

Harvard Kennedy School Negotiation Project
Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, Israel (IDC)

Negotiating Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa

A System Analysis after the Arab Spring, the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the Rise of ISIS

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The MENA Negotiation Report

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PREFACE

This report invites the reader to reflect systematically upon the broad range of actors, interests, and narratives present in the ongoing, interlocking conflicts in the Middle East and in North Africa.

Our research initiative included scholars and students from Harvard University, IDC Herzliya, Tufts University, and Brandeis University. The final report contains a comprehensive mapping of the MENA conflict system. It identifies and analyzes the various conflicts, parties, issues, and relationships that shape the current political situation in the Middle East and North Africa. As such, this negotiation stakeholder analysis includes many actors, both state and non-state, that are involved in the interconnected conflicts in the MENA region and that have a significant impact on its future. It also aims to identify opportunities for peaceful intervention by means of negotiation.

We would like to thank our research assistants, research facilitators, and research contributors for their hard work and collaborative creativity that made this project possible.

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ALGERIA

Party Portrait

After gaining independence from France in 1962, Algeria witnessed increased Arabization and conflict, particularly in its eleven-year-long civil war. Presently, the Algerian state is plagued by domestic rivalries among the Army General Staff, the Presidency, and the recently dismantled spy agency, the Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS). This split is further complicated by internal clan and factional conflicts within the groups. These groups compose the shadowy business, intelligence, military, and political forces controlling the nation. They act behind the scenes in pursuit of their own various interests, either through the elected government or around it.

Key Interests

- Maintain military dominance of the North Africa region
- Strengthen and expand military and intelligence cooperation with Western powers
- Settle the Western Sahara dispute in favor of the self-determination of the indigenous Polisario Front

Sources of Leverage

Military – The Algerian military boasts the largest defense budget in Africa; at \$13 billion USD, it is over twice the size of its Egyptian counterpart. Algeria also possesses robust military power projection capabilities and widely acknowledged counterterrorism experience.

Regional Strategy

Algeria seeks to maintain its military dominance of North Africa, and to strengthen military and intelligence cooperation with Western powers while seeking non-threatening economic innovations. Diplomatically, Algeria aims to become more engaged in the region, and avoid being isolated for its strong support of self-determination and national sovereignty in the case of Western Sahara.

Powerful Individuals

Ahmed Gaïd-Salah (Chief of the General Staff and Deputy Defense Minister) Abdelaziz Bouteflika (President), General Mohamed “Tewfik” Mediène (former head of the DRS), Said Bouteflika (brother of the President and advisor), Abdelmalek Sellal (Prime Minister), Ali Haddad (prominent businessman and presidential advisor)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Come to the table for Western Sahara peace talks - Talk with Morocco and the Polisario Front regarding Western Sahara. Since Morocco refuses to come to the table without Algeria’s participation, this would be a positive step toward settling the conflict. However, Algeria’s internal fractures may impede Algeria’s ability to engage in negotiations.

Internal Conflicts

Algerian politics are complicated by the strong internal conflicts among the Army General Staff, the Presidency, and the former DRS. The former DRS is still able to manipulate extremist groups, civil society, and media; it is unknown whether the erstwhile agency retains influence in the government.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

MOROCCO Polisario Front, UNITED STATES

Partners

EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, LIBYA Government of National Accord, LIBYA House of Representatives, NATO, RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA, TUNISIA

Rivals

HOLY SEE, MOROCCO Government

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

AQAP

Party Portrait

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was created from the unification of al Qaeda groups in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. With size estimates at around 4,000 fighters, AQAP punches far above its weight in terms of geopolitical influence. AQAP has been labeled “the most lethal Qaeda franchise.” It is seen as a top priority for U.S. counterterrorism officials and a destabilizing force in Yemen, a country already racked with governance issues. AQAP threatens powerful regimes like the Saudi royal family and Sultanate of Oman. In many ways, it has become the face of Al Qaeda (AQ) since the death of founder Osama Bin Laden in 2011 and the dismantling of AQ in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. At the same time, it remains a strongly Yemeni outfit, dedicated to the parochialism of Yemen as much as to global jihad. Although the group faces an existential threat in the rise of Salafist rival ISIS, AQAP has taken advantage of the Yemeni civil war and lack of territorial control to become more powerful than it has been in years.

Key Interests

- Hold on to territory gained as a result of Yemen’s collapse
- Disrupt the current Middle East powers and competing regional actors in Yemen, the region, and around the globe
- Take the mantle of Sunni Salafist leadership from ISIS
- Maintain and expand support of Yemeni population

Sources of Leverage

- Geographic** - Mountainous territory presents a challenge for military intervention
- Military** - Local Yemeni population possess an abundance of weapons which AQAP can use to its advantage; AQAP’s integration into local groups makes it difficult to attack without harming civilians
- Soft Power** - Grievances of the local Yemeni population with Middle East regimes
- Political** - Yemeni Government’s lack of territorial control and poor central governance

Regional Strategy

AQAP’s strategy includes: learning from ISIS’ strategy in Syria and Iraq to gain more territory; expanding and strengthening its forces in the Middle East, Western states and elsewhere; obtaining support from Gulf donors; and cultivating relationships with Muslims all over the world as a method to recruitment and enhanced capabilities.

Powerful Individuals

Qasim al-Rimi (Amir)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Reconcile with ISIS as it is weakened by Western forces, to form a combined Salafist terrorist organization

Internal Conflicts

There is evidence that AQAP has in the past shirked orders from AQ central, specifically the directive from AQ central not to establish Islamic governance

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

SYRIA Jabhat Fatah a-Sham

Rivals

ISIS

Adversaries

EGYPT Government, ISRAEL, JORDAN

Active Armed Opponents

EUROPEAN UNION, IRAN, OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UNITED STATES, YEMEN Government, YEMEN Houthis

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

Private citizens in mostly GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia

ARAB LEAGUE

Party Portrait

The Arab League – or League of Arab States (LAS) – is an organization focused on building cooperation between Arab states, defending their sovereignty, and working with international bodies on issues of economics, peace, and security. While the LAS is a political umbrella, each member of the LAS is responsible for conducting its own foreign policy. Historically, the LAS has strongly respected the principle of state sovereignty, thereby not supporting regime changes in its member states. Shifting away from these non-interventionist goals, the LAS has recently taken on active roles as a conflict mediator, crisis manager, and international intermediary.

Key Interests

- Maintain regional order and stability;
- Uphold state sovereignty;
- Reduce Shi'a/Iranian influence across the region; and
- Mitigate the impacts of conflicts and humanitarian crises across the region.

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power - The primary sources of leverage for the LAS are soft power. There is potential for oil-rich states to use their wealth to gain traction and attention during conflicts, but this leverage is largely unrealized due to rivalries between member states. The LAS' main source of leverage is grounded in its credibility and legitimacy as the only Pan-Arab organization.

Regional Strategy

Due to serious divisions and conflicts within the League, there seems to be no overarching regional strategy. Prior to 2008, the League's strategy was to ensure that powerful elites maintained domestic control and stabilized their states. Since the Arab Spring, most LAS actions seem aimed at maximizing Sunni influence in the region, minimizing Iran's Shi'a influence, and, generally, preventing conflict and instability.

Powerful Individuals

Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit

Potential Negotiation Moves

- Intervene in Conflicts** - In the early stages of conflicts, the LAS is likely to intervene and attempt a mediation effort. Alternatively, it may refer issues to the UN Security Council with recommendations/requests for additional mediation efforts, ceasefires, or military intervention by regional or international actors
- Build Regional Military Alliance** - Build on its 2015 commitment and establish a voluntary joint military force with peacekeeping role
- Act as Guarantor** - Position itself as the guarantor of political resolutions to conflict
- Engage with Donors** - Engaging with international donors for reconstruction and recovery aid

Internal Conflicts

There are numerous divides and conflicts within the League. Much of the conflict and indecision in the LAS can be explained by the Sunni-Shi'a divide. Saudi Arabia supports Sunni factions throughout the League while Shi'a states are largely supported by Iran. This leads to proxy wars in Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen and instability throughout the region.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, UNITED NATIONS, Informal partners of some member states include: IRAN, TURKEY, UNITED STATES

Rivals

Some member states consider as rivals or adversaries: IRAN, TURKEY, ISRAEL

Adversaries

Some member states consider as rivals or adversaries: IRAN, TURKEY, ISRAEL

Active Armed Opponents

Active armed opponents of member states include: ISIS, SYRIA Government

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

BAHRAIN

Party Portrait

Bahrain's monarchy has opted to focus on its security needs instead of creating a prosperous and open society for all. Sunni government policy routinely discriminates against its large Shia population. Bahrain feels threatened by Iran and the government views Shia Bahrainis as potential Iranian allies that may try to topple the monarchy at Iran's behest. Bahrain has historically sought an alliance with stronger nations to protect it from Iran. Today, the US acts as a guarantor of Bahrain security, especially in the face of Iran. While ISIS is seen as a threat to Bahrain, it is not treated with the same seriousness as Iran.

Key Interests

- Retain commitment from the US to the region and support to counter Iran
- Protect monarchy from a possible revolution; control Shia mobilization and organization
- Ensure economic troubles will not be exacerbated through a disruption of its oil refineries, economic aid cancelation from the GCC, or Iranian hostility in the Gulf

Sources of Leverage

Energy – Not a major oil producer, but has one of the largest refineries in the world with easy access to Saudi oil
Geographic – Location in the Gulf where most of world's oil is shipped, major powers will attempt to keep the shipping lanes open
Military – US 5th Fleet is stationed in Bahrain. Bahrain could use this as leverage in its relationship with the US. Provides Bahrain with significant security assurances and prestige
Convening Power – Sought to emulate other Gulf nations by hosting a series of international conferences (e.g. Manama Dialogue)

Regional Strategy

Bahrain has sought to deepen its alliance with the US/Britain by allowing increased military presence. The monarchy has continued to rely on the GCC and Saudi Arabia for economic and military support. Bahrain has joined military alliances against ISIS and other possible Iranian proxies (e.g. the Houthis in Yemen). Bahrain views their Shia population as a possible Iranian pawn in an attempt to destabilize the region. Bahrain oppresses and harasses its Shia population in order to negate their ability to challenge the monarchy, with the tacit approval of some its allies.

Powerful Individuals

Al Khalifa Monarchy: Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa (King of Bahrain), Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (heir apparent). Pro-government figures: Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa (Prime Minister), Sheikh 'Abd al-Latif al-Mahmoud (leader of the National Unity Assembly), Ali Ahmed Abdulla (Al-Minbar leader), Salah 'Ali (Al-Minbar Secretary General).
Major Human Rights players: 'Abd al-Hadi al-Khawaja, Nabeel Rajab, Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei.
Key opposition/Shia players: Isa Qassim, Ali Salman (Secretary General of the Al Wefaq), Matar Matar (Senior member of Al Wefaq)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Sunni-Shia Reconciliation – Bahrain could protect the rights of Shia Bahrainis, thus bringing them away from Iran and protecting the monarchy in the process
Use American Bases as leverage – US 5th fleet, located in Bahrain, is key to American regional strategy. Bahrain could use this to elicit concessions like deeper regional commitment and softening Saudi control in Bahrain
Convening power to bring in new actors – Invite South Asian nations, whose citizens are a large migrant presence in Bahrain, and Russia and China as actors in combating ISIS and playing a larger role in the region in general in order to inspire new thinking and mitigate sectarian and regional tensions

Internal Conflicts

Struggles with intense sectarianism. The government has aligned with Sunni groups and political parties with links to the Muslim Brotherhood. The government inhibits the work of human rights campaigners and civil society when deemed too closely aligned with the Shia opposition. While several Bahrainis have joined ISIS, Bahrain has not openly addressed the topic. ISIS routinely calls on its

Memberships

GCC, IAEA, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, League of Arab States, OIC, UN (Member)

Allies

OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, YEMEN Government, KUWAIT

Partners

CHINA, HOLY SEE, INDIA, JAPAN, RUSSIA, QATAR, NATO, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

IRAN, SYRIA Government, YEMEN Houthis

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

Various rebel groups the GCC supports in Syria, Anti-Houthi forces in Yemen (Bahrain's contribution minimal in both instances)

External Sponsor

SAUDI ARABIA, GCC member countries

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM

CHINA

Party Portrait

China has witnessed a remarkably rapid ascent from developing economy to global superpower. China's interest in the Middle East is primarily linked to, but not limited to, oil. The Middle East is China's main source of oil, and will become an increasingly essential source of oil for China in the future. China also regards the Middle East as an important market for the materials required for its own large-scale infrastructure projects. China sees itself as a neutral broker, maintaining relations with every government in the region. Beijing is deeply skeptical of military interventions, and believes American actions in the region have had a deleterious impact on regional security. China prefers to work with the current governments and to maintain the status quo. It has interests in tackling terrorism's root causes, which it regards as inherently economic in nature. Since Xi Jinping assumed office, he has consolidated power and taken a more aggressive stance internationally. While he has made some minor adjustments in China's Middle East policy, there have yet to be any significant changes.

Key Interests

- Secure supply of oil from the region
- Secure export markets for Chinese goods
- Secure concessions for Middle Eastern natural resources that are essential to China's massive infrastructure and trade route projects

Sources of Leverage

Economic - China is the largest or second largest trading partner of every country in the region. It also is a major arms supplier, including to Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and the UAE.

Military - China boasts the second most well-funded military in the world, and has been working on ways to project its power including the construction of a new naval base in Djibouti

Political - China has a positive reputation in most Middle Eastern countries and generally enjoys positive relations in the region

Regional Strategy

China's strategy is tridimensional in nature, seeking to balance the complex web of relationships in the region without having to choose sides. China's policy, known as the "1+2+3 approach", prioritizes massive regional investment, such as the "one-belt one road," and "the new silk road," as the key to regional stability. It opposes unilateral military intervention, and believes the UN should be the ultimate arbiter of any serious conflict

Powerful Individuals

Chairman Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, Party Secretary of Xinjiang Chen Quanguo, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Special Envoy on the Syrian issue Xie Xiaoyan

Potential Negotiation Moves

Economic Development - Fund economic developments projects in exchange for political cooperation

Provide military assistance - Increase training and materiel support to regional allies, including Egypt and the UAE

Commit military forces - Including to UN peace operations where it is an increasingly dominant actor

Broker Agreement - Use its role as a neutral mediator to broker agreement between conflicting parties

Internal Conflicts

Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan

Memberships

UN (Security Council)

Allies

N/A

Partners

DJIBOUTI, IRAN

Rivals

RUSSIA, UNITED STATES

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

GERMANY, FRANCE, JAPAN, EUROPEAN UNION

Aid Donor

DJIBOUTI, EGYPT Government, ERITREA, IRAN, IRAQ Government, JORDAN, MOROCCO Government, SOMALIA Government, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN, TUNISIA, TURKEY

DJIBOUTI

Party Portrait

The Republic of Djibouti, a predominantly Muslim country, historically formed part of French Somaliland before voting to become an independent country in 1977. Djibouti is a semi-presidential republic, dominated by the Somali Issa Dir clan, and has held consistently free and fair elections. Djibouti's strategic location on the Gulf of Aden – close to the world's busiest shipping lanes as well as Yemen, Somalia and Saudi Arabia – has made it a highly attractive location for an array of regional and global powers to set up military bases. Since 2002, Djibouti has hosted Camp Lemonnier, the only American base on the African continent. Saudi Arabia and China are now building their own bases in Djibouti, prompting Japan to expand its own pre-existing military base in the country. Italy also operates a small military base there, crucial to operations to tackle Somali piracy. While not a major military or economic power, Djibouti's strategic position potentially affords it a degree of leverage. Djibouti maintains positive ties with most Middle Eastern countries, but is locked in relatively hostile bilateral relationship with neighboring Eritrea.

Key Interests

- Secure lucrative contracts with foreign powers to lease military and naval bases.
- Ensure domestic security and that Yemen's civil war concludes rapidly and peacefully.
- Continue US military action in the Middle East.

Sources of Leverage

Military - Djibouti will soon host Saudi, Chinese, American and Japanese military bases, playing a vital role in all of these countries' military operations in the Middle East

Regional Strategy

Djibouti's strategy is to maintain positive relations with most Middle Eastern countries, fostering particular close partnerships with the Sunni powers. The country will continue to position itself as an attractive strategic location for military and naval bases, increasing its leverage over regional and global powers and securing rents.

Powerful Individuals

President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh; Prime Minister Adboukader Kambil Mohamed; Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff General Zakaria Cheikh Ibrahim

Potential Negotiation Moves

Refugee Hosting - Offer to host some of the refugees fleeing Eritrea to Europe, reducing burden on southern member states such as Greece and Italy.
Leverage Concessions - Make foreign powers' continued operation of military bases in Djibouti conditional upon increased development assistance or military funding.
Commit forces to multilateral operations - Voluntarily contribute Djibouti armed forces to United Nations / African Union peace operation in Somalia, securing rents or political concessions.

