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Scenarios for a Peace Mission for Syria

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This report analyses scenarios for a possible peacekeeping mission in Syria, making recommendations for the attention of the UN and the European Union. Almost four years after the start of a democratic uprising, Syria is facing the worst humanitarian crisis of the 21st century. The international community has proven unable to provide adequate humanitarian support to the population or to resolve the conflict through diplomatic initiatives. The Syrian war is now an international conflict, spreading to Iraq and bringing in the US and its allies in a campaign against ISIS. The situation in Syria is highly fragmented, with the opposition divided among many mutually conflicting armed groups. This report argues that the most likely scenario for an end to the conflict would involve a regional solution including Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, with the eventual backing of the US and Russia.

Any peace mission would likely need to be a two-tiered operation with both peacekeeping and peace enforcement components. The difficulty will be to find countries willing and able to assume the peace enforcement component. One possibility would involve a number of European states assuming the lead under a Berlin Plus agreement, allowing for use of NATO assets and capabilities, with support from a number of Arab and BRICS countries.

The report offers four key conclusions: First, short of a peace deal, the humanitarian crisis will not be addressed without a large-scale intervention conducted with a clear Security Council mandate. Second, any peace deal will likely not end the fighting between all groups. Even after a deal, Syria will be a challenging environment requiring a robust peace enforcement intervention authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Third, any peace mission must be built with an understanding that the conflict is a regional one that threatens international security, and should receive the attention and means proportional with the danger it represents. Fourth, there is no solution to the ISIS challenge in isolation from the issues at the root of the conflict: the popular uprising against the dictatorship, the ensuing war and the humanitarian tragedy. A democratic political process that leads to elections and a new constitution must be the end goal for any peace mission .

To start planning for a mission, the report recommends that the UN Secretary General immediately appoint a high level personality to work in coordination with the UN special envoy for Syria to build support among key countries for a peace operation, and that the EU High Representative develop a report on a future EU contribution to peace-making in Syria.

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I. Introduction

Syria, a country with a pre-war population of only 23 million people, is suffering the worst humanitarian crisis of the 21st century. Despite mid-2014 estimates of more than 190 000 dead[1] and more than 9 million displaced (6 million internally and 3 million refugees)[2], the international community seems powerless to deal with the crisis. There has been a failure both to provide humanitarian support to the population and to achieve progress through diplomatic initiatives, including direct talks in Geneva.

In the midst of a high intensity conflict, with no prospect for an end after more than three and a half years of war, a peace mission to Syria may appear as a remote if not utopian idea, particularly now that the war has spread to Iraq. Yet the US-led coalition of countries that began an air campaign against the so-called Islamic State (ISIS)[3] in August 2014 has created a new situation. There has never been a greater need for critical analysis of all available options for building and sustaining peace in Syria, including the option of a peace mission .

Despite wide divergences of opinion about how the conflict may end, all the individuals and institutions interviewed for this project agreed that a peace mission is likely to be needed to stabilise Syria at the end of the conflict. It is a good idea for the international community to be prepared for such a possibility because readiness is essential for successful peacekeeping. There is a need to be forward-looking and discuss the conditions for a potential peacekeeping mission: What forces will it need? What mandate will it need? What end game will it seek?

This report is based on a series of interviews and consultations with international experts on Syria and on peacekeeping. It has been enriched by three background papers and a rich discussion with prominent experts and practitioners in a seminar in fall 2014[4]. The interviews were conducted in order to research what is needed to address the human tragedy in Syria, though many interviewees emphasized the need to work within the realm of what is possible. Never have the answers to these questions seemed more different. As Stanley Hoffman put it reflecting on the debates on the Balkans wars of the 1990s, "while we must admit that there is a huge gap between what is ethical and what is likely with regard to military interventions, we should not resign ourselves to the consequences of inaction but should rather take every opportunity to narrow that gap "[5].

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[1] Megan Price, Anita Gohdes, and Patrick Ball, "Updated Statistical Analysis of Documentation of Killings in the Syrian Arab Republic," *Human Rights Data Analysis* Group, Commissioned by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, August 2014.
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SY/HRDAGUpdatedReportAug2014.pdf
[2] UNHCR, "2014 UNHCR country operations profile - Syrian Arab Republic," official data as of Jan 2014; Zarocostas, John, "9 million now displaced by Syria's civil war, U.N. says," *McClatchyDC*, May 10, 2014. http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/05/10/227103/9-million-now-displaced-by-syrias.html?sp=/99/117/416/505/
[3] The group is variously called the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This paper describes them as ISIS throughout.
[4] A high-level workshop was held September 4-5, 2014 in Oslo, jointly organized by the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center (NOREF) and the Arab Reform Initiative, with leading experts on Syria and on peacekeeping operations to discuss possibilities for a potential peacekeeping operation in Syria.
[5] Stanley Hoffman, *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era*, Rowman and Littlefield, Boston 1998, quoted by NOREF Director Mariano Aguirre in the introduction to the Oslo workshop, September 4-5, 2014.

The international community is facing the worst human tragedy of the 21st century. Neither established nor rising powers have so far been able to protect Syrian citizens from mass murder through diplomatic efforts, whether or not combined with the threat of force. But the need to deal with the humanitarian crisis in Syria will not fade away. Given that today's Syrian reality is one of a fragmented territory controlled by multiple actors with competing agendas, this report will focus on three types of potential missions :

A mission to monitor a limited cease fire; one with a restricted humanitarian objective; and one consisting of a two-tier force backed by significant international commitment and with a mandate for both peace enforcement and peacekeeping.

II.   From democratic uprising to regional war

The Syria conflict has evolved from a democratic uprising into a regional war with the serious involvement not only of regional actors, such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but also of Russia and, to a limited extent, western powers such as the USA and France. Western involvement in supporting the opposition has been timid, incoherent and inconsistent. The Syrian war has now re-ignited the sectarian conflict in Iraq with the declaration of an Islamic caliphate by ISIS .

It is important to look back to the start of the Syrian uprising to understand the evolution of the crisis, to know what is at stake, to determine what political, social and strategic situation any international forces will find in Syria. The Syrian uprising began in 2011 in the context of a democratic wave crossing the Arab world. It started as a peaceful demand for democracy against a dictatorial regime that repressed all forms of dissidence and did not respect human rights. According to Amnesty International, torture and other ill-treatment were used extensively and with impunity in police stations and security agency detention centres.[6] The UN Committee against Torture expressed deep concern over "numerous, ongoing and consistent" reports of torture by law enforcement and investigative officials.[7] The Syrians demonstrating in the streets wanted exactly the same things as protesting Tunisians and Egyptians did, but the reaction of the security forces was different from those in Tunisia or Egypt. Instead of seeing the fall of Assad, as occurred with Ben Ali and Mubarak, the repressive security forces did not ask him to go, but accepted his orders to repress the peaceful demonstrators .

On 23 November 2011, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria declared, "*The substantial body of evidence gathered by the commission indicates that these gross violations of human rights have been committed by Syrian military and security forces since the beginning of the protests in March 2011.*"[8]

[6] Amnesty International, "Syria: Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria," 31 August 2011. http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en
[7] Human Rights Watch, "UN Treaty Bodies Address Syria," 2011. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/features/hrc2011/unbodies.html
[8] UNHCR, "The findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria," 28 November, 2011. http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11654&LangID=E

