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China Briefing Paper

Introduction

The People's Republic of China is a unitary single party state of over 1.381 billion citizens and is one of the world's great powers. Since its formation in the year 1949 China has emerged as a leading power in the world politically in its establishments of relations with nations all over the globe, such as those in Africa and South America. It is one of the five countries on the UN Security Council and has been since 1971, as well as being a participant in the UN Human Rights Council. China has also established itself as major force economically and possesses the world's second largest economy with a GDP of around \$11.383 trillion dollars in 2016 and with its economy growing at a rate of 6.5% as of 2016 (IMF). China is a major investor overseas with interests in countries like the United States, Russia, Australia, South Africa and many others, in addition to this, it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 and has since worked to develop healthy trade deals with countries all throughout the globe.

China as a country has developed many economic interests and relationships all over the world including investments in Syria. As the conflict in Syria continues to escalate China's economic interests in the area are beginning to be put at risk of collapsing and failing. Specifically, China has interests in the oil and hydroelectric sectors in Syria in the form of oil fields and dams, which are important assets to the country. Over the course of the conflict, foreign opposition forces have encroached and even taken control of these assets causing them to

be valueless and misused. As a response to this issue China has taken an interest in supporting the Syrian economy in order to prevent the loss of valuable resources in the war torn region. China also believes that sanctions should not be imposed upon the government of Syria as these do not serve to improve the conditions in Syria, but instead cause conditions in the country to deteriorate. These sanctions would also stand as a large impediment to the process of achieving a state of peace and reconstructing Syria into a modern and functioning nation.

Key Points

- **Preserving china's economic interests in Syria**
- **Restrictions on peace negotiations in Syria through sanctions**
- **Ability to maintain a fair amount of neutrality and non interference in the conflict**
- **Reconstructing Syria into a stable country**
- **Preserve the sole legitimate governing body of Assad**
- **Expansion of China's influence in the Middle East**

Background

The People's Republic of China as it is known as in modern times, was founded in 1949, by the Communist party as they took control from the Kuomintang who were forced back into Taiwan, Hainan and their surrounding islands, but were eventually forced solely into Taiwan. In its early days the Communist party developed an independent industrial system and nuclear weapons. And in October of 1971 the party replaced the Republic of China in the UN Security Council. In the year 1978 Deng Xiaoping took over power of the Communist Party and began to

institute economic reform that possessed much significance. The Communist Party then began to loosen its hold on its citizens personal lives and began to disband the communes, state run economic systems, into private land leases. This transition was a change from a planned and government controlled economy towards a much more modern system with a more open market. The Communist Party was responsible for the day to day administrative affairs. It has basic level organizations in areas such as towns, cities, villages, neighborhoods, and major workplaces such as schools. The Communist Party has administration in areas such as discipline inspection, a central military commission, and a central committee, which divides down into the National Party Congress. These different sections of administration of the Communist Party ensured the security, discipline, and day to day function of all sections of China through the government.

China adopted its current constitution in December of 1982 which created a more modern world and a government that had a slightly lesser role in the citizens lives. During the 1990s under the leadership of president Jiang Zemin nearly 150 million peasants and maintained an annual average GDP growth rate of 11.2% (Peoples). After joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 it maintained this level of economic prosperity under the new leadership of Hu Jintao and living standards in China improved drastically. Most recently president Xi Jinping began large scale economic reform in a move to stabilize the Chinese economy and made major reforms to the one child policy and the prison system. Currently China is one of the most powerful and influential countries today and has furthered this reputation through its transition into the modern world. In recent times China has taken up investments in the developing world that have propelled those countries forward and have diversified China's interests as a whole. By utilizing technologies like high speed trains and advanced scientific research as well as one of

the world's highest scoring student population in the world China has rocketed into the modern world.

