

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - USSOCOM

The question of Syria



STUDY GUIDE B

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SUMMARY

PRESENTATION LETTER3

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE USSOCOM 4

ANNEXES19

Annex I - Hierarchy in USSOCOM.....19

Annex II - OpOrd.....20

Annex III - OpOrd Example..... 22

Annex IV - Maps..... 25

Annex V - Important News29

PRESENTATION LETTER

Dear Representatives,

It is with pleasure that we welcome you to our second FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS (FAMUN), a model that has evolved in a grand and positive way since its last edition. We would like to thank you for the support and for choosing the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to be simulated during the Conference.

After working hard and with dedication, we from the Command Secretariat are eager to see you representatives participating in the Command, bringing qualitative and fruitful discussions to the debate and putting your best effort on the consolidation of a possible Operation Order that can represent the American interests.

This Guide has the purpose of providing you with a background of each particular representative in order to steer you into a more realistic Command meeting. Consequently, we expect you to embody a very reliable and devoted role of each respective representative of yours, which demands the respect of the hierarchy of the Command at all times during the simulation.

We look forward to your presence and we will be available for any questions you may have. Be prepared to join a real USSOCOM!

Sincerely,

The Command Secretariat from USSOCOM,

Matheus Augusto Soares - Director

Rafaella Homsí Galesi - Assistant Director

Silvia Mara Lopes Conceição - Assistant Director

Larissa Milani Lopes Cruz - Assistant Director

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE USSOCOM

Although all the representatives here are seeking a common goal, trying to reach a consensus during the Command's meeting, it is important for them to bear in mind that each one of the representatives below has their specific roles. So, we strongly suggest representatives to deeply study their respective positions on the Command, so that the discussion can occur in a qualitative way and in a reasonable manner.

Moreover, we would like to strongly emphasize the importance of following the hierarchy in this Command (check annex 1 for illustrative information), meaning that, even though consensus should be sought by the representatives, the last call for the approval of a Final Document (CoveOp and PsyOp) falls in the hand of the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel.

The process of approval of a Final Operation Order (covert and/or psychological) at USSOCOM will be managed informally during the discussions. When or if the Command has finished an OpOrd, Chuck Hagel must agree upon that document, so that the J-3 (Director of Operations) can then raise a *Motion for submitting the Operation Order to the President*. The Chair (Commander of USSOCOM) will ask the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel if he agrees with the motion (given his position in the hierarchy). After the motion is accepted by the Secretary of Defense, the J-3 is allowed to deliver the Operation Order to the Command Secretariat, who will analyze the final document, and if adequate, will submit it to the approval of the President of United States Barack Obama.

Admiral William H. McRaven, Commander of USSOCOM - 4 star command

The role of USSOCOM is to provide special operation forces to safeguard United States' interests, developing special operation strategies - mainly covert and clandestine missions - and acting in unconventional and irregular engagements such as special reconnaissance, counter-terrorism, foreign internal defense, psychological warfare, civil affairs, and counter-narcotics operations (FEICKERT, 2013).

Admiral McRaven served as the 11th Commander of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) from 2008 to 2011, becoming the 9th Commander of USSOCOM on August 2011. Commander McRaven is known for his deep knowledge regarding special operations techniques and management, interoperability of the missions, promotion of exercises and training and coordination of inter-agencies and joint special operations. McRaven is credited for being the head-coordinator of the Operation Neptune Spear, which led to the death of Osama Bin Laden (UNITED STATES NAVY, 2012).

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

It is expected that Commander Admiral McRaven runs the meeting as the Chair, but also participates contributing to the debate with its specialties of special operation techniques and mainly the architecture of joint special operations with other sub-components or agencies in the room. As a four-star Commander, others must behave in a polite manner towards the Admiral, always respecting the military hierarchy. As stated in Annex 1, the only one he responds to is the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel.

Major General Mark A. Clark, Commander of Marine Corps Special Operations (MARSOC) – 2 star command

With the motto “always faithful, always forward”, MARSOC is a small and distinguished expeditionary force, being a sub-component command of USSOCOM. MARSOC was created in 2005 in order to act on special operation missions worldwide, especially under austere conditions and uncertain environments. MARSOC Marines are known for fighting the “wars of the future”, also called irregular wars (UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2014).

Major General Mark A. “Droopy” Clark assumed the rank of Commander of MARSOC in August 2012 after working as Chief of Staff for USSOCOM. Major General Clark has a vast experience on special operations, participating, since the beginning of his career, in several Operations, such as: Operation Desert Storm, Operation Desert Shield, Bosnian War and Operation Enduring Freedom (UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2012).

It is expected that Major General Mark A. Clark will offer to share his deep knowledge regarding special operations, always remembering to make a good evaluation of the operation environment and characteristics, so as not to put in danger their Marines. Also, the role of MARSOC has to be clear during the writing of the document of Covert Operations (CoveOps) and Psychological Operations (PsyOps), considering that MARCOC has its specialties, such as special reconnaissance missions.

Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland, Commander of United States Army Special Operations (USASOC) – 3 star command

As the larger component of the USSOCOM, with over 25,000 military personnel, MARSOC is responsible for managing the special operations of the United States Army. USASOC’s mission is mainly to “organize, train, educate, equip, fund, mobilize, deploy and sustain Army special operation forces”, being deployment actions and human-terrain mapping a specialty of this component. There are seven subcomponents subordinated to

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

MARSOC, and the 4th Military Information Support Group (MISG) is one of them, which will be of great importance for the debate on PsyOps (UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2012 a).

Lieutenant General Cleveland was Commanding General of Special Operations Command Central from 2008 to 2011, assuming the stand of Commander of the USASOC in July 2012. Lt. Gen. Cleveland graduated from West Point, having an enriching knowledge of special operations, but more specifically concerning detachment and battalion operations. He also worked for the Pentagon as Joint Staff, which gives him a great understanding of the bureaucratic and political parts of military operations (UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2012 b).

It is expected from Lt. Gen. Cleveland that he will use his knowledge regarding special operations to guarantee that USASOC and its subcomponents will be correctly managed on the CoveOp and PsyOp. The Army Special Forces is an important and vital part of a joint special operation and should have its right assignments. Furthermore, in the same room of the USSOCOM meeting, there will be a representative of the 4th MISG, Colonel Reginald J. Bostick, who is subordinated to Lt. Gen. Cleveland; therefore, the military hierarchy must be respected.

Rear Admiral Sean Pybus, Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command SEAL's (NAVSPEC WARCOM) – 2 star command

NAVSPEC WARCOMs, also known as NAVSOC, was created in 1987 as a component of USSOCOM in order to provide maritime expertise on special operations. NAVSOC also has subordinated elements, such as the SEAL Teams, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams and the Special Boat Squadrons. SEAL Teams are very small, formed by 10 to 14 platoons of a maximum of 12 naval personnel and 2 officers to each platoon. The specialty of NAVSOC, while operating jointly, is its amphibious operations, with the purpose of guaranteeing the success of Special Forces deployment (ROTTMAN, 1993).

After working at JSOC and for the National Security Council in the Executive Office of the President, Rear Admiral Sean Pybus joined the NAVSOC in June 2011, becoming a 2-star commander of a unit and overseeing around 9,000 personnel. Rear Admiral Pybus has a vast experience with special operations, dealing with maritime forces in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia (UNITED STATES NAVY, 2013).

It is expected from Commander Pybus that he will use his knowledge of maritime special operations in order to help architecture a joint CoveOp and PsyOp. As aforementioned, maritime skills are of paramount importance during military operations,

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

such as the amphibious actions, maritime researchers, the Special Boat Squadrons and the SEAL Teams that are also prepared for a direct conflict. The professional experience of Rear Admiral Pybus working in the Executive Office of the President also gives him a stronger sense of the importance of politics when dealing with any type of military actions.

Lieutenant General Joseph L Votel, Commander of the Joint Special Operations (JSOC) – 3 star command

JSOC is a component of USSOCOM, created in 1980, responsible for “study[ing] special operations requirements and techniques, ensur[ing] interoperability and equipment standardization, plan[ning] and conduct[ing] special operations exercises and training, and develop[ing] joint special operations tactics” (GLOBAL SECURITY, 2014 a). Joint communication has become a primary mission for JSOC, always ensuring coordination, communication and interoperability among military units throughout the standardization of equipment. JSOC also works closely with the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon (GLOBAL SECURITY, 2014 b).

Lieutenant General Joseph L Votel used to work as a Chief of Staff for USSOCOM, and in 2011 took charge of the JSOC replacing Admiral McRaven (who became Commander of USSOCOM) (“MCRAVEN...”, 2011). Lt. Votel has experience working with the Pentagon internally, but has also participated in important special operations abroad, such as Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It is expected that the Commander of JSOC will work in a cooperative way, seeking ways to better find coordination amongst agencies and institutions inside the room, in order to guarantee the interoperability and inter-communication of the mission. The Commander must always, as well, try to get ahold of new information, either with the representative of the CIA or with J-2.