Internal Conflicts

The Issa clan has dominated the country's politics for decades, both during and after French colonial administration. The Affar continue to feel aggrieved at its lack of political power and relative marginalization from government.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

SOMALIA Government, YEMEN Government

Partners

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, UAE, UNITED STATES

Aid Donor

N/A

EGYPT - GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Following the upheaval of the 2011 Tahrir Square protests, which led to the ouster of former President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt underwent a tumultuous political transition process. This resulted in the election of the Mohamed Morsi, the leader of the Freedom and Justice Party (the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm) in 2012. Thereafter in 2013, a military coup led to the removal of Morsi from office, and the emergence – and subsequent consolidation of power – of General Abdel Fattah al Sisi as President.

Key Interests

- Reassert full political control, thereby eliminating the Muslim Brotherhood as a major political threat;
- Attract foreign investment and boost economic growth;
- Drive back ISIS-linked groups out of the Sinai Peninsula;
- Restore Egypt's regional leadership role, and
- Maintain strong ties with the United States and the West.

Sources of Leverage

Convening Power - The Camp David Accords provide Egypt with significant leverage over the US and Western allies, given its role as an Arab ally and potential broker in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

Geography - As the largest Arab country with critical geo-strategic importance, Egypt holds sway in persuading international partners that large-scale economic instability or civil unrest cannot be permitted

Political - Historic regional influence allows the country to act as a power broker in bilateral relations and multilateral fora such as the League of Arab States

Regional Strategy

Reestablish its regional leadership role, particularly through regional institutions such as the Arab League, as well as through the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. As a result of its regional influence, Egypt seeks to maintain, and increase, its leverage over Western actors who provide substantial military and economic support.

Powerful Individuals

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (President), Sedki Sobhy (Minister of Defense), Mohammed Morsi (former President and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party), Mohammed Badie (Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Strengthen Military Ties - Partner with the United States, Israel and Western states to fight jihadist militant groups in the Sinai

Monitor Muslim Brotherhood - Seek partnership with Israel and Western countries to deepen monitoring and surveillance of Muslim Brotherhood activities

Lead Regional Negotiations - Lead the negotiation of a fair water distribution agreement for the Nile Basin with Israel, Sudan, Nile Basin Countries, as well as international financial institutions and the United Nations

Increase Regional Influence - Gain greater international and regional influence, for example by playing a leading role in negotiating a more sustainable framework for refugees fleeing from conflicts.

Internal Conflicts

The Egyptian government's main internal conflict is with their domestic political rival, the Muslim Brotherhood. Since ousting former President Morsi in a coup in July 2013, President Sisi has aggressively pursued repressive tactics against the group, arresting thousands and labelling the group a "terrorist organization". In addition, the government is facing armed conflict from ISIS-linked factions in the Sinai.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, OIC, UN (Security Council – term ends 2017)

Allies

Given the recent political tumult experienced by Egypt, the country does not currently have any stable, extensive relationships with other states which could be classed as a firm alliance.

Partners

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, ISRAEL, RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Rivals

QATAR, IRAN, SUDAN, SYRIA Government, TURKEY

Adversaries

EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS (especially militants based in the Egyptian Sinai and Libya), AQAP, YEMEN Houthis

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IMF, World Bank), SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES, UAE

EGYPT - MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Party Portrait

The Muslim Brotherhood is the most important Islamist organization in Egypt, and arguably across the Middle East. Since its founding in 1928, the group has sought to promote Islamist ideology in Egyptian society. It is an important social and political actor, particularly given its history of providing public services to disadvantaged communities. Its influence peaked with the election of Mohammed Morsi as President in 2012 before being deposed by a military coup in 2013. The group is now considered a terrorist organization, with thousands of members imprisoned.

Key Interests

- Regain status as a legitimate political actor;
- Gain international support against the Egyptian Government's crackdown of opposition groups;
- Achieve the release of its political and ideological leaders;
- Continue to yield influence in society; and
- Inspire demonstrations against the Egyptian Government

Sources of Leverage

Grass-roots Support – Given its history of providing low-income communities with public services, the Brotherhood continues to yield considerable, albeit subdued, political support

Regional Support – As one of the most important Islamist organizations in the region, it continues to have support from political groups in Tunisia, Palestine, Turkey or Qatar, for example.

International Support –The Brotherhood has sought to seek support from Western countries that have voiced reservations about the Egyptian Government's repressive tactics

Regional Strategy

Though there are important ideological factions within the Brotherhood, many leaders wish to maintain its relevance as a social and political group in communities across Egypt, despite many of its leaders and members currently being imprisoned.

Powerful Individuals

Mohammed Morsi (former President and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party), Mohammed Badie (Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Incite Protests – Though it has been pushed underground, the Brotherhood may seek to actively resist by inciting protests against the Egyptian Government

Elicit International Support – In order to pressure the Egyptian Government, the Muslim Brotherhood may seek to conduct public diplomatic efforts in order to gain support from Western and Arab countries for the release of its leaders

Block Egyptian Government's Agenda – Given that it continues to have partners in Qatar, Tunisia (Ennahda), Palestine (Hamas) or Turkey, the Muslim Brotherhood may be able to block the Egyptian Government's efforts to assert its influence abroad

Internal Conflicts

There are currently two main factions within the Muslim Brotherhood: (i) those that seek to continue to peacefully advance the organization's social or political goals; and (ii) those that believe that armed struggle against the Egyptian Government is justified and the only way of advancing its mission.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

QATAR, TURKEY, PALESTINE Hamas

Rivals

UNITED STATES, SAUDI ARABIA, UAE, ISRAEL

Adversaries

EGYPT Government

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

ERITREA

Party Portrait

Eritrea is a highly authoritarian country, widely considered to be among the most repressive on the African continent. This has generated an exodus of refugees and asylum seekers, settling not only in neighboring countries but also in Europe. Eritrea has long-standing positive ties with Israel, providing early and enthusiastic recognition of the Jewish State. It has hostile relations with neighboring Djibouti and Somalia, and at various points in recent decades has engaged in armed conflict with both parties. Eritrea has allegedly provided material and financial support to Al Shabab in Somalia.

Key Interests

- Seek new military equipment, expertise and funding to strengthen the government's domestic hold on power
- Leverage military support from foreign powers with greater technical expertise
- Foment insecurity in Somalia through al-Shabab
- Neutralize the small but dogged militias that contest its authority domestically, including the RSADO
- Develop its economy, prioritizing the agricultural sector
- Lift or ease sanctions that the UN Security Council has imposed on the country

Sources of Leverage

Political - Eritrea has frequently agreed to resettle Eritrean migrants in Israel in exchange for military aid, technological and agricultural assistance from Jerusalem. By tightening and loosening migrant controls, it can exert pressure on Israel and on the European Union.

Regional Strategy

Eritrea's limited strategy is composed of fomenting instability in neighboring countries, maintaining the government's ironclad grip on power domestically, and leveraging its partnership with Israel to strengthen its own military and security apparatus.

Powerful Individuals

President Isaias Afewerki rules a highly personalized authoritarian regime where power is centralized.

Potential Negotiation Moves

Adjust Migrant Controls - Tighten - or alternatively loosen - migrant controls to extract concessions from Israel and/or the EU.
Somalia Instability - Continue fomenting instability in Somalia by funding proxy group, al-Shabab

Internal Conflicts

Long-standing but small-scale rebellion of the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO)

Memberships

AU, IAEA, UN

Allies

ISRAEL

Partners

SUDAN, UAE

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

DJIBOUTI, SOMALIA Government

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, UAE

Aid Donor

N/A

EUROPEAN UNION

Party Portrait

The European Union is a 28-member state international organization based on economic and political integration. Economic integration has advanced furthest, with a single market and free movement of peoples. The combined economy of the EU is the second largest in the world, in normal terms. The economic, geographic and political diversity of the EU leads to important differences in perspectives on external issues. The EU's current position towards the Middle East is largely shaped by the issue of asylum seekers. It has caused divisions among EU member states over a common response to this issue and Islamic terrorism. Numerous terror attacks have taken place in EU member states, fighters in Syria and Iraq.

Key Interests

- Return to regional stability
- End conflict in Syria and Iraq, ending the flow of asylum seekers from the region
- Prevent further Islamic terror attacks in EU member states
- Two-state solution to the Middle East Peace process
- Maintain the solidarity and common foreign policy in the EU

Sources of Leverage

Economic – The EU has the capacity to grant access to its market and the provision of development assistance, particularly through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the establishment of sanctions

Convening Power – The EU has the capacity to initiate diplomatic talks. The EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership serves as a forum for regional dialogue.

Regional Strategy

Maintains sanctions against Syria, but divided over military action. Encourages both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume bilateral negotiations towards two-state solution. Supports using European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as framework to develop political and economic relations with Israel and the PA. Lifted all nuclear-related economic and financial sanctions and begun gradual high-level engagement with Iran. Concluded refugee deal with Turkey, Turkey will retain refugees from the region in exchange for payments and an upgrade of EU-Turkey relations.

Powerful Individuals

Donald Tusk (President of the European Council); Jean-Claude Juncker (Head of the European Commission); Federica Mogherini (High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy); European Parliament; EU heads of state and government

Potential Negotiation Moves

Maintain Syrian Sanctions - The EU could maintain a sanctions regime against Syria and disburse development aid. Due to its institutional limitations and the internal divisions of its member states, the EU is unlikely to take further actions

Serve as Discussion Forum - The EU can serve as a discussion forum for its member states on their policies towards the Middle East and act as a multiplier for diplomatic initiatives that are consensual among its members (such as renewed initiatives for Syrian peace talks or humanitarian aid)

Internal Conflicts

The EU's institutions and decision-making processes require unanimous decisions for most foreign policy actions. States retain the ability to act individually outside of the EU context. It has been difficult to achieve common agreement on responses to ongoing crises. One of the main divisions is member states' willingness to take in refugees from the region. Member states are also divided over the decision to intervene in the Syrian conflict militarily.

Memberships

Quartet on the Middle East

Partners

ISRAEL, PALESTINE Civil Society, LEBANON Government, IRAQ State of Law Coalition EGYPT Government, JORDAN, YEMEN Government, DJIBOUTI, SOMALIA Government, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, ALGERIA, MOROCCO Government, EGYPT Government, TURKEY, IRAN, ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Adversaries

SYRIA Government, YEMEN Houthis

Proxy

KURDS of Turkey, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

Aid Recipient

TURKEY, SOUTH SUDAN

Allies

TUNISIA, UNITED STATES, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, HOLY SEE, PALESTINE Fatah, MOROCCO Government

Rivals

RUSSIA

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

External Sponsor

Palestine – Civil Society, Syrian Refugees, Sudan

Aid Donor

N/A

FRANCE

Party Portrait

France is a stable presidential democracy, influential EU member, UN Security Council permanent member, and NATO member. France retains an activist foreign policy independently and within international organizations. Policy often includes the high levels of military spending. The population is very diverse, with the largest European Muslim and Jewish communities. France has struggled to manage internal tensions. Historically supported established regimes, but was a main actor in the bombing campaign against the Libyan government in 2011 and is one of the most outspoken critics of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria. Directly involved in attempts to fight ISIS. Consequently, has been the target of ISIS-led and inspired terrorist attacks, which has fueled anti-immigration rhetoric in the country and has contributed to the rise of the populist far-right National Front party.

Key Interests

- Ensure its own stability and the stability of its neighbors and the EU by eliminating the threat of Islamist terrorism, limiting the influx of refugees, and stabilizing the EU's neighborhood
- Retain role as one of Europe's most important powers
- End Syrian civil war, maintain Turkish stability, and defeat ISIS and AQAP
- Support its large corporations through trade deals with the region: export French-made armaments to the Gulf monarchies and make use of the opportunities arising out of the Iran deal

Sources of Leverage

Convening Power - UN Security Council Permanent Member, so France can sponsor or veto resolutions. EU and NATO membership increase its ability to shape activity of large parts of the Western world
Military - As one of Europe's main military powers with a capacity for force projection, France can participate directly in armed conflict in the region, but will be difficult to increase its levels of participation
Soft Power - France wields soft power through existing close ties and cooperation with many governments in the region, especially given its colonial history in the region

Regional Strategy

France recognizes the impossibility of replacing Assad regime in Syria by military force and prefers to concentrate military efforts on fight against ISIS. France wants to enlist further support from European allies, particularly Germany, to mitigate the responsibilities undertaken by France. Wants to continue cooperation with governments in Northern Africa in fight against Islamist groups and to stem influx of migrants to Europe, by redirecting EU funding towards stability in the region. Continues to sell armaments to the Gulf states and has increased its trade ties with Iran.

Powerful Individuals

President François Hollande (Socialist party); Prime minister Bernard Cazeneuve; Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault; Permanent Representative to the UN Francois Delattre

Potential Negotiation Moves

International Influence - Due to its military overstretch and ongoing economic crisis, France's main source of leverage remains its influence in international organizations and alliances
EU Military Assistance - France could rely on its EU partners to take over some security and military commitments to liberate some of its assets to increase its military involvement in the region
Alter Sanctions - France could focus on lobbying other EU member states to alter the organization's sanctions regime and to change the disbursement of existing EU funding

Internal Conflicts

French society is extremely divided and the country remains in a state of emergency after a series of Islamist terrorist attacks. This has contributed to a hardening of the country's rhetoric towards Muslims and refugees from the Middle East. Combined with the country's protracted economic crisis, its political system has been severely destabilized by the rise of the populist far-right National Front party.

Memberships

EU, IAEA, NATO, OECD, OSCE, UN (Security Council)

Allies

GERMANY, HOLY SEE, LIBYA Government of National Accord, LIBYA House of Representatives, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, TUNISIA

Partners

ALGERIA, INDIA, IRAN, ISRAEL, LEBANON Government, MOROCCO Government, PALESTINE Fatah, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Rivals

RUSSIA

Adversaries

SYRIA Government, SOMALIA al-Shabaab

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

MOROCCO Government, EGYPT Government, JORDAN, TUNISIA

Aid Donor

UNITED NATIONS

GERMANY

Party Portrait

Germany is a stable democracy, EU's largest and most economically successful member state and has emerged as its de facto leader in recent years. Given its history, Germany has been reluctant to take up this leadership position or engage in an activist foreign policy. In particular, it is opposed to making extensive use of armed forces. One of Germany's long-standing foreign policy aims is to ensure the security of Israel. Germany houses a large population of foreign origin, with more than 3 million residents of Turkish heritage. Since 2015, Germany has received more than 1 million requests for asylum, most from the Middle East. It has also been the target of Islamist terrorism. Germany views the conflict in the Middle East primarily as a risk to its own security and stability and that of the EU. However, Germany recognizes that its own interests and possibilities for direct influence in the conflict are limited.

Key Interests

- Ensure its own stability and the stability of its neighbors and the EU by eliminating the threat of Islamist terrorism, limiting the influx of refugees, and stabilizing the EU's neighborhood
- End Syrian civil war, maintain Turkish stability, and defeat ISIS and AQAP, while contributing as little militarily as possible
- Maintain and expand lucrative trade ties to countries in the region and make the most out of the economic opportunities arising out of the Iran deal

Sources of Leverage

Convening Power - Germany's membership in the EU and NATO provides it with important means to shape the positions of and efforts of these actors and thus increase its influence.

Economic - As an important economy, de facto leader of the EU, and recognized soft power its open and covert diplomacy can reach and influence most parties involved in the conflict. Also funds refugee relief efforts and technology to equip actors in the region with arms.

Military - Reluctant to use armed forces, but participates in military efforts to tackle Islamists in the region and could increase participation

Regional Strategy

Pushing for diplomatic talks to end the Syrian civil war and exclude Bashar al-Assad from government. It contributes to tackling the threat from Islamist terrorist groups militarily, yet limits its own contribution to indirect measures. While it openly criticizes Turkey for the degradation of civil liberties, it continues to be supportive of the EU-Turkey deal and provides funding for refugee relief efforts. Economically speaking, the country maintains close economic ties to the Gulf states and attempts to capture a large market share in Iran.

Powerful Individuals

Chancellor Angela Merkel (head of the federal government; Christian Democratic Union Party); Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel; Permanent Representative to the UN Harold Braun

Potential Negotiation Moves

Military - Could assume military responsibilities from EU/NATO member states in low-risk scenarios to free their assets to fight ISIS.

Expand Training Programs - Could expand its existing training and equipment programs to militias for Kurds of Iraq and Kurds of Syria.

Refugee Funding - Could provide further funding to incentivize refugees to remain in relatively safe areas in the region.

Alter Sanctions - Could influence the remainder of the EU to alter existing sanctions targeted at actors in the region or unilaterally alter its armaments exports regime to the Gulf monarchies and Israel.

Internal Conflicts

Germany is relatively stable politically and has very few internal divisions. The main governing and opposition parties agree on the broad lines of Germany's policy. Nonetheless, members of the governing coalition have criticized the welcoming attitude towards refugees and opposition groups and the country's Turkey policy after the attempted military coup. There are some societal tensions over the sudden influx of refugees from the Middle East since 2015. This has contributed to the rise of the AfD, a new right-wing populist political party.

