensify engagement with regional actors such as Iran, Russia, and Gulf states to de-escalate hostilities (UNSC, 2023).
- Preventive Diplomacy: The UN can deploy crisis-prevention mechanisms such as backchannel negotiations between Israel, Syria, and Iran to minimize future escalation (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2022).

3. Peacekeeping and Security Monitoring

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has monitored the Golan Heights ceasefire since 1974, but the escalation of Israeli-Syrian hostilities has severely constrained its operational capacity (UNDOF, 2023).

How UNDOF Can Enhance Its Role:

- Technology-Assisted Monitoring: Deploying satellite surveillance and drone technology could improve UNDOF's ability to monitor ceasefire violations without direct exposure to conflict zones.
- Strengthening UNDOF Mandate: The Security Council should consider expanding UNDOF's mandate to include rapid response mechanisms in the event of cross-border aggression.

Competing Interests in Syria's Reconstruction: The Stance of Key Blocs and Countries

Introduction

The reconstruction of Syria presents a complex geopolitical challenge, as various global and regional actors pursue competing interests in the post-conflict recovery phase. The civil war, which began in 2011, has left Syria's infrastructure, economy, and governance in ruins, requiring an estimated $120 billion for full reconstruction (World Bank, 2019). However, disagreements over the political future of Syria, economic sanctions, and foreign interventions have led to deep divisions among international stakeholders. While some countries advocate for immediate reconstruction without conditions, others insist that aid should be contingent on political reforms and power transitions (Phillips, 2021). This paper examines the positions of key global actors—the United Nations, the Western bloc, Russia and its allies, Turkey and regional states, and Syria's internal factions—and how these competing interests influence the future of Syria's rebuilding process.

1. The United Nations and Multilateral Organizations

The United Nations (UN) has played a central role in humanitarian aid and peace negotiations, but its ability to drive Syria's reconstruction has been hampered by geopolitical divisions in the UN Security Council (UNSC) (Gowan, 2019). The UNSC remains divided, with Russia and China blocking resolutions that would impose conditions on reconstruction, while the U.S., UK, and France argue that Syria's rebuilding should be tied to democratic reforms (UN Security Council, 2021).

UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNHCR, and the World Food Programme (WFP) focus on providing immediate relief rather than large-scale reconstruction. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have refrained from funding major projects, citing concerns about the legitimacy of Assad's government and corruption risks (Eriksson, 2019). The UN's stance remains largely neutral, prioritizing humanitarian aid and peace negotiations rather than direct involvement in reconstruction.

2. The Western Bloc: United States, European Union, and Allies

United States

The U.S. maintains a firm opposition to unconditional reconstruction, enforcing economic sanctions through the Caesar Act, which blocks any financial transactions involving the Syrian government (Carnegie Endowment, 2021). Washington supports the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria and opposes Russian and Iranian economic involvement, arguing that reconstruction aid should only follow a genuine political transition (McGurk, 2022).

European Union

The European Union (EU) has aligned with the U.S. in withholding reconstruction funds until political reforms are implemented (European Council, 2022). However, EU member states have taken a strong humanitarian approach, funding healthcare, education, and refugee support programs without directly assisting Assad's government (Betts & Collier, 2017). Germany and France have made it clear that any efforts to rebuild must be tied to democratic reforms and the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2254, which calls for a political settlement that includes everyone (Gowan, 2019).

United Kingdom

The UK supports sanctions and diplomatic pressure to weaken Assad's grip on power while funding humanitarian projects in opposition-held areas (Phillips, 2021). British policymakers argue that any premature reconstruction aid could entrench Assad's rule and benefit war profiteers (Carnegie Endowment, 2021).

3. Russia and Its Allies

Russia

Russia remains the strongest advocate for Syria's unconditional reconstruction, seeking economic and military gains from its intervention in the conflict (Hinnebusch, 2020). Having secured strategic military bases at Tartus and Hmeimim, Russia aims to dominate Syria's post-war economy through energy, transportation, and defense contracts (Lund, 2018). Moscow opposes Western sanctions, calling for full reintegration of Syria into the global economy (Yazigi, 2017).