Lieutenant General Eric E. Fiel, Commander of Air Force Special Operations (AFSOC) – 3 star command

With the vision of “transforming Airmen into Air Commandos who possess the specialized skills and warrior ethos to fight and win anytime, anywhere”, AFSOC is a component of USSOCOM established in 1990, with the mission of providing qualitative and responsive specialized airpower during special operations. Airmen from AFSOC have wide roles inside the unit, ranging from deployment, training, infiltration, resupply and engagement on firepower. With around 20,000 military personnel in AFSOC, the Command

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

has a unique division that deals with psychological operations, for instance, broadcasting airborne radio and television (AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2014).

Lieutenant General Eric E. Fiel became the Commander of AFSOC in June 2011 after his former job as Vice Commander of USSOCOM. Lt. Fiel has worked as Commander in several squadrons and wing levels, also holding staff positions as Air Staff and Secretary of the Air Forces, Deputy Commanding General at JSOC and Chief of Staff for USSOCOM. Participating of complex special operations such as the ones in Bosnia and Kosovo, the Commander has a great understanding on how to architecture joint operations, with his focus, of course, on Airmen abilities (UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, 2014).

It is expected from Lieutenant General Eric E. Fiel that he will use the subcomponents of AFSOC and the different divisions of the unit to help guide AFSOC Airmen to where they can be most effective. For instance, Air Force Airmen can act on reconnaissance missions, parachuting tasks, deployment moves or psychological operations; it will depend on how Lt. Fiel will put himself forward in the debate.

Major General Ken Tovo, Commander of Theater Special Operations - Central (SOCCENT) - 2 star command

SOCCENT is a component of US Central Command, one of the 5 geographic Combatant Commands (COCOM). SOCCENT is a division for special operations active in the Central Region (Middle East and Central Asian regions), which is one of the most important and vital regions of US' foreign policy, with a variety of 6 languages spoken, the three biggest religions of the world, a population of around 430 million people, 17 different ethnic groups and a place that has constant internal and regional conflicts that impacts directly with American interests. SOCCENT has important strategic military bases, some of them located in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. An important role of SOCCENT is its commitment to humanitarian assistance and civilian approach during US military presence in any country of the Central Region (GLOBAL SECURITY, 2014 b).

Major General Ken Tovo has a vast experience in working with special operations, commanding missions in the NATO, Gulf War, Northern Iraq and Afghanistan. Major General Tovo is also known for acting on humanitarian missions and peacekeeping operations. Nowadays Major General Tovo serves as a Commander for SOCCENT ("MAJOR...", 2012).

It is expected from the Commander Tovo that he will use his knowledge on special operations, but with a main focus on the geographic part of the Central Region, which is of great importance for the debate and for a possible CoveOp. Also, given the Major General's

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

experience on humanitarian missions and civilian understandings, advices coming from him will be welcome for any attempt on architecturing a PsyOp.

Konrad Trautman, Director of J-2 (Intelligence Directorate)

The role of the Director of J-2 is to always keep the members of the Command informed of what is happening outside the room. So, J-2 is in constant contact with other intelligence agencies, such as CIA, NSA or even the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (BIOMETRIC CONSORTIUM, 2008).

Mr. Konrad Trautman took on the position of Director of J-2 at USSOCOM in September 2007, after working for 27 years for the Special Operations Forces (SOF) on the intelligence field. During his job at SOF, he worked overseas at the Central Region for 8 years, acquiring deep knowledge on the geographic helm and on information collecting in the region (BIOMETRIC CONSORTIUM, 2008).

It is expected from Mr. Trautman that he will gather information of what is happening outside the room. He must know what is happening inside the government, for instance at Congress meetings, as well as what is happening in Syria and in the region. The opinion of the international community and the national and international press are also important information that can be helpful for the discussion. Lastly, it is the job of the Director of J-2 to choose what information he will release and when it should be done, always qualitatively selecting the information, depending on the flow of the debate.

In order to seek for a more realistic meeting, substantial questions asked from other representatives by paper for the Command Secretariat will be answered and delivered to the J-2 to then repass the information. The Director J-2 himself shall also send notes to the Command Secretariat for further answers and gathering of information.

Major General Douglas Anson, Director of J-3 (Operations Directorate)

The Director of J-3 is mainly responsible for the development and drafting of the operations. The operations, of course, will be made jointly among all the members in the room; however, J-3 is the Director that has the permission to send an Operation Order (OpOrd) to the Command Secretariat, by using the *Motion for submitting the Operation Order to the President*. Hence, a special operation draft will only be allowed by the Command Secretariat if containing the signature of Major General Douglas Anson. Additionally, J-3 has really close ties with the President and the Secretary of Defense, being their military advisor (ELECTRONIC SECURITY ASSOCIATION, 2014).

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Major General Douglas Anson joined the Operations Directorate in September 2010 to serve USSOCOM. The experience held by Major General Anson undergoes direct military confront, diplomatic talks with the Pentagon or even experiments regarding the national security laboratory. Having worked with national security issues for more than 20 years, the Director has forged a strict relationship between himself and the Executive branch of the Capitol (ELECTRONIC SECURITY ASSOCIATION, 2014).

It is expected from Major General Anson that he will maintain his fidelity with the President, always knowing his position before taking rushed and severe actions. As mentioned before, the J-3 is responsible for delivering the OpOrd to the Secretariat, but only with the consent of the Secretary of Defense and, therefore, the President. J-3 will also be important when working on the OpOrd drafts to be sent to the Command Secretariat. Given the fact that Major General Douglas Anson is a specialist in science and technological security, he will also be giving technical advice towards munition, bombs, equipment, nuclear security etc.

Chuck Hagel, Secretary of Defense

The Secretary of Defense is the head of the Department of Defense, being subordinated only to the orders of the President. The Secretary of Defense has the role of giving defense advice to the president, and representing him in any meeting (including USSOCOM). Furthermore, the Secretary of Defense tends to choose the political path before taking any military action, always trying to coordinate actions to avoid international complications. Although the Commander of USSOCOM carries the highest rank of the military hierarchy, the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel is at the top of the political hierarchy responding directly to the President, meaning that any decision taken during USSOCOM must have his approval (UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, 2014).

Chuck Hagel took on the position of 24th Secretary of Defense in February 2013. He started his career as a military being a volunteered combatant in Vietnam, but 20 years later he would become a political bureaucratic man, nominated by Ronald Reagan as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration. Mr. Hagel followed politics. He became a Senator and served from 1996 to 2009. Afterwards, Chuck Hagel took on the position of Co-Chairman of President's Obama Intelligence Advisory Board and later became a member of the Secretary of Defense Policy Board. Working next to the President made Secretary Hagel his man of trust (UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, 2014).

It is expected from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel that he avoid any rushed attempt at taking military actions, due to the fact that the integrity of the President is at

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

stake if any operation is related to the US. The contact between J-3 is also of great importance, as he is the military contact of the President and Hagel. Moreover, Hagel must guarantee that all American interests will be preserved by the representatives of Turkey and Israel that will also be in the meeting. It is also important to bear in mind that the Secretary of Defense is the one at the top of the Command's hierarchy, meaning that his decision is vital for the approval of the Final Document. In a few words, the OpOrd will only be submitted to the President at the end of the debate if Chuck Hagel agrees. Finally, Hagel should select which information from the room is vital for America's foreign policy so that he can warn President Obama (it can be done by sending notes to the Command Secretariat).

Lieutenant General Flora D. Darpino, Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the United States Army

According to Title 10 of the United States Code, paragraph 3037, a JAG is the legal adviser for all officers or agencies that belong to American military (LEGAL INFORMATION INSTITUTE, 2014). JAG's can give advice ranging from personal problems regarding military issues (for instance, sexual assault during an operation) to national problems like trespassing of sovereignty.

Flora D. Darpino was promoted to Lieutenant General in 2013 becoming the 39th Judge Advocate General of the US Army and the 1st woman to hold that position in the United States. Lt. Darpino has a rich experience with military law, including experiences in the Middle East.

It is expected from Lieutenant General Flora D. Darpino that she give technical advice to the Command concerning military law. The JAG must know the international treaties that can be broken during any military action and the technical legal consequences should that happen. JAG's knowledge must cover issues like maritime sovereignty, territorial trespassing, national American rules, civilian shootings, covert operation legitimacy, parachuting rules and all of the other rules of engagement that cannot be legally broken. The position held by Lt. Darpino is of paramount importance for the debate, given the fact that the US must guarantee that all their actions shall not be seen as illegal by people's eyes.