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Governance

Syria's government is officially a semi-presidential republic system (a system in which the popularly elected president works with both the prime minister and Cabinet). As stated in the 1973 constitution: the president is nominated by the Baath Party but then approved by a popular vote. Since 1963, Syrian government has been controlled by the Baath Party, and the Assad family has held the presidency since 1970. However contrary to its claimed republic, the vast majority, if not all, the power of the Syrian government is in the hands of the president and his family. In reality the Syrian government acts similarly to a dictatorship with a nepotistic king ("Syria" Freedom in the World).

In 2000, when Hafez al-Assad passed away, his presidency was granted to his son, Bashar al-Assad. Once he took over power, Assad promised to loosen Syria's strict politics and economy. The beginning of his presidency was called Damascus Spring, in which many political prisoners were freed, and the country's problems were open to discussion. But, this period of

time came to an end in February 2001, when reform leaders were arrested, and secret police were constantly watching and scaring the people of Syria. Assad's rule seemed to be suddenly extremely reluctant to any sort of political change ("Syria" Freedom in the World).

Saudi Arabia, United States, Turkey, Iran, and Russia, all play a crucial role in the Syrian crisis. Russia is a very important supporter of Assad's rule, Russia has stuck with Assad even though it has made them more susceptible to criticism from other countries, also Russia has launched air strikes against rebels. Although Russia is supportive of Assad's regime, Putin believes that the only way to end the Syrian conflict is through a political solution. On the complete other hand, the United States wants Assad out. The US supports the National Coalition, which is Syria's greatest opposition. China is definitely not as involved in the Syrian crisis as these key countries, however, China does still have opinions about Syria. China, much like its ally Russia, supports Assad and his presidency and wants to get rid of the rebels in Syria (Syria Crisis: Where Key Countries Stand." BBC News). However, even though China agrees with Russia's ideas, they do have doubts, and Chinese policymakers have questioned Russia's commitment to a "multilateral political solution" (Ramani).

China's approach contrasts immensely to the West's approach. China does not play as large of a role as the countries listed earlier for it has a non-interference policy when it comes to the Syrian Crisis (Ramani). This may be because China doesn't want to get involved and create more conflict or create any enemies. Also, China has a very rigid meaning of national sovereignty (the idea that an independent country with an organized government, have the right to exist without the intervention of other nations). This non-interference policy is another one of the reasons why they view Assad's presidency as a legitimate government system. Although

China isn't extremely involved, they still provide some sort of aid to Syria, such as medicine, arms, and humanitarian aids (Payne). Although China officially has a non-interference policy, they have become more involved recently. In August of 2016, Chinese military officials declared their plan to provide both humanitarian aid and personal military training to President Assad's government (Ramani).

Third parties are critical in both the ending of the Syrian crisis and the rebuilding of Syria after the fact. Syria would need extreme financial help in order to rebuild, most likely this economic help would be provided by Russia, Iran and Iraq. Syria would also need to restore security and stability. The events following either the end of the Assad regime or the end of the rebels movement would be such a drastic change that outside help would be required to keep Syria on it's feet. There also may be a need for a new constitution coming out of the crisis (English.alarabiya.net). For the current constitution states the basic function of the government and it determines Syria as a semi-presidential republic system. China, being supportive of Assad's dictator-like rule, would advocate for slightly reforming the constitution to give the president absolute power. For under absolute power, the president would be able to control and get rid of all rebels (Clarke).

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Strategic Security

The Syrian civil war includes many actors, both local and foreign. The war is mainly being fought between the current Assad regime holding power and a series of nongovernment groups (including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or ISIS), all of whom oppose the standing government (“*Islamic State*”). The conflict in Syria has also drawn many foreign nations to support either side of the war (*Al Jazeera*). Countries like Russia, the United States, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, among others, have been either drawn into the war or become involved with its consequential refugee crisis. Russia and the United States have both launched bombing campaigns that aimed to address problems within Syria (*Jpost.com*). The United States aims to remove ISIS from the region, while Russia targets hospitals and specific sites outside of large urban centers. Unlike these nations, however, China’s agenda for national security in Syria is very limited, mainly as a result of China’s non-interference policy. This policy is essentially a pledge on China’s part not to interfere with conflicts that don’t directly concern them. This rule is mainly nominal and doesn’t technically prevent China from supporting its allies, but for the most part it is followed sincerely. China still actively participates in diplomatic discussions concerning Syria’s security. Alongside Russia and Bulgaria, China recently voted against a resolution proposed by the United States, United Kingdom, and France that would prohibit the

sale of helicopters to Syria and lead to sanctions against groups involved in the chemical attacks as well as a number of Syrian commanders.

