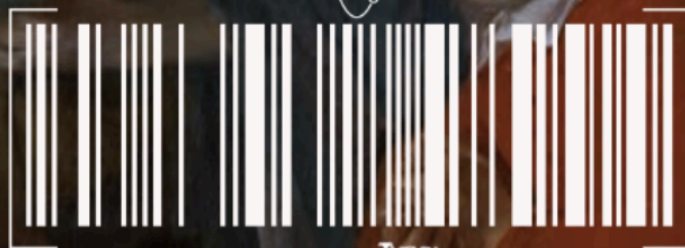


AFMUN

FALL OF THE ASSAD REGIME

UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL
Metehan Yıldırım

ACADEMIC ASSISTANT
Melikhan Demirkıran



Type:

ANGER

Anime Series

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1. Welcoming Letters

1.1. Letter from the Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to AFMUN'26. As the Secretaries-General, we are truly pleased to see this conference once again bring together so many bright and motivated young individuals who believe in dialogue, diplomacy, and cooperation.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our academic and organization teams. This conference would not have been possible without their dedication and commitment, and we are deeply grateful for the effort they have put in.

We are living in a time where it is almost impossible to ignore what is happening around the world. Many of us often find ourselves thinking that certain situations could have been handled differently, or questioning the decisions that were made. However, AFMUN is not only a place for reflection, but also a platform for initiative. Through our committees, you will have the opportunity to express your ideas, challenge perspectives, and engage in meaningful discussions. As young people in today's world, your voice is truly important.

We hope this conference will be both inspiring and memorable for all of you.

And as we say, a realm cannot endure without its sovereign.

Yours truly,

Kaan MUŞTU & Ömer Talha Demirel

kaansettar@gmail.com

demirelomer123456@gmail.com

1.2. Letter from the Under Secretary General

Dear Members of the Committee,

Welcome to AFMUN'26. As the Under Secretary-General of the H-JCC, it is a pleasure to have you with us, and I sincerely hope you will find the conference both intellectually demanding and genuinely enjoyable.

Before anything else, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the entire Secretariat and Organization Team for the dedication, professionalism, and countless unseen hours that made this conference possible. I am also grateful to AFMUN'26 for supporting committees that require a distinctive level of academic preparation.

It is my honour and absolute pleasure to welcome you to the Historical Joint Crisis Committee at the AFMUN'26 Conference. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to my Academic Assistant, Melikhan Demirkıran, whose support, particularly in the drafting and refinement of the study guide, has been invaluable.

Throughout this study guide, you will be learning lots of new things. You will notice that the Study Guide is intentionally comprehensive. Please do not let its length intimidate you. It is designed to function as a self-contained foundation so that you will not need to conduct extensive additional research in order to participate effectively. As the academy of this committee, we wished to design and make a committee that would never hinder the goals and ambitions of delegates by its structure; hence, before stepping into the committee, all we ask is that you read the study guides thoroughly and then bring your creative ideas, along with enthusiasm, to the committee.

Regardless of your previous MUN experiences, English level, or current procedural knowledge, you will be able to succeed, learn, and most importantly, have fun while doing so. Therefore, do not be afraid to try new things, to interact with others, or to contact us. If you have questions regarding the committee do not hesitate to reach out. I would much rather answer your questions early than see you struggle unnecessarily.

Contact: metehan.yildirim1@std.bogazici.edu.tr (Preferred), +90 533 055 33 66

I look forward to meeting you all and to witnessing a conference defined by competitive debate, respectful diplomacy, and memorable collaboration. We will try our best to make this committee a unique experience, so when it begins, feel at ease and have fun! I wish you the very best of luck, and an outstanding AFMUN'26 experience.

Sincerely,

Metehan Yıldırım

2. Rules of Procedure of Crisis Committees

2.1. What is a Joint Crisis Committee

Very briefly, a Joint Crisis Committee (JCC) is a type of committee in which two cabinets usually battle each other, and during these battles, updates or crises will arrive based on one's directives. Surely, depending on the conference, there can be more than 2 cabinets (like a WW2 committee with 6-7 cabinets), but in our case, it is the Allies Cabinet versus the German Cabinet, and only one side will come out victorious. The winning condition is usually defeating the opposing side; however, there may be exceptions, which will be addressed later. Furthermore, in a JCC, one will not represent a country, but a person from that era, a character, or a god. Here are the definitions of the terms mentioned above:

2.1.1. Directive

Directives are the main materials of Joint Crisis Committees; they are what distinguish a JCC from the General Assembly. As the name implies, the term "directive" refers to an order or instruction. On the committee, any realistic and feasible action can be taken by writing directives. Consequently, it is guaranteed that the majority of the time spent on the committee will be devoted to writing directives (Triumphs are attained through concrete actions, rather than mere speeches or campaigns.) Unlike the GA procedure, it is unnecessary to encourage, suggest, or demonstrate any ideas to make it happen; only a decent directive is required. There are several types of directives depending on what one wants to do, and they will be discussed in the latter section.

To summarize, directives are written when one wishes to accomplish or do something. Writing a directive allows one to take any realistic action, therefore instead of long discussions and talking sessions to execute your ideas and progress in the committee, directives will be written.

2.1.2. Updates

1- Updates are the outcomes of directives, which are either granted or rejected based on how precisely one wrote and phrased the directive. The Crisis Team evaluates whether they are

adequate or not; every conference with crisis committees includes a Crisis Team that reads and inspects directives.

2- Updates can also come as a result of a new occurrence in your cabinet. For example, if the other cabinet launches a successful attack on one of your cities and captures it, an update will come. If the directive only concerns your cabinet, such as building a new military base in your country, then the update will only come to your cabinet, but if it is a conflict that both sides participate in, then the update will come to both cabinets.

3- The update doesn't necessarily have to be the result of a directive; for instance, if you are in the Hundred Years' Wars committee during the 14th century, then the Crisis Team may bring a plague update that will infect the majority of soldiers. Hereupon, it can be understood that the update may also be a crisis.

2.1.3. Crisis

Crises emerge when one submits an insufficient directive, the other cabinet successfully affects you in a negative way, or temporal crises occur depending on the Crisis Teams' wishes. To clarify:

1- For a sufficient directive to be written, there are a few rules and necessities that must be followed; failing this, an inevitable crisis will occur based on what was wanted to be done in the directive.

2- If a cabinet were to create a virus and spread it to the other cabinet's people, the update would be a crisis that must be handled promptly. It doesn't necessarily have to be a virus or a plague; anything that affects one or one's cabinet negatively can be a crisis.

3- Finally, depending on how the committee's actions progress, a periodic crisis, like a plague or a political disagreement, may arise and adversely affect a cabinet.

2.2. Directive Types and How to Write Them

In a Joint Crisis Committee, there are six types of papers that can be submitted. Each type has its own purpose, advantages, and disadvantages. Unless it is a top-secret directive, directives should be given to the chair, who will then send them to the crisis team via admins.