Iran

Iran has invested heavily in Syria's reconstruction, particularly in infrastructure, energy, and security sectors (Heydemann, 2018). However, Iran's economic presence has drawn Israeli airstrikes, targeting Iranian-backed militias and weapons depots (Kober, 2021). Iran seeks to

use Syria as a corridor to Hezbollah and Lebanon, deepening regional security tensions (Phillips, 2021).

China

China, while less politically involved, sees Syria as a potential partner in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Chaziza, 2020). Beijing supports Syria's sovereignty and non-interventionist reconstruction, offering investment in infrastructure and telecommunications but remains cautious due to security risks and U.S. sanctions (Dollar, 2018).

4. Turkey and Regional Actors

Turkey

Turkey prioritizes containing Kurdish influence (SDF/YPG) in northern Syria while rebuilding areas under its control, such as Idlib and Afrin (Stein, 2021). Ankara supports a safe zone policy for refugee return but faces EU criticism for forced repatriation efforts (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2021). Turkey's reconstruction approach is militarized, with a focus on securing its southern border (Phillips, 2021).

Saudi Arabia & Gulf States

Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE initially opposed Assad but have recently re-engaged diplomatically to counter Iranian influence (Dagher, 2019). Qatar, however, remains aligned with opposition forces, funding humanitarian and economic aid to opposition-held territories (European Council, 2022).

Israel

Israel opposes Iranian military entrenchment in Syria, conducting airstrikes on Iranian and Hezbollah-linked positions (Kober, 2021). While it does not directly interfere in reconstruction, Israel supports U.S. efforts to block Iranian economic expansion (Phillips, 2021). The recent strikes on Syria on 2024 and 2025 are preventing UN involvement and peacekeeping efforts.

5. Internal Syrian Actors

The Assad Regime

The Syrian government demands unconditional reconstruction aid and seeks economic partnerships with Russia, Iran, and China (Hinnebusch, 2020). However, critics argue that Assad's use of reconstruction as a tool for political consolidation has excluded opposition-held areas from rebuilding efforts (Yazigi, 2017).

Syrian Opposition & Kurdish Forces

Opposition groups, particularly in Idlib and SDF-controlled areas, oppose Assad's reconstruction efforts, seeking alternative international funding (Lister, 2021). The SDF has called for localized governance and economic independence from both Assad and Turkey (McGurk, 2022).

Conclusion

Syria's reconstruction remains deeply entangled in geopolitical rivalries, with Western states demanding political reforms, Russia and China advocating for unconditional aid, and regional players prioritizing security concerns. The UN faces the challenge of balancing humanitarian needs with political realities, while economic sanctions and ongoing conflicts further complicate recovery efforts. Moving forward, the question remains: can Syria's reconstruction be depoliticized, or will it remain a battleground for global power struggles?

Revitalizing Infrastructure and Development in Syria: A Path Forward

1. Introduction

Syria's post-war reconstruction presents one of the most complex rebuilding efforts in modern history. Over a decade of conflict has devastated the nation's physical infrastructure, economy, and social fabric (Hinnebusch, 2020). The estimated cost of reconstruction exceeds $120 billion, requiring a multifaceted approach that integrates governance, economic recovery, critical infrastructure development, humanitarian support, and geopolitical considerations (World Bank, 2019).

The ongoing instability—marked by foreign interventions, Israeli airstrikes, and proxy conflicts—further complicates rebuilding efforts (Phillips, 2021). A comparative analysis of post-conflict reconstructions in Iraq, Lebanon, and Rwanda provides valuable insights into effective recovery strategies. These cases highlight the importance of inclusive governance, sustainable economic models, and community-driven development in overcoming the long-term consequences of war (Chandler, 2006). Additionally, post-war recovery in Syria must

consider regional economic integration, international legal constraints, and the participation of external stakeholders in financing efforts.

2. Governance and Stability: The Foundation for Reconstruction

Political and Administrative Challenges

Syria's political landscape is deeply fragmented, with the central government, opposition forces, and Kurdish-led administrations controlling different regions (Lund, 2018). The war broke down institutions, which led to inefficiency, bureaucratic inertia, and the growth of economies that are based on corruption. In these economies, warlords and local elites use reconstruction efforts to make money for themselves (Yazigi, 2017). The lack of unified leadership and governance further complicates the country's ability to implement national-scale recovery programs. Political disagreements between regional actors have led to the exclusion of key stakeholders from decision-making processes, which, in turn, hinders progress in rebuilding efforts.