According to the UN, over 5000 people had been killed by the end of 2011.[9] Facing such repression, the opposition believed that it would find the military support from the international community, as had happened in Libya. When the support failed to materialize, the credibility of the international community suffered significantly in the eyes of opposition representatives, a factor that must be taken into consideration in discussions of any international engagement in Syria. By the end of 2011, facing repression and lacking effective international backing apart from statements that President Bashar al-Assad "must go", the confrontation had evolved from peaceful demonstrations into an armed conflict. The armed opposition to the Assad regime split into a number of groups, many of which would increasingly assume a sectarian nature over the following months and years, as the government itself resorted to a sectarian strategy. Indeed, the Assad regime successfully helped transform an anti-dictatorial uprising into a sectarian one, breaking, perhaps forever, the unity of a country where communities of all allegiances have lived together for centuries. Syria is a multicultural and multiethnic society that includes Sunnis, Alawites, Twelver Shi'a, Ismailis, Druze and Christians of different sects, most of them Arabs, Kurds or Turkmen.
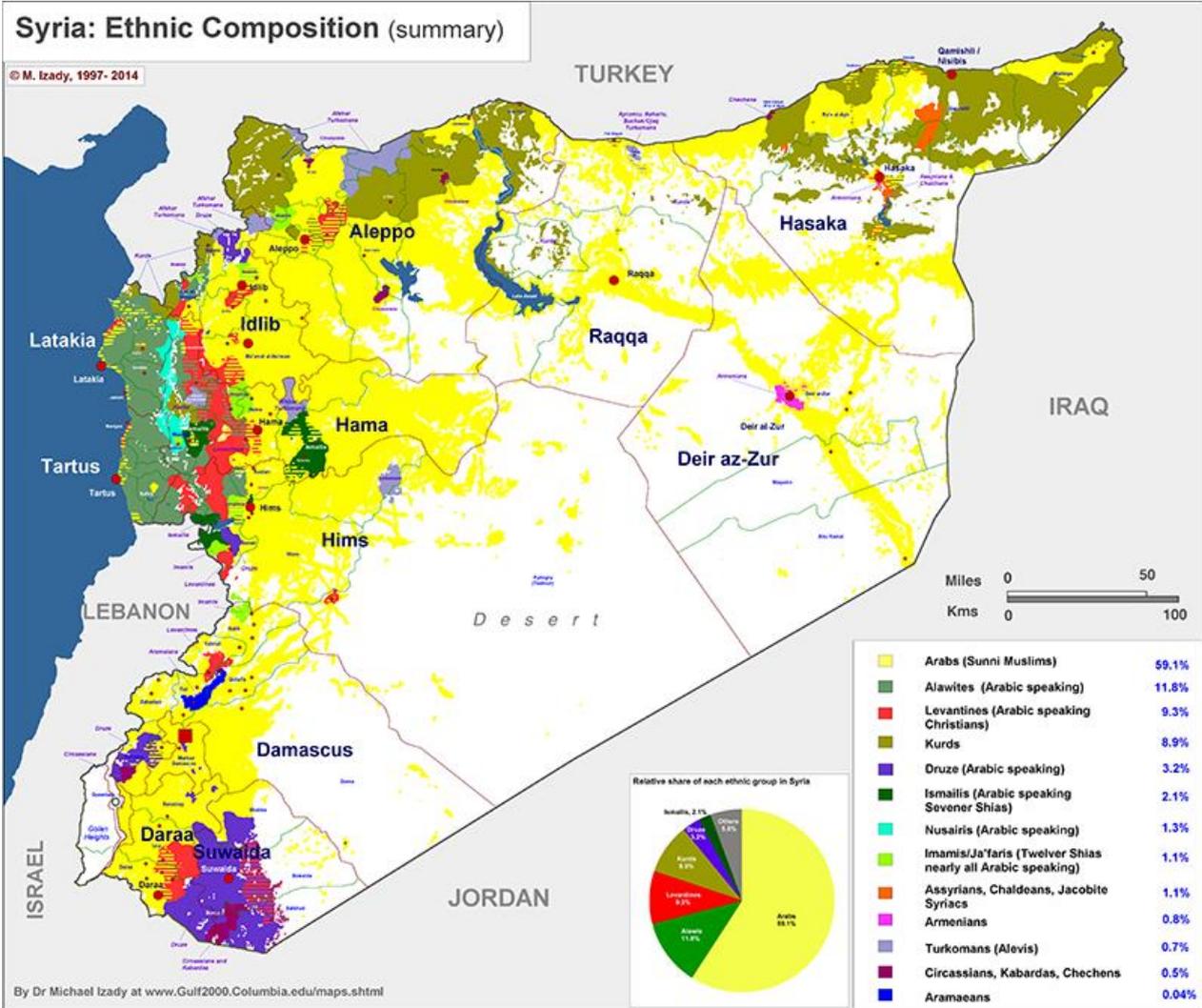
Source: Produced by Dr. Michael Izady at the Gulf/2000 project

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[9] UN News Centre, "As Syrian death toll tops 5,000, UN human rights chief warns about key city," 12 December, 2011. http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=40708#.U9Pt8eOSzsY

During the following three years, the Assad regime employed increasingly violent measures to stay in power, torturing and killing thousands of prisoners (150,000 are still in jail), bombing the Sunni areas of cities, committing crimes against humanity on a large scale and pushing the country towards a sectarian divide. According to the chair of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria,

"The Government continues to commit violations with impunity, using the advance of ISIS to frame their unlawful conduct as being essential to the fight against "terrorism". Their claims are specious. When so many of the casualties are civilian, claims of targeting "terrorists" become implausible. Hundreds of men, women and children are killed every week by the Government's indiscriminate firing of missiles and dropping of barrel bombs into civilian-inhabited areas. In some instances, there is clear evidence of targeting of civilian gatherings. Soldiers at checkpoints have prevented injured civilians from reaching hospitals, while hospitals in restive areas continue to be targeted."[10]

To these crimes committed by the government, one should add those being committed by some of the opposition groups, especially by ISIS. According to the Commission of Inquiry, "In areas of Syria under [ISIS] control, particularly in the north and north-east of the country, Fridays are regularly marked by executions, amputations and lashings in public squares."[11]

But it would be a dramatic mistake to consider that all opposition groups commit crimes against humanity, as the Assad regime has tried to suggest, or to go back to the old arguments that for years justified the support of European and American governments to dictatorships like Assad's out of fear of political Islam and in the name of fighting terrorism. Were an intervention to take place now, any international force would have to distinguish between the spectrum of opposition political forces it would have to deal with, ranging from those forces which would be willing to seek a peaceful and democratic Syria, both Islamist and non-Islamist, to those who would oppose any peaceful solution. The international community cannot become an instrument of the Assad regime's strategy, which simply poses a stark choice between itself and ISIS extremists.

We can conclude that the Syria that will emerge from this war will be one with deep wounds and social divides, accompanied by the destruction of basic infrastructure. Any peacekeeping operation will take place, from a societal point of view, in a situation similar to that which existed in Bosnia in the 1990s and will be a huge challenge in terms of national reconciliation and truth and justice, as well as in terms of national reconstruction, including the reintegration of millions of refugees and displaced persons.

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[10] Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio, Chair of Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Remarks at the United Nations Security Council, Arria Formula Meeting, New York, UN, 25 July 2014
[11] Ibid.

## III.   A highly fragmented military situation

There are dozens of armed factions involved in the Syrian conflict, including among the pro-Assad forces. The fragmentation of resistance to the regime is partly the result of the trend towards a sectarian conflict and partly a consequence of the fact that neither the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces nor the Free Syrian Army (FSA) became the common vehicle for opposition to Assad .

The FSA was created by former members of the Syrian armed forces and strove for a multi-confessional non-sectarian approach, declaring its objective to be the construction of a democratic Syria. The FSA was formally organized into the Supreme Military Council, created in December 2012, and came under the leadership the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, formed one month earlier and recognized by most Western and Arab countries as the sole legitimate representative of Syria. Today, the FSA is fractured into a myriad of groups, some better armed than others but all suffering from two essential weaknesses: first, the absence of an overall strategy beyond ad hoc tactical initiatives or uncoordinated decisions by local groups; second, the lack of appropriate weaponry that could bring about a decisive change in the situation on the ground.

The Islamic Front, which brings together seven Salafist rebel groups and until recently received massive support from the Gulf monarchies is another important component of the armed opposition. The Islamic Front has clashed sporadically with the FSA, but is also allied with it in the fight against the Assad regime and ISIS .

After the Assad regime, ISIS itself is increasingly perceived as the main obstacle to any peaceful democratic outcome to the crisis in Syria. At the leadership level, ISIS is formed essentially by foreign fighters who have been able to construct alliances with the tribes of the region. However, they still need to mobilise foreign fighters because ISIS seems so far "unable to mobilize sufficiently loyal local combatants and administrators, and is therefore, forced to work hard to attract foreigners."[12] The early reinforcement of ISIS, which controls most of the northeast of Syria, was facilitated by the Assad regime leaving it largely untouched, thus allowing it to open a military front against other opposition forces. ISIS is now fighting government forces to enlarge its control of northern Iraq as well as in Syria.