2.2.1 Personal Directive (Action, Information, Press Release)

Personal directives are written when an action is within your character's authority or is possible due to their abilities. Now take a look at how to write a Personal Directive: Firstly, there is a format for writing directives; thus, one has to write who is sending the directive and to whom (from, to). After that, which cabinet is sending the directive, then the real-world time and the current date of the committee. Lastly, the type of your directive and the headline of it. And that's it; this is all the format one needs to know to write a directive. The only thing left is the content of the directive, and the method by which one writes it is fairly straightforward; it is written by addressing the WH questions, which are what, why, when, who, where, and, most importantly, how. Write down the action you want to take by answering the WH questions, then detailing and explaining it as much as possible to ensure that your plan is as comprehensive as possible. Also, the use of the future tense is critical; try to use it whenever possible. Here is how a directive looks on paper:

From: Menelaus

Action Directive

Date: 1192BC May 3

To: My Army & Officers
(Spartan Cabinet)

Capturing Tiryns

Time: 12.34

What: I will capture Tiryns with my 5,000 agoge men stationed on the Tiryns frontline. My soldiers will kill and destroy any enemy forces they come across, as well as any enemy military bases. Women and children in the city will not be murdered unless they attack the soldiers.

To reduce noise, the 5,000 agoge soldiers will be divided into 50 groups, with 200 soldiers per group. Each group will have a commander, and the commanders will be the best warriors among their groups. They will be well-armed with their hoplons, xiphos, and dorus (Spartan agoge soldiers' shields, spearheads, and small swords). Each group will apply the doctrine properly to face the fewest casualties. If needed, 3 soldiers from each group will bring supplies to their own group from the frontlines, and these 3 soldiers will be picked randomly from the commanders. They will take the safest route and avoid the enemy. Our men will take the safe paths suggested by our spies.

Why: Tiryns plays a crucial role in the war, and it must be captured in order to cut the enemy's supply lines.

When: Soldiers will charge at 02.00 a.m. to catch the enemy off guard.

Who: I will be operating this attack, and if I fall during the war, my right-hand man, Analus, will take over. 5,000 agoge soldiers will assault the enemy under his command.

Where: 2,500 of my soldiers will charge from the southeast frontline, and the other 2,500 will charge from the west to capture Tiryns.

How*: Soldiers will check and control their weapons before charging. They will pray, remember how brave they are, and then honour their nation and gods by demolishing the enemy. They will not disobey their commander's orders and apply the doctrine as they say. To avoid being affected by attrition, our soldiers will study their geographical situation as well as the enemy's to use it in their favour. Soldiers will use an offensive phalanx formation when I order them to charge, and they will slaughter each enemy troop they face. They will use the offensive formation until they face a larger enemy force to quickly capture as many critical areas as possible. If they face a larger enemy force, to be exact, 1.5 times larger than them, they will quickly change to a defensive phalanx formation and wait for recruitment while defending themselves. Their priority will be killing the enemy rather than cutting supply lines. In mountain areas, they will use the highlands in their favour and quickly oppress the enemy to finish them. Once they reach the city, their priority will be killing the cabinet members of Tiryns. If possible, they will defenestrate them to entertain themselves. After the military bases and the city are captured, soldiers will go to the possible conflict areas to recruit other soldiers. Even though we sent spies before, our soldiers will be vigilant for any kind of trap. Their main objective is to capture the city, and for that purpose, they will sacrifice themselves without hesitation.

Once one gets used to it, it is quite simple and straightforward to write. While it lacks details and additional information, the directive nicely illustrates its format. As one keeps writing and contributing to their cabinet's goals, in no time, one will witness that the directives one has written have already surpassed those of one's above. And to write such a directive, here are a few tips and tricks:

- For every action that's written in the directive, it has to answer all the WH questions.
- The longer and more detailed, the better.

- Drawing your war doctrine, charging plan, or strategy may significantly increase the directive's precision and effectiveness. The success rate of the directive will grow in proportion to how clear your action and directive are.
- Do not use abbreviations such as "etc."; instead, detail the directive explicitly.
- WH questions are not necessarily broken into paragraphs (one can write the directive like a book), but if you're a beginner, doing so will dramatically improve the quality of your directive; hence, I strongly recommend it.
- In JCCs, one should not try to impose their ideas or policies on others but rather to achieve a specific goal, such as destroying the other cabinet; therefore, do not be hesitant to ask for help from other cabinet members or your chair, you are all in this together.
- If you are positive that there is no impostor in the cabinet, directives should be written separately because it will be much faster. If you need the authority of another cabinet member, simply ask that person to add their name to the "from:" section. That way, eight people will be working on eight different tasks, and it will save quite a lot of time.
- Precise information, like troop counts, is critical; don't forget to write them down.
- If needed, fake names can be used for strategic persons in the directives, like Cokus, the Naval Commander.

2.2.2. Joint Directive (Action, Information, Press Release)

Directives written by more than one individual are considered joint directives. Joint directives are written when one can only achieve the purpose of the directive by utilising the authority of other cabinet members. Consider the scenario where one is a commander responsible for capturing Warsaw. Recognising the insurmountable challenge of achieving this objective without air superiority, a collaborative effort can be initiated by writing a joint directive with the Air Force general. In this case, the "from" field of the directive would include the commander's name alongside the name of the air force general, and instead of a personal directive, you would write Joint Directive at the top of the directive. Everything else is the same.

2.2.3. Committee Directive (Action, Information, Press Release)

A committee directive is written when one wishes to use everyone's authority or when one is about to deliver their final directive (in most cases). Delegates frequently ask, "How are we

meant to write a committee directive with the other cabinet?" However, this concern stems from a widespread misunderstanding. The committee directive is essentially formulated collaboratively within the confines of your cabinet, with the members of your cabinet. Although it is formally referred to as a "Committee Directive," its essence remains akin to that of a cabinet directive. So, simply writing Committee Directive in the "from:" part will do.

2.2.4. Intelligence (Information) Directive

Intelligence directives are written when one wants to acquire the necessary information about their country/cabinet/character. The format is exactly the same, except for the "WH Questions" part. For example:

From: Winston Churchill	Intelligence Directive	Date: 1942 May 3
To: Minister of War (The Great Britain Cabinet)	Our Troop Counts	Time: 16.21

How many troops does our country have? Do we possess any nuclear weapons? How many of our military factories are assigned to manufacture infantry weapons, and what kind of weapons are they producing?

When you want to acquire information about something, such as given above you need to write "To: ..." part a made-up name or just an authority name that can give you that information and if you are going to take an action, you need to write the one who will take the action. To sum up, imagine who would receive this order as the related authority and write those names. For example, if you would like to construct a building for your city, you should write "To: Architect of the city" or for the intelligence/information directive,s if you ask for your rifle amount,s you should write "To: Depot Quartermaster" or "To: Minister of War"

2.2.5. Top Secret

Top Secret directives are those that your chair is not allowed to read. Top secret directives are directly handed to the admin. They are written precisely the same, but one must fold the paper and write "TOP SECRET" on the back side of it. The major reason for writing a Top

Secret Directive is treason, a diabolical strategy to crash one's own cabinet or switch sides. For instance, if a person secretly kills his cabinet members and becomes dictator, the winning condition changes and only that person wins, whereas the cabinet loses. But I don't recommend writing Top Secret Directives unless you're planning on writing a brilliant 10-page directive, because failing to do so will backfire much worse. If one fails to accomplish their nefarious plan and gets busted, one will earn their cabinet's distrust and may die and be given an insignificant character. Additionally, updates to the Top Secret Directives are only sent to the person who sent them unless they directly affect other cabinet members.