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Colonel Reginald J. Bostick, Commander of the 4th Military Information Support Group (MISG)

The 4th MISG is a subcomponent of USASOC, with the role of dealing with information military operations in order to benefit US' interests. More specifically, the 4th MISG is known for its experience in architecting Psychological Operations, in a way to influence their target through political, cultural, ethnic or religious approaches. Therefore, the focus of the 4th MISG when in action is to win the hearts and minds of the target-population through any type of communication. It is important to bear in mind, however, that, although not commonly used, the 4th MISG personnel can use elements such as fear to shape ones behavior (UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2012 a).

Colonel Reginald J. Bostick became Commander of the 4th MISG in August of 2011, having served before as Army War College Fellow and as Deputy Commander of the 4th MISG. During the assignment of the position, Colonel Bostick stated: "we will build our legacy. I know our organization will increase its ability to affect the human cognitive domain with a level of sophistication never before seen" (DEFENSE VIDEO & IMAGERY DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, 2012, p. 1).

It is expected from the Commander that he share his knowledge and expertise on influencing target-populations and on architecting PsyOps. Colonel Bostick shall analyze the behavior of Syrian people, for instance, but shall evaluate leaders, organizations and group behaviors as well. Moreover, Col. Bostick must work together with the others, bearing in mind that a PsyOp and a CoveOp are both complementary and should be drafted in a coordinated way (although each Op will have its different OpOrd). Due to its proximity to the population, the Command of Colonel Bostick should play a major role in humanitarian issues. Finally, the Commander must always remember that there is a hierarchy in the military, where Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland, the Commander of USASOC, is at a higher level.

John O. Brennan, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

The CIA is an agency that responds to the US federal government and has the role of gathering all types of information in order to guarantee national security and to protect America's interests. Moreover, the CIA is also known for conducting covert operations overseas, always working in a coordinated way with other agencies or divisions from the US Army (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2014).

John O. Brennan worked for 25 years for the CIA before becoming Director on March 2013 through President Obama's nomination. Previously, he worked closely with both

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

President George W. Bush and Barack Obama, holding positions of Chief Counterterrorism Advisor and Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. Mr. Brennan withdrew his name as Director during President Obama's first mandate of, due to the fact that there were rumors regarding the use of torture during his activities in the CIA (INFOPLEASE, 2014).

It is expected from Director John O. Brennan that he provide as much information as possible on the Syrian problematic. Brennan's actions consist of guaranteeing US' interests, but also protecting the legitimacy of the President, giving the fact that he is a good advisor to Obama. Brennan's experience on Covert Operations shall be of great help for the debate. Additionally, knowing that inter-agencies cooperation is a specialty of the CIA, Mr. Brennan may keep a strict relation with the representatives of Mossad and MIT inside the room.

Tamir Pardo, Director of the Israel Secret Intelligence Service (MOSSAD)

With the Motto: "Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety", MOSSAD is an agency of intelligence subjected directly to the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. MOSSAD's role is to gather information, architecture special operations beyond Israeli borders, handle any terrorist threat that is directly or indirectly related to Israel and its citizens. In sum, MOSSAD prides for the defense of and identity of Israeli values. MOSSAD is known as one of the best intelligence agencies in the world.

Tamir Pardo started early on his career of government intelligence, volunteering at the age of 18 for the Israel Defense Forces as a paratrooper. Pardo participated in some military operations and joined MOSSAD in 1980, specializing in special operations. After serving MOSSAD as Deputy Chief from 2002 to 2005 and again in 2008, Pardo retired, only coming back to the MOSSAD in January of 2011 to assume his position of Director (JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY, 2014).

It is expected from Director Tamir Pardo that he provide as much information as possible regarding the happenings in the region. Also, given the instability that the Syrian problematic has generated and the border conflicts between Israel and Syria, it is most likely that Pardo will demand more effective measures from the US, for instance a jointly military special operation. Moreover, MOSSAD has vast experience with high technology for special operations that could be useful for the debate. In addition, a tripartite coordination among CIA, MOSSAD and MIT is strongly recommended. Lastly, the Director of MOSSAD may keep his Prime Minister Netanyahu informed and ask for advice during the debates, by sending notes to the Command Secretariat.

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Hakan Fidan, Undersecretary of the Turkey National Intelligence Organization (MIT)

MIT was founded under Law no. 644 in 1965 in order to replace the National Security Service, being an intelligence agency subordinated directly to the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. MIT's main role is to gather information and identify any internal or external threats that may be harmful for the Turkish Nation. MIT is also specialized in Covert Operations and Psychological Operations, having the Directorate of Psychological Intelligence and the Directorate of Operations as divisions in the agency structure (NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION, 2014).

Hakan Fidan started his career as a soldier in the Turkish Army and soon became a diplomat, which led him to be nominated as head of the Turkish Development and Cooperation Agency from 2003 to 2007 and later Undersecretary of MIT in 2010. Given his position, Mr. Fidan has a strict relation with Prime Minister Erdogan, always representing his interests in meetings.

It is expected from the Undersecretary Hakan Fidan that he help USSOCOM with its concentration of information regarding the Syrian problematic. Considering the location of Turkey, Fidan can be of great importance when providing geographic, cultural, ethnic and linguistic information to the Command, focusing on giving support in the architecture of the PsyOp and CoveOp, if needed. Moreover, the Turkish border situation is alarming, with direct conflict between Turkey and Syria and a complicated case of massive flows of refugees inside the Turkish territory. Therefore, is it the role of Fidan to guarantee a rapid and effective measure coming from the Command as soon as possible.

Ken Myers, Director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)

DTRA, established in 1998, is "the U.S. Department of Defense's official Combat Support Agency for countering weapons of mass destruction", dealing with all types of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. DTRA's main role is to identify future threats and avoid them from causing any harm to the US or its allies. DTRA is also known for working along with other agencies nationally and internationally. In the international field, DTRA focuses on counter proliferation, nonproliferation and weapons of mass destruction reduction (DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY, 2014 a).

Mr. Ken Myers assumed the position of 4th Director of the DTRA on July 2009, after working at the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations from 2003 to 2009. Among Myers' specialties acquired during his career, he has deep knowledge on the themes of arms control, security, confidence building and counter proliferation and nonproliferation policies. Furthermore, Ken Myers used to work as a regular advisor on US policy towards the Middle

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

East that can be really useful for the debate (DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY, 2014 b).

It is expected from the Director of DTRA that he provide technical information regarding weapons of mass destruction. Considering that Bashar Al 'Assad and his loyal forces have chemical weapons at hand, there is a possibility that these weapons be used at any time. Consequently, scientific knowledge of these lethal weapons is of primary importance to identify them. Other information should be provided by Ken Myers, such as the impact these weapons have on civilians, what equipment is best to use against these weapons, how to avoid them etc. In sum, the Director shall be able to draw the best and worst-case scenarios regarding weapons of mass destruction.