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[12] Felix Legrand, "The Colonial Strategy of ISIS in Syria," *Arab Reform Initiative*, June 2014. http://www.arab-reform.net/colonial-strategy-isis-syria
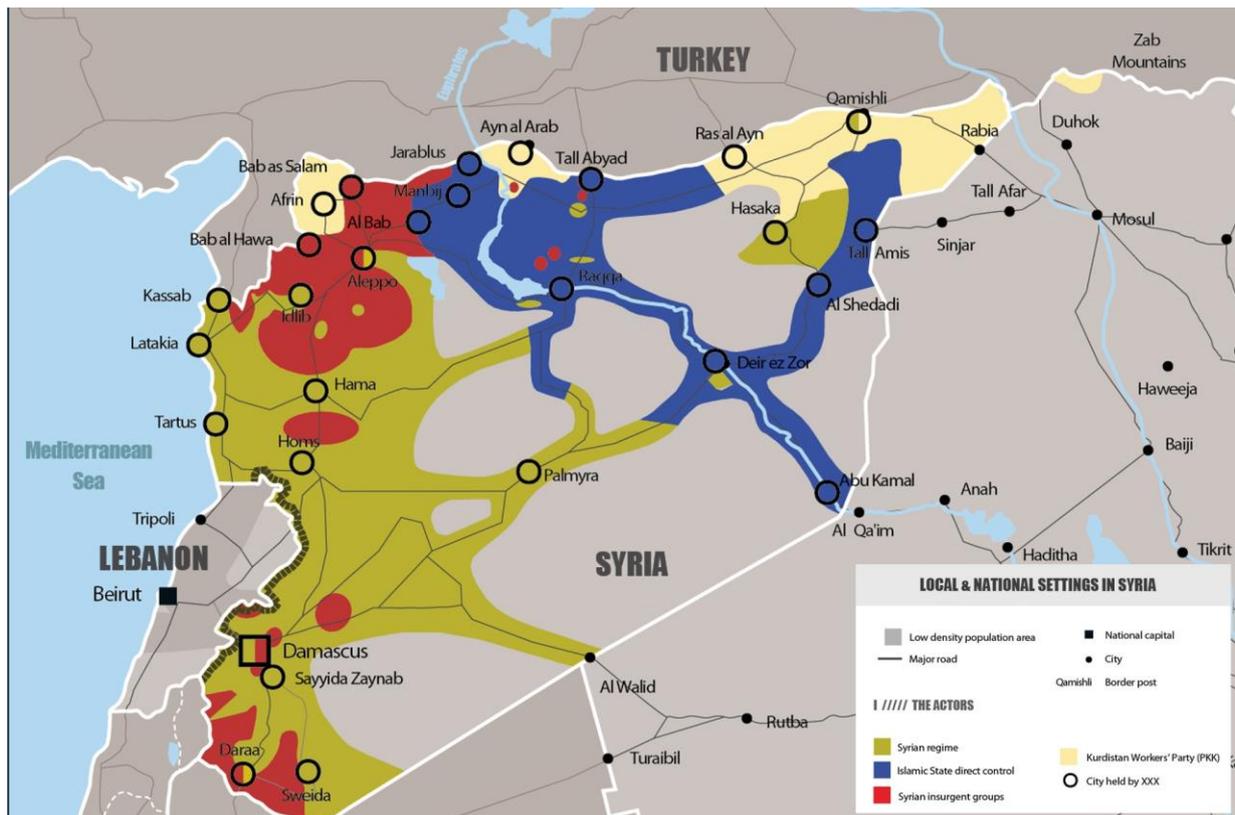
Source: Xavier Houdoy, Noria, 2014

The Kurds are also a major component of the Syrian opposition, but have not been deeply involved in fighting the Assad regime. They have created a semi-autonomous region in three northern enclaves of Syria, following the Iraqi Kurdish example of profiting from the crisis to obtain self-rule. They largely consider ISIS a threat and have fought ISIS forces.[13]

Other than these main opposition groups and armed Kurdish groups, the strategic equation will be defined in large measure by the Syrian armed forces. They have largely remained loyal to the regime at the command level, for most of the officer corps are Alawite. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Syrian army numbered 220,000 before the uprising began, but this had dropped to 110,000 by 2013[14]. Pro-regime militias have born the major brunt of the fighting and some estimates indicate that they have suffered nearly as many casualties as the regime's own military units.

The foreign military forces involved in the war must be added to this complicated strategic equation, notably Hezbollah and Iraqi and Iranian military units. While there are wide-ranging estimates of the number of Hezbollah fighters in Syria, their forces certainly number in the thousands, and hundreds of them have been killed. Hezbollah may leave Syria if an agreement is reached with the support of Iran. The same would be true for the Iranian and any remaining Iraqi elements within the pro-regime militias fighting in Syria, especially with the draw of leaving to fight against ISIS in Iraq.

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[13] Baker Sidqi, "Political Geography of the Kurdish Issue and Its Relationship with the Syrian National Revolution," *Arab Reform Initiative*, July, 2013. http://www.arab-reform.net/political-geography-kurdish-issue-and-its-relationship-syrian-national-revolution

[14] See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2011*, and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2013*, Routledge.

The conflict is most likely to end with significant parts of the country still under the control of forces that would not have participated in a peace deal or would not accept it, both among opposition and pro-regime forces. Additionally, a number of smaller groups without a political agenda, but with criminal objectives, might complicate the situation. Even in the case of a peace deal, the fragmentation of armed groups and the continued opposition of ISIS and other jihadist groups to an international presence would be a complication.

We can conclude that the Syrian conflict is different from civil wars such as those in Bosnia or Mozambique where an agreement between the regime and the opposition was an agreement between two political groups with extensive control over major combatant forces in the country. In any of the potential scenarios for ending the conflict that involve an international force to stabilise the country, such a force is likely to find a complex and volatile situation. There is a highly fragmented military situation with various groups supported by different international actors, with diverse allegiances and different attitudes to an international peace force. Some political agreement that secures the cooperation of all regional players is necessary to reduce obstruction to the activities of any peacekeeping force.

IV.   Past UN role in the region

There have been many UN missions in the region since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Some of these missions have had a presence in Syria, or in conflicts involving Syria, primarily to monitor agreements between Israel and the Arab states such as the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), the first UN peacekeeping mission .

The UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established in 1974 to oversee the ceasefire between Syria and Israel and to supervise the neutral buffer zone separating Syrian-controlled territory (Quneitra Governorate) from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. These two missions are still active and the knowledge they have accumulated may prove helpful for a peace mission in Syria. UNTSO staff have helped initiate and supplement other peacekeeping operations and UNTSO observers currently serve with UNDOF, UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) and in the Sinai. As was the case with UNDOF, however, these missions can become the object of retaliation from forces opposed to any settlement .

There are also two missions directly related to the current Syrian conflict: the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) and the joint mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN. UNSMIS was mandated in April 2012, two months after Kofi Annan became Joint Special Envoy, to be an unarmed military observer mission of up to 300 observers to monitor a cessation of violence by all parties and the implementation of the Kofi Annan's six-point plan. The mission's mandate was not renewed beyond August 2012 because the two conditions necessary for renewal - cessation of the use of heavy weapons and a reduction in violence by all sides – were not achieved .

Writing later about his experience, UNSMIS chief, Lieutenant General Robert Mood, declared that "(M)y deployment was unarmed, had a weak mandate, followed passive rules of

engagement, and operated within a political six-point plan that was challenging to translate to field realities without full commitment from all parties, including the UN Security Council"[15]. He suggested that UNSMIS was undermined by a lack of international support and flexibility. As a lesson for the future, the fact that UNSMIS had a weak mandate and did not get the full backing of all the members of the UNSC should be stressed.

In April, 2013, the Syrian regime was first accused of using chemical weapons against its own people. In August, 2013, a major chemical weapons attack on rebel-held areas outside Damascus killed hundreds of people and led to international calls for action against the Syrian government. The Assad regime negotiated an agreement that allowed for the supervised elimination of its chemical weapons stocks. In September 2013, the OPCW and the UNSC (Res 2118) each passed a resolution creating a joint mission to oversee the elimination of chemical weapons belonging to the Syrian regime, the OPCW-UN Joint Mission. Its objective of dismantling the regime's chemical weapons was clear and had the backing of all UNSC members, notably the US and Russia. The implementation was also made possible by making clear the price of noncompliance by the regime, with the US and France threatening to use force if the chemical weapons were not dismantled. The last of Syria's declared chemical weapons were removed in July, 2014 and subsequently destroyed .

We can conclude that the failures of UNSMIS and the success of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission indicate not only the need for a clear mandate from the UNSC for any future mission, if it is to be successful, but also that the credibility of the mission requires that it have sufficient capacities to impose consequences for non-compliance.

V.   Scenarios for an end to the conflict

Syria will probably need a large intervention force at the end of the conflict to maintain peace among different armed groups and to protect Syrian citizens and minorities when- and wherever their lives and identities are threatened. The nature of the mission and the countries involved will, most likely, depend on how the major manifestations of conflict will come to an end and what internal and external forces may be involved .