Memberships

EU, IAEA, NATO, OECD, OSCE, UN

Allies

FRANCE, HOLY SEE, ISRAEL, TURKEY, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Partners

IRAN

Rivals

RUSSIA

Adversaries

SYRIA Government

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

TURKEY, MOROCCO, EGYPT

Aid Donor

UNITED NATIONS

HOLY SEE

Party Portrait

The Holy See is the diplomatic arm of the Pope as the head of the global Catholic Church and the leader of the Vatican city state.. In the Middle East, the Holy See considers itself to have moral responsibility to the mass exodus of Christians fleeing persecution and to address the escalation of violence and conflict. The Catholic Church has opened itself to interfaith dialogue and promoted nonviolent conflict resolution. The Holy See has a wide informant network due to the community of Christians, Catholic NGOs, educational institutions, priests and religious communities across the Middle East. They also use their global diplomatic ties with world powers such as the US, European Nations, and the United Nations to advance their priorities. The Holy See will generally refuse to take one side in a conflict.

Key Interests

- Protect Christians and maintain Christian presence in “the Holy Land”
- Protect Church legal rights and property
- Defend human rights, international law, and self-determination
- Promote regional peace and understanding through non-violent conflict resolution, dialogue, and diplomacy

Sources of Leverage

Convening Power - As it has no military or economic arm, it can effectively leverage its moral authority as a convening power.
Soft Power – Can communicate with governments all over the world via its ecclesiastical structure. Widespread local parochial networks give it strong local legitimacy. It sees no country as an enemy and is willing to maintain all possible channels of communication.
Political – Diplomatic relations with 177 countries including all Middle Eastern countries except Saudi Arabia and Oman.

Regional Strategy

The Holy See seeks to communicate with all parties to stop the violence in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Iraq. Under Pope Francis, the Holy See has made assertive moves to avoid further stagnation of these conflicts. They have conducted the following moves: developed a theological (and closed-door political) relationship with the Ayatollahs in Iran; mended a relationship with the Maronite Church in Lebanon of which the new Lebanese president is a member; continued diplomatic relations with Syria’s Assad while simultaneously calling on him to honor humanitarian norms; established diplomatic ties with the State of Palestine; engaged in ongoing negotiations with Israel while recognizing its right to statehood and security. The Holy See intends to continue to use methods of dialogue, diplomacy, and non-violent conflict resolution to pursue its interests in the Middle East.

Powerful Individuals

Pope Francis (Sovereign of Vatican City State), Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Holy See Secretary of State), Bishop Paul Richard Gallagher (Holy See Secretary for Relations with States), Cardinal Mario Zenari (Holy See Ambassador to Syria), Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rahi (Leader of Maronite Catholic Church)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Use relationship with Iran to advocate for the continuity of diplomatic peace and nuclear disarmament talks between Iran and US Republican leadership under President Trump.
Work within the Iran/Russia/Lebanon Axis to put pressure on President Assad’s response to Syrian rebels.
Use ongoing negotiations and diplomatic relationships with Israel to promote the two-state solution with Palestine. Play a track II role between the Palestinians and the US Trump Administration.

Internal Conflicts

The Catholic Church in the Middle East has seven Arabic speaking rites. The Maronite rite is centered in Lebanon and has its own Patriarch. These relationships are sensitive to history and culture. During the Lebanese civil war, Maronite factions fought for Christian power against perceived Muslim exclusion of Christians. There are many other Christian denominations in the Middle East, and their common Christian roots do not guarantee homogeneity or agreement.

Memberships

IAEA, OSCE, UN (Non-Member Observer)

Partners

BAHRAIN, EGYPT Government, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAN, ISRAEL, JORDAN, KUWAIT, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, LEBANON Government, LEBANON Hezbollah, PALESTINE Fatah, PALESTINE Hamas, QATAR, RUSSIA, TURKEY, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Adversaries

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Allies

FRANCE, GERMANY, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Rivals

ALGERIA, OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA, SYRIA Government, YEMEN Government

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Party Portrait

As global challenges including civil wars, climate change, and forced displacement increase, states are less able to address the growing need with the resources they have. Humanitarian organizations have mobilized to address these challenges across the globe through access, assistance, and protection. These organizations maintain neutrality and impartiality and serve populations in need through independent and humane means, including negotiation and mediation. This table represents a broad range of UN organizations and international non-governmental organizations.

Key Interests

- Alleviate suffering and protect populations from harm through coordinated assistance efforts
- Promote human rights, economic growth, sustainable development, and adherence to international law
- Maintain organizational flexibility and autonomy as much as possible
- Ensure sustained, safe access to populations in need

Sources of Leverage

- Soft Power** – can credibly act as mediators in certain cases
- Economic** – Relationships with donors provide financial resources for use as leverage
- Convening Power** – Drawing on their neutrality, may be able to bring other parties to negotiations, particularly concerning cease fires, access to resources and aid, and other humanitarian concerns
- Political** – Can mobilize political support, though must be consistent with principles of neutrality and impartiality
- Technology** – Can provide technological assistance, needed resources, new models of partnering with local communities

Regional Strategy

Organizations coordinate with one another, local organizations, local government, and donors. Humanitarian actors use the cluster system to prepare, mobilize, offer assistance and protection, and coordinate efforts across sectors and regions, ensuring that mobilization is swift, targeted, and efficient. Humanitarian actors often negotiate with governments and armed groups for cease-fires and access to populations in need.

Powerful Individuals

Stephen O'Brien (Under-Secretary General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, UNOCHA), Filippo Grandi (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Potential Negotiation Moves

- Act as Mediator** - Mediate as neutral party for humanitarian corridors and cease-fire agreements;
- Restructure System** - Restructure cluster system and inter-organizational coordination to better meet pressing needs in cross-cutting issue areas;
- Threaten Cessation** - Threaten to cease all aid if certain conditions are not met (i.e. cease fire);

Internal Conflicts

In many cases, humanitarian organizations compete with one another for funding and support, which can hinder collaboration, coordination, and innovation. Organizations disagree on the extent to which one should compromise on neutrality to provide aid and on the best strategies for implementing aid programs. Organizations include but are not limited to: CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Doctors Without Borders, International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, International Rescue Committee, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Mercy Corps, Oxfam International, Save the Children, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, UNRWA, World Food Program, World Health Organization, World Vision.

Memberships

N/A -- the label of 'Humanitarian Actors' is too broad to allow for categorizations of memberships. Some organizations listed above are organizations within the UN system.

Allies

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, GERMANY, HOLY SEE, JAPAN, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

Partners

ALGERIA, ARAB LEAGUE, BAHRAIN, DJIBOUTI, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, JORDAN, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Syria, KURDS of TURKEY, LEBANON Government, LIBYA Government of National Accord, MOROCCO Government, OMAN, PALESTINE Civil Society, PALESTINE Fatah, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN, TURKEY

Rivals

IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, IRAQ Sadrist Movement, PALESTINE Hamas, SYRIA Government, SYRIA Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, RUSSIA, SOMALIA Government, YEMEN Government, YEMEN Houthis

Adversaries

AQAP, ISIS

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

IRAQ State of Law Coalition, JORDAN, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria, KURDS of Turkey, LIBYA Government of National Accord, PALESTINE Fatah, PALESTINE Hamas, SOMALIA Government, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN, SYRIA Government, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, TURKEY, YEMEN Government, YEMEN Houthis

Aid Donor

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, GERMANY, HOLY SEE, JAPAN, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

INDIA

Party Portrait

India's foreign policy continues to be dogged by a lingering "third worldism" and "anti-Western framework", in addition to conflict narratives shaped during the British colonial period and the Cold War. At the same time, with robust economic growth, military modernization, and rapprochement with the US, India increasingly sees itself rising to great-power status. Both India's past and present identity, however, seem to justify and suggest that a strategy of international restraint will endure. India's Middle Eastern policy, consistent with this broad global stance, can be characterized as "reactive and incremental", despite the country's substantial and ever-growing interests in the region along economic and security fronts.

Key Interests

- Seek new military equipment, expertise and funding to strengthen the government's domestic hold on power
- Secure energy supplies, including crude oil and natural gas
- Increase export markets for Indian goods and access to imports
- Ensure continued ability for Indian migrants in the Middle East to send remittances home
- Build alliances with Middle Eastern countries to balance Pakistan, including with Saudi Arabia
- Prevent Saudi Arabia from funding Sunni extremist groups in Pakistan

Sources of Leverage

Economic - India is a major trading partner for many Middle Eastern countries.
Military - India has consistently contributed forces to UN peace operations in the Middle East since the 1950s.

Regional Strategy

India tries to maintain a strategic balance between Saudi Arabia and Iran, between the US and Iran, and between the Israelis and the Arab Palestinians. India no longer attempts to take sides in inter-Arab disputes but instead developed relations with each country in a bilateral and separate fashion. In practice, however, it has favored one side over another. For instance, it still enjoys stronger relations with Iran over Saudi Arabia as the latter allegedly supports Sunni extremist groups and has strong ties with Pakistan. India maintains its position for anti-interventionism and non-coercive measures. For instance, Congress Party-led government strongly opposed NATO's 2011 intervention in Libya against Gaddafi by arguing that Libyan repression was an internal affair, and sided closely to Russian and Chinese positions.

Powerful Individuals

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval

Potential Negotiation Moves

Play Active Role - Assume more active role in regional multilateral organizations
Act as Mediator - Engage "good offices" in regional disputes, mediating dialogue and peace processes as a neutral broker

Internal Conflicts

Hindu-Muslim ethnic divisions continue to divide the country, particularly in the wake of the nomination of a controversial Hindu nationalist BJP candidate as First Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Kashmir stokes tension with Pakistan.

Memberships

IAEA, UN

Allies

N/A

Partners

FRANCE, IRAN, ISRAEL, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Rivals

CHINA, RUSSIA

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, UNITED STATES

Aid Donor

N/A

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Party Portrait

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) play a critical role in providing development and financial support, as well as technical assistance, to countries across the Middle East and North Africa. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, African Development Bank, European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development are among the most important IFIs operating in the region.

Key Interests

- Contribute to stabilizing the region;
- Support economic development, social inclusion, and poverty alleviation efforts; and
- Support the recovery and reconstruction of the region, particularly for those countries impacted by conflict or forced displacement

Sources of Leverage

Financial Support – IFIs are some of the most important international lenders, providing critical development aid and economic assistance programs to developing countries
Political Support – Given their international clout, IFIs can extend political support to a country's economic policies or poverty alleviation programs
Convening Power – The broad membership and international influence of IFIs allow them to convene a wide range of parties in efforts to mobilize funding, develop partnerships, or raise awareness

Regional Strategy

Though each IFI adopts independent strategies, broadly they share the goal of fostering economic development and social inclusion. In recent years, given rising levels of conflict, IFIs have also sought to play a more active role in promoting peace and stability across the region.

Powerful Individuals

Jim Yong Kim (President, World Bank), Christine Lagarde (Managing Director, IMF), Bandar Hajjar (President, Islamic Development Bank), Akinwumi Adesina (President, African Development Bank), Werner Hoyer (President, European Investment Bank), Suma Chakrabarti (President, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Increase Financial Support – IFIs can support stability across the region by increasing their development and financial assistance, and can particularly play a key role in transition countries such as Tunisia
Mobilize Funds for Reconstruction and Forced Displacement – Given the scale of conflicts across the region, IFIs can play a critical role in mobilizing the vast amounts needed to support countries impacted by refugee crises, as well as post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya
Focus on Conflict Prevention – Increasingly, IFIs may focus on supporting conflict prevention programs, for example by promoting citizen engagement, targeting aid to disadvantaged groups, or addressing long-standing social and economic grievances

Internal Conflicts

N/A

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

UNITED NATIONS, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, ARAB LEAGUE, EUROPEAN UNION

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EGYPT Government, TUNISIA, JORDAN, MOROCCO Government, LEBANON Government, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, PALESTINE Fatah, YEMEN Government

Aid Donor

N/A

IRAN

Party Portrait

Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979, when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established a theocratic system of government. Iran's largest ethnicity (Persian) comprises two-thirds of the population, the largest religion (Shia Islam) is close to 90% of the population, and the largest language (Persian) is spoken by half of the population. Only 3% of Iran's population are immigrants, which reinforces the strength of the country's shared history, culture, and identity. Iran has been designated by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism for its support of Hezbollah in Lebanon and remains subject to US, UN, and EU economic sanctions.

Key Interests

- Counter Sunni power in Middle East
- Limit American/Western Influence in the region
- Reduce Israel's influence in the region
- Improve economy including expanding oil exports
- Defeat ISIS
- Support Palestinian cause and its militant proxies against Israel
- Increase spread of political Islam in the region
- Maintain internal security including threat from Balochistan Province

Sources of Leverage

Military - Two-pronged ownership over its clandestine nuclear program and purse strings for regional militias. Able to use it as a strong bargaining chip to achieve better economic and political outcomes, or to incite fear

Economic - Burgeoning economy, potential to become massive global exporter and consumer

Energy - Impressive oil reserves and refusal to kowtow to GCC requests has created significant economic tension, while simultaneously pumping critical funds into the Iranian economy.

Regional Strategy

Given the Islamic Republic's history of isolationism and pervasive Persian-Shia identity, Iran's external conflicts are characterized by both strong adherences to current positions and weak international relations. Iran has attempted to build regional coalitions along ethnic and religious lines, but the hardline nature of political leadership has hampered partnerships with neighbors and the West.

Powerful Individuals

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani, Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani, Chief Justice Sadeq Larijani, Chairman of the Guardian Council Ahmad Jannati

Potential Negotiation Moves

Normalize US/EU Relations - By continuing to abide by the Iran Nuclear Deal and increasing ties with the West, Iran can continue to access European markets including exporting its oil

Play Russia and US Rivalry - Iran could exacerbate the American/Russian rivalry by playing each great power off the other.

Use Assad Regime Support as Bargaining Chip - Iran could negotiate with the West, using a relinquishing of their support for Syria to gain concessions

Internal Conflicts

Some political modernization has occurred in the past decade, particularly under the more moderate leadership of Presidents Khatami and Hassan Rouhani. Now, even though relations with the US are not yet thawed despite the nuclear agreement, and conservative Muslim clerics continue to view the US as an aggressor, much of Iran's population is ready to move toward a position of partnership with the West. The Republic Right represent the most West-leaning views, and has helped with recent progressive outcomes such as the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Memberships

IAEA, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

PALESTINE Hamas, LEBANON Hezbollah, SYRIA Government, LEBANON Government, YEMEN Houthis, KUWAIT, OMAN, Russia, IRAQ al-Ahram Sadrist Party, IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, IRAQ Sadrist Movement,

Partners

RUSSIA, EGYPT Government, JORDAN, EUROPEAN UNION, GERMANY, CHINA, JAPAN, INDIA, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, FRANCE, HOLY SEE, TUNISIA, QATAR, OMAN, ARAB LEAGUE, INDIA, KUWAIT, SOMALIA al-Shabaab

Rivals

SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN Government, JORDAN, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, EGYPT Government, NATO, TURKEY, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Adversaries

SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, ISRAEL, ISIS, SOMALIA Government, LEBANON Government, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, SYRIA Jabhat Fatah a-Sham, UNITED STATES, LEBANON Government, GCC, UNITED NATIONS

Active Armed Opponents

KURDS of Iran, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, AQAP

Proxy

YEMEN Houthis, Syria Government, KURDS of Iran, PALESTINE Hamas, IRAQ State of Law Coalition

External Sponsor

RUSSIA

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

IRAQ SADRIST MOVEMENT

Party Portrait

The Sadrist movement, led by Muqtada al-Sadr, is an Iraqi Islamist national movement supported by Iraqi Shia. The philosophy of the movement centers on religious sharia laws, traditional tribal customs, and anti-American Iraqi nationalism. After the US removed Saddam Hussein from power, al-Sadr’s movement became more public, turning a poor suburb of Baghdad where his followers lived into “Sadr City.” In 2010, the Sadrist movement became a part of the Iraqi National Alliance, running for parliamentary election with a platform of expelling the United States from Iraq.

Key Interests

- Maintain Shia power in Baghdad
- Increase Iranian influence in Baghdad
- Reduce US and Saudi influence in Iraq
- Establish sharia law in Iraq

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power – The Sadrist movement maintains religious authority and support from Iraqi’s majority Shias
Economic - The movement enjoys support (financial and ideological) from Iran
Political - The Ahrar party currently holds 34 seats in the Council of Representatives.

Regional Strategy

The Sadrist movement’s main strategy centers on appealing to Iraqi Shias who felt marginalized and victimized by Saddam Hussein and subsequent international interference. The movement protests the Abadi government because of its ties to US influence in Iraq.

Powerful Individuals

Muqtada al-Sadr (leader of movement)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Improve Relations with Iran – to increase Shia political power and block coalition building
Block Abdai - Continue divisive rhetoric, protest, and actions that render Abdai ineffective and block attempts to subsume religious identity beneath a more holistic Iraqi nationalism
Build Coalition - Create coalition with other groups around shared interests and leave National Alliance

Internal Conflicts

Internal differences hinge on the extent to which the movement should forge deeper ties with Iran or build cross-sect coalition within Iraq. Members of the movement support different groups in Syria and disagree about the best strategy there.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

IRAQ Supreme Islamic Council

Rivals

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, KURDS of Iraq, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, SAUDI ARABIA

Adversaries

UNITED STATES

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

IRAN

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

IRAQ SECULAR NATIONALIST PARTIES

Party Portrait

The Secular Nationalist parties of Iraq (including the Wataniyya party and the Iraqiyyoon party) currently hold approximately 15 percent of the seats in the Council of Representatives. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, they were part of the Iraqiyya coalition. Their main constituencies are regionally-based, particularly in the Sunni regions of Nanawa and the Anbar, and their stated goals are to create a united Iraq based on Iraqi nationalism, not ethno-sectarian considerations.