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

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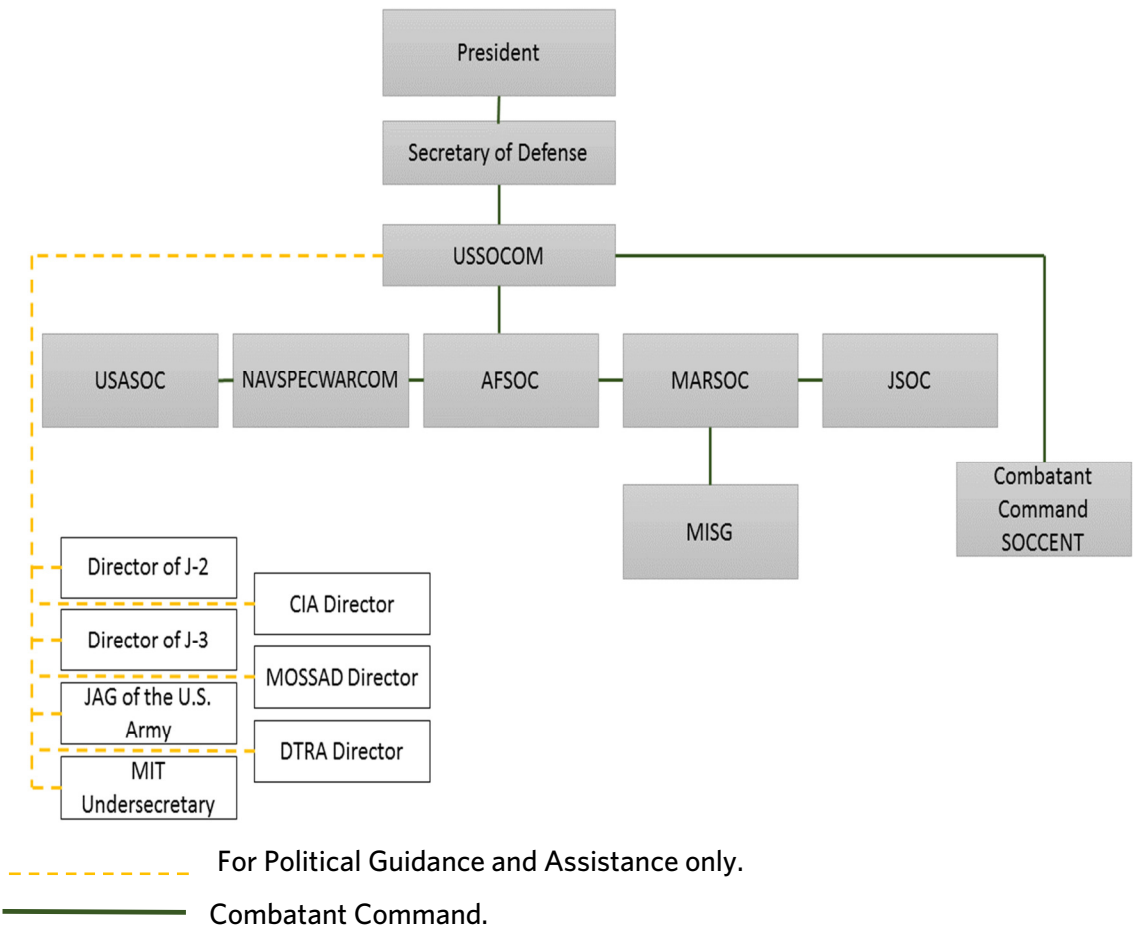
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ANNEXES

Annex I - Hierarchy in USSOCOM



FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Annex II - OpOrd

USSOCOM is expected to create two military special operations by the end of the meeting, being one a CoveOp and the other a PsyOp. For the military operations to be ordered and initiated, an Operation Order must be submitted to the Command Secretariat by the J-3 (Operations Directorate).

It is also possible for representatives to draft small and localized military operations during the Command meetings, but always following the procedures and the OpOrd format below:

OPORD [number][code name]-[number of OpOrd][date]

Task Organization:
(Symbol of the Command)

1. Situation

A. Enemy Forces

A1. Terrain - specify the type of environment that the troops will have to face during the operation.

B. Friendly Forces

2. Mission

A. Who

B. What

C. When

D. Where

E. How

3. Execution

A. Intent

B. Concept of the Operation (basically the mission)

B1. Planning (geographic information data, mention of any important legal documents, interactions with NGO's, international institutions or national agencies, reconnaissance operations for information gathering).

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

B2. Pre-Deployment (Operational Risk Management Process) – identify potential conditions that can cause harm or death of any military personnel, set a probability of this danger and propose ways of diminishing it.

B3. Deployment (establish the physical execution of the mission in all areas that the operation will take place) – specify details of the actions during the operation, the rules of engagement, order of movements and formations, from the deployment of troops to the potential end of the mission.

4. Acknowledge

[name of the Director of Operations]

J-3 Operations Commanding

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Annex III - OpOrd Example¹

OPORD 400US - PODAGORSK - 001 - 05JUNE2015

Task Organization:
(Symbol of the Command)

1. Situation: Podagorsk is caught up in their own bloody war. The EC has taken most of the area. The RRC Team 1 (Nomad) is currently operating out of the Northern Militia Camp, and has neutralized multiple SAM and AA sites a few weeks ago. The whole of Podagorsk is still too dangerous with AA and SAM sites to fly over the southern area of the nation. Special Operators working off the coast of Taviana secured a HVT a few days ago. He is a retired general and was able to provide substantial information about the SAM locations in the south. He has also provided information about potential safe areas in the north for airborne insertions. Based on some of his intel US Army Rangers, from 3rd Battalion have parachuted into the Northern territories of Podagorsk and conducted a raid on the primary northern EC camp, some displaced units have reconsolidated and regrouped and are staging with hardened midland area forces and are getting ready to launch a counter attack. Intel from captured enemy operatives suggests that they will conduct the operation from their high outpost -which is marked on your maps. From this location they will push north in the next few days. A CO, 3BN Rangers will prevent this from happening. Your orders are to engage and neutralize all enemy in the area that you encounter.

A. Enemy Forces: EC forces have taken most of the island. They are a mixture of former federal Podagorsian troops, previous loyal militia, and possible mercenaries. They present a lethal force and have outside help in the manner of guns, intelligence, and finances. We are not sure about the exact players yet, but we are suspecting some large investors are funding their efforts. There has been a significant increase in the midland areas of the Podagorsian peninsula according to local HUMINT, they have also provided that wheeled soviet model technicals have been patrolling near the AO.

¹ UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, 2014.

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

A1. Terrain: Heavily wooded and mountainous terrain. To the north lies the wilderness which is the EC stronghold, beyond that we have the Russian border. To the south we have villages and cities scattered throughout, cities primarily along the coastal areas, with inland villages. The single airfield also lies to the south, which serves as the only way in and out of the Podogorsian peninsula by way of aircraft.

B. Friendly Forces: Forces that are going to participate in this operation are 2 platoons from *Naval Special Warfare Command SEAL's* (NAVSPEC WARCOM), being one of them a Special Boat Squadron, and 3 platoons from *Marine Corps Special Operations* (MARSOC).

2. Mission

- A. Who:* NAVSPEC WARCOM and MARSOC
- B. What:* Conduct Strike Operations on Enemy Installation
- C. When:* 05JUNE2015
- D. Where:* Podagorsk, East Baltic Sea
- E. How:* By conducting a late night raid

3. Execution

- A. Intent:* In order to further our presence in the region, NAVSPEC WARCOM and MARSOC are tasked with reconnaissance and destruction of enemy strategic locations and defensive positions, primarily an enemy OP located near the railroad tracks. We will have to be quick and efficient due to the local enemy presence, they have other OPs near this one so if they detect our presence they will send immediate QRF.
- B. Concept of the Operation:* All elements will proceed from the northern militia camp and move on the camp, all manoeuvres will be METT-TC dependent. We are also greenlit to conduct raids on any targets of opportunity encountered in the AO.

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

B1. Planning (geographic information data, mention of any important legal documents, interactions with NGO's, international institutions or national agencies, reconnaissance operations for information gathering).

B2. Pre-Deployment (Operational Risk Management Process) - identify potential conditions that can cause harm or death of any military personnel, set a probability of this danger and propose ways of diminishing it.

B3. Deployment (establish the physical execution of the mission in all areas that the operation will take place) - specify details of the actions during the operation, the rules of engagement, order of movements and formations, from the deployment of troops to the potential end of the mission.