As of 2014, approximately 12,000 foreign entities belonging to 81 countries were situated in Syria. The UN has stopped counting casualties in many regions because the fighting is so scattered that numbers are virtually unattainable ("*Islamic State*"). While China remains physically uninvolved, they have begun to back the Syrian government in areas of negotiation and policy. In December of 2016, China voted to block a 7-day ceasefire in Aleppo drafted by Egypt, New Zealand, and Spain with influence from the United States, Britain, and France that would allow innocent civilians to clear the warzone and allow both sides to rest and restock their ammunition (*Besheer*). Both sides have been worn down by the fighting and could equally take advantage from a ceasefire like this. China has assumed this stance in order to help their ally Russia protect the Syrian government. Prior to the war, the Syrian army was thought to be at a tipping point, along with the rest of Assad's government- incapable of doing anything. After the war began, however, the Syrian army, in conjunction with Russian forces, has doubled its nightly airstrike count (*Fisk*). This army has not seen aid from China, but it continues to be reinforced by China's ally Russia.

Syria's borders are mainly fronted by Turkey and Iraq, who have both served vital purposes throughout the war. Turkey, who criticized Assad even prior to the war, has taken in about two million refugees. They have supported the Syrian-opposition and allowed the United States to use their airbases during bombing runs against ISIS. ISIS has proven to be another threat to Syria, controlling land across the country and spreading into Iraq, as well as much of the rest of the Middle East. ISIS has demonstrated unwavering interest in Syria, growing out of what

was Al-Qaeda (A Sunni militia group) in Iraq. They preyed on the anger against Iran's Shia government and the withdrawal of US troops from the area in order to gain land and influence, doing essentially the same thing in Syria. ISIS was able to enter the country and gain access to weapons and safety by opposing the standing government. In 2013 ISIS began taking land in Syria, killing hundreds of thousands of combatants and civilians ("*Islamic State*"). By contributing to the war, ISIS adds another dimension to Syria's conflict by posing the threat of a new ISIS controlled state. This increases the likelihood for international intervention, as ISIS and its actions are condemned globally.

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Local Security

The Syrian Arab Republic (commonly known as Syria) is located in the Middle East. In 2011, a peaceful protest against President Bashar al-Assad turned into a full blown civil war for almost six years, claiming more than 470,000 lives and displacing more than 6,100,000 syrian civilians. Before the war, Syria's security at the local level was provided by President Bashar al-Assad. In response to the protests against al-Assad's government, local police forces used excessive force by using tear gas, water cannons, and live ammunition to stop the demonstrations. As the war expanded, many police stations became abandoned by its officers who fled the scene instead of fighting it. The state of Syria is described as pure chaos, with many powerful groups dividing up territories of the country, killing anyone in their path.

The country of Syria has become divided into four main groups who all control four distinct land areas of the country. The Syrian Government, which is President Bashar al-Assad's force, has around 200,000 soldiers and mainly controls the southwestern part of the country. The Syrian Opposition controls parts of the north and south of Syria. The main group of the opposition, the Free Syrian Army, is dedicated to anti-regime, with 50,000 soldiers. Rojava, the Democratic Federal System of Northern Syria, also known as the Kurds, has around 50,000 soldiers. Lastly, the Islamic State, or ISIL/ISIS, controls the central and eastern part of Syria, and has 15,000-20,000 soldiers. The Islamic State is a terrorist organization and claims religious,

military, and political authority over all Muslims. Each of these groups controls their territory, therefore the level of security differs between regions. For example, Bashar al-Assad's army has taken control of the city of Aleppo, ending more than four years of rebel rule there, which changes the security situation greatly.