By autumn 2014, the most likely scenario appeared to be one involving a very long conflict with multiple and shifting conflict zones but few dramatic changes in the balance of power and no clear victor. The regime controlled Damascus and most of the south, as well as most of coastal and central Syria, including Homs. Apart from the Kurdish controlled areas, ISIS was the strongest opposition group in northeast Syria, where it was making strategic advances, while north western Syria was controlled by other opposition groups .

A new factor in the evolution of the conflict is the US-led war against ISIS in Iraq and in Syria. The rise of ISIS was facilitated by the Assad regime's brutal repression of its own people and of its strategy of turning the war into a sectarian struggle. Thus, unless the political and humanitarian challenges inside Syria caused by this situation are addressed, there can be

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[15] Robert Mood, "My Experience as Head of the UN Mission in Syria," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Jan 21, 2014. http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54238

no solution to the ISIS issue. George Joffé considers that without appropriate local leadership, any Western-backed campaign against the movement is likely to antagonise local sentiment in favour of ISIS extremism and will attract increased numbers of foreign fighters to it[16]

On the other hand, the American-led campaign of air strikes against the ISIS leadership, as has occurred against similar groups in Pakistan and Yemen, might only further deepen the divisions amongst Syrians. This, in turn, could cause collateral damage and facilitate ISIS recruitment of new fighters, intensifying anti-Americanism in the region[17]. ISIS thrives in an environment where a failing Syrian state cannot provide effective security or governance[18]. Furthermore, the coalition fighting ISIS, which includes Saudi Arabia, is likely to alienate anti-ISIS Islamic groups such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The humanitarian consequences of an air campaign against ISIS also need to be considered, for it will add to the instability of Syria's neighbours, which have already absorbed more than 3 million Syrian refugees .

Ultimately, three different routes for ending the conflict can be envisioned: an internal resolution to the conflict, an externally driven settlement achieved via agreement among international powers, or a regional solution.

1. Internal resolution of the conflict

The evolution of the conflict has shown that is very unlikely that it will end through the actions of internal Syrian actors without additional external involvement. The opposition no longer seems to be in a position to take power, as had appeared possible in late 2013. Even an opposition coalition, including the Free Syrian Army and the Islamic Front, would not be able to take down the regime without massive international support or a military intervention as previously seen in Kosovo and Libya.

At the same time, it is also very unlikely that the regime will be able to regain control over all Syrian territory. Despite its recent successes against the remainder of the opposition, the Assad regime has recently been losing ground to ISIS. The Assad regime may be able to keep control of a large portion of the country, but not all of it, with the end result that the country will be divided into mutually antagonistic regions.

2. Externally driven settlement through agreement among international powers

Under this scenario, leading powers, involving the US and Russia, would agree on a solution to the crisis and would encourage their partners to accept a diplomatic solution. They would be likely to find strong support from other actors, including the Arab League, the BRICS and the EU. This would create the conditions for the necessary UN resolutions and the involvement of a peacekeeping mission. This scenario has been favoured by the UN since the beginning of the conflict. The Geneva I and II conferences were predicated on efforts to

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[16] George Joffé, Research Fellow at the Centre and Visiting Professor of Geography at Kings College, London University, personal communication to the author, September, 2014.
[17] Wehrey, Frederic, "Five Hidden Risks of U.S. Action Against the Islamic State," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Sept 11, 2014. http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=56596
[18] Discussion at Oslo high-level workshop September 4-5, 2014.

achieve this scenario. This did not happen then and is not likely to occur in the near future because Russia has never accepted the need to end the Assad regime. Furthermore, the worsening of relations between the US and Russia over Ukraine has made a US-Russia agreement over Syria even less likely. Nonetheless, the US and Russia must play a role in any solution to the conflict, even if it is unlikely to emerge as a result of their agreement or their joint capacity to influence the parties to the conflict.

3. A regional solution

A regional solution may be the option with the most likelihood of bringing about a peace agreement, and is the option most favoured by many analysts interviewed for this project. The major difference between a regionally led option and the international involvement of great power scenario is that it would be a regional dynamic that would trigger the role of non–regional powers. Of particular importance will be the management of relations between the US and Iran. This has already begun to happen over the complex issue of responding to ISIS.

The most influential external actors in the conflict are regional powers: Iran, which supports the regime directly and indirectly through Hezbollah; Saudi Arabia, which is a strong supporter of the Islamic Front; and Turkey, which backs the Free Syrian Army. Some consider that the regime's survival so far has depended more on support from Iran than from Russia.

Iran would like to maintain the Assad regime, with or without Assad, and has so far been successful in this, its main goal. Saudi Arabia opposes Assad but considers that the evolution of the war, particularly the influence of jihadist groups like ISIS which are outside Saudi control, could represent a potential threat. According to Bassma Kodmani, "It is only a matter of time before the antagonistic regimes in Tehran and Riyadh start to cooperate."[19]

To confront ISIS, Turkey favours a regional solution that would end instability on its borders. In late 2012, Turkey proposed a regional agreement involving Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia but the initiative faced enormous difficulties because of the conflicting agendas of Iran and Saudi Arabia and the difficulty for Egypt to play a positive role, particularly after the military coup of 2013.

The regionalisation of the war challenges the interests of regional powers and may facilitate their convergence toward a common solution. The situation is particularly challenging for Iran, which sees the Iraqi government threatened by ISIS, but also for Turkey.

A regionally-led solution would need to be the result of compromise between regional actors: primarily Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Its success would also depend on significant involvement by the US and, to a certain extent, Russia, so that neither could become a spoiler of any agreement.

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[19] Bassma Kodmani, "Syria's opposition should steel itself to wait, not fight," *Financial Times,* August 27, 2014. http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/2b0b3ae4-2a09-11e4-8139-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3GUlD2AMQ. A similar argument is made by Jessica Matthews indicating an unlikely but important agreement could be reached at some point between Iran and Saudi Arabia (and Bashar al-Assad) in order to jointly combat ISIS. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/nov/06/there-answer-syria/?insrc=rel

There are important implications of a regional solution for a potential peacekeeping operation. Iran, which is widely seen as part of the problem, has also been trying to gain recognition of its role as part of a solution. Tehran announced a four point peace plan that Lakhdar Brahimi, the former United Nations and Arab League Special Envoy to Syria, considered worthy of discussion[20]. According to Saban Kardas, "The pacification of the conflict will most probably require some kind of power-sharing arrangement with the involvement of the external backers of different groups on the ground. In this case a Kosovo model might be a possibility."[21]

Some analysts consider that a peace arrangement could mean the partition of Syria into zones of influence for the regional actors, possibly on a sectarian basis, with Iran guaranteeing the security of the Alawite region, and Saudi Arabia, with the support of the Arab League, of the Sunni-dominated areas under the influence of the Islamic Front. The role of Turkey in this scenario would be to guarantee the security of the areas under control of the FSA. Turkey might also have been considering taking responsibility for the security of Kurdish areas. But with the eruption of ISIS at its border, Turkey is now confronted with the need to deal with ISIS directly in order to keep control of the outcome.

This scenario of *de facto* partition could also result in a Dayton-type agreement (as established in 1995 for the Bosnian war) for Syria that would be imposed by the international community, guaranteeing peace but leaving the basic problems of a working state unresolved. However, if this scenario were developed with serious backing from the UN Security Council, it should be possible to avoid partition. The Kurdish areas, potentially tempted to join Iraqi Kurdistan, may be the most difficult issue to address. For now, the aspirations of Syrian Kurds are kept in check by both Turkey and the leadership of Iraqi Kurdistan. In any event, the UN would be called on to guarantee post-agreement peacekeeping, but the good will and collaboration of regional powers would be essential. The security interests of these regional powers should thus be taken into consideration, in addition to those of neighbours such as Jordan, Lebanon and Israel.

We can conclude that the conflict is likely to last for a long time without significant external involvement. The most likely scenario for an agreement between the government and major sectors of the opposition remains one that is regionally led. The regional solution may, however, contribute to the breakup of Syria into zones of influence according to interests and influences of neighbouring states. As a result, avoidance of dismemberment should be a guideline for any peace mission.

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[20] Andrew Parasiliti, "After Resigning, Brahimi Says Iran's Syria Plan 'Worth Discussing'," *Al Monitor*, May 19, 2014. http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/05/19/after-resigning-brahimi-says-irans-syria-plan-worth-discussing?page=2
[21] Saban Kardas, Director of Turkish Center for Middle Eastern Studies, interview for this report, August 2014.