4. **Acknowledge**

Major General Douglas Anson, Director of J-3

J-3 Operations Commanding

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Annex IV - Maps

Map of Syria

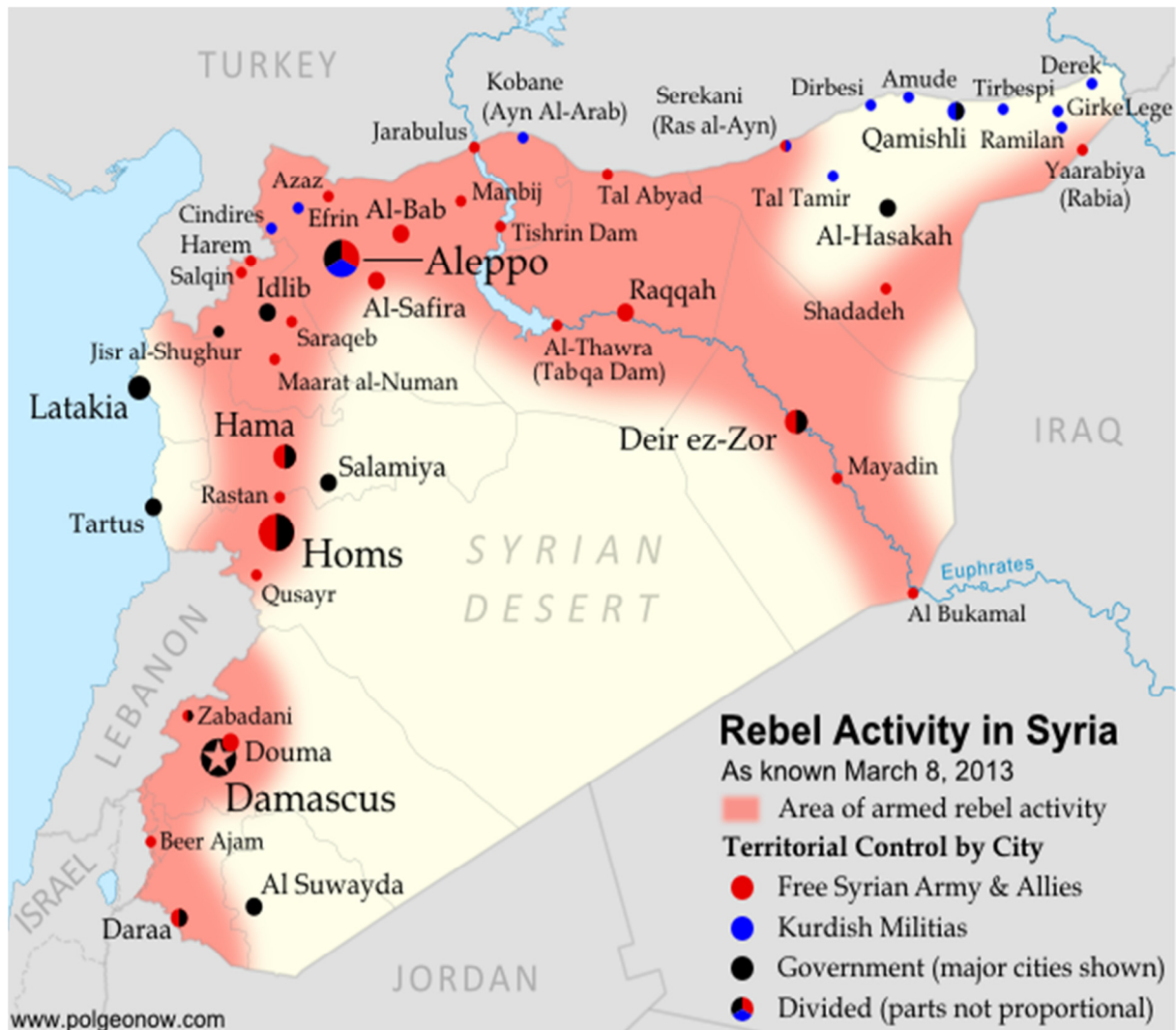


Source: "SYRIA...", 2008.

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Map of Rebel Activity in Syria (March 8, 2013)

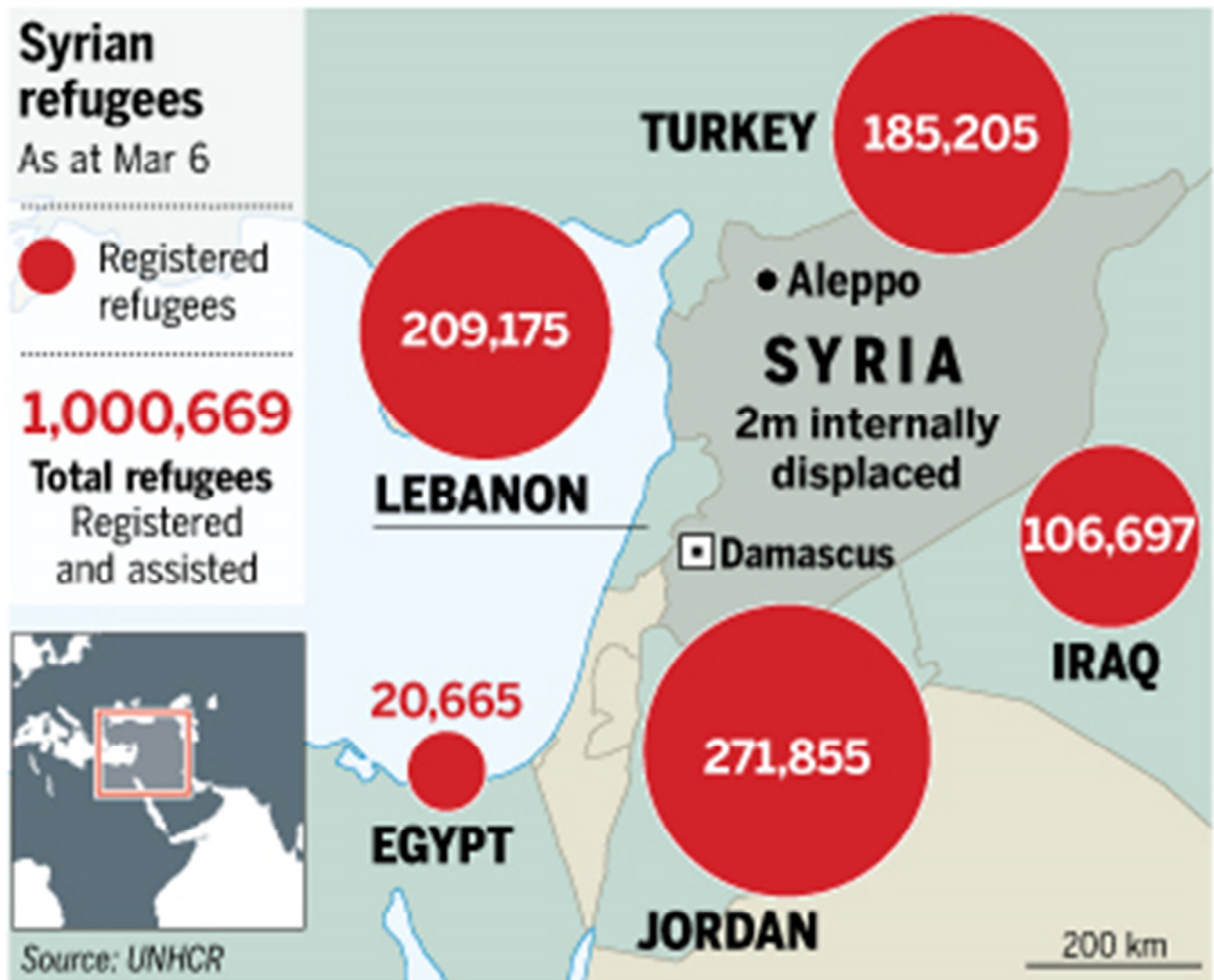


Source: CENTANNI, 2013.

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Map of Syrian Refugees Flow (March 6, 2013)



Source: PEEL, 2013.

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Map of Middle East



Source: FREE WORLD MAPS, 2014.

CARTA CAPITAL

ORIENTE MÉDIO

ATAQUE À SÍRIA CONFIRMARIA OS EUA COMO POTÊNCIA ÚNICA

Caso inicie uma guerra sem o apoio de Rússia e China, Washington mostrará que o seu poder continua inquestionável

Por Lucas Pereira Rezende — publicado 28/08/2013 12:35, última modificação 28/08/2013 12:40

A crise política pela qual passa a Síria, iniciada em janeiro de 2011 e ainda em curso, parece estar com os seus dias contados, quando Estados Unidos, França e Reino Unido anunciam que estão preparados para um ataque militar ao país, justificado pelo suposto uso de armas químicas por parte do governo de Bashar al Assad.

Em grande medida, a demora na definição da balança de poder síria se deu devido ao apoio das grandes potências, o que prolongou o conflito e causou a morte de milhares de pessoas, de ambos os lados do conflito. Os EUA e seus aliados europeus, assim como o secretariado da ONU - que pediam a saída de al Assad do poder para que houvesse qualquer condição de pacificação - apoiavam, direta e indiretamente, as forças oposicionistas. Em maio desse ano, a União Europeia aprovou a suspensão do embargo à venda de armas para a oposição síria, abrindo espaço para que se desse, então formalmente, a consolidação do apoio militar ao grupo que luta contra o governo.

Por outro lado, China e, em especial, Rússia, deixavam claro que uma intervenção direta na Síria não seria autorizada por ambos no Conselho de Segurança da ONU, o que impossibilitaria uma decisão do órgão. A relação entre Rússia e Síria é contínua desde a década de 1950, quando a extinta União Soviética começou a consolidar a parceria estratégica com o partido Ba'ath, ao qual pertence, ainda, Bashar al Assad. Esse relacionamento hoje é sinônimo de uma das maiores parcerias militares russas, de importância não apenas política e estratégica, mas econômica, como principal comprador de armamentos da Rússia.

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

A não-decisão do Conselho de Segurança da ONU representou, para alguns, uma mudança nos polos globais de poder. Os EUA, diferentemente da autonomia para ditar a agenda política na ONU que viveu nos anos após o colapso soviético, agora enfrentavam uma Rússia reemergente e uma China cada vez mais protagonista, ameaçando, em conjunto, um veto a qualquer intervenção na Síria. O cenário, de fato, não é mais o mesmo, e a agenda da ONU não é mais tão unilateralmente ditada - o que deixou o secretariado da organização "mal-acostumado", com uma série de demandas, ainda politicamente alinhadas aos EUA, sem chance real de implementação. O congelamento do Conselho de Segurança passava a lembrar os anos de divisão de poder vividos pelo órgão nos anos da Guerra Fria.