Strategies for Effective Governance

A decentralized governance model could enhance administrative efficiency by empowering municipal authorities to oversee reconstruction projects. Rwanda's post-genocide governance model demonstrates the benefits of local engagement in rebuilding efforts (Gaynor, 2016). Strengthening local governance through technical training, transparency measures, and anti-corruption initiatives could help in stabilizing Syrian institutions. Transitional justice mechanisms, including reconciliation programs, could address war-related grievances and foster national unity (Kritz, 1995). Implementing legal frameworks that ensure justice for past atrocities would play a vital role in securing lasting stability. Furthermore, establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor and assess reconstruction efforts could help mitigate corruption and improve governance outcomes.

Ensuring inclusive political participation is essential to stabilizing governance. Broad-based engagement across ethnic and sectarian lines can prevent renewed conflicts and build public trust in reconstruction efforts (Paris, 2004). Encouraging dialogue between different factions and promoting national unity will be critical to preventing the resurgence of violent conflicts. Additionally, policies aimed at fostering civil society participation in governance could strengthen democratic structures and encourage long-term stability.

Lessons from Case Studies

- Iraq (Post-2003): The failure to integrate diverse political factions led to governance instability and the rise of sectarian conflict (Dodge, 2013). Efforts to establish democratic institutions were undermined by power struggles and external interventions, contributing to prolonged instability.
- Lebanon (Post-1990s): Heavy reliance on private-sector-driven rebuilding deepened economic inequalities and reinforced sectarian divides (Makdisi, 2016). The reconstruction efforts, primarily controlled by elite groups, failed to equitably distribute resources, leading to further social fragmentation.

3. Economic Recovery and Financing Reconstruction

Challenges in Funding Reconstruction

Syria faces significant barriers to securing reconstruction funds. Western sanctions restrict financial transactions, limiting international investments (Eriksson, 2019). The country is grappling with hyperinflation and a weakened currency, further deterring economic stability (Kabbani, 2018). The decline in oil production, the destruction of industrial zones, and trade barriers have exacerbated economic vulnerabilities. Reliance on external debt from allies such as Russia, Iran, and China may lead to long-term economic dependency (Heydemann, 2018). Without diversified sources of financing, Syria risks becoming heavily reliant on foreign creditors, further reducing its economic sovereignty.

Alternative Financing Models

- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Lebanon's post-war model leveraged private investment for infrastructure development (Dagher, 2019). Establishing clear legal frameworks and incentives for private-sector involvement in reconstruction could attract much-needed capital.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Iraq and Angola have benefited from Chinese-funded reconstruction projects (Chaziza, 2020). Syria's integration into BRI could enhance infrastructure development and regional trade connectivity.
- Islamic Finance & Sovereign Wealth Funds: Gulf states offer Sharia-compliant financing options that could be tapped (Iqbal & Mirakhor, 2011). Expanding access to these funds may provide alternative means of investment while aligning with regional economic interests.

- Diaspora Investments: Afghanistan's model of engaging expatriates in SME development could be adapted for Syria (Gordon, 2019). Encouraging Syrian expatriates to invest in local businesses and reconstruction projects could generate substantial capital inflows.
- Regional Development Banks & Aid: The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), along with financial support from Russia and Iran, could play a role in infrastructure funding (Dollar, 2018). Strengthening partnerships with multilateral institutions could increase access to concessional financing.

Sanctions and Potential Relief Strategies

Selective humanitarian exemptions could provide an avenue for economic recovery without violating international sanctions (Jones, 2020). Diplomatic negotiations may help in securing conditional relief to facilitate essential reconstruction projects (Malmvig, 2018). Examining historical precedents of sanctions relief, such as the Oil-for-Food Program in Iraq, could offer insights into mitigating the economic impact of restrictions while ensuring that reconstruction efforts are not obstructed by geopolitical constraints.

4. Rebuilding Critical Infrastructure

Syria's infrastructure has been devastated by the war, affecting essential services such as electricity, water supply, roads, and hospitals (World Bank, 2021). Years of conflict have left power grids in disrepair, water sources contaminated, and transportation networks dysfunctional. Rebuilding efforts must prioritize key sectors to restore normalcy and enable long-term economic recovery.

