

For your policy memo, due March 29, you will take on the role of a senior advisor to a participant in the international crisis over Syria. You will describe your goals and interests in Syria, put those interests in the context of international relations theory, and propose policies for achieving your goals. See below for details.

The Memo

In the policy memo, you will:

1. *Explain what goals or interests your state or group should be pursuing in Syria, and the major challenges it faces in achieving these goals.* Provide some background on your state or group's interests in Syria to help the reader follow your argument. What does your state/group hope to achieve in Syria? What is standing in the way of achieving these goals? Don't forget that leaders often face domestic or internal challenges in addition to international ones.
2. *Put your state or group's challenges in Syria in the context of the relevant international relations literature.* Describe a small number of important theories or empirical findings from the international relations literature that apply to your state/group. What does international relations theory have to say about the challenges of achieving your state/group's goals in Syria, or about the policy options that you might pursue? Some theories to consider include those addressing the causes of war, alliances, deterrence, international institutions, civil wars, and terrorism. You need not address all of these, of course—apply the theories that are most essential for the actions of state/group in Syria.
3. *Provide concrete advice to the leader of your country or group on how to achieve its goals in Syria.* Address your memo to a specific leader of your state or group. Provide 2-3 policy options for achieving the goals your memo describes, and make the case for your *one* preferred option. It is best to acknowledge any major weaknesses in your preferred policy, and explain why the leader should choose this policy anyway. You should argue for a particular policy based on your understanding of the goals of the state or group you represent and the capabilities at your disposal. Remember, you are playing a role, not representing yourself. Only propose options that are feasible or reasonable (i.e. don't suggest nuking Syria or doubling the US defense budget), and that are available to the leader of your organization.

Your policy memo should be 3-5 pages of double-spaced text (not including the bibliography), using a standard 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Please number your pages.

Submit the memo via Blackboard (as a PDF file, if possible) before class on March 29.

Your role

For the policy memo and the subsequent in-class simulation, you will take on the role of senior advisor to one of the participants in the international crisis over Syria. Your role is listed at the end of this handout.

- If your role is listed as “US,” “Turkey,” or “Russia,” you are representing the current leadership of that country.
- If your role is listed as “Syria,” you are representing the administration of President Bashar al-Assad.
- If your role is listed as “Opposition,” you are representing a coalition of various opposition groups known as the High Negotiations Committee. Your coalition includes members from the major rebel groups and various exiled Syrian political factions. Your coalition does *not* represent ISIS (the Islamic State) or the al-Qaeda affiliated al-Nusra Front.

Research

This memo requires you to conduct research into the goals, interests, and capabilities of the state or group you represent, with regard to the Syria crisis. It will also be useful to understand what the other participants in the crisis are seeking to achieve. The list of resources below is a good starting point for your research, but it is only a starting point. You should do additional research to better understand your role and the positions of other parties. I recommend that you consult policy journals (*Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*, for example), reputable blogs and news sources (such as those listed on the syllabus), and reports from major think tanks (Brookings, Council on Foreign Relations, IISS) or government agencies. Talk to the staff at the library if you need help identifying appropriate sources or getting started with your research. Don't rely on Wikipedia.

Your textbook will be your primary source for investigating theories of international relations that apply to your state or group, but you are welcome to consider outside sources for theories of particular interest. You might consult the additional readings referenced in the textbook, Google Scholar (beware of unpublished work), JSTOR, or the major academic journals that published the readings assigned for this course.

You can use whatever citation style you prefer, **but you must cite your sources correctly**. Ask for help if you're not sure how or whether to cite material. For guidance on appropriate sourcing, see the following resources:

<http://guides.swem.wm.edu/writingandciting>

<http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism>

Grading

Your grade will be based how well you fulfill each of the tasks highlighted above: explanation of the goals and challenges of your group or state in Syria, application of international relations theory, and discussion of policy options.

- You must do more than just describe the literature or summarize the arguments of others! I am looking for your own critical analysis of the policy issue. Use the arguments and theories of others only as a starting point. Make sure that you clearly take a position on the best policy for your state or group to pursue.
- On the other hand, you must do more than just provide your opinion! Use arguments and theories in the literature to support your analysis and conclusions.
- Spend some time thinking about how best to organize your paper. Write clearly and concisely. Proofread. You cannot do well on this assignment if I am confused about your analysis or policy recommendation.

Resources

Here are some useful resources to begin your research:

General background

<http://syriadeeply.org/>

<http://www.cfr.org/syria/hbo-do-syria/p37408>

[http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syria 90 Day Forecast 24 FEB 2016%281%29.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syria%2090%20Day%20Forecast%2024%20FEB%202016%281%29.pdf)

<http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/02/25/federal-syria-its-time-to-recognize-reality/>

<http://www.iiss.org/en/regions/syria/despite-good-intentions-prospects-for-syria-ceasefire-are-gloomy-4d6e>

US

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/02/22-confederal-model-syria-ohanlon>

<http://us-russiafuture.org/publications/working-group-papers/the-u-s-and-russian-interventions-in-syria/>

<http://duckofminerva.com/2016/02/the-triple-imperative-a-new-plan-b-for-syria.html>

https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/sites/twq.elliott.gwu.edu/files/downloads/TWQ_Winter2016_Byman.pdf

<http://warontherocks.com/2016/02/high-time-for-intervention-the-united-states-must-invest-in-its-partners-to-turn-syria-around/>

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-02-16/fight-or-flight>

Russia

<http://us-russiafuture.org/publications/working-group-papers/the-u-s-and-russian-interventions-in-syria/>

<http://warontherocks.com/2016/02/the-russian-quagmire-in-syria-and-other-washington-fairy-tales/>

<http://csis.org/publication/best-enemies-russia-turkey-confrontation-beyond-syria>

<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=62207>

Turkey

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2016/02/19-turkey-syria-challenges-kirisci>

<http://warontherocks.com/2016/02/prospects-for-a-turkish-incursion-into-syria/>

<http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/solution-syria-the-kurds-turkey-the-us-can-agree-14226>

Syria

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2016-01-19/assad-has-it-his-way>

<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2015/06/02/iran-s-stakes-in-syria-s-economy/i9ce>

<http://www.tcf.org/blog/detail/inside-bashar-al-assads-syria>

Opposition

<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=62263>

<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=62239>

http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrian%20Opposition%20Guide_0.pdf

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/opinion/one-mans-syrian-resistance.html>