2.2.6. Press Release (Declamation)

Press Releases are written when one wants to make a declaration, a speech, or a notice. When one writes a press release, depending on the era of the committee, the other cabinet members may hear it or not. In our case, there are no printers, social media, or newspapers, so it is very unlikely to hear other cabinets' press releases. The format is once again exactly the same, except for the "WH Questions" part. For example:

From: Erwin Smith	Press Release	Date: 845 July
23		
To: My Soldiers	Hyping Up the Soldiers	Time: 18.17
(Wall Maria Cabinet)		

Everything that you thought had meaning: every hope, dream, or moment of happiness. None of it matters as you lie bleeding out on the battlefield. None of it changes what a speeding rock does to a body, we all die. But does that mean our lives are meaningless? Does that mean that there was no point in our being born? Would you say that of our slain comrades? What about their lives? Were they meaningless?... They were not! Their memory serves as an example to us all! The courageous fallen! The anguished fallen! Their lives have meaning because we, the living, refuse to forget them! And as we ride to certain death, we trust our successors to do the same for us! Because my soldiers do not buckle or yield when faced with the cruelty of this world! My soldiers push forward! My soldiers scream out! My soldiers RAAAAAGE!

A Press Release like that might be written before a conflict to increase the motivation and morale of soldiers, or it could be written in any way one wishes, depending on their goal. Since one is addressing your people rather than the Crisis Team, the language can be informal. Plus, press releases can prevent crises, especially those related to the public; they can be used for propaganda, making promises, or spreading misinformation. This is a different form of press release that could be submitted:

From: Rollo	Declamation	Date: 802
August 28		
To: My Army	Standing our Ground	Time: 10.27
(Frankish Kingdom Cabinet)		

All of my life and all of your lives have come to this point. There is nowhere else to be but here. Nowhere else to live or die but here. To be here now is the **only** thing that matters. So, gather yourselves. Gather all of your strength, all of your sweetness into an iron ball. For we will attack again and again until we reach and overcome their king or die in the attempt! We will attack! Attack! Attack! Blow the horns! Beat the drums! And have courage! For there will be no turning back. Only victory! Or death!

Based on one's creativity, press releases may vary just like directives and can be used for almost any purpose. And for this committee, we will allow you to write a declamation instead of a press release because a declamation is a more accurate term for the ninth century.

2.3. Procedure of the Committee

2.3.1 Roll Call

When your character's name is called out during a roll call, you can respond with "I", "present", or simply by raising your placard.

2.3.2. Tour de Table

Tour de Table is an introduction, similar to the opening speech. Following the roll call, it can be done at the beginning or end of the sessions, depending on the chair's initiative. Delegates are expected to briefly introduce themselves and voice their goals or vision for their cabinet.

2.3.3. Semi-moderated Caucus

Unlike moderated caucuses, delegates in a semi-moderated caucus are allowed to speak without the chair's permission, as long as they do not interrupt other cabinet members and treat each other with respect.

2.3.4. Unmoderated Caucus

In an unmoderated caucus, delegates are free to draft any kind of paper they want to achieve their goals and support others. The majority of the cabinet's time should be spent on unmoderated caucuses rather than semi-moderated.

Unlike the General Assembly Committees, at a Joint Crisis Committee, the sessions proceed with Semi-Moderated caucuses and Unmoderated caucuses. The reason for that is to have a smoother experience. Since the participants of a Joint Crisis Committee have already had a few experiences with how committees and MUN conferences proceed, semi and unmoderated caucuses are to advance the efficiency of debates, thus making crucial and quick decisions. It was mentioned earlier, but directives are the primary reason that a JCC's procedure is so unique. So later on, with the sessions based on your chair's initiative, you needn't take one or two semi-moderated caucuses before an unmoderated caucus to write directives. Directly voting for an unmoderated caucus before being moderated will be allowed to continue writing directives.

On a Joint Crisis Committee, after the roll call and Tour de Table, delegates take semi-moderated caucuses to discuss future actions, strategies and plans. After determining their move, delegates write down the designated act to put into practice. There isn't a General Speakers' List, resolution paper, or opening speech.

3. Historical Background

The uprising did not emerge from nowhere. The Assad regime presided over a system that was not just autocratic but kleptocratic, distributing patronage to bind Syrians to the state. When Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father, he promised that he would change Arab

socialism. However, the benefits of that change only affected the regime insiders, while the removal of subsidies and price controls harmed rural peasants and urban laborers.

3.1. The Arab Spring and the Outbreak of War (2011)

The Arab Spring usually dates back to December of 2011 but its roots go deeper, of course. The main reasons for the event are widespread discontent with authoritarian regimes, economic hardship, and social injustice across the Arab world, beginning in Tunisia after street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation, which symbolized broader grievances about government corruption and repression. Bouazizi's act went beyond its purpose. When he immolated himself outside of a government office, a movement of revolution spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, toppling several long-standing authoritarian regimes. The protests grew so large that the president of Tunisia resigned after 23 years of duty. Just a month after that, the president of Egypt also resigned after three decades of duty. After the success, it was thought that people had enough power to force governments to things. Especially because of social media, slogans, protests, actions, and results were instantly spread. Even though the main slogans remained the same, each country faced a different outcome.

Syria followed yet another trajectory, one defined by internationalization rather than either quick suppression or quick regime change. The chain of events started in March of 2011 in the southern city of Daraa. On March 6, a group of teenagers spray-painted on the walls of their school. The paint said, "Your turn, doctor." (It is a reference to President Bashar al-Assad since he was an ophthalmologist.) After the paint was noticed by related departments, the teenage boys who were responsible for that were captured. The young boys were heavily tortured for days. The people who wanted to defend the boys clashed with the police officers. After the clash, the protests grew day by day. However, the main reason that turned those protests into a war was not the arresting of teenagers. It was the harsh interventions by the government. As soon as people gathered to start the protests, police officers arrived there immediately. During the interventions, people started to be killed by government officers. The death of people spread the protests even more. The more force police put into interventions, the harsher the protests became.

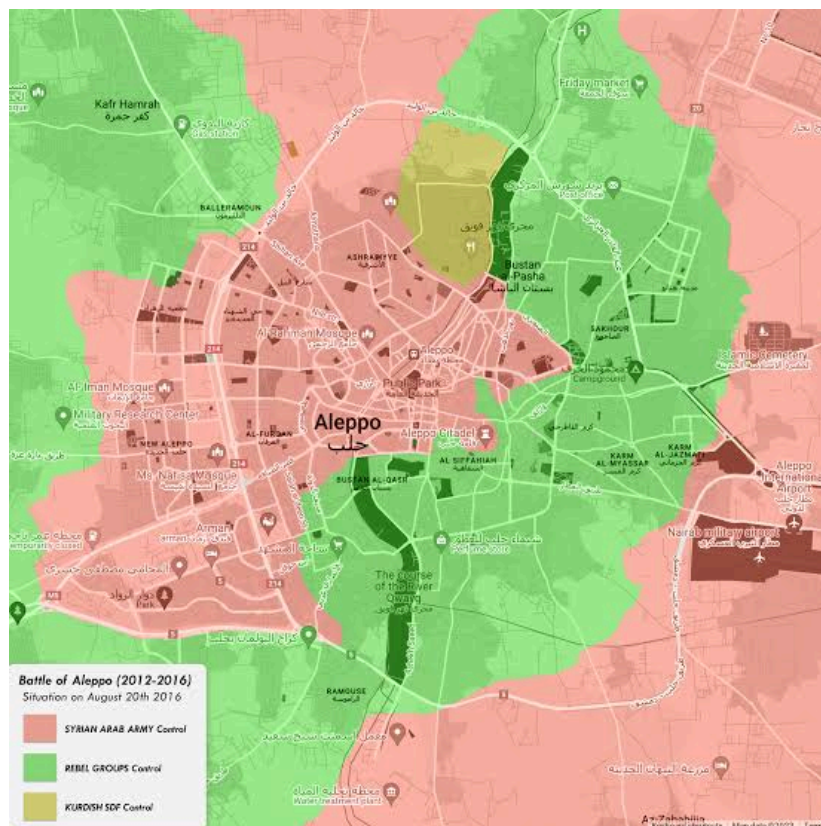
When a video of a boy's tortured corpse was seen, it reignited the conflicts nationwide. But this time the government's response wasn't expected. Heavy firearms such as tanks were

assigned to suppress the protests, inflicting heavy civil casualties. The one-sided suppression continued until some of the soldiers deserted. The men who gave up on killing civilians left the army. As soon as the deserters formed another military organisation, the act became more than just a protest: a civil war...