Key Interests

- Balance against the powerful Shia block in the Baghdadi government
- Support Iraqi nationalism as a basis for good governance
- Reduce influence of Iran in Baghdad
- Foster relationships with other regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia

Sources of Leverage

Political – Iraqi nationalist parties currently hold approximately 15 percent of the seats in the Council of Representatives
Soft Power- High profile members have relationships with foreign governments (United States, Saudi Arabia) and use diplomacy/soft power to leverage interests domestically

Regional Strategy

The party leverages its position within parliament to legitimize coalition's goals and employs key players to help ameliorate sectarian divisions in Iraq and reduce Tehran's influence in Iraq.

Powerful Individuals

Osama al-Naijafi (former Speaker of the Parliament), Ayad Allawi (former Interim Prime Minister, member of al Wifaq, and Wataniyya)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Reconfigure Government - Reconfigure Iraqi government in order to (i) end governance based on confessional identities and (ii) empower mixed coalitions (which include Sunni, Shia, Kurdish and independent parties) to rule instead of singular, ethno-sectarian parties.
Build Coalitions - Build coalitions with various international powers (including Saudi Arabia and United States) to balance against Iran, maintain Western interest and investment in Iraq, and promote cooperation.

Internal Conflicts

Failure to consolidate the Wataniyya government allowed Maliki to retain power for his second term – this caused internal division and controversy in the coalitions.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, KURDS of Iraq, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, UNITED STATES

Rivals

IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, IRAQ Sadrist Movement

Adversaries

IRAN

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES, TURKEY

IRAQ STATE OF LAW COALITION

Party Portrait

The State of Law Coalition was formed in 2009 by Nouri al-Maliki, then Prime Minister of Iraq. The coalition was originally formed to empower its (primarily Shia) members -- including the Islamic Dawa Party -- in the 2009 Iraqi governorate elections. In 2010, the coalition incorporated a few additional parties and ran in the Iraqi parliamentary elections, winning a majority of seats. The coalition also ran in the 2013 governorate elections, winning fewer seats than in 2009. Haider al-Abadi, who assumed office in September 2014, is now the Prime Minister of Iraq.

Key Interests

- Dismantle government quota system in favor of a “governing majority” that favors the parliamentary majority (State of Law)
- Consolidate Dawa Party and other participating parties’ power
- Maliki: Seek revenge against Sunni minority in Iraq and dismantle Sunni power, particularly within the security sector
- Abadi: Increase coexistence measures with Sunnis and Kurds

Sources of Leverage

Political – The Coalition currently holds 94/325 seats of Parliament and the current Prime Minister of Iraq is a member of a participating party (The Dawa Party). The former Prime Minister of Iraq is the current leader of The Dawa Party. The Dawa Party is credible for its historic opposition to Saddam Hussein

Economic - The oil industry provides 90% of government revenue, though low oil prices in recent years have caused economic volatility

Geographic - With ISIS fighting in Iraqi territory, the Iraqi government can leverage its position to gain assistance from others

Regional Strategy

The coalition’s strategy includes using its position within parliament to achieve its interests, and leveraging sectarian tensions to consolidate power and justify increasing executive authority. Under Abadi, strategy includes reforms to stabilize the country and decrease corruption.

Powerful Individuals

Haider al-Abadi (Prime Minister of Iraq, Dawa Party), Nouri al-Maliki (Former Prime Minister, Dawa Party), Kamal Saadi (Leader, State of Law Coalition), Ali al-Sistani (spiritual leader)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Reconfigure Government - Reconfigure Iraqi government to (i) end governance based on confessional identities and (ii) empower mixed coalitions (which include Sunni, Shia, Kurdish and independent parties) to rule instead of singular, ethno-sectarian parties.

Connect with Kurds - Increase ties to Erbil and benefit from the Kurds’ networks, military strategy, and oil exportation capacities.

Empower Women - Move past sectarian division, create stronger ties with the international community, and become a regional leader in support of human rights.

Ally with Russia, Iran - Forge deeper ties with Russia and Iran to increase power against ISIS.

Russia vs. US - Play Russia and US against one another in contest to fight ISIS from Iraqi territory, access oil market, etc.

Internal Conflicts

Current tensions exist between Dawa Party elites that want to keep quota system in government and retain Abadi and those that do not. Both Sunni and Shia politicians have sought to remove Abadi from power in the past. Abadi has criticized Maliki’s divisive governing, resulting in tensions between the two.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, IAEA, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

N/A

Partners

EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, HOLY SEE, IRAN, JORDAN, LEBANON Government, RUSSIA, UNITED STATES

Rivals

IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, ISRAEL, KURDS of Iraq, KUWAIT, IRAQ Sadrist Movement, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, SAUDI ARABIA, SUDAN, SYRIA Government

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, IRAN, RUSSIA, UNITED STATES

IRAQ SUPREME ISLAMIC COUNCIL

Party Portrait

The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (SIIC) began in the 1980s in Iran, under the name Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). This party represents Shia Islamist political party, and The SIIC's ideology supports Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran's thinking that the Islamic Government should and must be controlled by Islamic scholars (ulema).

Key Interests

- Increase Shia power in Baghdad
- Promote religious conservatism and clericalism in Iraq
- De-centralize Iraqi government and create Shia zone in the south

Sources of Leverage

Political - The SIIC currently has 29 seats in the Council of Representatives and has the support of Iran and many of Iraq's Shias
Geography - The SIIC largely controls the major city of Basra
Soft Power - Rampant sectarianism, and the efficacy of the Kurdish autonomous zone, lend credence to the argument that a separate Shia zone could be established in the south of Iraq, with Basra as its capital

Regional Strategy

The SIIC maintains a strategy of increasing Iranian support to impose clericalism on Iraq. In addition, the party also aims to increase SIIC presence in the executive branch of Baghdad government.

Powerful Individuals

Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim (former party leader, d. 2003), Abdul Aziz al-Hakim (former party leader, d. 2009), Ammar al-Hakim (current leader)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Establish Shia Zone - Leverage sectarianism and support of Iran to establish Shia zone in south of Iraq with Basra at the helm;
Strength Iran Ties - Leverage this zone to stabilize Iraq's Shias, implement clericism, and promote stronger political and economic relations with Iran.

Internal Conflicts

Previously linked with the Badr Brigade (formerly the militant wing of SIIC), with which SIIC now cooperates in the Parliament but is no longer explicitly linked.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

IRAQ Sadrist Movement

Rivals

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, KURDS of Iraq

Adversaries

UNITED STATES

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

IRAN

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

ISIS

Party Portrait

ISIS is a violent extremist organization that has claimed statehood by capturing large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria. A successor to al-Qaeda in Iraq and proclaiming itself a caliphate, it catapulted onto the global stage with military victories in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, the group has been characterized by its particular brutality, and the pledges of allegiance it has received from jihadist groups across the world, from Nigeria to the Philippines. Battles against Iraqi, US, Syrian, Russian and Turkish forces, among others, continue across Iraq and Syria.

Key Interests

- Uphold the caliphate, and continuing to spread across the Middle East and Africa through allegiances with other jihadist groups;
- Conquer, maintain, and regain territory, particularly throughout Syria and Iraq; and
- Destabilize states across the MENA region and the West through terror attacks and the establishment of franchises.

Sources of Leverage

Military – By building on the lessons al-Qaeda learned during the Iraqi insurgency and building a sophisticated military campaign.

Financial – Their revenue comes from cash looted from major cities, oil and gas black markets, kidnapping and ransoms, taxes within their territory, and an unspecified amount of donations.

Manpower - ISIS can be broken up into key groups: (i) its leadership; (ii) foreign fighters; (iii) Syrian and Iraqi fighters; and (iv) populations under its control.

Intelligence - Drawing on former Ba’athist leaders’ experience in Saddam Hussein’s military and intelligence agencies, ISIS’ success is rooted in its ability to quell internal dissent and coerce local leaders to put up minimal resistance.

Propaganda - Invoke messages of brutality, mercy, victimhood, and belonging through professional-quality propaganda efforts.

Regional Strategy

Focus on territorial conquest using foreign fighters in Syria and Sunni tribesmen in Iraq; utilize suicide and car bombings to destabilize regional enemies; leverage its extensive recruitment networks across Europe, North Africa, and Asia to bring in additional foreign fighters; and inspire both cells of trained attackers and lone wolf attacks to terrorize states across the West and the Middle East and North Africa.

Powerful Individuals

“Caliph Ibrahim” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi continues to provide the strategic leadership of ISIS; many of their military commanders in Syria and Iraq are former Ba’athist officials; though deceased, Hajji Bakr was key in building the intelligence apparatus and managing the alliance between Ba’athists and violent extremist elements; though deceased, Abu al-Amri managed brigades of foreign fighters and developed their online presence as a Syrian fighter

Potential Negotiation Moves

Negotiate with Assad - Continue side negotiations with the Assad regime – or elements close to the regime – to exchange oil and natural gas for electricity, or with regards to ransoms.

Economic/Political Negotiations - Though ISIS has demonstrated a limited willingness to negotiate for its economic interests (i.e. with regards to oil), it has to date shown no instance of making any political concessions through negotiation.

Internal Conflicts

ISIS is a factionalized alliance between violent extremists, former Ba’athist military and intelligence officials of Saddam Hussein’s regime, Sunni Iraqi tribal leaders, local Syrian and Iraqi fighters, and foreign fighters. Overall, ISIS’ previous grouping of fighters by country or language of origin has strengthened rivalries between the different factions, and as they have lost territory, disputes over the allocation of resources and goals have emerged.

Memberships

ISIS does not recognize any authority besides its own. Therefore, it does not participate in established governance mechanisms or organizations, nor does it adhere to international resolutions or norms.

Allies

The Islamic State in Libya, The Islamic State in Sinai (formerly Ansar Bait al-Maqdis), Boko Haram, The Islamic State in Afghanistan, Abu Sayyaf

Partners

N/A

Rivals

Al-Qaeda, SYRIA Jebhat Fatah al-Sham

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

SYRIA Government, SYRIA Ahrar al-Sham, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, KURDS OF IRAQ, TURKEY, USA, RUSSIA, International Coalition against the Islamic State,

Proxy

ISIS presumably receive funding from donors, some of which may be in the Gulf.

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

ISRAEL

Party Portrait

Israel was established in 1948 as the national homeland for the Jewish people. Following the 1967 war, Israel annexed the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem and began civil and military administration of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israel withdrew from Area A of the West Bank in 1993 following the Oslo Accords, and from Gaza in 2005. Attempts to negotiate a final status agreement have failed since then. As a small country, the only democracy in an unstable region, a Jewish nation surrounded by Arab and Muslim states, Israel believes it must maintain impressive deterrence capabilities and military power.

Key Interests

- Weaken Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis and radical Salafi groups, strengthen moderate Sunni states, weaken Russia's support of Syria, prevent Iran nuclear capabilities, weaken Iran's economic/military support to Hezbollah, strengthen Jordan
- Revive Israel-Palestinian negotiations, promote refugee regional solution with minimal political cost
- Achieve recognition by Arab states, weaken boycott attempts, recovering international reputation, maintain effective diplomacy, maintain access to water, natural resources

Sources of Leverage

Military – Possesses substantial military power with offensive and defensive capabilities and military, security industry. Nuclear-armed.
Technology – 1 of 6 global cyber powers, increases diplomatic leverage
Natural Resources – Preferential access to aquifers in West Bank
Economic – Export-oriented state, limited natural resources and small market. Economic strength mainly from science/tech sectors, innovative capabilities and startup industry
Political – Strong alliance with the US despite its international reputation deteriorating in recent years

Regional Strategy

Help stabilize Jordanian and Egyptian regimes with parallel support from Saudi Arabia, coordinate with Russia on effects/spillover of Syrian war to Israeli territory, renew/expand relations with Turkey, and improve coordination with US administration. Cultural, political, and humanitarian “hasbara” (public relations) to portray Israel in a positive light in international conversations and delegitimize detractors. It presses for a more favorable and permanent nuclear deal with Iran while maintaining the status quo in relation to Palestinians and continuing to build within/expand settlements.

Powerful Individuals

Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister), Avigdor Liberman (Defense Minister), Naftali Bennett (Education Minister), Yair Lapid (Leader of Yesh Atid Party), Yitzak Herzog (Head of opposition and leader of the Zionist Union), Leaders of the Settlers

Potential Negotiation Moves

Deepen US Relationship - Build relationship with new US administration while continuing to build settlements and secure borders
New Regional Coalition - Build coalition or create bilateral agreements with countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey for increased regional legitimacy
Control Resources - Leverage control of PA tax funds and control of movement within and out of the West Bank as bargaining chip
Integrate “outside-in” and “inside-out” - Aim to create a triangular structure of concessions and profits between Israel, the PA and moderate Sunni Arab states.
Internal moves - Change coalition government and consolidate fragmented Israeli society.

Internal Conflicts

Majority of Israeli public supports the “Two State Solution.” Right-wing groups support annexation of Palestinian territories, while some left-wing groups support a “One State” or binational solution. Center-left public believes the Israeli national interest is to act urgently towards a peace agreement and/or disengagement, through negotiations or unilateral measures; center-right groups counter that Israel should maintain the status quo until circumstances change. Right wing advocates for tough military actions to defeat terror, left wing calls for diplomatic/political measures to achieve peaceful resolution. The political structure produces fragile coalition governments with excessive power to small political groups. Religious-secular divide: extreme right is orthodox and rejects the separation of religion and state; central and left wing groups hold more secular liberal views.

Memberships

IAEA, MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, OECD, UN

Allies

GERMANY, NATO, UNITED STATES

Partners

EGYPT Government, ERITREA, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, HOLY SEE, INDIA, JORDAN, KURDS of Iraq, RUSSIA, SOUTH SUDAN, TURKEY, UNITED KINGDOM

Rivals

PALESTINE Fatah, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED NATIONS

Adversaries

AQAP, ARAB LEAGUE, EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood, IRAN, ISIS, LEBANON Government, LEBANON Hezbollah, PALESTINE Civil Society, PALESTINE Hamas, SUDAN, SYRIA Government, YEMEN Government, YEMEN Houthis

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, SOUTH SUDAN

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES

JAPAN

Party Portrait

Japan's current identity and security narratives were largely shaped during the post-World War II era. Its defeat to the US and the nuclear bombing in its territory continue to represent a national trauma, which resulted in public revulsion at militarism. Japan has thus evolved into an economic and a non-military great power. Its main interest lies in promoting an international system governed by economic interdependence and stable international institutions. The US-Japan alliance, which is rooted in a military agreement by which US provides a security umbrella in the volatile regional security of East Asia, makes Japan somewhat dependent on the US. Japan sees itself as politically distant from East Asia and geopolitically more closely aligned to the US. However, several factors have pushed Japan to incrementally transition from being an almost exclusively economic power to assume greater military capacity. First, Japan has faced stagnation in its economic growth since the 1990s. It has also faced an increasingly challenging security environment with China's increasingly bellicose behavior and North Korea's nuclear development.

Key Interests

- Maintain a good relationship with the GCC due to energy considerations
- Establish a foothold in Iran and Iraq
- Balance partnership with the US in developing new relationships with US adversaries in the region
- Prevent US from adopting measures that are considered by regional actors to be hostile or antagonizing
- Limit Chinese involvement in the Middle East & North Africa

Sources of Leverage

Economic - One of the big purchasers of the region's resources and growing economic interdependence with the GCC countries through mutually beneficial energy cooperation and legal frameworks. In addition, since the 1970s, Japan has become one of the top donors to the region, leveraging increasing soft power through consistent support and development assistance.

Military - Despite limits imposed on Japan's offensive activities by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, Japan has nevertheless slowly expanded its military capacity in the region.

Regional Strategy

In order to secure energy resources, Japan tries to develop good relations with the Middle Eastern countries. With this objective, the Japanese government is attempting to build a more multi-layered relationship that includes politics, security, and culture. The Japanese government is actively involved in securing resources abroad by funding Japanese companies and has been promoting a number of infrastructure projects and joint investments in the GCC countries. Due to the dilemma it faces between the US and the Middle Eastern countries, Japan promotes diplomatic neutrality in the region's conflicts by balancing between the two. While Japan has more often closely aligned with the US in its Middle East strategy, it also has sought to maintain a policy that stands apart from the US to preserve its neutral stance. Japan also puts emphasis on non-coercive measures, humanitarian support, and economic development in its approach to Middle East conflicts and peace process.