Investment in power grids is critical to reviving industries, businesses, and households (UNDP, 2022). Renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, could provide sustainable solutions in remote or heavily damaged areas. Similarly, water sanitation projects must address the widespread contamination of supply lines, ensuring access to clean drinking water (UNICEF, 2022).

Reconstructing roads and bridges is essential for reconnecting urban and rural areas, enabling trade, and facilitating humanitarian aid delivery (International Crisis Group, 2020). Modernizing hospitals and healthcare facilities will also play a pivotal role in reducing mortality rates and improving overall public health. Given the shortage of medical professionals due to displacement, training programs must be implemented to rebuild Syria's healthcare workforce (WHO, 2021).

Community-led projects, public-private partnerships, and collaborations with foreign investors can accelerate the recovery process (Kattan, 2021). Countries like China and the Gulf States have expressed interest in infrastructure investments, but transparency and corruption prevention measures must be implemented to ensure fair and effective reconstruction (Lund, 2020). The Syrian diaspora, particularly those with engineering and technical expertise, could also play a crucial role in rebuilding efforts through remittances, knowledge transfer, and direct investments (OECD, 2022).

However, political and security challenges pose obstacles to reconstruction. International sanctions limit funding sources, and ongoing instability in various regions makes large-scale projects difficult to implement (Crisis Group, 2021). A coordinated effort, involving local communities, government agencies, international organizations, and private sector actors, will be necessary to rebuild Syria's infrastructure in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

5. Humanitarian and Social Development

With over 12 million displaced individuals, Syria faces a major humanitarian crisis (UNHCR, 2022). Refugee repatriation, healthcare restoration, and educational reintegration are urgent needs that must be addressed to stabilize the country and prevent long-term societal fragmentation. The war has left deep psychological scars, with children and adults suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and other mental health conditions (WHO, 2021). Implementing large-scale psychological support programs and trauma-informed care will be essential for rehabilitation (Save the Children, 2022).

Reintegrating refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) requires a multifaceted approach. Housing reconstruction programs should prioritize safe and affordable living conditions, particularly in urban centers where populations are expected to return (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2021). Job creation and vocational training initiatives can help returnees reintegrate into the workforce and contribute to economic recovery (ILO, 2021). Women's empowerment programs, particularly in conflict-affected areas, can enhance social cohesion and economic stability (UN Women, 2022).

The education sector has been severely impacted, with thousands of schools damaged or destroyed (UNESCO, 2021). Immediate priorities include rebuilding school facilities, training teachers, and ensuring access to quality education for children who have missed years of learning. Digital education tools and mobile learning units could be deployed in remote or conflict-prone areas to bridge the gap (Education Cannot Wait, 2022).

International collaborations with WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, and NGOs will be crucial in rebuilding healthcare and education systems, ensuring displaced communities regain stability (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Humanitarian aid must also address food insecurity, as millions of Syrians remain at risk of malnutrition (WFP, 2022). Sustainable agricultural projects, including irrigation system rehabilitation and support for local farmers, can strengthen food security and reduce dependence on external aid (FAO, 2022).

Ultimately, rebuilding Syria's social fabric requires a long-term commitment to inclusive policies, reconciliation efforts, and a holistic approach to addressing trauma, displacement, and economic hardship (Lischer, 2022).

6. Geopolitical Considerations and Security Challenges

Syria's reconstruction is deeply entangled in regional and global power struggles. Russia and Iran, key allies of the Syrian government, have taken strategic stakes in infrastructure, energy, and military bases (Lund, 2021). Russia's military presence at the Tartus naval base and Hmeimim airbase reflects its long-term strategic interests, while Iran's influence extends through financial aid, militia support, and investments in reconstruction projects (Phillips, 2021).

Turkey remains engaged in northern Syria, seeking to curb Kurdish influence while managing refugee flows and security concerns along its border (Stein, 2021). Ankara's control over parts of northern Syria has led to tensions with both the Syrian government and Kurdish forces, complicating reconstruction efforts in those regions (Crisis Group, 2021).

The U.S. maintains a presence in northeast Syria, particularly in areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) (McGurk, 2022). Washington's economic sanctions and political stance on the Assad government further complicate reconstruction financing (UN Security Council, 2021). Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes continue to target Iranian military assets in Syria, raising security risks and deterring potential foreign investments (BBC, 2022).