Os últimos movimentos, contudo, vêm em sentido contrário. Se confirmado, de fato, o uso de armas químicas por parte do governo de Damasco contra opositores combatentes e civis (condição colocada pelos EUA como a gota d'água para a série de "violações aos direitos humanos" praticadas pelas forças governamentais), uma intervenção militar capitaneada por EUA, Reino Unido e França parece iminente - seja aprovada ou não pelo Conselho de Segurança. Tal feito apenas confirmará que, quando julga necessário, os EUA têm condições de fazer o que consideram adequado, independentemente da legislação internacional ou da aprovação de outras potências. Esse é o símbolo máximo do poder estadunidense.

A demora para a decisão de derrubar militarmente al Assad não deve ser lida como uma fraqueza dos Estados Unidos. Em especial após uma controversa guerra ao Iraque em 2003, ficou claro que é menos custoso uma guerra multilateral, que seja vista, politicamente, como legítima. Lembremos, ainda, que os EUA se encontravam ainda no Iraque e no Afeganistão, em duas guerras longas e custosas, além da crise econômica vivida pelo país desde 2008. A decisão de derrubar al Assad já fora feita, mas procurou-se os meios mais baratos e menos controversos para tal. O apoio militar e político à oposição foi o primeiro caminho e, em alguns momentos, quase bem sucedido. A pressão contínua ao governo de Damasco e seus aliados russos e chineses também mostrava a construção de um argumento de legitimidade, calcado na democracia, nos direitos humanos e na responsabilidade para proteger. A via barata, contudo, acabou não mostrando resultados. Nesse ínterim, os EUA saíram do Iraque, reforçaram a campanha no Afeganistão e se recuperaram econômica e politicamente.

Em um momento em que o governo de Barack Obama é acusado de agir contra os direitos humanos pelo uso dos veículos aéreos não-tripulados (ou *drones*), fazer um ataque à Síria multilateral, justificado na proteção aos direitos essenciais dos sírios e, ainda por cima, aproveitando para criticar os direitos humanos na China e na Rússia, parece bem

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

profícuo. Além de entrarem na guerra como os defensores da democracia, reafirmando seu chamado poder brando, sairá dela mostrando que também o seu poder duro continua inquestionável. Podemos ter ainda bons candidatos a novos polos globais, mas são apenas isso: candidatos. Até que consigam, de fato, fazer uma oposição direta aos Estados Unidos, seja politicamente, economicamente ou militarmente, muitos anos terão ainda que se passar. O desenrolar da crise na Síria serve para nos mostrar que, para o desgosto de muitos, o realismo e a velha política do "manda quem pode, obedece quem tem juízo" continua sendo o guia máximo das relações internacionais.

Syria: Obama's Pretext for War

Global Research, September 05, 2013.

By: Phil Greaves

It seems many have forgotten the last two and a half years of western sabre-rattling and covert military aggression against the Syrian state. It is worth reiterating that without the vast amount of military, financial, and diplomatic largesse the west and their regional clients have thrown at the "revolutionary rebels" in Syria – who have now beyond doubt been exposed as sectarian extremists, lead and dominated by Al Qaeda ideologues – the violent insurgency in Syria would have been defeated long ago by the Syrian army.

These extremist-dominated "rebels" were armed and funded by Syria's enemies – with the tacit approval and coordination of the west – from an early stage in the supposed "Syrian uprising" (read: local protests), to wage a sectarian insurgency upon the Syrian state and its security apparatus on behalf of the US and its various allies. The US-led military and intelligence alliance comprises of: the United States, Israel, United Kingdom, France, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, as well as numerous Lebanese political and paramilitary factions under the influence of Saudi Arabia.

Although individual relationships and objectives have been in flux between this group, elements within all their respective establishments; governments; intelligence agencies; wealthy private donors and military contractors have worked to facilitate the transfer of arms and militants into Syria since the onset of the insurgency in March/April 2011. Although their individual desired outcomes and long-term objectives may differ; this alliance has held one common objective throughout: the destruction of an independent Syrian state.

The pathetic attempt at media "debate" surrounding Obama's imminent plan to bomb Syria in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack – which morphed from a couple of hours of feigning scepticism straight into accepting unsubstantiated western allegations as fact, and then repeating them verbatim – all have one common theme: that of a reluctant Obama, unwilling to sacrifice "boots on the ground" and desperate to avert wider regional conflict in another endless war in the Middle East.

Yet, upon analysing the conflict from a realistic perspective – which was from the onset, a sectarian, foreign-funded insurgency – as opposed to the corporate-media, and western politician's manufactured fantasy-narrative of a "democratic grass-roots uprising" –

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

it becomes clear that the reluctant facade of Obama has also been manufactured from false media narratives – propagated by the government “sources” that shape them.

In contrast to Obama’s apparent reluctance to exacerbate the Syrian crisis; at every periodic occasion that the Syrian opposition have had setbacks – be it on the battlefield; diplomatic theatre; or within public opinion – the US has stepped up its covert militarism with its partners operating on Syria’s borders. For example, we now know that when the much-desired No Fly Zone was blocked by China and Russia in the UNSC the White House made efforts to step up its covert support to the “rebels” through the CIA and Qatar, transitting the shipments through the Turkish/Syrian border. Accordingly, with the increase of militarism; came the increase of death-toll and displacement.

With regard to the early demands for a sovereign states’ President to “step aside”; westerners must first ask ourselves: do any world leaders demand Obama, Cameron, Bush, Blair, or any other variety of western diplomatic mass-murderer “step aside” for killing possibly millions of innocent civilians of countless nations? Or does the “International Community” only frown upon dictators allegedly “killing their own people” with “Weapons of Mass Destruction”? Is this the moral bar for western society as a whole? “Our leaders” can be proven to kill vast numbers in illegal wars anywhere on earth with impunity, but those “our leaders” deem enemies cannot defend allegations, let alone defend their nation from a foreign-funded insurgency?

Even if one finds this repugnant, hypocritical state of affairs as agreeable; how do Obama and Cameron explain their lack of condemnation toward Egypt’s coup-leaders; killing up to a thousand people from mainly peaceful protests in the space of a few days? One suspects any real condemnation of the military coup and subsequent crackdown (justified or not) will only come from the “moral” leaders of the west when and if Sisi and his feloul cohorts decide to cut-off the US’ vital “interests” in Egypt; those “interests” being primarily the protection of Israel; unfettered access (control) of the Suez Canal, and a continuation of the long-standing US-dominant military relationship and billion-dollar contracts. Those US “interests” do not include the lives, much less the “freedom” or “democracy” of the Egyptian people.

Furthermore, how do Obama and Cameron explain their silence or complete lack of “action” regarding their close ally the Al-Khalifa monarchys’ brutal crackdown of protesters and dissidents in Bahrain over the last two years? Of course, the United States does not need regime change from a compliant monarchy in Bahrain that dutifully host its fifth-fleet in one of the world’s most strategic locations. Further still, where is the “moral outrage” regarding Saudi Arabia’s brutal regime and its decades-long sponsorship of terrorism? The

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Saudi type of terrorism is often purported in the west as in “our interest”. Saudi-sponsored terrorism comes only in the name of supporting “freedom fighters” who at the time may just so happen to be enemies of our enemies, who are then dutifully facilitated, fomented and sponsored by the west; inevitably resulting in small instances of blowback that provide the western security establishment further pretext to encroach upon civil liberties with draconian and over-expansive “anti-terror” laws – a win-win for the National Security State and the Military Industrial Complex.

The west’s proxy-forces in Syria are, in reality, close to defeat. Against the odds, and a considerable multi-national effort to destroy an army and divide a nation; Assad has solidified his core base and territories. In the last few months the Syrian army has made considerable gains on the battlefield, recapturing strategic choke-points along the rebel supply route and utilising its bolstered numbers from the National Defense Forces to protect regained territory. Assad has also maintained his own critical supply lines, both of a military and diplomatic nature and has upheld his side of whatever bargains he has made with international allies.

Russia has remained steadfast in its support of Assad up to the point of writing, but this may yet change in the face of a possible world war III scenario. Russia’s military supplies have been critical to the Syrian army’s success on the battlefield, and its diplomatic efforts in the UN have stalled what has been a determined effort by the west to gain a pretext for military intervention. Moreover, anti-rebel sentiment has been on the rise in Syria for months. An example lies in the border town of Tal Kalakh, which was recently peacefully transferred to army control; not out of any particular love for Assad I must add, but simply due to the fact the extremists had moved on and the locals were more inclined to keep their livelihood and live in peace than face death or imprisonment. In a recent interview Assad also highlighted an increase in defections from the rebels back to the army as a result of government amnesty’s. This, and an added impetus from the Hezbollah-aided victory of Qusair had set the army on a trajectory that would be difficult to stop without massive foreign intervention.