Powerful Individuals

Prime Minister Shinzō Abe (President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); Normalist); Relatively weak leaders of opposition party including Renho Murata of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

Potential Negotiation Moves

Increase foreign direct investment (FDI) - In Middle East

Facilitate peace processes and reconciliation dialogues in the region

Support negotiated ceasefire in Syria conflict

Separate itself from US-led efforts to promote democracy and human rights, and perceived initiatives to "impose" Western values on the Middle East.

Internal Conflicts

Within Japan, four ideological groups exist with regards to Japan's involvement and the role of the JSDF in international conflicts, which directly affect Japan's Middle East policy: Pacifists (opposing all involvement in overseas conflicts), Mercantilists (prioritize economy over defense), Normalists (support deployment of troops overseas and normalization of JSDF), Nationalists (strong support of remilitarization).

Memberships

IAEA, OECD, UN (Security Council – term ends 2017)

Allies

UNITED STATES

Partners

BAHRAIN, DJIBOUTI, EGYPT Government, IRAN, JORDAN, KUWAIT, LEBANON Government, OMAN, QATAR, RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, UAE, YEMEN Government, GCC, IRAN

Rivals

CHINA

Adversaries

ISIS

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

ALGERIA, EGYPT Government, IRAQ Government, JORDAN, LEBANON Government, LIBYA GNA, MOROCCO Government, PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, SYRIA Government, TUNISIA, YEMEN Government

JORDAN

Party Portrait

The Jordanian monarchy maintains a robust authoritarian grip, undergirded by dependence on Western institutions and the United States for aid. Although there have been serious attempts at reform within Jordan over the past few decades, the reluctance of the monarchy to relinquish control and the manipulation of the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Action Front have hindered these efforts. Western sponsorship has made this possible and encouraged the monarchy's unpopular cooperation with Israel, against the desires of the Jordanian-Palestinian majority. Further liberalization or destabilization of the state could incentivize King Abdullah II to act with the sole intent of preserving the monarchy, even if doing so would counter Western allegiances.

Key Interests

- Internally, sustain power through maintaining economic stability, promoting social cohesion, and national identity
- Maintain economic and security support from outside powers
- Promote the stability of other authoritarian regimes in ME
- Delegitimize democratic reforms (esp. Muslim-Brotherhood-led)
- End refugee crisis within Jordan's borders and beyond
- Stabilize environmental, food, water and economic resources

Sources of Leverage

Geography – Stability within Jordan is lynchpin for stability in Israel-Palestine, broader ME. Jordan is a buffer state for regional neighbors
Military - Well-funded military that acquired much of its material from American military sales, with highly capable intelligence
Soft Power – Broad regional amicability as a moderate state
Economic – High quality higher education facilities and healthcare despite other economic difficulties
Political – Allied with Western powers offers both economic and political leverage

Regional Strategy

Aims to maintain amicable connections with any actor who could hold leverage over them and to maintain a neutral stance unless asked by allies to cooperate in a multilateral effort. Goal is to sustain Jordanian monarchy at any cost. Aims to support Western efforts in Syria and Libya, and Saudi strategy in the Gulf while not alienating Iranian allies (Iraq or Lebanon). Focus diplomatic efforts on solution to Israel-Palestine conflict that allows the stability of the Jordanian monarchy. Appealing to the US and international bodies for political, military, and economic assistance.

Powerful Individuals

King Abdullah II (reigning monarch); Queen Rania (Palestinian wife of Abdullah), Hussein bin Abdullah II (heir to the throne)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Democratize - Initiate internal democratic reforms to form stronger alliances, or to demand more forcefully a Palestinian state
Repress reform - Repress reform efforts more harshly;
Exit - Threaten to exit partnerships with the US, Saudi Arabia, and Israel if interests are not met, particularly around economic support;
Russia - Align with the Russian-sponsored Assad regime against American-sponsored rebel groups in Syria if shifting realities on the ground reflect a lasting government presence on the Jordanian border.

Internal Conflicts

Conflict exists between "ethnic Jordanian," or "Jordo-Jordanian" citizens and Palestinian Jordanians; Palestinian Jordanians are underrepresented and disadvantaged by Hashemite monarchy's preference towards Jordo-Jordanians. Allegiance to Western states, while tolerated by most citizens, provokes anger in subsets of the population, specifically for participation in Jordanian-Israeli peace process and cooperation in U.S. invasion of Iraq and Syrian war. A divide exists between Islamist, anti-government parties led by the Islamic Action Front and the loyalist parties backed by the monarchy. It is illegal to criticize the monarchy, so the scope of public disagreement is limited. Conflicts also exist between Syrian, Iraqi, and Sudanese refugees and Jordanians, and between foreign workers and Jordanian nationals. Strong economic divisions separate wealthy elite from rural and urban poor.

Memberships

IAEA, ARAB LEAGUE, MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, OIC, UN

Allies

MOROCCO Government, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, YEMEN Government

Partners

EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, PALESTINE Fatah, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, ISRAEL, JAPAN, LEBANON Government, NATO, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, QATAR, RUSSIA, TURKEY, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Rivals

PALESTINE Hamas, LEBANON Hezbollah, IRAN, KUWAIT, PALESTINE Civil Society, SYRIA Government

Adversaries

AQAP, YEMEN Houthis

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, NATO, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

KURDS OF IRAN

Party Portrait

The Kurds of Iran reside in Northwestern Iran. They are the second largest minority in Iran and are estimated to make up 7 percent of the Iranian population. Although they have not endured the same horrors as the Kurds of Syria or Iraq, they have still suffered systematic and cultural oppression. For a brief period, with Soviet support, the Kurds of Iran established an independent republic, Mahabad. This republic was short-lived and quickly crushed by Teheran. After the Iranian revolution, Kurds were severely politically constricted and in turn revolted with Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê, or the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), leading the fight. The rebellion was quickly crushed. These events give the Kurds of Iran a strong sense of nationalism and victimhood, but also of pragmatism. Teheran is swift to dismantle Kurdish separatists with executions. The Kurds note these repercussions and are seeming less likely to promote pro-Kurdish autonomy political parties than their counterparts in greater Kurdistan. The Kurds of Iran also have a unique aspect to them in that the largest percent of Shia Muslim Kurds live in Iran. This creates an internal dynamic between the Kurds, as the Shiite Kurds to some degree identify with, and some even prefer to live under, the Shia Iranian regime.

Key Interests

- Protect themselves from brutal military incursions by Tehran or other actors. This desired security can come in the form of civil rights guarantees from the state.
- Become adequately represented in the national government. Underrepresentation contributes to Iran issuing legislation that is oppressive of the Iranian Kurdish population.
- Seek the opportunity to host assemblies featuring Kurdish Nationalism to reduce cultural suppression

Sources of Leverage

Military - The PJAK and KDPI are armed and formidable forces for the Iranian government due to their guerilla warfare. They launch terror attacks that in turn kill and disrupt the lives of Iranian citizens.

Political - After an attack from the PJAK or KDPI, Turkish citizens are likely to place pressure on politicians to reform their policies to prevent further attacks.

Soft Power - Utilize the media and human rights watch organizations to further deter Teheran from abusing them. The Kurds across greater Kurdistan can exploit the enmity between their host states to manipulate and mobilize them accordingly, as they have in the past.

Regional Strategy

As for external actors, the Kurds of Iran do not possess a strong regional strategy policy. Their situational vision in Iran keeps them preoccupied with their local reality and Teheran. Internally speaking, the Kurds of Iran's most prominent political parties, the PJAK and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), are largely exiled and reside in Iraqi Kurdistan. PJAK has ties to the PKK and in certain instances is activated.

Powerful Individuals

Abdul Rahman Haji Ahmadi and Evindar Renas (leaders of PJAK)
Mustafa Hijri (leader of KDPI)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Use the PJAK and KDPI as leverage by way of deterrent agents through the threat of terroristic activity.

Utilize Iranian politics as a platform to spread awareness- it is speculated that as Iran opens its international relations, it will crack down on internal dissonance.

Partner with Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi Kurds and their diasporas to pressure their respective governments for greater autonomy.

Internal Conflicts

Shiite VS Sunni Kurds within Iran and their disproportionate political oppression from Teheran.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

Rivals

TURKEY

Adversaries

IRAN

Active Armed Opponents

IRAN (against PJAK and KDPI)

Proxy

KURDS of Turkey

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

KURDS OF IRAQ

Party Portrait

The Kurds of Iraq are a distinct ethnic group in Northeastern Iraq. One of the four groups of Kurds, they are predominantly moderate Sunnis, seen as a stable, progressive and Western looking society. They are historically oppressed and manipulated by Iraqi and Iranian leaders. They have narratives of victimhood, fierce soldierhood and honored martyrdom. They seek security and self- autonomy. Their biggest threats are internal corruption, Islamic (Shia and Sunni) extremists and loss of legitimacy when applying for autonomy.

Key Interests

- Gain enough leverage to be able to establish borders and to also acquire international legitimacy so their political and physical state can be established. Requires breaking Iraq's territorial integrity; not supported by the international community.
- Develop petroleum and tourism industry while enhancing civil society and infrastructure.
- Maintain and enhance Western support
- Retain Peshmerga's absolute control over Iraqi Kurdistan.

Sources of Leverage

Energy – The Kurds of Iraq are located atop lucrative petroleum resources. They are developing these resources, and host International Oil Companies such as Exxon Mobile. They are creating strategic ties with Iran and Turkey through petroleum diplomacy.

Military – They maintain an efficient military, the Peshmerga.

Soft power – They project a peace-loving image and maintain public diplomacy policy that portrays them as a stable, progressive, continually Western-backed actor in the region.

Regional Strategy

Through the creation of diplomatic ties based on mutual security and economic interests, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) seeks to increase its eternal legitimacy and leverage against Baghdad. It is particularly working on their regional arrangements with Turkey, Iran and Israel and are developing relations with EU states. Superficially, the KRG is developing relations in line with international order, seeking to use policy paths to autonomy that increase their legitimacy and do not paint them as rogue actors.

Powerful Individuals

Massoud Barzani (President of the KRG; Party leader of the Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê, or the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP))
 Nechervan Barzani (Prime Minister; from the Barzani Tribe)
 Muhammad Fuad Masum (President of Iraq; Talbani tribal affiliation; Member of the Yekîtiya Nîştîmanî ya Kurdistanê, or Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, (PUK))

Potential Negotiation Moves

Advancing petroleum-based, diplomatic ties with Iran - Subject to upcoming Iranian presidential elections.

Assist NATO Interests - KRG may choose to partner more intensely with NATO to continue their Western partnership

Negotiate - With the rise and current dismantling of ISIS, the KRG expanded its territorial administration of security, most notably into oil rich Kirkuk. The KRG may use this in negotiation with Baghdad.

Potentially partner with Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi Kurds and their diasporas to pressure their respective governments for greater autonomy.

Internal Conflicts

There is a longstanding feud between the PUK and KDP. This took the shape of a civil war, which was quelled by a peace agreement after intervention by Ankara and negotiations brokered by Washington. The power struggle stems from a differing of social ideology; the KDP, led by the Barzani Tribe, is highly tribal, nationalistic and dynastic in its leadership, while the PUK, led in part by Jalal Talbani is affiliated with socialism and elitism. Within Iraqi Kurdistan, the KRG incorporates the politics of Iraqi Turkmen, Assyrians and other minority groups, such as the Yezidis.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

GERMANY, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Syria, KURDS of Turkey, ISRAEL, TURKEY

Rivals

IRAQ State of Law Coalition

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

GERMANY, NATO, UNITED STATES

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES

KURDS OF SYRIA

Party Portrait

The Kurds of Syria are a distinct ethnic group in Northern Syria, making up 12% of the total Syrian population. They exist in three main cantons: Afrin Canton, Cizre Canton and the Kobani Canton. Together they make up the region known as Rojava. These cantons are not contiguous, but the Kurds aspire to join them. In 2016, the Syrian Kurds established Federasyona Bakurê Sûriyê, or the Federation of Northern Syria-Rojava. They have historically been abused, displaced and marginalized by the Syrian regime. Since the 1930s, Arabization was forced upon the Kurds in a systematic manner that suppressed their culture and social and economic mobility. This has created a narrative of self-reliance, distrust of Arabs, martyrdom and resistance. Their economy is currently in shambles due to the Syrian civil war, but they have the potential to establish agricultural and petroleum export industries.

Key Interests

- Protect themselves from brutal military incursions. This security can come in the form of civil rights guarantees from the state.
- Achieve political representation in the national government. They are also not represented in the peace talks underway to restructure Syria. They seek a seat at the table and to be seen as a legitimate party.
- Gain autonomy or federalism – Rojava has already established a federal region that preserves both the territorial integrity of Syria, and the integrity of the autonomous Kurdish region that is already established and self-administering.

Sources of Leverage

Energy – Future potential to establish agricultural and petroleum export industries.
Military – The Yekîneyên Parastina Gel , or the People's Protection Units (YPG) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are armed and formidable forces for the Syrian Government. Moreover, they are able to, at times, garner Western support.
Soft Power – Use of social media and other media outlets, such as documentaries. The West is entranced with the female fighting unity, the Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê, or the Women's Protection unit (YPJ), and the Syrian Kurds have done well capitalizing on their fame. Additionally, the Kurds across greater Kurdistan can exploit the enmity between their host states to manipulate and mobilize them.

Regional Strategy

In their situational vision, the Kurds of Syria hope to quell Ankara's fear that they are a proxy for the PKK and to show the Western world that they are a legitimate actor, capable of administering their own federal region. Additionally, the Syrian Kurds have begun to warm relations with Moscow, as they realize that Russia is increasing its sphere of influence into Syria. For their grand strategy, Rojava will likely move to establish ties to develop its petroleum industry, possibly with the KRG, Turkey and Iran.

Powerful Individuals

Salih Muslim Muhammad (Co-Chairman of the PYD)
 Asya Abdullah (Co-Chairwoman of the PYD)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Activate global partners - Like the US, Russia, or the UN, to advocate for them while Turkey tries to pressure the Syrian Kurds out of the Syrian peace talks, which will attempt to restructure Syria.
Leverage potential future oil wealth for a more advantageous negotiating position.
Partner with Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi Kurds and their diasporas to pressure their respective governments for greater autonomy.

Internal Conflicts

Syrian Kurds complain that the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat , or the Democratic Union Party (PYD) is monopolizing the political scene and silencing smaller dissenting parties, such as the Kurdish Yekiti Party (Kurdish Union Party).

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria, RUSSIA, UNITED STATES

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

SYRIA Government

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

RUSSIA, UNITED STATES

KURDS OF TURKEY

Party Portrait

The Kurds of Turkey reside in the Southeastern part of the state. They make up an estimated one-quarter of the Turkish population. During the nationalization of Turkey in the 1980s, Kurds were subjected to harsh assimilation tactics, such as forbidding the Kurdish language in schools and proper political representation. Since 1983, the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, or Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), has engaged in armed struggle with the Turkish Government. To date, there have intermittent ceasefire agreements, then a vicious cycle of violations, spoilers, resumptions of violence, etc.

Key Interests

- Security – they seek to have the ability to protect themselves from brutal military incursions. This security can come in the form of civil rights guarantees from the state.
- Political representation – the Kurds are not adequately represented in the national government. This, among many factors, contributes to Turkey issuing a legislation that is oppressive of the Turkish Kurdish population.
- Cultural expression – the Kurds of Turkey are severely culturally oppressed. They seek the opportunity to host assemblies featuring Kurdish Nationalism.

Sources of Leverage

Military – The PKK is an armed and formidable force for the Turkish government due to its guerilla warfare. It launches terror attacks that in turn kill and disrupt the lives of Turkish citizens. The citizens then place pressure on politicians to reform their policies to prevent further attacks

Soft Power – Media and human rights reporting groups – the Kurds utilize the media and human rights watch organizations to further deter Turkey from abusing them, due to Turkey's aversion to showing itself as the aggressor in its relationship with its Kurdish population. Further, the Kurds across greater Kurdistan can exploit the enmity between their host states to manipulate and mobilize accordingly.

Regional Strategy

As for external actors, the Kurds of Turkey do not possess a strong regional strategy policy. Their situational vision in Turkey keeps them preoccupied with their local reality and Ankara. Internally speaking, the Kurds of Turkey's most prominent political party, the PKK, has links to political parties in Iraq, Syria, and Iran. These ties are activated in certain advantageous situations. Concerning Europe, the Kurds, to some degree, activate their diaspora community there to advocate to their respective European states on behalf of the Kurds in Turkey and their situation.

Powerful Individuals

Abdullah Öcalan (Founder of the PKK; Jailed by the Turkish Government for the creation of an armed group; Still leads the PKK and due to their ideological founding's similarities, many Kurdish groups across Kurdistan are de facto under his sphere of influence.) Figen Yüksekdağ Şenoğlu and Selahattin Demirtaş (Current co-leaders of the Halkların Demokratik Partisi, or the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP))

Potential Negotiation Moves

Keep pressure and international media attention on Erdogan as he targets what he sees as affiliates or instigators to the failed coup attempt in 2016. Moreover, with Ankara preoccupied by coup purges, ISIS and the Syrian civil war, they have failed to implement satisfactory reforms that were proposed for the Kurds.