3.2. Major Battles and the Fight Against ISIS

3.2.1. The Battle of Aleppo

Aleppo is the largest city in Syria, and it was the industrial center before the war. Being the important city that it is, it hosted one of the most prolonged battles of civil war. In 2013 rebel forces had nearly encircled the regime-controlled western half. However, for about 3 years, the rebels were constantly bombed and sieged. In 2016 rebel forces attacked from inside and outside the city at the same time. The rebels successfully captured the Ramouseh Roundabout and the Air Force Technical College, opening the road and breaking the siege on eastern Aleppo's districts, though this breakthrough was short-lived, reversed by a government counter-offensive weeks later.



The worst part about this war is that the bomber units of the government did not take any precautions to protect the civilians, causing civilian casualties. The battle's human and legal

dimensions were investigated in depth by the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, a body mandated by the UN Human Rights Council.

After the countless bombing missions, the rebels were besieged, finally forcing the rebels to retreat. The prolonged war caused about 20.000 civilians to die.

3.2.2 The Siege of Homs

Homs, known as the "Capital of the Revolution," was the site of one of the war's bloodiest sieges. When the Syrian military began its assault on February 3, 2012, snipers and bomber units inflicted heavy damage on the city and civilians since they did not take special precautions. The neighborhood was bombed from different headquarters, increasing the destruction even more. To prevent further casualties, the Free Syrian Army made a tactical retreat. After the rebel army retreated the government entered the city.

3.2.3. Fight Against ISIS

The campaign against ISIS unfolded largely as a separate conflict from the regime-opposition war, concentrated in northern and eastern Syria. When ISIS's advance across northern Syria stalled outside this Kurdish border town in the fall of 2014, the US-led coalition began pouring air support into its defense. by October 9, a total of 135 air strikes had already been carried out on Kobani targets, making it the coalition's second most heavily struck target after the Mosul dam. Rather than forcing a retreat, this bombardment provoked the opposite response: ISIS doubled down on capturing the town, funneling in reinforcements from its manpower reserves in Raqqa and Aleppo and sharply increasing its use of vehicle-borne suicide bombers. The resulting 112 day siege became a turning point in America's commitment to the Syrian theater and served as a testing ground for coordinated air-ground tactics that would define the rest of the campaign.

Kobani's most consequential legacy, however, was political rather than purely tactical: it produced the US-Kurdish military partnership that shaped everything that followed. This alliance was not a planned outcome but an ad hoc one the sheer persistence of Kurdish YPG fighters, joined by some Arab rebel factions, in holding the line against ISIS at the height of the group's power impressed American policymakers enough that Washington moved to establish a formal working relationship with the YPG. That early coalition had deeper local roots than is often appreciated: factions like Jabhat Thuwwar al-Raqqa fought alongside the YPG and Kurdish volunteers from Iran, Iraq, and Turkey at Kobani in 2014, despite having clashed with the YPG elsewhere before the battle a sign of how the shared urgency of

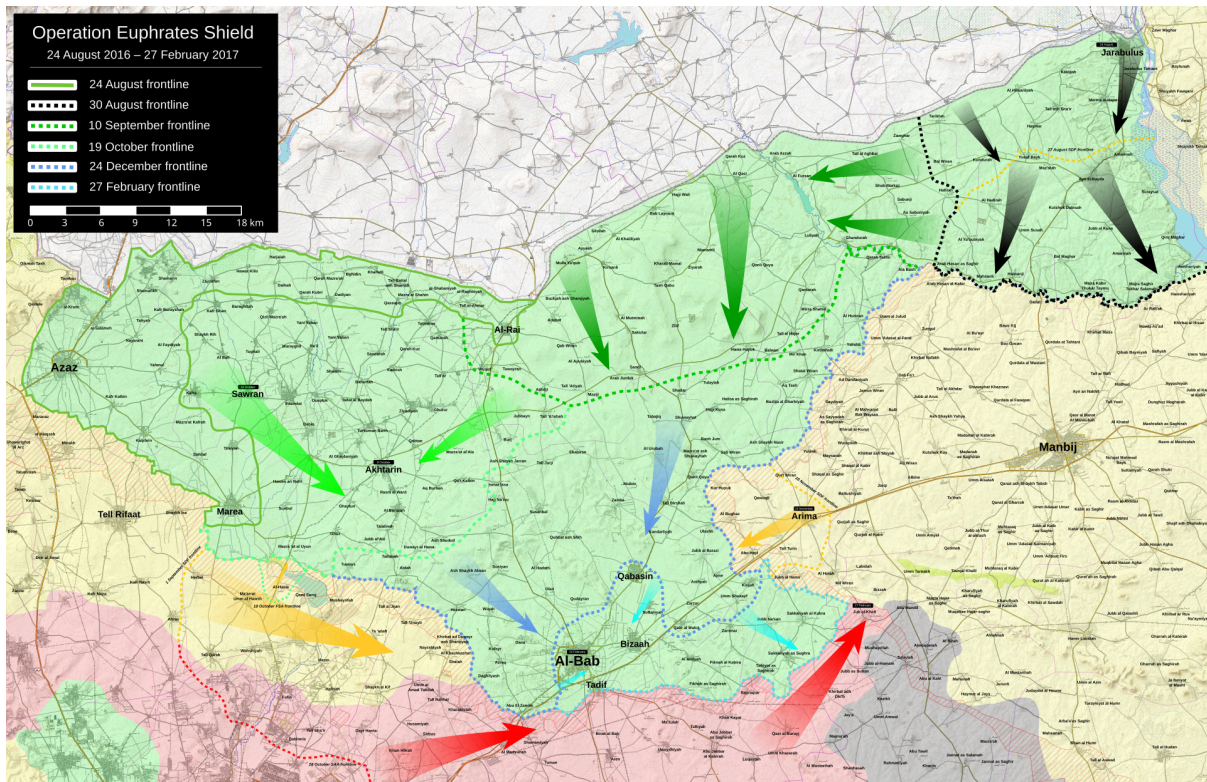
fighting ISIS could temporarily override pre-existing rivalries between Kurdish and Arab opposition forces.

The campaign to retake Raqqa, ISIS's self-declared capital, in 2016–2017 represented the culmination of this Kobani-born partnership. Unlike the parallel campaign against Mosul in Iraq, where the coalition could work with a functioning central government, the Raqqa operation lacked any such partner and had to contend with rival Russian, Syrian regime, and Turkish forces operating on its periphery. By the time operations against Raqqa and Mosul converged in 2016, the coalition had already conducted more than 11,000 airstrikes since the campaign began, pushing ISIS out of roughly 40 percent of its Iraqi territory and 10 percent of its Syrian territory.