VI.   Possible formats for a mission

There are multiple non-exclusive possibilities for how a potential peace mission could be organised and mandated. A mission may be developed as part of an initiative to manage the conflict or to enforce limited agreements. A mission might be developed to enforce the provision of humanitarian assistance, coercively creating the conditions necessary to facilitate humanitarian action, with or without the agreement of the parties to the conflict to actually end it. A mission might also be led by the UN, a regional security organisation or by an ad hoc coalition of the willing to enforce the implementation of a full peace agreement.

1.   A mission to support limited agreements

A minimalist scenario, favoured by those who consider that a peace deal is not likely to happen soon, prioritises managing the conflict and the humanitarian crisis. It is focused more on immediate conflict reduction and human security than on permanently resolving larger political questions. This view may amount to mere crisis management rather than crisis resolution. Experiences with missions such as UNSMIS show that the success of such missions can be very limited in terms of resolving humanitarian crises. This limited approach, however, could also be seen as part of an incremental approach and could help build trust among different parties to the conflict.

A limited mission could, according to some analysts, secure a geographically limited peace deal, to manage border issues with Syria's neighbours, to secure humanitarian corridors for refugees, or to control trafficking in weapons. To be effective on the humanitarian front, such efforts need to be based on a UNSC resolution providing a clear mandate.

A peace agreement might be needed prior to any observer mission (perhaps similar to UNSMIS), but that would imply first securing a peace deal. An observer mission could thus serve as a step towards a full-scale peace mission, linked to the scenario of a larger peacekeeping operation authorised by a UNSC resolution (discussed below). In the present circumstances, and in the scenarios highlighted above for ending the conflict, a mission like UNSMIS may fail, as UNSMIS did, if it is not part of a large peacekeeping force.

Enlarging the mandate of an existing mission like the UNIFIL force for Lebanon to include control of the border with Lebanon may not be a good idea as it could exceed the mandate of what has been considered a successful mission. Yet such an enlargement of the UNIFIL role is a specific demand of the Lebanese government which has requested UNIFIL to "…assist the Lebanese Army and Lebanese security forces in monitoring and controlling Lebanon's border with Syria"[22]. Although this idea has been endorsed by some analysts in London[23], it was rejected by the UN representative consulted for this paper and by representatives of the

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[22] "Lebanese Forces lobbies for UN monitoring of Syria border," *The Daily Star,* Aug 07, 2014. http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Aug-07/266383-lebanese-forces-lobbies-for-un-monitoring-of-syria-border.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Recommended%20Articles%20widget&utmcampaign=Magnet%20tools#ixzz3Daf8D0AQ
[23] Workshop organised at Chatham House, London for this report, March 11, 2014.

states that contribute to UNIFIL. Of course, the American-led war against ISIS has made ever more urgent the question of monitoring the Syrian-Lebanese border, whether by enlarging UNIFIL's mandate and reinforcing its military capacities, or by a specific mission to achieve the same end. Any future mission in Syria would need to coordinate its actions with other missions in the region, including the possible sharing of facilities.

A mission to monitor a ceasefire to fight ISIS

Of the more restricted initiatives that might be developed to respond to the current crisis, the most promising could be one to monitor a ceasefire between opposition and Syrian government forces to allow them to deal with the challenge of ISIS. According to Michel Duclos, "Current army and regime forces would have to redirect their operations against ISIS."[24]

The implications and manifestations of such a ceasefire would be complex but a first stage could involve agreements for local ceasefires in areas under imminent threat from ISIS. At the time of writing, this would have applied to Aleppo for example, which was under attack by ISIS whilst the regime's forces were attacking opposition supply routes into the city. However, as the International Crisis Group has highlighted, "A local cease-fire would require a fundamental shift in the Assad regime's strategy: Instead of prioritizing the defeat of the mainstream opposition, it would have to direct its fire exclusively on ISIS"[25].

Such a deal would require the strong commitment of international actors, including from Iran, the US and Russia. Nonetheless, this would be an essential component of the solution to Syria's humanitarian crisis and of countering the lack of an effective state infrastructure that has facilitated the growth of ISIS. Such ceasefires could be monitored by an international mission that would "…create incentives for pragmatic behaviour and political engagement among rebel factions"[26] and would also start fostering relations between opposition forces and sections of the Syrian Army. The security challenges facing such a monitoring mission would require it to have credible military capabilities in order to protect itself from possible threats.

2. A robust humanitarian mission

UNSC resolution 2139 of February 22, 2014 described "hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in besieged areas, most of whom are besieged by the Syrian armed forces and some by opposition groups, as well as the dire situation of over 3 million people in hard-to-reach areas". The UNSC also deplored "the difficulties in providing, and the failure to provide, access for the humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need inside Syria". Having in mind the gravity of the humanitarian situation, the UNSC passed resolution 2139 unanimously, which was remarkable given that Russia and China had previously opposed several resolutions on Syria. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his statement on the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2139, stated that humanitarian assistance "is not something to be

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[24] Michel Duclos, former French ambassador to Syria, interview for this report, September , 2014
[25] Jean-Marie Guéhenno and Noah Bonsey, "To Stop ISIS in Syria, Support Aleppo," *NY Times*, Sept 14, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/15/opinion/to-stop-isis-in-syria-support-aleppo.html?_r=0
[26] Ibid.

negotiated; it is something to be allowed by virtue of international law."[27] The resolution *"Demands* that all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and across borders, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need through the most direct routes."[28] Along the same line, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) secretary general Jan Egeland indicates "any aid going into Syria must include provisions for civilians living in parts of the country now controlled by the so-called Islamic State", as quoted in a polemical article.[29]

In July 2014, UNSC Resolution 2165 was passed unanimously, "Expressing grave alarm at the significant and rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, at the fact that the number of people in need of assistance has grown to over 10 million, including 6.4 million internally displaced persons and over 4.5 million living in hard-to-reach areas, and that over 240,000 are trapped in besieged areas, as reported by the United Nations Secretary-General."[30]

The important aspect of Resolution 2165 is the authorization of cross-border convoys of emergency aid for Syrian civilians, including rebel-held areas, without prior approval by the Syrian authorities. With this resolution, the Council authorised cross-border humanitarian activities for humanitarian agencies, for which no such authorisation was required. According to Luis Peral, "It is however always welcome that the Security Council confirms that these activities are legal, but this resolution must be seen as a first step by the UNSC to enforce its resolutions and face its responsibilities."[31]

Resolution 2165 alone cannot force the warring parties, including the government, to give access to areas in need of humanitarian aid. Only the international community can enforce it by deploying the means to do so. This was shown in Bosnia in the 1990s where, following deterioration in the humanitarian situation, the international community acted in a decisive way to ensure access to humanitarian aid and eventually to impose peace and an end to the humanitarian tragedy through the Dayton agreement. The procedure would be that the UN Secretary-General reports the failure of the regime and other actors to comply with Resolution 2165 and asks the UN Security Council to enforce it.

In July 2014, an initial UN aid convoy of nine trucks crossed from Turkey into Syria[32]. This was the first step in the right direction, and can be seen as the beginning of what might become a peace mission to enforce protection of further aid convoys, thus making Resolution 2165 credible. The need for the resolution to be enforced is clear given OCHA's report that no trucks beyond the first nine have actually been able to cross the border into Syria.

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[27] UNSC, "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2139 (2013) to Ease Aid Delivery to Syrians, Provide Relief from 'Chilling Darkness'", 22 February, 2014.
http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/sc11292.doc.htm
[28] UNSC Resolution 2139 http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2139
[29] Joshua Hersh, "Why Humanitarians Talk to ISIS," *Daily Beast*, October 24, 2014. http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/24/why-humanitarians-talk-to-isis.html?via=mobile&source=email
[30] UNSC Resolution 2165 http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2165
[31] Luis Peral, Senior Analyst of Global and Strategic Affairs with the Club de Madrid, background paper to this report, August, 2014
[32] Nichols, Michelle, "First U.N. aid convoy enters Syria without government consent," *Reuters*, 24 July, 2014.

According to Russia and the other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, this would only be possible with a Chapter VII UNSC resolution.

But others argue that international humanitarian law may legitimise action in case of inaction by the Security Council, thus devolving power to states willing and able to intervene on humanitarian grounds. Such action would also contain the flow of new refugees into neighbouring countries and allow for the repatriation of those already displaced across the border.