Partner with Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi Kurds and their diasporas to pressure their respective governments for greater autonomy.

Internal Conflicts

PKK occasionally engages in guerilla tactics against HDP.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

Rivals

TURKEY

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

Turkey (against PKK)

Proxy

Other Kurdish groups that have ties to the PKK, such as the PJAK (political and militant organization in Iran).

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

KUWAIT

Party Portrait

Despite its size, Kuwait plays a key role in Arab and Gulf affairs given its geo-strategic importance, alliances, and large amounts of oil reserves. Like its GCC neighbors, it is a monarchy, though it is also the most politically open Gulf state. It was also one of the first Gulf states to industrialize, establish a directly elected parliament, and adopt a liberal constitution. The most critical event that has defined modern Kuwait is undoubtedly the 1990 invasion by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The war led to a more balanced power-distribution system that gave more power to the parliament (National Assembly), arguably becoming the strong legislative body in the GCC. However, this has also led to significant internal political conflicts.

Key Interests

- Maintaining its role as one of the world's largest oil producers. Currently oil revenues comprise a significant portion of government revenue, which is in turn key to continuing its rentier social contract with citizens.
- Diversify its economy and attract investment. Given low oil prices, the country has sought to increase foreign direct investment and diversify to other industries
- Maintaining regional security, given the existential threat they encountered in 1990 during the first Iraq War.

Sources of Leverage

Political - Kuwait's alliance with the United States, as well as with other Western partners affords it a powerful role within the Gulf.
Economic - In addition to its political partnerships with Western powers, Kuwait's large oil reserves provide it with a critical voice in regional fora such as the GCC or OPEC.

Regional Strategy

As a strong ally of the United States in the region, Kuwait seeks to support regional security measures. To this end, it continues to host a large contingent of US troops on its soil. In addition, Kuwait has sought closer political and military relations with Western allies, both bilaterally as well as through multilateral fora in NATO, for example.

Powerful Individuals

Emir Sabah Ahmad al-Sabah, Crown Prince Nawaf Ahmad al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanim, Prime Minister Jaber Mubarak al-Sabah

Potential Negotiation Moves

Support regional stability - By allowing the US to station additional troops that could be deployed in the fight against ISIS, Kuwait could help the US regain power in the region and maintain regional stability.

Internal Conflicts

Tensions between the National Assembly and the Emir persist due to members of parliament fiercely questioning cabinet members, as well as issues relating to the electoral system. This has led the Emir to dissolve parliament on a multitude of occasions since the founding of the state, including various times in the past few years.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, IAEA, ISTANBUL COOPERATION INITIATIVE, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

UAE, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Partners

QATAR, IRAN, UNITED KINGDOM

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, YEMEN Government, PALESTINE Fatah

Aid Donor

N/A

LEBANON GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Prime Minister Saad Hariri leads his country through continued periods of political turbulence and instability, heavily impacted by conflict in neighboring Syria. Hariri is drawn from the March 14th alliance, one of the two most prominent political alliances in the country – cutting across sectarian lines to include Sunnis, Christians and Druze. These diverse actors, which have traditionally clashed in Lebanon, have united around the shared goal of ending perceived Syrian interference in Lebanon. Despite persistent insecurity, the Lebanese economy continues to grow and diversify, with a dynamic banking and financial sector. Hariri’s government is also occupied with challenging the political and security threat of Hezbollah, backed by regional power Iran, both within Lebanon and in neighboring Syria. An influx of refugees into Lebanon has strained inter-communal relations, fractious inter-religious ties, and put pressure on the economy to provide sufficient employment for the population.

Key Interests

- Weaken and disarm Hezbollah
- Strengthen the hold of the Lebanese state
- Strengthen the position of the country’s Sunni communities.

Sources of Leverage

Political - Domestic legitimacy and political support from regional and international powers

Regional Strategy

Key representatives from the March 14 alliance have generally supported the Syrian rebellion, considering it a legitimate struggle against Assad’s oppression. The Future Movement is believed to have been subtly supporting the Syrian rebels by transporting arms from the Gulf, mostly Saudi Arabia, to the Syrian rebels to overtake Assad regime and cut the “Axis of Resistance” between Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.

Powerful Individuals

Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Former President Amine Gemayel

Potential Negotiation Moves

Support Syrian Rebellion - Support the Syrian rebellion in an attempt to oust President Assad and weaken Hezbollah’s regional and domestic influence.

Oppose Nuclear Agreement - Oppose Iranian nuclear agreement and the country’s attempt to strengthen its nuclear weapon capabilities.

Internal Conflicts

Recent shifts between the two major coalitions appears to have settled along sectarian lines. Hezbollah-backed president, Aoun, was elected as president in Oct 2016 after few surprising political moves that left March 14 coalition weaker than ever. Hariri’s initially nominated Frangieh, a nominal member of the opposing March 8 alliance in an attempt to encourage Hezbollah to switch its support toward Frangieh and in so doing weaken the alliance between Hezbollah and Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement which forms the cornerstone of the March 8 coalition. However, this strategy failed because Hariri lost his key Christian ally, Samir Geagea (leader of the Lebanese Forces party), who considered the nomination of Frangieh as a betrayal. Consequently, Geagea joined the Free Patriotic Movement within the March 8 coalition and supported Hezbollah’s candidate, Aoun. As a result, the three biggest parties of the March 14 alliance are now divided: The Lebanese Forces party was supporting Aoun, the Future Movement was supporting Frangieh, and the Kataeb Party was refusing to support either of them. Believing that a Syrian-friendly president is better than no president at all, Hariri eventually succumbed to Hezbollah’s candidate and voted for Aoun.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, QATAR, FRANCE

Rivals

IRAN

Adversaries

LEBANON Hezbollah, IRAN, SYRIA Government, ISRAEL

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, GERMANY, JAPAN, KUWAIT, TURKEY, U.A.E., UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Aid Donor

N/A

LEBANON HEZBOLLAH

Party Portrait

Hezbollah (the "Party of God") sees itself as the legitimate representative of the historically oppressed Shia community in Lebanon and the wider Middle East. Its narrative is woven around the notion of resistance against oppression and injustice. Since inception, the party has looked to Iran for its religious and ideological leadership, financial and military support. Hezbollah's identity has also been defined by its opposition to Israel. It emerged in the backdrop of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon. The 2000 Israeli withdrawal of forces from Southern Lebanon was portrayed as the triumph of the Hezbollah-led resistance movement and further boosted support for the party and its charismatic leader, Nasrallah, within and outside Lebanon. Hezbollah has used the on-going threat of Israeli aggression in its political narrative, thereby justifying being the only political group to retain military capabilities post the end of the civil war. Hezbollah's traditional conflict narratives adapted in light of its direct intervention in the Syrian conflict. Albeit Nasrallah's speeches in relation to the Syrian civil war paint the "US-Israeli axis" as "occupying forces" dividing the region, they have also emphasized the sectarian nature of the conflict by highlighting the destruction of religious shrines in Syria. The threat to Shia and Christian minority populations from Sunni jihadists forms the ideological basis of Hezbollah's fight against ISIS.

Key Interests

- Retain legitimacy as the representative of the historically oppressed Shia communities across the Middle East and conversely, contain the dominance of Sunni political and armed groups.
- Undermine Israel's military and political power in the region; deter Israel's military advances into Lebanon.
- Enhance the power of the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis which in turn will guarantee uninterrupted arms supply through Syria and Syrian territory serving as military bases for Hezbollah (including storage of military stockpiles).
- Increase Hezbollah's share of political power, influence and representation within Lebanon's domestic politics.

Sources of Leverage

Political - The Lebanese government formed by Saad Hariri in December 2016 is dominated by pro-Hezbollah factions that control two-thirds of the cabinet.
Military - Hezbollah's military arm, the Islamic Resistance, has military capabilities that are comparable with a medium-sized state army and superior to that of the Lebanese Army.
Convening Powers - Hezbollah exerts ideological influence in the Middle East. In the past (e.g. 2006 war against Israel), it has formed a symbol of pan-Arab resistance to Israel. It also serves as a "bullets plus ballots" model for other militant organizations such as Hamas.

Regional Strategy

Hezbollah's regional strategy involves signaling its willingness and preparedness to respond to Israeli aggression with an escalation to war; build military capabilities to deter Israeli military advances and fight wars in the event of perceived aggression. It also seeks to strengthen regional resistance to Israel by supporting groups such as Hamas. Hezbollah also seeks to provide direct military support to the Assad regime in Syria in order to strengthen the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis, which would have been at great risk if a non-Assad regime came into power in Syria. Preservation of a sympathetic Syrian regime also ensures uninterrupted routes for arms supply and access to Syrian territory that can serve as military bases and arsenal for Hezbollah.

Powerful Individuals

Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah Secretary General

Potential Negotiation Moves

Syrian Military Support - Extend direct military support to Assad regime in Syria
Strengthen Axis - Strengthen the Iran - Syria - Hezbollah axis
Fight Sunni jihadist groups in Syria

Internal Conflicts

Hezbollah leads the March 8 alliance of political parties and groups that stand in opposition to the Sunni-led March 14 coalition in Lebanon.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

IRAN

Partners

PALESTINE Hamas, SYRIA Government

Rivals

PALESTINE Fatah

Adversaries

ISRAEL, ISIS, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES, GCC

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

IRAN

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

LIBYA GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL ACCORD

Party Portrait

Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) is the executive branch of the interim government for Libya established by the December 2015 Libyan Political Agreement. The GNA - and the agreement that led to its foundation - has been endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council, offering recognition of the GNA as the sole legitimate government of Libya. However, internal divisions between the GNA and the supposed legislative branch - the House of Representatives (HoR) - is a major obstacle to the effective functioning of the Libyan state. These institutions compete for recognition and authority, with the political representation of the GNA a major grievance for the HoR. The GNA, composed of 17 ministers and Prime Minister, is based in Tripoli - but had previously convened in neighboring Tunisia while the Political Agreement was being formulated.

Key Interests

- Consolidate legitimacy by building support within the HoR
- Secure national consensus on the role and powers of the GNA
- Address the country's economic, security and infrastructure issues

Sources of Leverage

Military - neutralize Islamist actors and terror groups that are a source of consternation for various Middle Eastern and Western actors.
Natural resources - Libya possesses vast quantities of oil, with export levels well below pre-war levels.

Regional Strategy

Due to the nature of Libya as a failed state, it has no explicit regional strategy - and has limited capacity for regional projection of power.

Powerful Individuals

Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, Deputy PM Ahmed Maiteeq, Deputy PM Musa al-Koni

Potential Negotiation Moves

Limited potential for negotiation moves on a regional basis, given domestic focus on political conflict.

Internal Conflicts

Significant conflict between the GNA's leadership and the HoR, with former Prime Minister of the GNC Khalifa al-Ghawil, and with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA).

Memberships

AU, IAEA, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

QATAR, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES, FRANCE

Partners

ALGERIA, TUNISIA, UAE

Rivals

LIBYA House of Representatives

Adversaries

ISIS

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EUROPEAN UNION, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, TURKEY, FRANCE, JAPAN, UAE

Aid Donor

N/A

LIBYA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Party Portrait

The House of Representatives (HoR) is Libya's legislature body, responsible for passing legislation and representing the Libyan population. Yet the HoR ignored the November 2014 Supreme Constitutional Court that it should be dissolved while it was surrounded by armed militias, and opposed the later establishment of a rival parliament known as the General National Congress (GNC). The HoR fiercely contests the political representation of the GNA, feeling that its members and parties are not represented. The HoR relocated from the capital, Tripoli, to the provincial city of Tobruk in the far east of Libya. It has consistently voted not to endorse the GNA as a result of this sentiment, despite the efforts of the UN political mission to use its good offices to foster improved ties between the GNA and HoR. The HoR maintains a strong relationship with Khalifa Haftar, head of the HoR-aligned Libyan National Army (LNA).

Key Interests

- Secure international recognition
- Secure power within the executive branch
- Increase economic and management capacities of the HoR's Central Bank
- Increase military capacity and security advances of Marshal Haftar's forces

Sources of Leverage

Military - LNA and Marshal Haftar's popular support and military capacity to engage ISIS.
Political - distancing from political Islam enables relationship-building with external actors concerned about spread of such parties in the region.

Regional Strategy

The HoR has cultivated regional alliances with the likes of France and Russia, developing a particularly strong alliance with the Egyptian Government, which opposes the strengthening of Islamist parties in Libya.

Powerful Individuals

Chairman Aguila Saleh Issa, LNA Marshal Khalifa Haftar

Potential Negotiation Moves

Engage ISIS in intensified military campaign

Internal Conflicts

Competition between HoR to secure leadership roles of Chairman and Vice Chairs in particular, as well as contestations over public legitimacy given limited turnout in 2014 vote to elect HoR.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE

Allies

Russia

Partners

Algeria, United Kingdom, United States, France

Rivals

Libya - Government of National Accord

Adversaries

ISIS

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

Egypt - Government, UAE

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

MOROCCO POLISARIO FRONT

Party Portrait

The Polisario Front is a military and political indigenous independence group in Western Sahara. The governing body of the Polisario Front, the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), is based in Algeria and controls further territory in refugee camps surrounding the Algerian town of Tindouf. They have announced a sovereign claim to the entirety of Western Sahara, but presently control only 15%. Morocco has erected a 2,700 km sand wall to separate their portion of Western Sahara from the Polisario Front-held territory. Morocco alleges that the Polisario Front is backed by Algeria. Algeria denies this claim, but publicly supports Western Sahara's right to self-determination. The question of Algeria's support or lack thereof has foiled peace processes in recent years, with Morocco refusing to participate unless Algeria participates and acknowledges its alleged support of the Polisario Front.

Key Interests

- Expel Morocco from Western Sahara
- Establish a Sahrawi state
- Receive sovereign recognition of Western Sahara as Polisario territory
- Return safely the approximately 90,000 displaced Sahrawi refugees. Most of these refugees reside in the Tindouf refugee camp in Algeria.

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power – The Polisario Front has the support of Algeria and some Spanish solidarity organizations
Political – The UN currently refuses to recognize either Morocco or SADR sovereignty over Western Sahara

Regional Strategy

Expel Morocco from Western Sahara; maintain strong ties with Algeria; court recognition from all sovereign states. The Polisario Front's claim to Western Sahara is currently recognized by 45 countries.

Powerful Individuals

Brahim Ghali (Secretary-General of the Polisario Front and president of SADR)

Potential Negotiation Moves

UN Talks - Reinitiate efforts to settle the sovereignty issue through a referendum via the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), with direct UN-mediated talks between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front.
Use Comparative Example - Capitalize on the use of the Western Sahara issue as a comparative example for Israel's refusal to grant Palestinians autonomy over the West Bank. Highlight the potential momentum for recognition which could be sparked over the settlement of this contextually similar situation

Internal Conflicts

In 2004, an opposition group calling itself the Front Polisario Khat al-Shahid announced its separation from the main Polisario faction. The group demands SADR reform and a return to hostilities with Morocco. However, the group has largely been sidelined due to the Polisario's refusal to engage with it, as well as its own internal fractures.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

ALGERIA

Partners

LIBYA Government of National Accord, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

MOROCCO Government

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

ALGERIA

MOROCCO GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Morocco is dominated by the institution of the monarchy (Makhzan). The Makhzan is the protector and guarantor of Moroccan traditions, society, and state, and though it has ceded some powers to the elected parliamentary government, it is able to exercise control over the members of this government through its dual religious and temporal leadership role and network of business and media interests. The Justice and Development Party (PJD) has been in charge of the elected government since 2011. Public debates about religion, the king, and the nature of the Moroccan state are generally off limits, though these factors compose the center of political machinations.

Key Interests

- Minimize or eliminate the threat of the Polisario Front. To that end, either gain control over Polisario Front/SADR territory, or maintain the area as a neutral buffer zone.
- Become a manufacturing and exporting hub between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Increase sub-Saharan influence.
- Counter growing ISIS recruitment and influence in Morocco.
- Establish or maintain good relations with neighbors and donor countries.

Sources of Leverage

Geographic – Morocco is located at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. It therefore serves as a bridge to Europe for movement of goods and people, and plays an important role in migration and trade deals.

Military – Morocco operates a robust intelligence bureau, which may be used against terrorist threats.

Political – Morocco also has a strong relationship with the West on security issues and plays host to global summits, giving its diplomats access to world leaders.

Regional Strategy

Morocco recently rejoined the African Union, indicating a desire to increase its influence in sub-Saharan Africa while declining to make progress on the Western Sahara issue. The country also seeks increased security and prosperity, to raise its standing as a destination for international conferences and negotiations as well as building stronger trade and economic ties across Africa, the Arab Gulf, and the West.