3.3. Cross-Border Military Operations

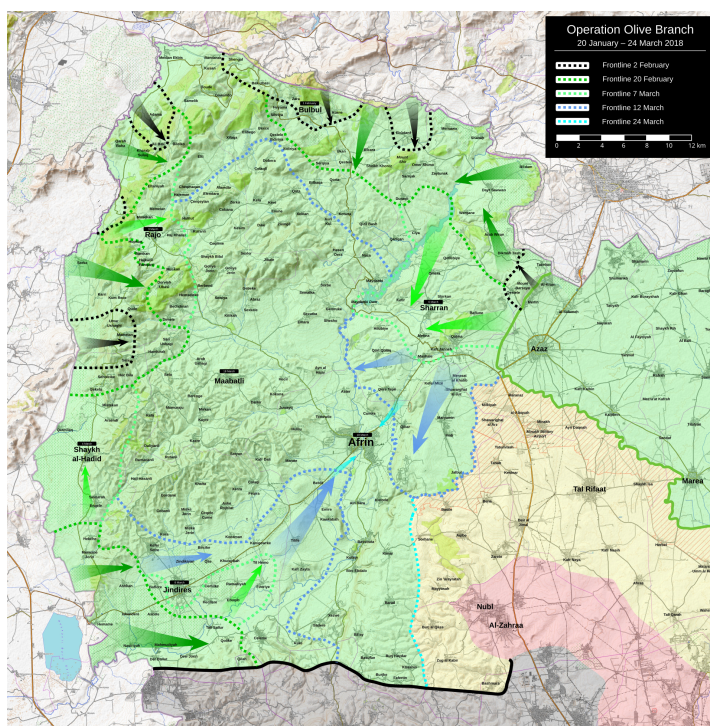
3.3.1. Operation Euphrates Shield (2016)

On 24 August 2016 Turkish government launched an offensive operation to the Northern Syria. According to claims of president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the operation was conducted against ISIS, SDF and YPG to guarantee its border safety. However for many views, the mission of this operation was prevent SDF to expand through ISIS territory and Türkiye's intervention assisted ISIS and stopped the invasion of SDF. The operation started on 24 August and the first initial attack happened at Jarbulus, a city where SDF forces were sieging ISIS forces. ISIS troops did not resist much to Turkish forces, in fact an ISIS fighter later reported that “when the Turkish army entered Jarabulus, I talked to my friends who were there. Actually, Isis didn't leave Jarabulus; they just shaved off their beards.” and with the capture of Jarbulus, Turkish forces continued their advance and until 27 February, Turkish forces advanced rapidly and continuously. By the end Turkish army suffered 71 casualties.



3.3.2. Operation Olive Branch (2018)

Operation Olive Branch was an offensive invasion operation led by Turkish forces and Turkish-backed Syrian forces to Afrin region where Kurds are majority. The place was controlled by SDF and YPG before the operation. The air war and use of major artillery

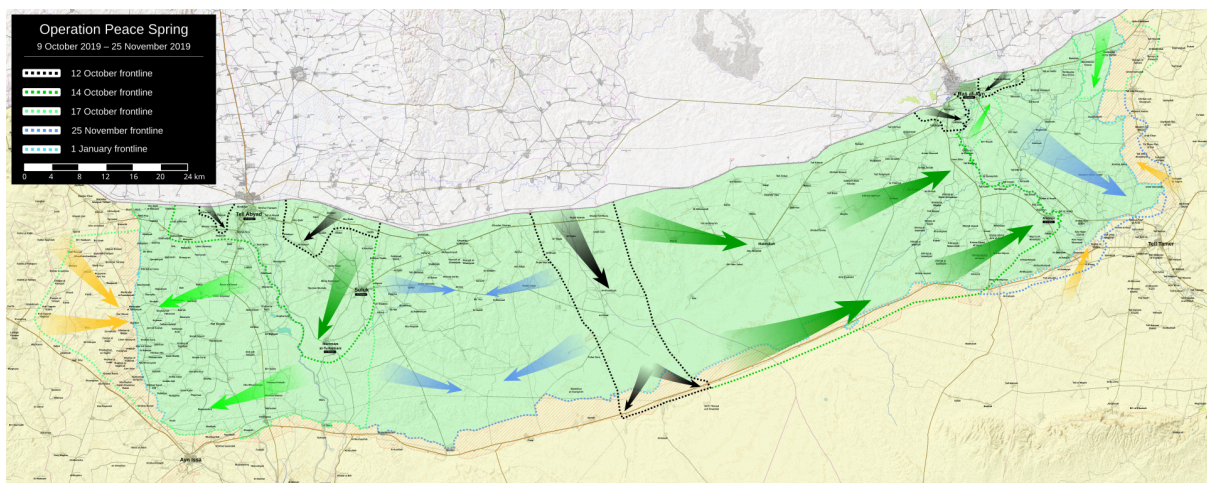


ended as the Arab and Turkmen militias of the SNA entered the city of Afrin on 18 March 2018. Between 395 and 510 civilians were reported killed in the invasion. Other reported war crimes include the mutilation of a female corpse by SNA fighters, the killing of civilians due to indiscriminate shelling by Turkish forces, the alleged use of chemical gas by the Turkish Army, and the indiscriminate shooting of refugees fleeing from the conflict area into

Turkey by the Gendarmerie General Command. The Turkish government issued restrictions on press. Hundreds of people were arrested for being against the invasion. The opposing view of invasion referred the use of the term “olive branch” (a traditional symbol of peace) in the operation’s name and has been criticised as Orwellian and a “mockery”.

3.3.3. Operation Peace Spring (2019)

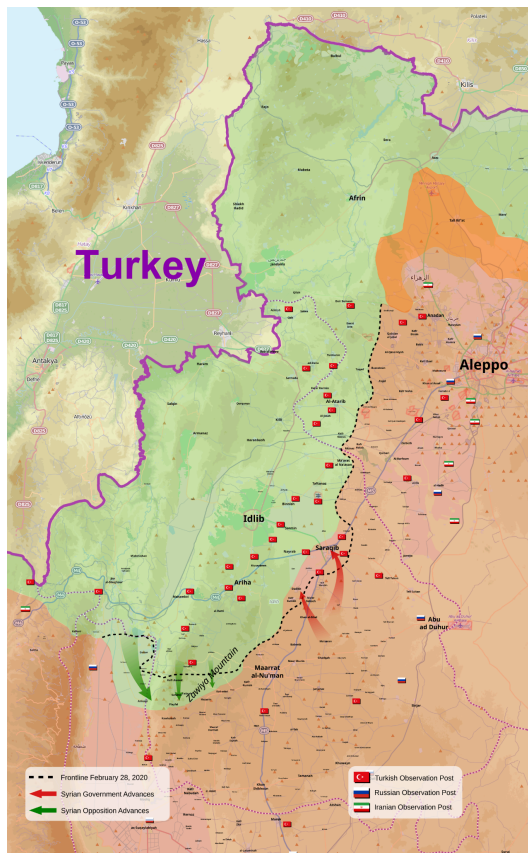
On 6 October 2019, the Trump administration ordered American troops to withdraw from northeastern Syria, where the United States had been supporting its Kurdish allies. Following this event Turkish government launched a third offensive operation to Kurdish controlled Northern Syria on 9 October 2019 with the Turkish Air Force’s airstrikes on border towns. The conflict resulted in the displacement of over 300,000 people and caused the death of more than 70 civilians in Syria and 20 civilians in Türkiye. According to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the operation was intended to expel the SDF from the border region as well as to create a 30km “safe zone” in Northern Syria where some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Türkiye would resettle. As the proposed settlement zone was heavily Kurdish demographically, this intention was criticized as an attempt at ethnic cleansing, a criticism rejected by the Turkish government who claimed they intended to “correct” the demographics that it alleged had been changed by the SDF.