Beyond external actors, internal security threats persist. The resurgence of ISIS and other extremist groups remains a critical challenge, particularly in eastern Syria, where insurgents continue to launch attacks (Clarke, 2022). The presence of multiple armed factions—ranging from pro-government militias to opposition groups—further complicates efforts to establish a unified security framework (Lister, 2021).

A coordinated diplomatic approach—balancing regional security concerns with long-term economic interests—is essential to creating a stable environment for reconstruction (Yazigi, 2022).

7. International Legal Frameworks for Reconstruction

Rebuilding Syria must adhere to international legal frameworks, including UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which calls for a political solution before full-scale reconstruction (UN Security Council, 2021). The resolution emphasizes constitutional reforms, democratic elections, and power-sharing agreements as prerequisites for Syria's recovery. However, ongoing political deadlock and external interventions have hindered meaningful progress (Dagher, 2022).

The Caesar Act, a U.S. law imposing financial sanctions on entities engaging with the Syrian regime, further complicates economic recovery (U.S. State Department, 2021). While intended to deter human rights abuses, the act also limits Syria's access to reconstruction funds and international trade, raising concerns about prolonged economic stagnation (Carnegie Endowment, 2021).

Case studies from past conflicts offer valuable insights. The Dayton Agreement, which helped stabilise post-war Bosnia, demonstrated the importance of power-sharing arrangements and international oversight (Chandler, 2022). Meanwhile, Iraq's Oil-for-Food Program illustrated how economic frameworks could be structured to balance humanitarian aid with geopolitical constraints (UNDP, 2021).

A well-defined legal framework, supported by regional and international actors, is essential for ensuring that Syria's reconstruction does not exacerbate existing conflicts (Gowan, 2022).

8. Conclusion: A Pragmatic Path Forward

A balanced reconstruction strategy that prioritises governance reforms, economic recovery, infrastructure rebuilding, and humanitarian stability is necessary for Syria's long-term stability (World Bank, 2021). Reconstruction efforts could fail or make things more unequal if they don't deal with the underlying political conflicts and security issues (Yazigi, 2022).

Ultimately, Syria's reconstruction must be driven by a vision of inclusivity and stability. This requires not only physical rebuilding but also reconciliation, governance reforms, and economic policies that prioritise the well-being of all Syrians (Phillips, 2021). While challenges

remain immense, a pragmatic and coordinated approach can help navigate the complexities of rebuilding a war-torn nation and laying the foundation for a stable and prosperous future.

Key Questions for Debate: Deliberating on Revitalizing Infrastructure and Development in Syria

1. The UN's Role: Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding, or Reconstruction?

- At what stage is the UN in Syria—peacekeeping, peacebuilding, or reconstruction—given the evolving security situation?
- How does the recent escalation of conflicts with Israel impact the UN's ability to transition from crisis management to long-term recovery?
- Should the UN prioritize security-oriented peacekeeping efforts in Syria before engaging in full-scale development projects?
- Is the Geneva peace process still a viable framework for achieving peace in Syria, or does the situation require a new diplomatic approach?
- Should the UN expand its mandate beyond humanitarian aid to include stronger mediation, conflict resolution, and security stabilization efforts?

2. Challenges to UN-led Reconstruction Amidst Ongoing Conflicts

- Can Syria's infrastructure and development be revitalized while active conflicts continue, especially given Israeli airstrikes and regional instability?
- How should the UN navigate its involvement in Syria without taking sides in ongoing conflicts between Syria, Israel, Iran, and other regional actors?
- What role should the UN Security Council play in addressing Israeli-Syrian hostilities while ensuring that reconstruction efforts continue?
- Should the UN reassess its approach to aid delivery and rebuilding strategies in Syria to account for the impact of recent conflicts?
- Should the UN push for a stronger ceasefire agreement before moving forward with long-term development efforts?

3. Political and Governance Challenges

- How can Syria establish an inclusive governance model that involves all factions in reconstruction efforts?
- Should reconstruction aid be conditional on political reforms in Syria? If so, what conditions should be prioritized?