Powerful Individuals

Moroccan King Mohammed VI, Abdelilah Benkiran (President of the Government of Morocco and leader of the PJD), Aziz Akhannouch (Secretary General of the National Rally of Independents Party (RNI)), Mohand Laenser (Secretary General of the Popular Movement (MP)), Hamid Chabbat (Secretary General of the Istiqlal Party's (IP))

Potential Negotiation Moves

Seek reconciliation with Algeria on the status of Western Sahara
Combine intelligence forces with Algeria regarding terrorist threats

Internal Conflicts

The monarchy (Makhzan) has near absolute leverage through its control of important government functionaries and royal prerogative guaranteed to it in the Moroccan Constitution, as well as its business and media interests. Although the Makhzan has ceded some power to the parliamentary government, overall it exercises strict control. As a result, political dissent is minimal. Nevertheless, the PJD is generally regarded as the cleanest and most effective political party among a political class struggling for authenticity and efficiency. It seeks increased power through the development of a more representative political system.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, OIC, UN

Allies

SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Partners

EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, SUDAN, TUNISIA

Rivals

ALGERIA

Adversaries

AQAP, ISIS, MOROCCO Polisario Front

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

EUROPEAN UNION, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

NATO

Party Portrait

NATO is a political-military alliance founded in 1949 to ensure the collective defense of its 28 trans-Atlantic member states. Since 9/11, Islamic extremism and threats originating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have become one of NATO's and its member states' primary concerns.

Key Interests

- Stabilize the MENA region in order to eliminate long-standing threat to NATO and its members
- Minimize risk of jihadist terror threats to NATO states

Sources of Leverage

Military - Hard power in the form of military strength, as was seen in its 2011 intervention in Libya

Soft Power - Soft power through military exchanges, training missions, collaboration and political support.

Regional Strategy

Since NATO's intervention in Libya, many key actors have shied away from further pursuing interests in the region, instead preferring a minimal containment strategy. For instance, NATO members' involvement in Syria has been on an individual, ad hoc basis rather than as part of a greater NATO MENA strategy. The bulk of NATO's strategy in the region consists of establishing dialogues with Gulf and Mediterranean states while also pursuing bilateral agreements with individual states throughout region that focus on collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding.

Powerful Individuals

The United States is the most influential member of NATO. Other key actors include France, Germany, the UK, and Turkey. The NATO Secretary-General is Jens Stoltenberg.

Potential Negotiation Moves

Continue Engagement- Continue to pursue engagement with regional actors on shared security interests

Broaden Engagement - Negotiate tailored bilateral deals with key regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, or by seeking to expand participation in its multilateral forums (Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative). In addition, moving forward it may seek to reach out to rivals and build ties with non-partner states.

Deepen Engagement - Offer itself as a "soft-security" provider of maritime engagement, training, consultation, WMD monitoring and intelligence expertise to partners in the region.

Internal Conflicts

There are several internal conflicts affecting NATO policies and strategy in MENA. NATO's southernmost member, Turkey, and other countries affected by the refugee crisis - Greece, Germany, and Italy - have urged NATO to focus on conflict and instability in MENA, while Eastern members have argued for NATO to reinforce its eastern flank against new Russian aggression. More broadly, recently the President of the United States has questioned the value of the alliance, and has sought greater budgetary commitments from other member states.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

Mediterranean Dialogue partners: ALGERIA, EGYPT Government, ISRAEL, JORDAN, MOROCCO Government, TUNISIA, MAURITANIA
Istanbul Cooperative Initiative partners: SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR, KUWAIT, UAE; More limited partnership with SAUDI ARABIA and OMAN

Rivals

IRAN

Adversaries

RUSSIA (not in the MENA region, but this adversarial relationship impacts NATO's involvement in the region)

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

OMAN

Party Portrait

Oman is a small Gulf nation of a little over 4 million people, but one with the potential to play a larger regional role, including as a regional mediator. Sultan Qaboos Bin Said is one of the longest ruling monarchs in the world, having maintained power since 1970. In recent decades, it has embarked on a reform agenda seeking to modernize and develop the country. Furthermore, Oman is also an oil-dependent Gulf state, but its oil production is significantly smaller than its neighbors.

Key Interests

- Furthering its own economic and social development, as well as diversify its economy in areas such as tourism.
- Ensuring regime continuity, which to date has involved modest advances towards increasing popular decision making. However, critically the regime seeks to stifle political opposition and the threat of terrorism.

Sources of Leverage

Political - Oman's continuous relationship with Iran has made it a valuable Gulf Arab ally for Western states who seek a mediator or intermediary to help resolve disputes or pursue shared interests with Iran.

Western partnerships - It's friendly relationships with United Kingdom and the United States make Oman a discreet, yet reliable partner in a volatile region.

Regional Strategy

Oman has historically sought to play the role of regional mediator. Its regional strategy is therefore to participate in track-II diplomatic efforts and not intervene militarily in the region.

Powerful Individuals

Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said, Deputy Prime Minister Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said

Potential Negotiation Moves

Broker rapprochement between West, Gulf and Iran - Given its unique role as a Gulf Arab state, and its partnership with both Western states and Iran, the Sultanate could potentially be a broker or mediator in any regional discussions with the United States, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries. If tensions increase between Gulf states, the United States and Iran, Oman could also help mitigate the challenges and support conflict resolution.

Internal Conflicts

Though a formidable domestic political opposition does not exist at the moment, Oman did face some rising political discontent following the 2011 Arab Spring.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT

Partners

SAUDI ARABIA, UAE, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM, IRAN

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

PALESTINE CIVIL SOCIETY

Party Portrait

Comprised of NGOs and individuals without cohesive political leadership, Palestinian Civil Society is largely dissatisfied with current Palestinian leadership and the negotiations process. These organizations see themselves as developing Palestinian society internally as a means towards ending the occupation and achieving Palestinian civil rights. Some estimates place the number of NGOs in Palestine at over 5,000, mainly funded by international donors and UN organizations. Critics claim that the main interests of these groups are to maintain funding, rather than create change. While a few coalitions exist, there is no unified leadership or coordination structure.

Key Interests

- Achieve peaceful Palestinian society that effectively incorporates citizen voices into representative democratic government
- Maintain thriving Palestinian economy with educational and employment opportunities for all that allows freedom of movement and access to resources
- End the occupation
- Achieve recognition of Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, with some symbolic return and/or reparations
- Attain permanent status of East Jerusalem as Palestinian capital
- For each individual actor: Maintain institutional power and funding

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power - Palestinian Civil Society achieves moral and legal legitimacy for their cause from UN Security Council Resolutions and the Geneva Convention. International solidarity for victimhood, especially from Arab States and European countries, and moral leverage in relation to Israeli actions within the West Bank also increase the soft power of Palestinian civil society organizations. The presence of Palestinian refugee populations spread across the Middle East and the world creates pressure on host governments.

Economic - Growing international support for boycott, divest, and sanctions movement constitutes an economic threat over Israel. In addition, labor constitutes an economic source of leverage, with sixteen percent of Palestinians living in the West Bank working in Israel or in West Bank settlements.

Regional Strategy

Use grassroots activism to mobilize Palestinians around engagement in democratic processes, offer a “voice” to concerns of non-politicians, and affect change within the Palestinian political sphere. Many of these organizations mobilize international support through messaging about the Palestinian cause and raise international funds to sustain local work. According to a 2015 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll, 85% of individuals support the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions movement. Many organizations, though not all, separate from ‘normalization’ (cooperation with Israel and Israeli organizations) to show dissatisfaction with political and social trends in Israel.

Powerful Individuals

Omar Barghouti (Founding member of Palestinian Committee for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), Mustafa Barghouti (co-founder of Palestine Monitor and Palestinian National Initiative), Amjad Shawa (Director of Palestinian NGO Network in Gaza), Sami Khader (Director of Maan Development Center, board member of Palestine NGO Network)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Solidarity Network - Build cross-border Palestinian Solidarity Network with Palestinian refugees around the world, heightening concerns for all host countries

Grassroots Networks - Build grassroots networks within Palestinian society to engage politically, mobilize cohesive opposition, and increase independent civil society systems through re-envisioning funding sources and development practices

Engage nonviolent opposition - To Israel and Palestinian leadership;

Mobilize possible mediation body - Comprised of European Union, Arab League, US, and Russia

Internal Conflicts

Organizations and individuals disagree as to best-case future solutions, levels of appropriate boycott or cooperation with Israel, and strategies of nonviolence vs. violence. Many perceive the negotiations process to serve Israel’s needs without true consideration of Palestinian interests, and disagree as to the extent to which Palestinian leadership should attempt to negotiate with Israel. Many individuals and organizations are frustrated with what they see as unrepresentative and elitist Palestinian leadership, with a majority believing that Abbas should step down. Palestinian support for a one-state and two-state solution stood at 36% and 44% respectively, according to a 2017 EU-funded poll.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, PALESTINE Fatah, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, UNITED NATIONS

Rivals

EGYPT Government, JORDAN, LEBANON Government, PALESTINE Hamas, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Adversaries

ISRAEL

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

EUROPEAN UNION, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

PALESTINE FATAH

Party Portrait

Founded by Yasser Arafat and other members of the Palestinian diaspora in 1959 and joining the PLO in 1967, Fatah currently leads the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank. Despite its initially violent start, since 1988 Fatah has denounced terror as a strategy and been recognized as a legitimate political party by Israel and the US. The Palestinian Authority took control over Gaza and West Bank Areas A and B following the 1993 Oslo Accords, though Hamas has controlled Gaza since 2007. Militant groups such as the al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade conducted violent acts during the second intifada; these groups share membership with Fatah, though Fatah does not officially recognize them.

Key Interests

- Achieve a viable, stable, and independent Palestinian state with full sovereignty, recognition, and freedom of movement, with East Jerusalem as its capital
- Maintain access and achieve full control over West Bank natural resources and state finances
- Achieve return of Fatah-affiliated political prisoners and recognition of the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, with some symbolic return and/or reparations
- Maintain Fatah control over PA

Sources of Leverage

Political - Fatah receives recognition as Palestinian leadership and can leverage the perceived lack of other moderate political groups to threaten more hard-line approaches if they are not in power. Political cooperation with Israel is also a source of leverage for Fatah
Soft Power - Fatah appeals to moral and legal legitimacy from UN Security Council Resolutions and international humanitarian law
Convening Power - Fatah may be able to convene talks between Israel, other countries in the region, and a Palestinian unity government including Hamas

Regional Strategy

Fatah recognizes Israel and coordinates with the Israeli government, including on security and border control in the West Bank. Fatah maintains a strategy of working with Israel and the US on potential tradeoffs and issues that could comprise two-state solution. In addition, Fatah has gained political power through appeals to the United Nations and other international bodies for recognition through observer status and for resolutions declaring the settlements and sieges on Gaza illegal. Fatah also appeals to Western Countries for support for a negotiated settlement with Israel and financial support for Palestinians, and has at times worked with Hamas representatives to create a unified Palestinian government as a way to move forward with peace talks.

Powerful Individuals

Mahmoud Abbas (President of PA, Fatah Party Leader), Rami Hamdallah (Palestinian Prime Minister), Yasser Abed Rabbo (former PLO Secretary-General), Saeb Erakat (Member of Palestinian Parliament, negotiator and spokesperson), Hanan Ashrawi (Leader of Third Way Party & former legislator), Marwan Barghouti (imprisoned Fatah member)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Deal with Internal Conflicts - Address internal Palestinian conflicts between Hamas, Fatah, and other parties to create unity government;
Build Arab Support - Build support for the Arab Peace Initiative among Arab Nations and internationally;
Seek Recognition as a State - Seek recognition as a state from other states and as a full member in international fora;
Build Cross-border Palestinian Solidarity Network - with Palestinian refugees, heightening concerns for all host countries

Internal Conflicts

There is an ideological and political divide between Fatah and Hamas and divisions within each about how much to coordinate with the other and with Israel. There are levels of perceived legitimacy of Fatah within Palestinian Civil Society, based on collaboration with Israel, poor governance, and perceived economic mismanagement. Divisions between older members (led by Abbas) and younger members (led by jailed activist Marwan Barghouti) center around corruption.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, OIC, UN (Non-Member Observer)

Allies

N/A

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, JORDAN, PALESTINE Civil Society, RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN, TUNISIA, TURKEY, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

Rivals

EGYPT Government, ISRAEL, PALESTINE Hamas, LEBANON Hezbollah, LEBANON Government, QATAR, SYRIA Government

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

EUROPEAN UNION, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, UNITED STATES

PALESTINE HAMAS

Party Portrait

Hamas is a fundamentalist Sunni political party with both a social service wing (Dawah) and a militant wing (Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades). The group, founded after the first Intifada in 1987, seeks the complete liberation of Palestine, and has been designated a terrorist group by Israel and the US. Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006, but did not take control due to sanctions by the Quartet. In 2007, Hamas took control over the Gaza Strip. Attempts for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas have been made since 2006, but none have lasted. The group does not formally recognize Israel or engage in negotiations, though it has informally and indirectly negotiated with Israeli officials and recently softened anti-Israel language in its charter. The military wing of Hamas intermittently launches rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip and Israel has launched several military campaigns into Gaza in the past ten years. The Gaza Strip is currently in a state of humanitarian crisis.

Key Interests

- Achieve Palestinian liberation in all of historic Palestine
- Achieve recognition and implementation of Right of Return for Palestinian refugees
- Create Islamic governance over the West Bank and Gaza

Sources of Leverage

Political - UN Security Council Resolutions, both past and present, against Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza, connections to other Islamist groups and Diaspora Palestinians, currently holds one Israeli citizen in prison and has the bodies of two Israeli soldiers
Economic - Support from Qatar, Iran, Turkey, independent donors
Soft Power - Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel and claim to Palestinian land is a source of leverage in relation to its Palestinian constituents and Israel itself. The group's claims against Israel offer it moral legitimacy as a Palestinian representative group in some circles and constitute a threat for the Israeli public
Military - The armed wing, Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, maintains guerilla military operations (rocket launching) from the Gaza Strip

Regional Strategy

Hamas provides social services and employment to Palestinians in the Gaza strip to enable their control and garner support from constituents. To do so, the party maintains tunnels under the Gaza blockade to have continued access to resources. The party refuses to recognize Israel or engage in negotiations and maintains strong deterrent actions against Palestinians seen to be too close to 'normalizing' relations with Israel. Hamas also seeks to mobilize ideological and economic support from political Islamists around the Arab World.

Powerful Individuals

Yahya Sinwar (Leader of Hamas as of February 2017), Khaled Meshaal (Previous Leader of Hamas), Ismail Haniyeh (Senior Hamas Member)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Coalition - Build coalition with other Islamist parties in the region;
Reconcile - With Fatah and create unity government;
Increase social services wing - Garner Palestinian support;
Call for third intifada - A new concentrated movement of nonviolent resistance and violent opposition against Israel;
Increase rocket launches - Against Israel or, alternatively, end all attacks to increase political legitimacy;
Revise Hamas charter - To garner international community support;
Denounce ties with Muslim Brotherhood - to Partner with Egypt and call for regional security agreement.

Internal Conflicts

There is conflict within Hamas as to the levels of terrorism or negotiations to engage in, and the political and military wings have had a divisive relationship due to this question. Hamas factions within Gaza, the West Bank, Israeli prisons, and the Diaspora all have different views on what stance to take in relation to Israel.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood, HOLY SEE, IRAN, LEBANON Hezbollah, QATAR, TURKEY

Rivals

EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, ISIS, JORDAN, PALESTINE Civil Society, PALESTINE Fatah, RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES,

Adversaries

ISRAEL, UNITED STATES

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

Individuals and organizations in QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN, and SYRIA Government, and HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

QATAR

Party Portrait

Qatar is a country of 1.9 million people, of which only one-eighth are Qatari citizens. Despite its relatively small size, though, it is the world's leading exporter of liquefied natural gas and the richest in terms of GDP per capita. Like its Gulf neighbors it is a monarchy, and has been ruled since the 19th century by the Al-Thani family. Qatar is most concerned with maintaining its security and stability, particularly given the volatility of the region. It has sought to create a more proactive role as a mediating power in the Middle East and North Africa, leveraging its significant economic strength as well as its soft power.

Key Interests

- Be viewed as a powerful state in the region, a player on the international scene, and an ally of the West. To this end, it has increasingly been involved, to varying degrees, in conflicts across the region.
- Be perceived as a power broker in the Middle East, and particularly to supplant Saudi Arabian influence in the region.

Sources of Leverage

Political - It has allied itself with the West and specifically the United States, serving as a mediator in certain situations, and housing the US Central Command forward headquarters.

Economic - Its economic power allows Qatar to exert significant political influence across the region, either through aid or military support.

Soft Power - Al-Jazeera is a government-backed news outlet based in Doha and is considered the Arab world's most influential media organization, with a huge following in Arab communities.

Regional Strategy

Though it has played a mediating role in various conflicts, it has also gone beyond this in terms of funding or providing weapons to groups. Moreover, it often deviates from the GCC "party line", choosing instead to establish an independent foreign policy. Ultimately, Qatar seeks to establish relations with a wide array of actors in an effort to exert as much influence as possible in regional affairs.

Powerful Individuals

Emir: Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani; Designated Successor: Abdullah bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani (the current Emir's half-brother); Prime Minister and Minister of the Ministry of Interior: Abdallah bin Nasir bin Khalifa al-Thani; Former Emir: Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani (Tamim bin Hamad's father); Mother of Emir: Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Missned; Director General of Al-Jazeera: Dr. Mostefa Souag

Potential Negotiation Moves

Regional power broker - Qatar can act as a mediator in key conflicts across the region, most notably in Syria and Yemen.