It is worth noting that this argument was used to legitimise international action in 1991 to stop the persecution of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein. According to Luis Peral, "States willing to protect victims of massacres in third countries are entitled to do so even in the absence of a Security Council decision, including by using force in as much as they comply with relevant international principles. Indeed the basic principle in this case is that of fully respecting humanitarian mandates, so that no abuse in the use of force is permitted."[33]

Recognizing the validity of these arguments would be a first step in enforcing the provision of humanitarian aid and the subsequent creation of humanitarian corridors and safe havens, building on recent Security Council resolutions. This seems to be the preferred option of many interviewees who believe that there is no other way to protect civilians. For now, the idea of a robust humanitarian mission is only supported by Turkey, and even then with many caveats.

The US intervention in Iraq and Syria may open a debate over how to create the necessary international consensus to deal with the humanitarian crisis in Syria, especially as ISIS increasingly makes its presence felt in both countries. The selective American approach of targeting ISIS and not stopping the mass murder by the regime in Syria does not solve any of the fundamental questions of the Syrian regional war. It does, however, create a more international dimension to the crisis and may make Security Council members more aware of the threat to international security than the Syrian humanitarian tragedy suggests. The basic question in both Iraq and Syria is how to create conditions facilitating humanitarian action for current and potential victims of crimes against humanity. The need to allow aid agencies freedom of action in all the territories in which they operate may have to result in the provision of military escort and protection services for humanitarian actors.

To effectively connect the ISIS-Iraq-Syria line of reasoning in a way that could win the support of reticent countries such as the BRICS, it may be necessary to develop a more inclusive approach, putting the accent on the diplomatic implications of humanitarian resolutions rather than on their military dimension. This is currently the option favoured by most members of the international community, including the US and most European states. According to Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry for Syria, the Security Council's unanimous support for Resolution 2165 should be used to reinforce the diplomatic momentum to "…unite the West and the BRICS in order to effectively provide for the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people."[34]

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[33] Luis Peral, ibid.
[34] Interview with Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro., July, 2014

3. A two-tier UN peacekeeping operation

The mandate of a peace mission in Syria may involve a combination of peace enforcement, peacekeeping, and possibly its transformation into a civilian peacebuilding mission. If a coalition of this sort is considered in order to deal with such a mix of requirements, it will have to include a combat force with a large contingent of peacekeepers, such as the mix that was created to stabilise Bosnia and Kosovo to keep peace among the warring parties, with NATO providing security. In Kosovo, NATO's KFOR peacekeeping force was complemented by the UN providing the civilian component, which took over the interim administration of Kosovo and the political process of reconciliation.

The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has been working on contingency plans for such a peacekeeping mission in Syria. The conviction in the DPKO is that such a mission would only be possible after a peace deal is achieved and would need the involvement of a robust multilateral force during the initial phase in order to stabilise the situation. The rationale for this initial force is built on the assumption that after an eventual peace deal there will still be combat operations taking place by insurgent groups and that the situation will be too dangerous for any UN peacekeeping operation.

The end game for such a mission should be clear from the beginning: bringing peace and assuring the return of refugees; supporting and monitoring the organisation of free elections; and supporting the Syrian drafting of a new constitution for a democratic and inclusive Syria.

Keeping this end game in mind, any multinational force involved in peace enforcement will have some initial tasks involving a hard power component:

- *To stabilize the country*, it will need to face the challenge represented by groups that will not accept a peace deal, as will certainly be the case with ISIS as well as, perhaps, some of the pro-regime militias and smaller armed bands.

- *To protect the peacekeepers* and its own forces who might be targeted in any violent environment, similar, no doubt, to that experienced in Afghanistan.

- *To deal with the regional dimension,* it will need to address the issue of the stabilisation of borders with neighbours, particularly Iraq.

A peacekeeping force, for its part, will have a number of tasks, including:

- *Ensure compliance with the peace agreement* by providing deterrence and monitoring the boundaries between chunks of territory held by different armed groups.

- *Facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid* to war-battered communities and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) and create conditions for those who are willing and able to return to do so.

- *Apply the rule of law and protect public order* by assisting local authorities in a number of tasks, including justice support, police training, demobilization, and decommissioning and destruction of weapons; protecting the international community's representatives; contribute to the fight against corruption and fraud; monitor the human rights situation; ensure that cases of war crimes, terrorism,

organised and serious crime are properly investigated, adjudicated and enforced; and engage in the development of potential amnesty laws and disputed amnesty cases.

- *Assume transitional administration powers.* Any transitional government would likely be very weak, so the UN special representative for Syria would need to have a strong mandate, including transitional administration powers.

We can conclude that any international mission to implement UNSC Resolution 1365, even after an agreement among parties to the conflict, will need to have an effective military component even if it comes about as the result of an international consensus involving most of the actors to the conflict.

VII.   Building an effective multilateral mission: the "Berlin Plus" option

It will not be easy to create the necessary mix of forces that can deliver both a stabilising peace enforcement force and a peacekeeping one with a strong civilian component. One relevant example is that of Kosovo from 1999 onwards. The KFOR mission was quite formidable, involving 60,000 troops from 39 different NATO and non-NATO nations. Syria, seventeen times the size of Kosovo with twelve times the population and many more armed factions, is likely to be far more complicated from a security perspective. In order to stabilise the country, any peacekeeping operation would therefore need to have at least the capacity of KFOR. Preparing a force of such a size, however, will be quite difficult. One of the major reasons is that NATO, the collective security organisation with the greatest capacity, would face enormous opposition from its domestic constituencies – and probably from Syrians too – to being directly involved in Syria, even if it could give indirect support through European involvement .

Barring direct NATO involvement, another possibility would be a coalition of states willing and able to participate, involving both Europeans and non-Europeans. While this may raise questions about the neutrality of such a force, it may not be easy to develop an operation that has a peace enforcement component made up only of forces from countries that are neutral in the conflict and that also have sufficient fighting capacity. Those who may be able to deal with such an operation from a military perspective are precisely the countries, like the US, Russia, Turkey, France or Great Britain, which have all supported one side or the other during the war and thus would not be considered as neutral parties .

What role for Europeans?

One possibility would be for the European Union to form the core group of such a mission. As Richard Gowan points out, European nations would "have much of the experience necessary to take on this mix of tasks."[35] This would imply the formation of 'a coalition of the

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[35] Richard Gowan, Associate Director of the Managing Global Order project with the Center on International Cooperation at NYU, "Europe and peacekeeping in Syria," background paper to this report, August, 2014

willing' that could act in line with the 'Berlin Plus' arrangements[36] – using NATO assets and capabilities including NATO headquarters facilities for operational planning, while being conducted under the EU umbrella .

The application of the 'Berlin Plus' agreement would facilitate the provision of logistical support from the US and – provided it can overcome the opposition of Greece – would include the direct involvement of Turkey. Such an arrangement would give great credibility to the force. The EUFOR Althea military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is, to date, the best example of a 'Berlin Plus' mission. It was conducted under the provisions of chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, with the objective of ensuring compliance with the Dayton agreements after NATO decided to bring its SFOR operation to a close. For the EU this would be an opportunity to contribute to peace in the Middle East and re-launch its Common Security and Defence Policy. The 'Berlin Plus' option would imply the deployment of significant numbers of European ground forces. British experts consulted for this report indicated that significant British involvement is very unlikely after the parliamentary vote last year over projected attacks on Syria with regard to the chemical weapons issue .

However, this option may be facilitated by the end of the European engagement in Afghanistan. German experts have suggested that the kind of contribution Germany might be willing to make is open for discussion as a result of its experience in Afghanistan. Germans consider that they have gained experience in fighting a different type of war in Afghanistan and this may be an asset for participation in an operation in Syria. France has shown in Mali that it is prepared to send troops to Muslim-majority countries. Nordic countries such as Norway, Finland and Sweden may also be willing to participate but in a limited way and probably only in a supporting role, as they have done in Mali. Italy, as the second-largest contributor to UNIFIL, might also provide ground troops for such a force .

The EU is equipped to make an important contribution to such a force by designing a high-tech support mission to accompany it. This could involve activities and resources such as satellites and drones to monitor the disengagement of forces, camera networks to observe the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and the separation of armed groups[37].

While such contributions could make an intervention mission more agile, they would not obviate the need for ground troops. Similarly, neither the possible deployment of European special rapid reaction forces in neighbouring countries nor air support to assist troops on the ground would replace the need for troops inside Syria itself. This is, after all, the lesson to be taken from the Libya experience where an air operation contributed to the fall of Gaddafi, but the lack of a peacebuilding strategy and commitment undermined the subsequent stabilisation of the country .