- How can Syria balance the involvement of external actors such as Russia, Iran, the United States, Turkey, and China in reconstruction while maintaining sovereignty?
- How can the UN support anti-corruption initiatives to ensure that reconstruction funds are used effectively?
- What governance models from other post-conflict countries (such as Iraq, Rwanda, and Lebanon) can be adapted to Syria's recovery?

4. Funding and Economic Development

- What are the most viable financing models for Syria's reconstruction given ongoing sanctions and limited international investments?
- How can public-private partnerships (PPPs) contribute to rebuilding Syria's infrastructure, and what safeguards should be put in place?
- Should the World Bank, IMF, and regional development banks play a larger role in Syria's economic recovery, and under what conditions?
- How can Syria reintegrate into the global economy while addressing concerns over human rights and governance?
- Should alternative funding sources, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or Islamic finance, be leveraged for Syria's reconstruction?

5. Infrastructure and Urban Development

- What should be the top priorities for infrastructure rebuilding—housing, energy, water, or transportation?
- How can Syria ensure sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure while rebuilding?
- Should the rebuilding process prioritize rural areas that have been neglected or focus on urban centers like Damascus and Aleppo?
- How can regional partnerships support infrastructure recovery while maintaining Syria's political and economic independence?
- What lessons can Syria learn from post-conflict reconstruction efforts in countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Rwanda?

6. Humanitarian and Social Development

- How can Syria create long-term solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who wish to return?
- What role should international organizations such as UNHCR and UNICEF play in providing healthcare, education, and social services?

- How can Syria address the psychological trauma and social divisions caused by over a decade of war?
- What policies should be implemented to rebuild the education system and prevent a "lost generation" due to disrupted schooling?
- How can women's empowerment programs be incorporated into post-conflict recovery to enhance social cohesion and economic stability?

7. Regional and International Coordination

- How can the UN ensure that Syria's reconstruction remains neutral and is not used by external actors to expand their influence?
- Should regional powers (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel) be directly involved in Syria's rebuilding, or should the focus remain on multilateral institutions?
- How can Syria prevent foreign investments in reconstruction from exacerbating corruption, economic exploitation, or political dependence?
- What role should neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey) play in shaping Syria's reconstruction policies?
- Should the UN and international community impose transparency conditions on reconstruction aid to ensure fair distribution and accountability?

8. Security and Regional Stability

- How can Syria prevent the resurgence of terrorist groups such as ISIS in areas undergoing reconstruction?
- What role should the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) play in ensuring regional stability, particularly in light of tensions with Israel?
- Should Syria adopt a decentralized governance structure to maintain peace and stability, or should it prioritize a strong central government?
- How can Syria manage regional conflicts with Israel, Turkey, and other neighboring states while focusing on internal rebuilding efforts?
- Should international peacekeeping forces be expanded to protect reconstruction projects and aid workers from security threats?

9. International Legal and Diplomatic Considerations

- How can Syria navigate the legal constraints of international sanctions while securing the necessary resources for reconstruction?

- What legal measures should be implemented to prevent war profiteering and ensure that rebuilding efforts benefit the broader Syrian population?
- Should UN Security Council Resolution 2254 be restructured to accommodate Syria's current geopolitical reality?
- How can Syria's reconstruction efforts align with international human rights and humanitarian laws to avoid exacerbating existing conflicts?
- Should the Caesar Act sanctions imposed by the United States be reevaluated to allow for targeted economic relief for rebuilding efforts?

Further Research Links

1. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Syria Crisis Response & Resilience
   https://www.undp.org/syria
2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – Syrian Refugee Crisis
   https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html
3. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – Syria Situation Reports
   https://www.unocha.org/syria
4. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) – Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Syria
   https://www.unescwa.org/topics/syria-reconstruction
5. United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Syria
   https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-syria
6. World Bank – The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria
   https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/publication/the-toll-of-war-the-economic-and-social-consequences-of-the-conflict-in-syria
7. International Crisis Group – Syria Reports
   https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria
8. International Monetary Fund (IMF) – Economic Challenges in Syria
   https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/SYR
9. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – Syria's Environmental and Infrastructure Challenges
   https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/disasters-conflicts/where-we-work/syria
10. The Carnegie Middle East Center – Syria's Post-Conflict Governance and Economy
    https://carnegie-mec.org/topic/1381

Timeline of Key Events in Syria's Conflict and Reconstruction Efforts

A clear timeline is essential to understand the trajectory of Syria's conflict, the role of international actors, and where reconstruction stands today.