Because of the war and the fight for different areas, many Syrians have been forced to leave their homes in order to survive. In these different regions, groups like Mercy Corps, UNICEF, World Vision and the Syrian American Medical Society focus on providing Syrians with assistance. Resources like water are very scarce, and these groups help the Syrian civilians get it, along with food, shelter, and more. ISIS controls about a third of Syria's oil production, which makes it harder for civilians to get oil. While ISIS sells oil to al-Assad for funding for their terrorist group, many are forced to smuggle the oil on boats, pumps and even horses.

Prior to the conflict, civilians already had an unusual amount of small arms in their hands, due to decades of Russian and Soviet support. Prior to the war, it was estimated that there were around 700,000 small arms in the hands of civilians. As the Syrian conflict grew, these numbers kept getting larger and larger. Due to the lack of local security and the decrease of a feeling of safety, many civilians- along with armies, have increased their arms in order to counter their enemies.

In terms of supplying President Bashar al-Assad's government, China, Iran, and Russia are key suppliers of mass weapons and equipment. The rebels, mainly the Free Syrian Army, get their weapons through the black market, along with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Turkey, Europe, and the United States.

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Social Reconstruction

The Syrian conflict as turned many people's lives upside down, despite nationality or affiliation. This is certainly true for the four million refugees who are fleeing to the European

Union and other foreign powers to find a new home. Yet people who remain in Syria face hardships as well, as there are 4.8 million people in remote areas with no access to humanitarian aid, medical supplies, or an escape route out of their remote area (guardian.com) . Functioning hospitals have become scarce as well, causing medical assistance to be rare and inconsistent. In total, both of these groups make up the 12 million people in Syria in need of aid to survive (guardian.com). This is affecting people of all ages, but children are being hit the hardest because they are suffering from trauma and ill health. These children have also not been able to attend school, because a quarter of Syria's schools have been damaged, destroyed, or taken over for shelter by rebel organizations like TEV-DEM, a branch of the Democratic Union Party (diplomat.com :Why China Can't Ignore Syria's Rebel Factions). The women in Syria are feeling the harsh effects of the crisis as well because many of them are being held hostage as a means to blackmail their fighting relatives into surrendering and have been subject to rape and sexual harassment when traveling as refugees (independent.co.uk.com). Thousands of newborns are dealing with the crisis as well, as they are being denied a nationality and forced to live a life without access to official employment, education, or health care just because of their birthplace (guardian.com). This lack of identity will cause problems for these children in the future, and if not solved will leave these babies no place to call home. If borderlines and territorial rights these newborns may have hope of not living as undocumented. To combat human rights issues, Iran, Jordan, and Lebanon are cracking down on their screening for entry to their country to make sure that those who have humanitarian issues are prioritized entry before others (guardian.com) By doing so, these three countries will be able to help civilians and finally consider their rights and needs as the victims to one of the worst wars in the history of our world.

The diplomats of China wish to help these victims by dealing with the human rights dilemma, which China believes is best solved by domestic judicial courts. China, however, has still agreed with Assad that the Chinese military will provide humanitarian aid to Syria. This goes against China's non-interference policy, which was originally made to ensure China's safety, but China has finally come to realize that to reach a resolution everyone must contribute all of their available resources. China wants to better civilian's lives so that the Assad regime can continue its rule and so China can prove its power in Asia. China is also trying to prevent the UN for enforcing outrageous sanctions on Syria, for it is ridiculous to condemn Assad for no reason, or accuse countries wrongly of humanitarian violations when these issues can not be solved simply by punishment. China has also encouraged other foreign powers to comply with the Charter of United Nations' policies of sovereignty and territorial integrity, but to not oblige to the Charter bringing in civilians rights into the mix when all problems can be solved by each country, in their own domestic courts.