3.3.4. Operation Spring Shield (2020)

In 2020, Türkiye faced the Balyun airstrikes conducted by Russian air force and Assad’s government to Turkish territory. In response to that Turkish Armed Forces in Idlib launched

an offensive operation against the Syrian Government Forces on 27 February 2020 aiming to



address the escalating situation in the region.

According to Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, the primary objective of Operation Spring Shield was to achieve a ceasefire agreement. The operation continued until 5th of March 2020. On that day, the presidents of Turkey and Russia, Erdoğan and Putin, met in Moscow for high-level talks. According to the statements made by the Turkish and Russian leaders following their one-on-one meeting, a ceasefire in the area of Idlib was to come into force. The terms of the ceasefire included a secure corridor of 12km patrolled by both Russian and Turkish forces. After four operations conducted by Turkish Armed Forces, Fukuyama an important American military strategist stated that Turkey has made a revolution in the military use of drones and caused a change

in modern military tactics and continues to change modern war strategies.

3.5. The Stagnation Period (2020-2024)

In the early 2020's the battle started to become pointless since it was not able to change territories on the main front. Türkiye and Russia brokered a ceasefire between Syrian government and the Rebels. The ceasefire froze the last active frontline in the northwest, halting a Syrian government offensive that had been pushing into Idlib province and displacing roughly a million people in the process. It caused conflict to enter a stalemated phase, characterized less by decisive battles than by territorial fragmentation among competing zones of control backed by outside powers.

The map of the era remained the same for too long due to the frozen phase. The large-scale war turned into local clashes between sides. But it was not the end yet... The five outer countries (Russian, Turkish, Iranian, American, and Israeli) continued their operations in different regions. All while attempts for a political consensus carried on unsuccessfully.

The primary diplomatic vehicle during the conflict was the Astana framework. But the framework also lost its momentum at the same time. After facilitating a series of ceasefires, land swaps, and prisoner exchanges, the Astana process ran out of steam by early 2021, largely because Russia and Turkey had reached the practical limits of what they could agree on regarding Idlib's status.

Even during this relatively quiet period, violence never fully disappeared. Fighting along the Idlib line resumed intermittently well before the war's final collapse, including a sustained wave of clashes beginning in December 2022 that saw Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and allied factions carry out infiltration and sniper operations against government positions across Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates a reminder that the ceasefire functioned more as a suppressed conflict than a genuinely resolved one.

Assad used this window of relative military quiet to pursue a parallel diplomatic strategy: regional re-legitimization. This diplomatic rehabilitation proceeded even though the humanitarian and economic underpinnings of the conflict remained essentially unresolved: displacement figures barely moved during these years, with roughly half of Syria's pre-war population still living as refugees or internally displaced persons, and the rate of returns continuing to decline rather than improve despite the reduction in active combat. the eventual collapse of the frozen conflict was a predictable outcome rather than a surprising rupture: years of diplomatic failure to deliver either security in the northwest or accountability for regime violations had left opposition forces with no viable political channel for addressing their grievances, so when the moment came, they turned to military means instead. In other words, the 2020–2024 period is best understood in this literature not as genuine peace or even durable ceasefire, but as a temporary equilibrium sustained by external military balancing — one that persisted only as long as none of the outside powers underwriting it chose to test its limits, and that gave way abruptly once Hayat Tahrir al-Sham judged conditions favorable for renewed offensive action in November 2024.

4. Major Factions

4.1. The Ba'athist Syria (The Government)

Ba'athist Syria or also known as Syrian Arab Republic was the government ruled Syria from 1963 until it's collapse in 2024. The state was under one-party rule led by Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. The regime emerged in 1963 following a coup d'état led by Alawite Ba'athist

military officers. Another coup in 1966 led to Salah Jadid becoming the country's de facto leader while Nureddin al-Atassi assumed the presidency. In 1970, Jadid and al-Atassi were overthrown by Hafez al-Assad in the Corrective Revolution. The next year, Assad became president after winning sham elections.

Hafez al-Assad reorganized the state and assigned Shias to the government roles, whereas the majority of Syria was Sunni. He allocated his family members leading to an increase in corruption and instability among the state. Furthermore in Hafez al-Assad's regime Syria became very unstable and with the Islamist uprising's result in government to commit 1981-1982 massacres in Hama causing the regime to be considered as one of the most repressive in modern times, arguably reaching totalitarian levels.

In 2000 Hafez al-Assad died and was succeeded by his son Bashar al-Assad who maintained a similar policy. During the Arab Spring in 2011, number of protests against the Ba'athist Assad regime increased which eventually led to the Syrian Civil War with the Syrian Opposition Forces. The civil war ended with the fall of Assad Regime in 2024 caused by the offensive led by the opposition forces.

4.2. The Syrian Opposition

The Syrian Opposition was rather than being a one faction under one leader, it was an umbrella term used for all revolutionary Syrian groups that opposed the Assad regime. Free Syrian Army (FSA) was the most prominent group of the opposition and they were highly active until 2015 when they declined and decentralized. In 2021, FSA was followed by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and they became the strongest armed group of the Syrian Opposition.

In July 2011, as the civil war started, defectors from the Syrian Arab Armed Forces formed the Free Syriaa Army. In August this was followed by the foundation of Syrian National Council formed by groups operation from abroad by the following months it became the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) which was a broader organization. Although the aim for these coalitions was to create connection with opposition forces fighting inside the country, the opposing forces suffered heavily against the government due to lack of leadership as well as lack of foreign aid.

The opposition continued by forming several exile governments. One of these governments was the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) formed by SNC in 2013. The SIG and SNC operated from Istanbul Türkiye and were present in the Turkish occupied zones of Syria. This was followed by HTS to form another government unaffiliated with Türkiye, SNC and SIG. They formed the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) in the areas they control. Both opposition governments operated as quasi-states.

Rebel armed forces during the civil war have included the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, affiliated to the SIG, the Syrian Liberation Front, the National Front for Liberation, the Southern Front, the Southern Operations Room, and the American-backed Syrian Free Army.

On 2024 the HTS launched an attack also known as the 2024 Syrian Offensives led to Fall of the Assad Regime and SSG became the foundation of Syrian transitional government and in Syrian Revolutionary Victory Conference held in Damascus on 29 January 2025, newly formed government decided the dissolution of Opposing Forces and to merge as the revolutionary groups into Syrian Armed Forces.

4.3. The Kurdish Forces

The Kurdish Forces during the Syrian Civil War were under a coalition called The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF are left-wing ethnic militias and rebel groups serving as the official military force of Rojava, officially called as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), since 2015. The Rojava's mission is to create a secular, democratic and federalized Syria. The SDF was opposed by the Turkish government who viewed the SDF as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which is internationally considered as a terrorist group.

The SDF formed in the Syrian Civil War as a rebel group with American support. The coalition is militarily led by People's Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia group designated as a terrorist group by both Türkiye and Qatar. The opponents of SDF and YPG are Turkish forces involved in the civil war, Turkish backed Syrian National Army, Islamists and nationalists.

From the beginning of the war, until 2019 SDF and YPG had major battles with ISIS in the eastern zones of Syria. The conflicts concluded in 2019 when SDF announced the total

territorial defeat of ISIS in Syria, with the SDF taking control of the last region ISIS owns. The defeat of ISIS in Syria resulted in border conflicts and battles with Turkish government and Syrian National Army.