Key Events: 2011 – 2025

Date	Event
March 2011	Arab Spring protests begin in Daraa; Syrian security forces violently crack down, escalating into civil war (Phillips, 2016).
2012	Defectors from the Syrian military form the Free Syrian Army (FSA), marking the shift from protests to armed conflict (Lister, 2015).
2013	Ghouta chemical attack kills over 1,000 civilians; the U.S. and Russia broker a deal to dismantle Syria's chemical arsenal (Trapp, 2020).
2014	The Islamic State (ISIS) seizes control of large parts of Syria and Iraq, prompting a U.S.-led coalition to launch airstrikes (McCants, 2015).
2015	Russia intervenes militarily to support Assad, shifting the war in the Syrian government's favor (Hinnebusch & Imady, 2017).
2017	ISIS loses major strongholds in Syria, including Raqqa, after Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and U.S.-backed offensives (Lister, 2015).

2018	The Assad government retakes most opposition-held territory; humanitarian crisis worsens (UNHCR, 2019).
2019	Turkey launches an offensive in Kurdish-controlled northern Syria after U.S. withdrawal of troops from the region (Stein, 2021).
2021-2022	Economic collapse worsens as sanctions and war destruction cripple Syria's economy; international reconstruction talks stall (World Bank, 2021).
2023	Israel-Hamas war escalates tensions, with Israeli airstrikes on Iranian-backed forces in Syria increasing (Al-Khatib, 2024).
2024	Syria files a complaint at the UN against Israel for military strikes; reports of increased Iranian military activity in Syria (UN Security Council, 2024).
2025	Reconstruction efforts remain fragmented, with Western powers blocking aid to Assad while Russia, Iran, and China fund limited rebuilding (Gowan, 2025).

Current Territorial Divisions in Syria

As of 2025, Syria remains politically fragmented, with different actors controlling various regions:

- Government-Controlled Areas (Assad Regime): Holds major urban centers (Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama), backed by Russia and Iran. Reconstruction here is heavily influenced by these allies.

- Kurdish-Controlled Areas (Syrian Democratic Forces - SDF): Controls northeastern Syria, including oil-rich regions. The U.S. supports them, but Turkey opposes Kurdish governance.

- Opposition & Turkish-Controlled Areas (Idlib, Afrin, Northern Syria): Turkey-backed militias hold pockets of land; Turkey has funded rebuilding efforts here, separate from Assad's control.

- ISIS & Militant Insurgency Zones (Eastern Syria): Though weakened, ISIS cells remain active, making reconstruction in these areas difficult.

- Foreign Military Bases:

    - Russia: Maintains naval and air bases, ensuring a long-term military presence.

    - Iran: Expanding military infrastructure, facing Israeli airstrikes.

    - U.S.: Supports Kurdish forces in northeast Syria, controlling key oil fields.

    - Turkey: Occupies northern Syria, blocking Kurdish autonomy.

Current Status of Infrastructure and Development Priorities in Syria (2025)

Housing & Urban Infrastructure

- Current Status: 50% of buildings in urban centers destroyed (World Bank, 2024).
- Challenges: Displacement, slow rebuilding, lack of funds.
- Potential Solutions: Public-private partnerships, regional investment, diaspora funding.

Energy (Electricity & Oil)

- Current Status: 60% of power grid damaged; oil infrastructure remains contested (UNDP, 2024).
- Challenges: Sanctions limit imports, reliance on Russia/Iran.
- Potential Solutions: Renewable energy projects, reconstruction of power plants.

Water & Sanitation

- Current Status: 70% of water supply networks damaged (UNICEF, 2024).
- Challenges: Contamination, cholera outbreaks.
- Potential Solutions: Infrastructure repairs, UN-led water access programs.

Healthcare

- Current Status: 70% of hospitals damaged (WHO, 2024).
- Challenges: Doctor shortages, war crimes against medical workers.
- Potential Solutions: Medical aid partnerships, rebuilding hospitals.

Education

- Current Status: 35% of schools destroyed (UNESCO, 2024).
- Challenges: Generational gap in education.

- Potential Solutions: Online learning programs, rebuilding schools.

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