The EU contribution, however, is most likely to be towards the civilian dimension of an operation. Playing a significant role in developing a rule-of-law mission would be part within

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[36] The Berlin Plus agreement was establish in 2003 between the EU and NATO to allow the EU to make use of NATO assets and capabilities for EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions. Examples of missions conducted within the Berlin Plus framework are Operation Concordia, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in December 2003 and EUFOR Althea, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004. http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/about-csdp/berlin/
[37] Ibid.

the Union's comfort zone. The EU could "offer support to an international monitoring network that could at least marginally increase transparency of the post-war political process in Syria. Brussels could also coordinate capacity-building efforts for Syrian officials in the wake of the conflict. From 2005 onwards, the EU trained thousands of Iraqi justice and police officials in European member-states, and while this effort has received very mixed reviews, similar schemes could be prepared to help Syria[38]"

The importance of such a civilian mission should not be underestimated. The security problems of Syria are essentially political in nature, involving the need to cooperate with the political and military wings of both Islamist and non-Islamist groups. It is not certain that European states would be the most suitable actors to take the lead in such an endeavour, though some have a good track record of encouraging an inclusive approach to such problems.

According to Gowan, "EU members must also not forget their role as guarantors of the regional framework for any peace deal in Syria." This would mean maintaining their engagement with UNIFIL and UNDOF, missions that play a part "in insulating Israel and Lebanon from the risks of a spill-over emerging of the Syrian conflict ".

Any peacekeeping force, even if it has a core of European states willing to participate in it, will need to integrate non-western countries as well. Indonesia has already made clear that it could be available for peacekeeping and the role of this Muslim country, with its successful experience of transition to democracy, would certainly be an important asset for such a force. Its role in Lebanon as the largest contributor to UNIFIL is testament to its experience in such a role and to its familiarity with conditions in the Middle East .

Gauging Willing Countries: the BRICS?

The difficulty of finding the forces necessary to achieve the stabilising tasks of a peace enforcement operation cannot be underestimated. This is especially so, as Radha Kumar, points out, since Iraq and Syria are "…interconnected now and any peace mission would imply a policy that would cover the two conflict zones, if in different ways. This would actually mean fighting ground wars where required"[39].

We have, therefore, considered those countries most likely to contribute to such a force, including Indonesia, India, Brazil and some Arab countries. We have also included South Africa to assess the possibility that a sub–Saharan or IBSA-BRICS contribution might occur[40]. We have tried to identify what tasks these non-western nations would eventually be willing to take on and in what circumstances. The BRICS countries under study would be reluctant to accept an agenda for any operation that could also appear to be part of the specific Russian or US agendas. There are also concerns that such a mission is likely to be, as indicated by Gavin Cawthra, "A long slog with not much chance of complete success… and where their strategic interests are not evident."[41] However, there is a real possibility that at

[38] Ibid.

[39] Radha Kumar, Director General of the Delhi Policy Group, background contribution to this report, July, 2014

[40] IBSA-BRICS: India, Brazil and South Africa – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

[41] Gavin Cawthra, Chair in Defence and Security Management at the Graduate School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, background contribution to this report, July, 2014

least India and Brazil could become involved in a peace mission, including with a stabilising force component.

India might be prepared to be involved in certain circumstances, given its long experience of peacekeeping. With a political system based on the principle of unity within diversity, India could play an important role in such a mission. It is the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations and the third largest contributor to UNIFIL after Indonesia and Italy. India has a presence in Syria, despite the difficulties created by the conflict, for it is responsible for logistics security for UNDOF and has provided the Force Commander since July 2012 .

According to Radha Kumar, "India could participate in a peacekeeping operation in Syria but only in the context of an UN mission and most likely only after a peace deal. The difficulty arises in relation to the peace enforcement component of such a peace mission."[42] India could, if more time were given to the negotiation process, be part "of a multinational force and assume hard power tasks if part of a peace enforcement mandate." This country could also be part of a robust humanitarian operation if such operations were developed to deal with the humanitarian crisis in both Syria and Iraq "if conceived for stranded communities" in these countries and organised under UN auspices. "However, Indian participation in operations where fighting a ground war was required would not be not in the tradition of the country's involvement in peacekeeping and would need a very large domestic consensus to become reality. The only case where India has done this previously was in Africa a decade ago"[43].

Brazil is moving in an assertive way to play a role in peacekeeping missions with a hard power component, as seen in Haiti.[44] Brazil has sent troops to half of the UN's peacekeeping operations but until taking charge of the peace operation in Haiti, had refused to participate in peace enforcement operations under chapter VII of the UN Charter. However, this may not prove to be a major obstacle, given the growing involvement of Brazil in peacekeeping operations, the success of the Haiti experience and Brazilian willingness to maintain a military presence in the region. Since 2011, for example, Brazil has commanded the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force off the coast of Lebanon. The mixed nature of any mission in Syria might facilitate Brazilian participation, particularly if it involved other BRICS countries such as India and possibly South Africa, with which Brazil formed IBSA and has tried without success to mediate in the Syrian conflict .

According to Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, "If a peace mission were to be put together in the Arab Republic of Syria, given the Brazilian experience in peace operations and the fact that is considered to be an "honest broker" in multilateral organisations, its presence would be welcomed and its contribution to the rule-of-law and its provision of medical support could be very relevant."[45] According to Feliciano Guimarães, "Brazil could deploy troops in a future UN Mission in Syria. However, it is unlikely that it will participate there whilst it continues to

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[42] Radha Kumar, background contribution to this report, July ,2014
[43] Ibid.
[44] Rita Santos and Teresa Almeida Cravo, "Brazil's rising profile in United Nations peacekeeping operations since the end of the cold war," NOREF Report, March 2014.
http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/47c24376b182eb29154461520d5ba7e9.pdf
[45] Interview with Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, July 2014.

play a leading role in Haiti."[46] Nonetheless, although Brazil's engagement in Haiti has some peace enforcement characteristics, especially after the 2010 earthquake, its lack of experience in guerrilla warfare might compromise its performance in wider peace enforcement initiatives. Brazil would therefore be more at ease over engagement if the Syrian mission were predominately a peacekeeping operation. In such circumstances, Brazil's experience with police enforcement in Haiti could be of great utility in Syria.

The third IBSA country, South Africa, is overstretched as far as peace operations are concerned, with more battalions deployed on African missions than its national defence force believes it can support. As a result, South Africa is likely to be extremely reluctant to get involved in Syria, providing at most a few observers and civilians in political roles, but probably acting 'below the radar'. It has been noted that South Africa is anxious to demonstrate its experience in negotiation and mediation, and as such it might be tempted to take on some political missions more publicly.[47] Yet, with South Africa and the African Union already overstretched in Africa, it is not likely that there will be any significant sub-Sahara Africa contribution to solving the conflict in Syria.

An important component of the Bosnia and Kosovo peace operations was the involvement of Russian peacekeepers, which were perceived as a guarantee for the protection of the rights of the Serbian minority. Cooperation between Russia and NATO in Kosovo was considered a success by both. The possible involvement of Russian peacekeepers in Syria could be perceived as a guarantee by Alawite supporters of the Assad regime .

Any UNSC resolution on Syria to allow for a peace enforcement operation under chapter VII of the UN Charter will face enormous opposition not only from Russia and China, but from all the BRICS countries, as they fear such a resolution could open the door for a military intervention to change the regime. According to Mariano Aguirre, "Russia, Brazil and South Africa consider they have been deceived by the United States, France and the UK on Libya"[48].

UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya was based on the principle of the 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P)' and was approved unanimously by the Security Council. The NATO intervention, legitimised by this resolution, was subsequently conducted without any participation from rising global powers. After the intervention, there was a backlash against the way that the intervention had been conducted and against the fact that after the war there had been no complementary stabilisation efforts, leaving the country in a state of disintegration and civil war. In reflecting on the crisis in Libya in his 2012 report on R2P, the Secretary-General recalled "that the use of force was authorized by the Security Council after most Member States agreed that the series of peaceful measures had proved inadequate. He also recognizes the concerns of some Member States that non-coercive measures were not given adequate time to take effect and that the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1973 went

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[46] Feliciano Guimarães, Professor with the Instituto de Relações Internacionais da Universidade de São Paulo, Interview for this report, August 2014.
[47] Gavin Cawthra, background contribution to this report, July 2014.
[48] Mariano Aguirre, contribution to this report.

beyond the given mandate."[49] Discussion of any involvement of the BRICS should take into consideration the lessons they took from the Libyan intervention.

Regional actors

The involvement of Syria's neighbours in a peacekeeping operation raises huge political and security difficulties. Given the instability that exists in Iraq and Lebanon, their contributions might be minimal or non-existent since, according to Saban Kardas, "In terms of the reorganization of the security sector, the involvement of the regional powers might be needed but it could also be a divisive issue."[50] There is also a sectarian dimension to their involvement, given the current crisis in Iraq's governance system and the role already played in Syria by Lebanon's Hezbollah, which is also dominant inside Lebanon's convoluted domestic politics.