China's plans for rebuilding society begin with solving all of these civilian crises. China aims to begin to solve the crisis of low employment rates by providing civilians with new jobs through its Silk Road Initiative which will run through Iran before swinging west through Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. This will cause a splurge in trade among these countries, and profits will be doubled because of the modern technology that will cause it to have an edge over its ancient equivalent. Although not a top priority post-war, it will only add to the income of these countries as a whole and will be a way for them to increase their revenue when trying to recover and rebuild after the Syrian conflict. The lack of medical care and shut down hospitals will be fixed with the enforcement of the Chinese military new humanitarian aid, that will be able bring these

people to a physician more quickly. Problems regarding women's rights can be amended by a resolution to the conflict because these women will be more safe and will be able to benefit from a stable Assad government. Problems regarding children's and newborn's rights will also be solved by a stable Assad government because schools will be re-established and taken back from the Democratic Union Party and their military TEV-DEM. Assad will also begin to investigate the birthplace of these nationality-lacking children.

Overall, China wishes for a resolution where Assad is in power once again, all civilians no longer live in fear of their safety, and where China is seen as an influential power because of its infrastructure and the policies it used to rebuild the Middle East. This goal can only be achieved through the mutual contribution of all foreign powers, and success is only attainable if we all work together to find a resolution.

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Economic Reconstruction

Prior to the war, the state of the Syrian economy was very diverse and included a 40 year old centralized economy. Syria adopted a centralized economy, along with strictly regulated commercial transactions in order to have more control over their economic decision making. Before the war, agriculture produced 22% of the economy, industry and excavation made up 25%, retail took up 23%, and tourism made up 12% of the Syrian economy (Mahamid). Oil is undoubtedly the most valuable natural resource that Syria has and because of this, it has had several groups fighting for control of it. Before the war, the extraction and sale of it was controlled by Iraqi and Kurdish forces, but were taken over by ISIS when they seized hydroelectric dams and oil fields, which help them generate millions of dollars per month (Watkins). In addition to oil fields, the Syrian government also used to control sectors such as

border posts, but has since lost both of these to the growing terrorist groups. Sectors run by private industry focused on textiles, paper products, electrical products, machinery, and leather goods. Syrian exports include crude oil, which generated 150 billion lira in 2010 and accounted for 67% of Syrian exports before the war, fuels, calcium phosphate, sheep, tomatoes, electricity, cotton, chemicals, and eggs (Pike). Export partners included the United States, Turkey, France, Iraq, and Italy. On the other hand, major imports included fuels, sugar, grains, iron, steel, cigarettes, plastics, vehicles, and soybeans, with import partners which included the United States, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. Before the war, Syria continuously spent around 2.3 billion dollars on military, which made up about 4.1% of GDP in 2010 (“Syrian Military Budget”). In 2009, Syria's investment in healthcare made up an underwhelming 2.9% of GDP, while education accounted for 5.1% of GDP in Syria in 2010 (Al-Kattan). Because of these statistics, Syria would not have been considered an equal society based on the fact that they spent an underwhelming amount of their budget on healthcare for their citizens.

In 2009, Syria established the Damascus Security Exchange, which prompted the number of firms listed on the exchange to expand. In Syria, publicly listed private banks dominated the exchange's values and trading activities. There were only six state owned banks, with the Commercial Bank of Syria as the largest. Private banks attracted a new wave of businessmen who owned a substantial amount of shares and even sit on the board of several banks, proving that banking was a booming business in Syria.