After the end of the civil war between opposition forces and Ba'athist Syria. The Syrian transitional government launched an offensive to SDF region in 2026. In the following days, SDF signed a ceasefire with new government, negotiated through the US envoy Tom Barrack. The ceasefire included the integration into the Syrian government. The SDF handed over the regions they control and from the remaining troops of YPG, three brigades will be integrated into the Syrian Armed Forces according to the agreement.

4.4. Involved Foreign Powers

Most of the groups involved in the civil war received support from foreign powers. These interventions led to a massive Proxy War in Syria. Many countries brought their rivalries into the civil war such as USA v. Russia, USA v. Iran and Türkiye v. Israel. All of these rivalries and interventions shaped the outcome of the civil war.

4.4.1. Support for the Ba'athist Syria

Main support to the Ba'athist Syria was from Russia. The Russia was a military ally to Syria from 1956 until 2024. Russia was already supporting Syria with arms, investments and military advisors before the war and when the civil war started it was reported that there were Russian troops deployed in Syria constructing anti-air zones to prevent US intervention. Later on Russia was reported to have supplied armored vehicles, surveillance equipment, radars, electronic warfare systems, spare parts, and weapons such as guided bombs. In 2015 Russian Air Forces conducted air strikes into ISIS and Turkish-backed forces in Syria causing an international crisis between Türkiye and Russia which was hardly resolved. These events were followed by military cooperation signed between US and Russia to avoid air incidents. By 2023, Russia had 20 military bases and 85 other military outposts in Syria and all of these military outposts and bases were emptied when the Syrian caretaker government ended the alliance with Russia which allowed Russian troops to be in Syria.

Similar to Russia, Iran was also a military and strategic ally of Syria. Both governments being Shia and having similar policies, Iran supported Syria with technical aid and \$9bn. These aids continued during the civil war and Iran had a crucial role in the Assad regime's

appearance in global media. Iran was moving coordinated with Russia during the civil war in favor of Assad's government. By 2024, Iran had 55 military bases in Syria and 515 other military points becoming the %70 of foreign military regions in Syria.

Another major ally of Syria was Hezbollah. In 2012 the US criticized Hezbollah for their involvement in the Syrian Civil War. Hezbollah denied these claims and stated in a 12 October 2012 speech that "right from the start the Syrian opposition has been telling the media that Hezbollah sent 3,000 fighters to Syria, which we have denied". However, he said that Hezbollah fighters had gone to Syria independently and died there doing their "jihadist duties". However in following months Hezbollah fighters were reported in the Battle of Zabadani. Later in that year, Hezbollah forces took over eight villages. The Hezbollah militias were actively involved in conflicts from 2012 to 2018 playing a crucial role in major battles. It was stated by a Hezbollah leader that there were more than 10.000 active troops fighting in Syria ready to face Israel forces.

Other than major supports, Iraq sent financial aid to Syria. They opened their airspace to the Assad regime, granted land passage and supplied gasoline. Another country declared their support was Egypt. They publicly expressed their support and sent 300 troops to the war in 2020.

4.4.2. Support for the Opposition Forces

Most important foreign involvement of Syrian Civil War was from United States. From the initial months of the war, US government was against the Assad regime and publicly targeted Assad regime. For instance in 2011 Hillary Clinton stated that Bashar al-Assad had "lost legitimacy" and Barrack Obama released a written statement saying "The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way. His calls for dialogue and reform have rung hollow while he is imprisoning, torturing, and slaughtering his own people....the time has come for President Assad to step aside."

In 2012, it was reported that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was conducting operations in Syrian-Turkish border. These operations included organizing separate groups into opposing forces against Assad and moreover CIA operatives distributed assault rifles, anti-tank rocket launchers and other ammunition to the opposition forces they organized. The State Department had reportedly allocated \$15 million for civilian opposition groups. These aids

continued more and more and numbers became billions of dollars. It was also reported that US, France and Britain were training non-Islamist rebel troops in order to fight against Islamic extremism. US later on blamed Syrian government for using chemical weapons and threatened to launch air strikes but they did not. By early 2015, US armed over 30.000 SDF forces to fight with ISIS and they continued their support to SDF and YPG. On April 7 2017 US launched 59 Tomahawk missiles making it a direct intervention to the civil war. Later that year the Donald Trump administration had decided to stop the CIA program to support anti-government rebels resulting in complete withdrawal of USA from Syria. By the end of USA's support, it is estimated that more than 100.000 militias were killed or wounded by CIA-backed operations and combats.

Another main support to the opposition forces were from Turkiye. The government of Turkiye, a NATO member with the alliance's second largest army, had a friendly relationship with Syria prior to the civil war. After the beginning of civil war Turkiye trained defectors from Syrian Arab Armed Forces in its own territory. The trained defectors later on used to create the Free Syrian Army and Turkiye sheltered FSA including a safe zone and a base of operations. Together with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Turkiye provided arms and other military equipment. Turkiye provided refuge for Syrian dissidents from the onset of the conflict. Tensions between Syria and Turkiye significantly worsened after Syrian forces shot down a Turkish fighter jet in June 2012 and border clashes in October

In late 2015, PKK which is designated as a terrorist organization by UN and EU conducted incidents in Syrian border of Turkiye. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claimed these incidents are conducted by YPG which is an extension of PKK and responded by operations in Syrian territory and demanding a safe zone in Syrian-Turkish border with no-fly-zone. Prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that claimed that Turkey had struck Kurdish YPG militia fighters twice for breaching the "red line".

On the other hand, Turkiye faced allegations about supporting ISIS. Turkish authorities have openly supported al-Qaeda and other extremist Islamist groups including Ahrar al-Sham, and al-Nusra Front, which is marked as a terror organization by much of the US and Europe. Turkey was further criticized for allowing individuals to enter the country and join ISIS and training ISIS members. In 2016 a leaked confidential report from Germany's Interior Ministry stating that Turkiye supports terrorist groups especially Islamist groups

across the Middle East. Another document revealed in 2019 revealed that the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) was secretly transporting ammunition and fighters into Syria. Video footage appeared to show security forces discovering weapons parts en route to Syria in MIT-owned trucks. The Turkish government ordered the officers to let the trucks pass into Syria. In June 2019, a Turkish court convicted the officers and prosecutors, who stopped the MIT trucks, to over 20 years in prison for obtaining and disclosing confidential state documents. They were said to be FETÖ members. In December 2020, the Turkish court sentenced 27 people to prison for stopping the MIT trucks in 2014.

After the 2024 Syrian Opposition Offensives and fall of the Assad regime it was revealed that a major group of HTS troops active in the offensive was supported and armed by Türkiye. Turkish officials reportedly having knowledge of the offensive 6 months beforehand. In 2019 HTS adopted a doctrine aimed at transforming loosely organized opposition into a military force. The doctrine relies on heavy usage of drones and it is claimed that Turkish government supported HTS by sending advisers that developed the doctrine from the beginning. After the fall of Assad regime, Türkiye and allied fighters in northern Syria continued to attack SDF, launching Operation Dawn of Freedom. Following these events, during a meeting in Doha between Lavrov, Abbas Araghchi and Hakan Fidan, the Russian and Iranian foreign ministers both tacitly blamed Turkey for Assad's downfall.