On the other hand, the disparate factions of Bin-Ladenite “rebels” have been bogged down with infighting and internal conflict, which has resulted in a further increase of their brutality toward the civilian population. Just this week the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) executed three Alawite truck drivers on video for the crime of forgetting prayer ritual. A prominent Alawite cleric was also recently executed by “rebels”, the latest in a long line of clerics and religious officials that have been targeted by the extremists. The cleric was kidnapped during the ISIS/JaN sectarian onslaught in Latakia; the mass graves that were

FACAMP MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

found as a result of this particular sectarian assault on a civilian area didn't merit much attention in the western press. Moreover, recent rebel attacks – predominantly ISIS and jabhat al Nusra – on the Kurdish community in the north have taken on a broader and intractable dimension; resulting in the mass exodus of 30,000 Kurds over the border to Iraqi Kurdistan. In relation to the north of Syria where jihadist groups are most dominant; ISIS recently released a message to all international aid organisations to leave the region or be killed. Accordingly, the “rebels” public appeal is arguably at an all-time low. Several defining events throughout the course of the conflict have been imprinted on the minds of millions of people across the globe. From children being forced to behead prisoners; to rebels – from the supposed “moderate western-backed” militants no less – eating the organs of slain Syrian soldiers.

There is little sympathy in the west for the militants western governments support. A recent Reuters poll showed only 9 percent of Americans support any form of US military intervention in Syria. Even if the Assad government were found to be guilty of using chemical weapons that figure only rose to 25% percent. With a resounding 60% percent against. These figures are almost mirrored in the UK and have reflected such opinion throughout the Syrian conflict. Yet if military intervention was to occur, it would undoubtedly be the UK and the US at the forefront of the attacks: that is western “democracy”.

President Assad and the Syrian establishment have long known that they have been on the US' target list. Indeed, it was public knowledge in the west that during the post-9/11 Bush administration Syria was placed under “the axis of Evil”. During that decade several prominent reports highlighted covert policies the US and its allies were directing at Syria. These covert policies ran parallel to USAID “democracy” programs that the US had implemented in Syria in order to bolster opposition elements and leverage the Assad government – as is the protocol for US subversion. Many of these same initiatives have formed a part of the US State Department-trained anti-Assad “activists”, so prevalent on social media and often touted as objective sources in the western corporate press. More importantly, Assad has also known for a long time that any use of chemical weapons would undoubtedly result in the west – at the very least – abandoning any pretense of negotiations and reverting to type: the military option. Why would Assad choose now to entice a western military intervention? What can he possibly gain from his own certain downfall? At a time when it was becoming more and more likely that the Assad government would hold on to some sort of power in Syria and the “rebels” and their international alliance were looking increasingly likely to fall apart, why would Assad choose to use chemical weapons? Not only

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

that, we must also remember that the UN team is in Damascus at the Syrian governments request, it simply defies logic that Assad would willingly commit such a grave act right under the nose of the UN, particularly when the trajectory of the war was firmly in his favour?

Conversely, there are multiple logical scenarios in which the “rebels” would benefit from staging a chemical weapons attack. This is plain objective common sense. Since Obama declared his famous “red-line” it has been a casus belli waiting to happen. The “rebels”, and their many international backers, intelligence agencies and private contractors are all in the knowledge that a chemical weapons attack will incur a western military response, resulting in their desired objective: the removal of Assad. There is already a strong case being made that the “rebels” have deployed a form of sarin in a home-made shell fired on government forces in Khan al-Assal. Russia has provided the UN with evidence to this effect and Khan al-Assal was one of the sites on the list to be visited by the UN inspection team. Moreover, in May this year UN investigator Carla Del Ponte pointed the finger at the “rebels” for the use of chemical weapons, a fact that has been thoroughly whitewashed in both western media and from the duplicitous mouths of western diplomats – who still claim that “rebels” don’t have the capability to launch chemical weapons. Contrary to western diplomats hollow claims; in late May militant cells with links to Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham were found in both Iraq and Turkey with sarin and other chemical weapons materiel in their possession – another fact that received only light attention in western media, and has been virtually ignored in any western diplomats talking points.

Framed in the above context, and with the “evidence” – or glaring lack of it – to date to prove the US’ assertions; it cannot be logically, or honestly implied that the Syrian military has used chemical weapons – or has any intention to, knowing it would be certain suicide. Thus, one can only logically draw the assumption that this latest alleged CW attack is a repeat of previous attempts to incite western intervention, but on a much larger and deadlier scale. It could have any number of culprits, but the Syrian government is possibly the least likely. Yet the United States (arbiter of the world) has dismissed such notions on the premise that the “rebels” don’t have the capability: the United States is quite literally overruling UN investigators in order to carry out regime change to meet its own geopolitical objectives (again).

The clearest signal of this intention came when several members of the Obama administration intentionally mislead reporters and stated several times that the Syrian government blocked an immediate investigation into the recent alleged CW attack in Ghouta. This was a blatant lie and the US knew it; it was in fact the UN that held up the

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

investigation through fear for their own safety in a what was a contested area. The Syrian government gave its immediate blessing for an investigation and escorted the UN team to the site for a short time; at which point it was fired upon by unknown snipers and retreated to the safety of an army checkpoint. Another clear indicator of Obama's aggressive intention is the blatant double-standard being applied; the UN team is inside Syria to specifically investigate alleged CW attacks that occurred 5 months ago, and presumably the US would have accepted its findings. Not only this, but the UN team does not have a mandate to determine the source of chemical weapons use - only to determine whether they have been used or not. Yet the UN team has been granted access to an alleged CW attack site by the Syrian government only 5 days after the alleged event, and the Obama administration is claiming that any results from the investigation are now "too late to be credible"?

Now why would the Obama administration lie? I thought they were reluctant for war?

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<http://www.globalresearch.ca/syria-obamas-pretext-for-war/5348361>

The Geopolitics of the Syrian Civil War

**STRATFOR Global Intelligence - Geopolitical Weekly TUESDAY,
JANUARY 21, 2014 - 03:59**

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International diplomats will gather Jan. 22 in the Swiss town of Montreux to hammer out a settlement designed to end Syria's three-year civil war. The conference, however, will be far removed from the reality on the Syrian battleground. Only days before the conference was scheduled to begin, a controversy threatened to engulf the proceedings after the United Nations invited Iran to participate, and Syrian rebel representatives successfully pushed for the offer to be rescinded. The inability to agree upon even who would be attending the negotiations is an inauspicious sign for a diplomatic effort that was never likely to prove very fruitful.

There are good reasons for deep skepticism. As Syrian President Bashar al Assad's forces continue their fight to recover ground against the increasingly fratricidal rebel forces, there is little incentive for the regime, heavily backed by Iran and Russia, to concede power to its sectarian rivals at the behest of Washington, especially when the United States is already negotiating with Iran. Ali Haidar, an old classmate of al Assad's from ophthalmology school and a long-standing member of Syria's loyal opposition, now serving somewhat fittingly as Syria's National Reconciliation Minister, captured the mood of the days leading up to the conference in saying "Don't expect anything from Geneva II. Neither Geneva II, not Geneva III nor Geneva X will solve the Syrian crisis. The solution has begun and will continue through the military triumph of the state."

Widespread pessimism over a functional power-sharing agreement to end the fighting has led to dramatic speculation that Syria is doomed either to break into sectarian statelets or, as Haidar articulated, revert to the status quo, with the Alawites regaining full control and the Sunnis forced back into submission. Both scenarios are flawed. Just as international mediators will fail to produce a power-sharing agreement at this stage of the crisis, and just as Syria's ruling Alawite minority will face extraordinary difficulty in gluing the state back together, there is also no easy way to carve up Syria along sectarian lines. A closer inspection of the land reveals why.

The Geopolitics of Syria

Before the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement traced out an awkward assortment of nation-states in the Middle East, the name Syria was used by merchants, politicians and warriors

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alike to describe a stretch of land enclosed by the Taurus Mountains to the north, the Mediterranean to the west, the Sinai Peninsula to the south and the desert to the east. If you were sitting in 18th-century Paris contemplating the abundance of cotton and spices on the other side of the Mediterranean, you would know this region as the Levant -- its Latin root "levare" meaning "to raise," from where the sun would rise in the east. If you were an Arab merchant traveling the ancient caravan routes in the Hejaz, or modern-day Saudi Arabia, facing the sunrise to the east, you would have referred to this territory in Arabic as Bilad al-Sham, or the "land to the left" of Islam's holy sites on the Arabian Peninsula.