The impact that the Syrian crisis has had on their economy has been astronomical. Oil output has dropped significantly because many oil fields are under the control of ISIS, while all of the components of Syria's GDP have dropped dramatically, including 25% contractions year

over year in 2012 and 2013, especially in manufacturing and agriculture. Meanwhile, exports have lost 80% of their value from 2010 to 2015 (Holodny). It is estimated that the Syrian economy will annually contract by 3.9% from 2016 to 2019, which would bring the economy back to its early 1990's size. The access to oil fields has been disrupted, as now ISIS controls most of them, and because of sanctions placed on Syria by the European Union, there are limited markets available that are able to process the crude oil. This loss of oil export capabilities has damaged the government revenue. Meanwhile, because of the ongoing conflict which has reduced Syria's production ability, heating oil and diesel fuel are in short supply (Al-Jazeera). Basic infrastructure such as schools and health facilities have also been destroyed as a result of the war.

Prior to the conflict, Syria's unemployment rate in 2010 was 8.6% ("UNData"). Sectors employing the most people included agriculture and industry. The population of Syria, prior to the conflict, was roughly 23 million people, but has dropped to 18 million this year. The unemployment rate in Syria has risen to 57.7% because of the loss of resources and opportunities, plunging 80% of Syrians into poverty ("Syria's War").

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Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

The Conflict in Syria has brought to question many issues in relation to the topic of human rights and war crimes such as the alleged use of chemical weapons on the Syrian people by the Syrian government, the millions of refugees fleeing the country, and the millions more that have been trapped in Syria by the civil war or those who have lost so much over the course of the conflict. In the past Syria has never really possessed a reputation for being very advanced human rights wise, never really being human rights friendly. Since 1973, Syria has been a single party state with authorities having been accused of harassing and imprisoning human rights activists, as well as being in a state of emergency from 1963 until April of 2011 which allowed security forces all reaching powers of arrest and detention. In Syria freedoms like those of expression, association and assembly are strictly controlled with women and ethnic minorities facing large scale discrimination. The Human Rights Watch, a reputable authority on the issue has said that the current president Bashar al-Assad has failed to improve Syria's human rights

record in the first 10 years of his rule and remains among the worst in the world. The group Amnesty International claims that the government may be guilty of crimes against humanity concluded from “ witness accounts of deaths in custody, torture and arbitrary detention” during the response to the 2011 uprising (Amnesty).

The conflict in Syria has raged on since early 2011 during the Arab Spring where Syrians took to the streets in protest of the oppressive regime of Bashar al-Assad and since then many severe human rights offences have been committed by no matter the side. The UN has produced reports that have said that the war has been “characterized by a complete lack of adherence to the norms of international laws” (UN). In a recent estimate, the number of casualties in the conflict was said to be anywhere from 400,000 to 470,000 people with a large amount of that number being made up of civilian casualties. The scope of the humanitarian crisis is astounding with millions fleeing the country every year in search of the promise of safety. Some of the accusations facing the Syrian government include unlawful killing, torture, arbitrary and collective, prevention of medical treatment, shelling of civilians and attacks on medical personnel. The opposition forces have also been accused of crimes like unlawful killing, torture, kidnapping and the use of children as soldiers. Overall both sides in the conflict have committed many horrible war crimes and violations of basic human rights which must be dealt with and stopped. Currently there have been quite a few attempts to through the use of sanctions; however these sanctions are not very useful and serve no real purpose other than to restrict the path to peace.

Throughout history there have been many different cases in which civil wars have occurred and in each situation accountability has been handled very differently. One example is

Chile when the government committed many staged disappearances then declared amnesty exempting them from punishment for their crimes. Other notable examples include those with trials like those in Nuremberg, Bosnia and Rwanda which were held by the international criminal court and it incriminated those who had committed crimes during these terrible conflicts. Another way of finding accountability was through truth and reconciliation commissions in South Africa after apartheid which allowed victims to share their experiences and have perpetrators give testimony. Finally there is the local reconciliation efforts in Rwanda which allowed local level judges to hear the trials of the perpetrators. The trials and commissions provided justice and rightful conclusions to the conflict however the amnesty law taken up by the perpetrators of the Chilean crisis is wholly unfair and completely unjust as it protects those who have committed such awful crimes. The International Criminal Court serves as a higher authority on cases that possess consequences on a global scale the decisions made by this court are accepted by most of the countries in the world. In the past the court has ruled delved into cases like that of the Central African Republic and was created so that large scale genocide like that which happened in Rwanda and is effective in doing so.