5. Fall of the Assad Regime

The Assad regime did not collapse because of a single military operation. Its fall is because of the shift of power over the region. Also the main thing that kept the government strong was outer support. In late 2024 that support was gone exposing the weaknesses of the regime to its enemies. Iran had been the most consistent guarantor of Assad's survival since 2011, building an extensive military infrastructure inside Syria over more than a decade; bases, weapons depots, arms factories supplying Hezbollah, and a network of allied local and foreign militias. Yet by the time the 2024 offensive began, Tehran was in no position to intervene. Iran had already been gradually reducing its military footprint in the preceding years, partly to accommodate Assad's own push to normalize relations with Arab states demanding reduced Iranian influence, and partly because intensifying Israeli airstrikes on Iranian facilities and allied militias forced Tehran to withdraw key personnel. By late 2024, Iran maintained only a contingency force in Syria dedicated to protecting its own remaining assets, leaving it unprepared for the speed of the rebel advance. Facing the risk of direct

escalation with Israel after an unprecedented Israeli operation against its air defenses in October 2024, Iran ultimately prioritized its own national security over rescuing its Syrian client, leaving Assad to face the rebel offensive alone.

Russia's intervention was a breaking point for the war. As soon as Russia came, the regimes' territories were instantly saved. Even though it had a massive effect, Russia's numbers of personnel over the region were too limited.

When a war between Ukraine and Russia started, Russia decided to concentrate more on that new battle rather than Syria. When the 2024 rebel offensive began, Assad's own forces—including the Fifth Corps, a unit that had received substantial Russian financial and military backing—offered minimal resistance and rapidly collapsed. This exposed the underlying fragility of Russia's intervention model, which had never been designed to substitute for a functioning Syrian army but rather to reinforce one. There was also a more human dimension to Russia's disengagement: Russian officials had grown quietly frustrated with Assad's unwillingness to make political concessions that might have shored up the gains Moscow and Tehran had helped him win militarily. When Aleppo fell to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in the campaign's opening days, Moscow, already stretched thin by Ukraine and exasperated with its client, made the consequential choice not to bomb HTS back into Idlib as it had done in previous years.

But Turkey's role was one of active enablement, even if Ankara officially denied direct involvement and depicted the offensive as purely a Syrian operation. The 2024 rebel offensive was made possible by the green light from Turkey. Ankara had forged close ties with both HTS and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army since 2015-16. By 2024, Ankara's primary goal in Syria had shifted from removing Assad to preventing the consolidation of Kurdish autonomy under the PYD/YPG on its southern border. In particular, Turkey's relationship with HTS became more like patronage: while officially calling HTS a terrorist organization, Ankara had nonetheless taken on the role of protective power over Idlib under the 2018 Sochi agreement with Russia, and its military intervention in 2020 had directly prevented the Assad regime from retaking the province.

President Erdoğan reportedly expressed unease over the pace of the rebel advance once it began, suggesting Ankara had anticipated a more limited operation rather than the wholesale one. collapse of the regime that followed. It indicates Turkey's original aim was to coerce Assad into engaging in the normalization of refugee repatriation and bilateral relations, not to engineer his total ouster—rendering the pace and thoroughness of the regime's fall a partial shock even to one of its primary facilitators.

5.1. The Collapse of the Frontline

The offensive began on November 27, 2024, with a coordinated assault by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army in northwestern Syria. Aleppo fell in days. A remarkable turnaround given the amount of blood and years the regime had spent retaking it in 2016. Government defenders in the city were reportedly demoralized and disorganized, offering little sustained resistance as HTS forces overran their positions.

Aleppo's fall did not immediately signal the end. The regime's fate was not sealed there but in Hama, where Syrian forces made a genuine attempt to regroup and hold the line. This is a critical detail often lost in accounts that treat the entire offensive as a single unstoppable rout: the government still had the capacity, at least in principle, to organize a defense after losing its second-largest city. It was only when this defense at Hama failed that the character of the campaign changed fundamentally, from a contested military campaign into a full-scale collapse across every remaining front simultaneously.

What followed was less a battle than an evacuation. Homs fell on the night of December 7–8 after government forces abandoned the city rather than defending it. This was consequential beyond its symbolic weight: losing Homs effectively cut Damascus off from the Alawite-populated coastal region around Latakia and Tartus, the regime's traditional demographic and military heartland, severing the capital from the base it would have needed to retreat to and regroup in.

The unraveling was not confined to the HTS-led advance in the north and center. As the main offensive drove south, a separate, opportunistic uprising erupted in the south of the country,

where southern rebel factions and the Syrian Free Army launched their own offensive, rapidly capturing Daraa along with Suwayda and the historic city of Palmyra, essentially encircling the capital from multiple directions at once and denying the regime any coherent front to fall back on.

The collapse of specific military formations illustrates just how thin the regime's actual fighting capacity had become by this point. The Fifth Corps, a unit that had received substantial Russian financial and military investment specifically because it was meant to function as a reliable, professionalized core for the wider army, offered minimal resistance and disintegrated along with the rest of the force.

By December 8, with Homs gone and southern rebels entering Damascus from the opposite direction, Bashar al-Assad fled the capital for Moscow without any further significant fighting for the city itself. He had traveled to Russia just weeks earlier, on November 28, to personally request military aid; his request was denied, yet upon returning home he reportedly told his senior commanders and advisors that Russian assistance was still forthcoming. However that support never came...

6. Military Structure and Civil Warfare

Before the war, the Syrian land army was large, and they had a Soviet-style organization. However, with the breakout of the civil war, the main army lost some of its qualities. Discharging government-opposed high-ranked officers, not having enough precautions for desertions, and the unwillingness of some soldiers to fight against their own nation caused the military structure almost to collapse. These kinds of inconsistencies within the army forced the government to assign some fanatic military groups for critical operations. The rest of the army was assigned as garrison troops.

To decrease the effects of chaos ongoing in the army, the government formed some militia groups. Those groups were more like gangs rather than an army. Each of these groups contained militias that supported the regime deeply. Later those militias were reinstitutionalized as a formal army. Until that those groups were supported by businessmen who supported the government or intelligence agencies. The militia groups did not only fight; they also increased the regime's influence in areas where regime soldiers cannot enter. Also those militia groups were supported by outer forces by men, arms, and supplies.

Before the civil war, the air force of Syria was limited. There were not many experienced pilots; in addition to that, the planes were old. As the war kept going, the situation completely changed. To protect the dominance that the government had already had, the government had to use air force. In order to achieve that, they renovated all the air units they had. New planes were bought, better air personnel were trained. As soon as it was 2012, the air force became a key factor in strategic moves of government. Air operations were used deliberately and gradually escalated: large-scale artillery use began around January 2012, and by April of that year the regime shifted toward heavier use of airpower, a calibrated approach that avoided the kind of high-visibility early bombardment that might have triggered outside intervention. Structurally, the SyAAF's operational commands were organized around two air divisions covering the north and south of the country, with fighter-bomber, interceptor, and helicopter brigades under them, plus an independent Air Defense Force branch responsible for surface-to-air missile networks and ground-based air defenses.

When compared to others, navy was less important and weaker. Its main bases were at Latakia, Baniyas, Minat al-Bayda, and Tartus, with Tartus also hosting a Soviet/Russian naval maintenance facility dating to a 1971 agreement. Nearly all of the ships and submarines were outdated. The Tartus base itself became strategically important less as a Syrian naval asset and more as the anchor for Russian naval power projection in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially after Russia's 2015 military intervention, which used Tartus as a logistics hub supporting the wider regime war effort.



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