Whether viewed from the east or the west, the north or the south, Syria will always find itself in an unfortunate position surrounded by much stronger powers. The rich, fertile lands straddling Asia Minor and Europe around the Sea of Marmara to the north, the Nile River Valley to the south and the land nestled between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers to the east give rise to larger and more cohesive populations. When a power in control of these lands went roaming for riches farther afield, they inevitably came through Syria, where blood was spilled, races were intermixed, religions were negotiated and goods were traded at a frenzied and violent pace.

Consequently, only twice in Syria's pre-modern history could this region claim to be a sovereign and independent state: during the Hellenistic Seleucid dynasty, based out of Antioch (the city of Antakya in modern-day Turkey) from 301 to 141 B.C., and during the Umayyad Caliphate, based out of Damascus, from A.D. 661 to 749. Syria was often divided or subsumed by its neighbors, too weak, internally fragmented and geographically vulnerable to stand its own ground. Such is the fate of a borderland.

Unlike the Nile Valley, Syria's geography lacks a strong, natural binding element to overcome its internal fissures. An aspiring Syrian state not only needs a coastline to participate in sea trade and guard against sea powers, but also a cohesive hinterland to provide food and security. Syria's rugged geography and patchwork of minority sects have generally been a major hindrance to this imperative.

Syria's long and extremely narrow coastline abruptly transforms into a chain of mountains and plateaus. Throughout this western belt, pockets of minorities, including Alawites, Christians and Druze, have sequestered themselves, equally distrustful of outsiders from the west as they are of local rulers to the east, but ready to collaborate with whomever is most likely to guarantee their survival. The long mountain barrier then descends into broad plains along the Orontes River Valley and the Bekaa Valley before rising sharply once again along the Anti-Lebanon range, the Hawran plateau and the Jabal al-

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

Druze mountains, providing more rugged terrain for persecuted sects to hunker down and arm themselves.

Just west of the Anti-Lebanon mountains, the Barada river flows eastward, giving rise to a desert oasis also known as Damascus. Protected from the coast by two mountain chains and long stretches of desert to the east, Damascus is essentially a fortress city and a logical place to make the capital. But for this fortress to be a capital worthy of regional respect, it needs a corridor running westward across the mountains to Mediterranean ports along the ancient Phoenician (or modern-day Lebanese) coast, as well as a northward route across the semi-arid steppes, through Homs, Hama and Idlib, to Aleppo.

The saddle of land from Damascus to the north is relatively fluid territory, making it an easier place for a homogenous population to coalesce than the rugged and often recalcitrant coastline. Aleppo sits alongside the mouth of the Fertile Crescent, a natural trade corridor between Anatolia to the north, the Mediterranean (via the Homs Gap) to the west and Damascus to the south. While Aleppo has historically been vulnerable to dominant Anatolian powers and can use its relative distance to rebel against Damascus from time to time, it remains a vital economic hub for any Damascene power.

Finally, jutting east from the Damascus core lie vast stretches of desert, forming a wasteland between Syria and Mesopotamia. This sparsely populated route has long been traveled by small, nomadic bands of men -- from caravan traders to Bedouin tribesmen to contemporary jihadists -- with few attachments and big ambitions.

Demography by Design

The demographics of this land have fluctuated greatly, depending on the prevailing power of the time. Christians, mostly Eastern Orthodox, formed the majority in Byzantine Syria. The Muslim conquests that followed led to a more diverse blend of religious sects, including a substantial Shiite population. Over time, a series of Sunni dynasties emanating from Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley and Asia Minor made Syria the Sunni-majority region that it is today. While Sunnis came to heavily populate the Arabian Desert and the saddle of land stretching from Damascus to Aleppo, the more protective coastal mountains were meanwhile peppered with a mosaic of minorities. The typically cult-like minorities forged fickle alliances and were always on the lookout for a more distant sea power they could align with to balance against the dominant Sunni forces of the hinterland.

The French, who had the strongest colonial links to the Levant, were masters of the minority manipulation strategy, but that approach also came with severe consequences that endure to this day. In Lebanon, the French favored Maronite Christians, who came to dominate Mediterranean sea trade out of bustling port cities such as Beirut at the expense

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GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALISM

of poorer Sunni Damascene merchants. France also plucked out a group known as the Nusayris living along the rugged Syrian coast, rebranded them as Alawites to give them religious credibility and stacked them in the Syrian military during the French mandate.

When the French mandate ended in 1943, the ingredients were already in place for major demographic and sectarian upheaval, culminating in the bloodless coup by Hafiz al Assad in 1970 that began the highly irregular Alawite reign over Syria. With the sectarian balance now tilting toward Iran and its sectarian allies, France's current policy of supporting the Sunnis alongside Saudi Arabia against the mostly Alawite regime that the French helped create has a tinge of irony to it, but it fits within a classic balance-of-power mentality toward the region.

Setting Realistic Expectations

The delegates discussing Syria this week in Switzerland face a series of irreconcilable truths that stem from the geopolitics that have governed this land since antiquity.

The anomaly of a powerful Alawite minority ruling Syria is unlikely to be reversed anytime soon. Alawite forces are holding their ground in Damascus and steadily regaining territory in the suburbs. Lebanese militant group Hezbollah is meanwhile following its sectarian imperative to ensure the Alawites hold onto power by defending the traditional route from Damascus through the Bekaa Valley to the Lebanese coast, as well as the route through the Orontes River Valley to the Alawite Syrian coast. So long as the Alawites can hold Damascus, there is no chance of them sacrificing the economic heartland.

It is thus little wonder that Syrian forces loyal to al Assad have been on a northward offensive to retake control of Aleppo. Realizing the limits to their own military offensive, the regime will manipulate Western appeals for localized cease-fires, using a respite in the fighting to conserve its resources and make the delivery of food supplies to Aleppo contingent on rebel cooperation with the regime. In the far north and east, Kurdish forces are meanwhile busy trying to carve out their own autonomous zone against mounting constraints, but the Alawite regime is quite comfortable knowing that Kurdish separatism is more of a threat to Turkey than it is to Damascus at this point.

The fate of Lebanon and Syria remain deeply intertwined. In the mid-19th century, a bloody civil war between Druze and Maronites in the densely populated coastal mountains rapidly spread from Mount Lebanon to Damascus. This time around, the current is flowing in reverse, with the civil war in Syria now flooding Lebanon. As the Alawites continue to gain ground in Syria with aid from Iran and Hezbollah, a shadowy amalgam of Sunni jihadists

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backed by Saudi Arabia will become more active in Lebanon, leading to a steady stream of Sunni-Shiite attacks that will keep Mount Lebanon on edge.

The United States may be leading the ill-fated peace conference to reconstruct Syria, but it doesn't really have any strong interests there. The depravity of the civil war itself compels the United States to show that it is doing something constructive, but Washington's core interest for the region at the moment is to preserve and advance a negotiation with Iran. This goal sits at odds with a publicly stated U.S. goal to ensure al Assad is not part of a Syrian transition, and this point may well be one of many pieces in the developing bargain between Washington and Tehran. However, al Assad holds greater leverage so long as his main patron is in talks with the United States, the only sea power currently capable of projecting significant force in the eastern Mediterranean.

Egypt, the Nile Valley power to the south, is wholly ensnared in its own internal problems. So is Turkey, the main power to the north, which is now gripped in a public and vicious power struggle that leaves little room for Turkish adventurism in the Arab world. That leaves Saudi Arabia and Iran as the main regional powers able to directly manipulate the Syrian sectarian battleground. Iran, along with Russia, which shares an interest in preserving relations with the Alawites and thus its access to the Mediterranean, will hold the upper hand in this conflict, but the desert wasteland linking Syria to Mesopotamia is filled with bands of Sunni militants eager for Saudi backing to tie down their sectarian rivals.

And so the fighting will go on. Neither side of the sectarian divide is capable of overwhelming the other on the battlefield and both have regional backers that will fuel the fight. Iran will try to use its relative advantage to draw the Saudi royals into a negotiation, but a deeply unnerved Saudi Arabia will continue to resist as long as Sunni rebels still have enough fight in them to keep going. Fighters on the ground will regularly manipulate appeals for cease-fires spearheaded by largely disinterested outsiders, all while the war spreads deeper into Lebanon. The Syrian state will neither fragment and formalize into sectarian statelets nor reunify into a single nation under a political settlement imposed by a conference in Geneva. A mosaic of clan loyalties and the imperative to keep Damascus linked to its coastline and economic heartland -- no matter what type of regime is in power in Syria -- will hold this seething borderland together, however tenuously.