Turkey's involvement could be quite substantial both in peace enforcement and peacekeeping but, as pointed out by Atila Eralp, "Turkey would want to be active in the peacekeeping but would also like to be one of the parties that will have a say in the future of Syria politically."[51] In addition, its past role in supporting Syrian opposition factions might run against its effectiveness in a peacekeeping or peace enforcement role there.

The involvement of the Arab League in all UN initiatives since the beginning of the crisis adds an important regional dimension to any UN-led peace process. In this regard, it would have been a natural contributor to a peacekeeping operation. However, its involvement in such operations is more difficult now than it would have been one year ago because of shifting positions among its members vis-à-vis Syria. Egypt under President Sisi has all but reversed its position toward the Syrian regime, while the rift between Qatar and the UAE/Saudi Arabia/Bahrain has split the GCC on the question of Syria. As a result, according to Nadim Shehadi, "the Arab League is now much more fragmented and less able to act on Syria"[52].

The involvement of other Arab countries with experience in peacekeeping operations should also be considered. The Maghreb countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria are potential contributors, and among the Gulf states, Oman is a potential contributor. Arab countries, with the backing of the Arab League could, according to Nadim Shehadi, contribute to "separate and facilitate transfer and movement between the rebel held areas and the regime held areas. They would participate in humanitarian relief, supervise disarmament and help local administrations."[53] "The Gulf States should be brought in to play a major role when it

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[49] International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, "Overview of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's report on The Responsibility to Protect: Timely and Decisive Response", August 2012. http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/Summary%20of%20the%20Report%20of%20the%20Secretary%20General%202012.pdf
[50] Saban Kardas, interview for this report, August, 2014
[51] Atila Eralp, Director of International Policy Research Institute (IPRI) at TEPAV, interview for this report, August 2014.
[52] Nadim Shehadi, Associate Fellow at Chatham House interview for this report, August 2014.
[53] Ibid.

comes to financing peacebuilding operations and reconstruction," according to Murhaf Jouejati[54].

Where do the Syrians come in?

Any peacekeeping operation will need the cooperation of the Syrian army as well as opposition armed forces who have signed the peace agreement.[55] In preparing for the creation of a peacekeeping force, the UN will need to engage, as soon as conditions allow, with different Syrian interlocutors to determine which Syrian forces would be willing and able to work with them. The range of different military forces on the ground will likely produce a complex picture. Yet those working on paving the road for a peaceful Syria should keep in mind that the success of the whole endeavour hinges on the involvement of Syrians with the right profile.

The FSA would likely welcome a well-designed international force and would cooperate with international peacekeeping efforts if the mandate of such a force is clearly defined and explained. Its non-sectarian perspective for the future of Syria will make the FSA an essential, though not exclusive, interlocutor for any international force. However, in addition to the FSA, any international force should connect with other interlocutors as well, including the Islamic Front. Kurdish militias would not fight an international force and would actively collaborate on condition that regions under their control would be essentially secured by their own forces.

According to Bassma Kodmani, "Cooperation between the armed forces of the regime and an international force would, no doubt, be a major challenge. It would primarily depend on three main factors:

a. The political terms of any arrangement under which the peacekeeping force would be deployed and the role that the agreement would provide for elements of the regime, particularly their role within a new military and security apparatus;

b. The attitude of the regime's allies who would need to exert pressure on it to accept such arrangements. The regime will simply not cooperate without significant and sustained pressure from its two main allies – Iran and Russia – as the two failed attempts in 2012 to create, first, an Arab and then a UN monitor force demonstrated;

c. The composition of the force itself, particularly whether it would include contingents from what the regime would consider friendly or neutral countries[56]"

As it develops its program to train and equip selected Syrian fighters from the Free Syrian Army to fight ISIS, the United States should integrate future needs, not only of peace enforcement but also for peacekeeping .

Cooperation between an international force and Syrian forces that are prepared to participate should be designed from the beginning with the objective of their future integration into a

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[54] Murhaf Jouejati, Syrian scholar and Chairman of "The Day After" Association, comment for this report, August 2014.
[55] Discussion at Oslo high-level workshop September 4-5, 2014.
[56] Bassma Kodmani, Executive Director of the Arab Reform Initiative, background paper for this report, August 2014

new Syrian Army. This was successfully achieved in Mozambique at the end of the civil war[57]. It would be a challenging issue because it would require welding together armed groups that are intrinsically hostile to each other. Yet it is the only way in which the international community would be working towards reconstructing a single, integrated Syrian state .

We can conclude that the formation of a peace mission with a strong peace enforcement component will face enormous difficulties in finding forces with sufficient hard power capacity. The most likely solution would be for countries that were not neutral in the conflict, such as France, Italy, Turkey and possibly Germany and the UK, to agree to participate. A substantive contribution may be made by some BRICS countries, notably India and Brazil, as well as some Arab states, particularly those who are not neighbours of Syria. There could also be a logistics and intelligence role for the US and an eventual peacekeeping role for Russia.

VIII.   Conclusions and Recommendations

The international community has a responsibility to deal with the Syrian tragedy as a matter of urgency. The war has caused a humanitarian crisis within the country, burdened neighbouring countries with millions of refugees, and led to war and instability in Iraq. There is, however, no consensus among the leading global or regional actors on how to respond.

Through our investigative endeavour, we have identified four preliminary conclusions about the Syrian situation today and the framing of any peace operation**:**

- First**,** short of a peace deal, the humanitarian crisis in Syria will not be addressed effectively without a large scale humanitarian intervention conducted under a clear mandate defined in a UNSC resolution.

- Second**,** any peace deal will not likely end all fighting between different armed groups. Even after a deal is agreed, Syria will still be an incredibly difficult environment for any peace operation. A robust peace enforcement intervention, authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter is likely to be required.

- Third, a peacekeeping operation will need to be built with a clear understanding that the Syrian conflict has already become a regional war that threatens international security; it should therefore receive the attention and means proportional with the danger it represents.

- Fourth, there is no solution to the ISIS challenge in isolation from the broader issues at the root of the conflict, i.e. the popular uprising against the dictatorship, the ensuing war and the humanitarian tragedy. A democratic political process, with elections and a new constitution must be the end game for any peace mission.

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[57] UN, Background information on United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onumozFT.htm

In exploring the political and diplomatic treatment of the crisis, our inquiry leads us to offer three preliminary recommendations:

- First, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should present to the EU Council of Ministers a report on a future EU contribution to peace-making in Syria, as was done for the EU mission in Kosovo, and start contingency planning for a peace enforcement mission. An initiative to build a coalition of the able and willing could be led by France, the United Kingdom and Italy, with support from Germany, other EU states, and non-EU NATO members like Turkey and Norway. Due to the hard power nature of such an operation, preparation for an intervention should be done using a 'Berlin plus' framework that allows for the use of NATO assets and capabilities.

- Second, the UN Secretary General should charge a high level personality to work in coordination with the UN special envoy for Syria and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in building support for a peacekeeping operation in Syria. This would involve work to sound out different countries (including those cited in this report) about their willingness to contribute to such a force after a peace deal is reached. Discussion with the Syrian government and opposition forces, as well as Syria's neighbours, should be a priority. A contributors' conference might be envisaged.

- Third, discussion over a potential peace mission should continue, with open participation from civil society and the community of experts on peacekeeping and Syria. A number of states have expressed openness to being potential contributors to a peace mission. The civil society in these countries, along with an international community of experts, should be involved in the discussion over the eventual nature of a peace mission through a series of debates in potential contributing countries, organised around the themes of this report. This would involve European states, Brazil, India, Indonesia and the Maghreb countries, together with the participation of experts from the UN DPKO.

The debate on a peace operation should have as its starting point not what seems feasible today, but what will actually be needed to deal with the humanitarian tragedy and the security challenges in Syria. At the end of the day, any solution to the Syrian war will have to be political in nature. This means returning to the original demands of Syrians for a more democratic and inclusive society, the main objective of those who went to the streets in 2011 to face the regime despite the threat of violent repression and death. Progress in moving from war towards a viable political process that culminates in elections and a new constitution will serve to isolate those who only know the rule of violence. In short, extremists from all sides in this tragic war will not survive in a political process, so facilitating such a process must be the ultimate objective of any peace mission.

About the author

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- We empower individuals and institutions to develop their own policy solutions.

- We mobilise stakeholders to build coalitions for change .

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