Syria as a country is not very diverse and is home to a small Christian minority, but is mostly made up of a large Muslim majority, throughout the conflict these Christians have been a target of violence by the majority Muslim government and protections for these minorities do not exist in a country like Syria. This specific and targeted violence is a significant issue that is just one facet of the many-sided conflict and humanitarian crisis in Syria.

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Cross-Border Issues

Syria is bordered by Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, and Lebanon and Israel to the southeast. Prior to the war, Syria had a steady relationship with Turkey, although they have had their struggles. In the mid-1900s, Turkey and Syria feuded about water and about different groups that each country supports. The relationship was fairly calm for two decades prior to the start of the Syrian Civil War. Iraq and Syria have had their fair share of border issues in the past. Many past Iraqi leaders had longed to combine the two countries. This has caused some border wars between the two countries. Recently, both Syria and Iraq have been

pretty calm with each other, for both countries are fighting ISIS. Syria has had a lot of conflicts with Jordan. On and off fighting and finger-pointing had created a tense relationship between the two. Although, recently the two countries have been fairly peaceful. The relationship between Syria and Israel, on the other hand, is far from peaceful. Both countries have had it out for the other and both countries do no business with the other. There has been a ceasefire line created, which has helped to keep what little peace they have. Lebanon and Syria have had a complicated relationship in the past. Syria had occupied Lebanon for roughly three decades. Only have relations been stable when Syria recognized Lebanon's sovereignty in 2008. During the war, Turkey and Syria have had some quarrels. Many Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey and Turkey is not very happy about it. This has created some tension between the two countries. Since the start of the civil war, Iraq has opened some Syrian refugee camps. The two countries have been pretty peaceful as well, but there are a lot of refugees in Iraq, causing a lot of stress on the Iraqi government. Syria and Jordan have had some conflict due to the civil war. Some battles between Syrian and Jordanian forces on the border have created some tension between the two countries. Syria and Israel have had some small quarrels during the war. These strifes have caused the deaths of some soldiers from both countries, but nothing major has come from them. Syria and Lebanon have been fairly peaceful during the civil war. Some fights from Syria have spilled into Tripoli and tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have fled to Lebanon.

Prior to the conflict, roughly 1.2 million Iraqi refugees have sought safety in Syria in 2007. These refugees have affected everyday life in Syria. The cost of normal goods and houses in Syria have skyrocketed. Most of these Iraqi refugees are forced to live in overcrowded apartments. Many refugees have returned to Iraq.

Prior to the war, the Syrian border was mostly secure. Although, Syria had many fights and wars with the countries on its borders, so they had many soldiers ready to defend the border. The government was in charge of appointing generals to help protect the border with their troops.

Syria has had problems with deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, and water pollution. Syria has especially battled the with water for a long time. A lot of the sewage and wastes from refining oil were dumped into the water there and have caused a shortage of clean water. Also, population growth and industrial expansion have caused clean water to be hard to find. Due to the war, outbreaks of pollution and disease have flooded Syria. Power plants and sewage plants have sustained major damage and could cause for more environmental concerns.

In the 1986, Syria was repeatedly bombed by an Iraqi group around the city of Damascus. In the 2000s car bombs and a bus explosion killed at least twenty Syrians. Although, the Syrian government didn't say that terrorism was involved in the bus explosion. Most of these terrorists were from surrounding countries. Although, there have been homegrown terrorists due to the civil war. Isis has been trying to conquer Syria for a long time. The rebels have led many attacks against ISIS and have fought over land with them for a while. ISIS continual poses a threat inside Syria and Iraq has helped Syria with the fight against ISIS, both in Syria and Iraq. ISIS poses threats to civilians and to the Syrian government.

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