Increase support to Syrian opposition groups - Alternatively, Qatar may also wish to play a more active role in the Syrian conflict, increasing financial and armed support to rebel groups.

Internal Conflicts

Qatar is mostly ethnically and religiously homogenous and has not suffered through some of the ethnic or sectarian struggles that have burdened so many countries in the region. It is one of the wealthiest rentier states, and though political freedoms are limited, there have not been any significant disputes between citizens and the state. However, with migrants representing a majority of the population, the government has faced increased international pressure to provide greater labor rights to these groups.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, IAEA, ISTANBUL COOPERATION INITIATIVE, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

N/A

Partners

PALESTINE Hamas, EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood, IRAN, TURKEY, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM

Rivals

SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, UAE, EGYPT Government

Adversaries

SYRIA Government

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

PALESTINE Fatah, PALESTINE Hamas, YEMEN Government

Aid Donor

N/A

RUSSIA

Party Portrait

Russia's engagement in the Middle East has deep historic roots. For more than two hundred years the primary goal of Russia's foreign policy was to drive the Ottoman Empire out from the Balkans and Black Sea region. Persia was divided into the Russian and British zones of influence. Russia's entry into the World War One was mainly motivated by its claims for Constantinople and the Turkish Straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles. The USSR continued active involvement in the political developments of the Middle East, soon leading to tense contention with the United States. Today, Moscow's official position is the continued premise of Russia's exclusively important role in regulating the Middle Eastern conflicts. Moscow is engaged in a variety of interaction around the Arab-Israeli conflict. As a permanent UN Security Council and Middle East Quartet member, Russia is insisting on the inclusive and collegial nature of its policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moscow supported Assad in the wake of the Arab Spring, but the formal rationale behind Russia's military presence in Syria is fighting terrorists. In December 2016, Russia announced that the peace agreement in Syria had been reached through the help of the Russia-Turkey-Iran trio of mediators.

Key Interests

- Restrain/block Islamic extremism as a matter of national security
- Stop revolutionary changes of regimes (primarily those where Moscow sees the influence of outside powers)
- Secure limited military presence in ME
- Expand presence in the local markets of weaponry, nuclear energy, oil and gas, food, etc.
- Obtain a degree of control over world oil prices
- Attract foreign investments in Russia
- Restore international reputation

Sources of Leverage

Political - Consolidated political elite and centralized power; deep penetration of the Russian state and private companies in the economies of the Middle East;
Soft Power - Public and cultural diplomacy; reputation (especially after the success of the Syrian peace process initiation)
Military - Hard power (military and intelligence)
Convening Power - UNSC permanent membership
Energy - Oil and gas

Regional Strategy

Russia is involved in fighting terrorists through a variety of levers - from space intelligence through cultural diplomacy, - to prevent the infiltration of extremism in Russia and neighboring CIS republics. Supports secular regimes, particularly Assad's government. Holds open and secret negotiations of bilateral and multilateral format, leaving room for potential negotiation.

Powerful Individuals

Vladimir Putin (President), Sergey Lavrov (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Sergey Shoigu (Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation since 2012), Mikhail Bogdanov (Special Representative of the President for the Middle East and Africa), Valery Gerasimov (Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and Deputy Defense Minister), Igor Konashenkov (Head of Department of Information of the Ministry of Defense), and Anatoliy Antonov (the Deputy Foreign Minister supervising the questions of politic-military realm and nuclear weapons).

Potential Negotiation Moves

Mediation - Engage more parties into the initially trilateral mediation alliance for the Syrian peace process (like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, and Jordan)
US - Russia Relations - Test the waters with Trump administration to potentially 'reset' the relations with the U.S.
Syria - Advocate for an internal separation of Syria with an eventual formation of a federative form of government with the precedence of Alawites

Internal Conflicts

Islamic extremists operating in the territory of Russia (mainly North Caucasus and Volga region).

Memberships

CIS, IAEA, OIC (Observer), OSCE, Quartet on the Middle East, UN (Security Council)

Allies

SYRIA Government, IRAN, Palestine Fatah, ARAB LEAGUE, LIBYA House of Representatives, YEMEN Houthis, KURDS of Syria

Partners

TURKEY, PALESTINE Fatah, ISRAEL, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, JORDAN, QATAR, UAE, SAUDI ARABIA, EGYPT Government, BAHRAIN, JAPAN, HOLY SEE, EGYPT Government, PALESTINE Hamas

Rivals

UNITED STATES, EUROPEAN UNION, CHINA, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, UNITED KINGDOM, GERMANY, INDIA

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS, SYRIA Jabhat Fatah a-Sham, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

Proxy

SYRIA Government, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, KURDS of Syria

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

PALESTINE Fatah, JORDAN, LEBANON, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN

Aid Donor

N/A

SAUDI ARABIA

Party Portrait

Saudi Arabia has consistently presented itself as a regional leader of the Arab world in the Middle East. It derives this identity narrative from its control over the cities of Mekkah and Al-Madina, while also legitimizing its influence through its vast economy fueled by oil revenues. It's Islamic/Arab leadership narrative has propelled the nation to serve a proactive and regional coordinative role in regional conflicts, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The threat perception that has tended to capture the Saudi conflict narrative has shifted from a focus on the Palestine-Israeli conflict to a concern with Iranian political ascendancy in the region, and its impact on Saudi's domestic politics and regional role.

Key Interests

- Maintaining the economic and political stability of the country, particularly given the number of domestic terror attacks by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliated individuals/groups that have been reported over the years
- Ensuring a powerful role in Middle Eastern political decision making processes. The nation wishes to maintain its prominence as the political, economic and religious powerhouse of the region, which has been challenged by Iran.

Sources of Leverage

Religion – Saudi Arabia is home to the two holiest cities of Islam, providing the Al-Saud family with both domestic and regional legitimacy.

Natural Resources – Revenue from oil exports allows the nation to create a loyal citizenry through an expansive welfare based social contract. Its economic strength provides an important tool to foster partnerships across the region and globally.

Political - The Saudi government has relied heavily on its relationship with the United States, which has primarily revolved around shared interests regarding regional security, oil and defense cooperation.

Regional Strategy

Continue to leverage its economic might through “checkbook diplomacy”, whereby it provides financial incentives and aid packages to regional political actors in order to form a network of support across the Middle East and North Africa. Funds rebel/opposition groups in Syria against Bashar Al-Assad. Quell the Houthi rebellion in Yemen and counter threats that may emanate from, or are supported by, Iran.

Powerful Individuals

King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Muhammed bin Nayef, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

Potential Negotiation Moves

Broker Agreement - Seek to play a key role in brokering agreements to cease hostilities in Syria or Yemen

Strengthen Western Relationship - Strengthen relationship with the US around shared interests in the region, particularly the threat of increased Iranian influence

Work with Israel - Build strategic partnership with Israel with regards to intelligence sharing and containment of Iran

Internal Conflicts

There are contestations for influence with the royal family between the Saudi civil service, religious establishment and the military establishment. Among the ruling elite, the quest for royal succession between the princes and their factions primarily plays out in the form of tribal rivalries, but also manifests itself on the lines of ideological variances or differences in constituencies and support structures of princes.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, IAEA, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

BAHRAIN, OMAN, KUWAIT, UAE, UNITED STATES, YEMEN Government

Partners

IRAQ State of Law Coalition, TURKEY, EGYPT Government

Rivals

IRAN, QATAR

Adversaries

LEBANON Hezbollah, SYRIA Government, EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood

Active Armed Opponents

YEMEN Houthis, ISIS, AQAP

Proxy

SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EGYPT Government, PALESTINE Fatah, YEMEN Government

Aid Donor

N/A

SOMALIA AL-SHABAAB

Party Portrait

.Al-Shabaab is one of the most potent armed groups and terrorist organizations in the Horn of Africa, with an estimated 9,000 combatants (including foreign nationals) fighting largely within the territory of Somalia. The target of counterinsurgency operations led by the United Nations, African Union and Federal Government of Somalia, al-Shabaab continues to pose a significant threat to regional security. Al-Shabaab has fought to secure territory within Somalia and to expand and deepen its ties with Al-Qaeda. Evidence suggests that weapons from both Iran and Yemen have found their way to the hands of Al-Shabaab fighters within Somalia. Many of Al-Shabaab's combatants are reportedly focused on local grievance, rather than waging global jihad against the "enemies of Islam."

Key Interests

- Increasing financial and military capacities;
- Controlling territory in Somalia;
- Acts of terror against countries / nationals of countries deploying troops to peace operations in Somalia

Sources of Leverage

Military – Threat of terrorist attack throughout the Horn of Africa and large swathes of East Africa.

Regional Strategy

Al-Shabaab has sought to cultivate partnerships with state and non-state entities that have the potential to provide military and financial support for its operations. While Somalia has aligned itself with Saudi Arabia, Al-Shabaab is alleged to have pursued ties with Tehran. And with civil war waging in Yemen, Al-Shabaab has profited from increased small arms proliferation just across the Gulf of Aden. Al-Shabaab prioritizes ties with Al-Qaeda.

Powerful Individuals

Ahmed Omar assumed the self-appointed role of "Emir" of Al-Shabaab in September 2014, following the death of his predecessor Ahmed Abdi Godane in a US airstrike that same month.

Potential Negotiation Moves

Potential to threaten terrorist attacks not only against Western and African targets within Somalia, but potentially also in neighboring states such as Eritrea and Djibouti. Al-Shabaab may also seek partnerships with ISIS, and to develop more overt partnerships with countries including Iran.

Internal Conflicts

Al-Shabaab has countless internal factions and divisions, with many disputing the extent to which it represents a single unitary actor. Each regional unit's recruits are likely driven by highly localized grievances, undermining the extent to which a single jihadist ideology can motivate the entire organization.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

AQAP

Partners

IRAN

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

FRANCE, RUSSIA, CHINA, INDIA, JAPAN, YEMEN Government, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM

Active Armed Opponents

SOMALIA – GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

SOMALIA GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Somalia has been mired in internal conflict for more than 15 years, with limited central government control in that time. Free and fair elections in early 2017 and a peaceful transition of power are a positive sign. But the continued threat of Al-Shabab and frequent terror attacks in the capital, Mogadishu, suggest the country will continue to face significant challenges in the future. Somalia's government is dependent on external partners such as the African Union, Kenya and the UN to maintain internal security, and has formed productive alliances with Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. It has a hostile relationship with Iran.

Key Interests

- Provide domestic security and neutralize al-Shabab
- Build the capacity of its armed forces, leveraging overseas military assistance
- Build and strengthen the economy and reduce vulnerability to famine

Sources of Leverage

Political - Somalia remains a major source of migrants and refugees to Europe and Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen

Regional Strategy

Somalia has sought to capitalize upon Saudi Arabia – Iran rivalry in Africa by partnering with Riyadh in exchange for military and economic assistance. Mogadishu has cut off ties with Tehran in order to consolidate its status as a firm Sunni ally, accusing Iran of support for Islamic groups in Somalia such as al-Shabab.

Powerful Individuals

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed; Prime Minister Omar Abdirad Ali Sharmarke

Potential Negotiation Moves

Limited options for negotiation moves beyond its own borders, given restricted economic, military and geopolitical capacity. Somalia is largely focused on neutralizing the threat posed by al-Shabab and, to a lesser degree, by international piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Internal Conflicts

Al Shabab continue to pose a major threat to the security of Somali citizens, government assets and resources in Mogadishu and beyond, and to critical infrastructure. Somali "pirates" have the potential to disrupt trade through the Gulf of Aden.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, OIC, UN

Allies

DJIBOUTI, EGYPT Government, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, UAE, UNITED STATES, TURKEY, CHINA

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

ERITREA, IRAN

Active Armed Opponents

SOMALIA Al-Shabaab

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES, EUROPEAN UNION, TURKEY, JAPAN, CHINA, FRANCE, UNITED KINGDOM, RUSSIA, KUWAIT, UAE

SOUTH SUDAN

Party Portrait

South Sudan's regional perspective differs from Sudan's due to its non-Muslim political regime. South Sudan has a very weak economic, social and strategic position in the region. South Sudan declared independence from Sudan in 2011. Thus far, South Sudanese statehood has been characterized by instability, violence, and humanitarian need. The civil war between the government of Salva Kiir and opposition forces has displaced 3.6 million citizens as IDPs and refugees. The violence has also resulted in a humanitarian crisis, as 4.8 million are threatened with extreme hunger, and famine has begun to affect certain areas. Due to the severity of the violence, farmers in the agricultural-based society are largely unable to plant crops. Widespread attacks on aid workers and convoys make it difficult to reach vulnerable populations. The conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives, but the presence of a UN intervention of 15,000 troops has frequently drawn the ire of the president, who desires to avoid Western influence in the country.

For the past two years, the UN has fallen below its funding goals for South Sudan. In 2015, the UN only met 62% of its \$1.6 billion goal for the 4.6 million people affected. For 2016, only 88% of the more modest goal of \$1.29 billion was funded. The resulting gap in resources leaves vulnerable populations in South Sudan more susceptible to starvation and disease.

Key Interests

- Strengthen the economy by making strong ties with major regional countries that are financially sound, such as Israel, which supports South Sudan with ammunition and financial aid.
- Resolve internal political problems with minimal assistance from outside actors like the UN, whom the South Sudanese government views with suspicion.

Sources of Leverage

Energy – South Sudan is oil rich
Natural resources – South Sudan shares many of the same resources as Sudan, such as mineral resources

Regional Strategy

Since independence, South Sudan has been plagued by severe political strife resulting in civil war, widespread drought and hunger. The government has failed to control the various insurgent groups, and has a contentious relationship with neighboring Sudan. South Sudan also faces the threat of infiltration by terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. Therefore, South Sudan's regional strategy is to counter terrorism by securing its borders and collaborating with its neighbors on military and intelligence strategy. South Sudan also desires to fix its internal fractures, bring home refugees from surrounding areas, and develop its natural resource extraction to bring profit to the failing economy.

Powerful Individuals

Salva Kiir (chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation movement, SPLM, and commander in chief of the armed forces), Pagan Amum Okech (senior leader in the military and active political wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, SPLA), Dr Riek Machar Teny (senior member of the SPLA and leader of SPLM/A rival faction), James Wani Igga (National Assembly Speaker and current SPLM vice chairman), Dr Lam Akol (senior member of SPLA)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Convince China to mediate internal disputes - With India and Malaysia, China is one of South Sudan's three major oil investors; however, conflict threatens China's investments in both South Sudan and Sudan. China has the necessary leverage, resources, and interest to attract parties to the table.
Appeal to neighboring states for assistance in ending the conflict - Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda have an interest in ending the conflict as their borders have been besieged with South Sudanese refugees.

Internal Conflicts

After gaining independence from Sudan, South Sudan has fallen into a civil war between the government of Kiir and its opposition. In addition, internal conflict by internally displaced people has been a cause for concern for the government and public alike.

Memberships

AU, UN

Allies

EGYPT Government, INDIA

Partners

CHINA, EUROPEAN UNION, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INDIA, ISRAEL, PALESTINE Fatah, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Rivals

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAN, LIBYA Government of National Accord, SAUDI ARABIA, SUDAN

Adversaries

SUDAN

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

AU, EUROPEAN UNION, ISRAEL, UNITED STATES, UNITED NATIONS

SUDAN

Party Portrait

Sudan's Arabic and Muslim identity has a palpable effect on the country's foreign relations, and its desire to maintain strong ties with its neighboring countries in the region. In particular, Sudan's shattered economy leads it to seek close and cordial relations with other Arabic and predominantly Muslim neighbors rich in natural resources and economy, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Sudan sees Middle Eastern problems as its own. As such, the country tries to take a fully-fledged role in Middle Eastern conflicts. Sudan sees the Middle East as a source of power, derived from a common Arabic and Muslim identity. However, Sudan's main motivation is to develop strong ties with Arabic countries, regardless of their stance on different issues. Sudan desires to maintain positive relations with such diverse allies as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and now Israel. In contrast, South Sudan has a different stance owing to a non-Muslim regime in the country.

Key Interests

- Combat terrorism, particularly from the threat of al-Qaeda and ISIS
- Secure its borders from the South Sudanese conflict
- Support self-determination of rebel groups against corrupt governments
- Sustain strong ties with Middle East allies and partners, and obtain financial aid

Sources of Leverage

Energy – Sudan is oil rich
Natural Resources – Sudan possesses abundant natural resources, including oil, water, arable land, and mineral resources.
Soft Power – Sudan received global news coverage regarding its afflicted Darfur region, which brought increased attention and financial and humanitarian aid.
Technology – Sudan has 1/3 of Sudan/South Sudan's combined oil resources, but Sudan retains the infrastructure needed to export the oil

Regional Strategy

Sudan is interested in supporting Arabic and predominantly Muslim countries. Additionally, Sudan has adopted strategies against ISIS and al-Qaeda, opposing the operations of these non-state actors by securing Sudan's boundaries. Sudan opposes the hegemony of non-Muslim states like Israel and Shiite states like Iran and Iraq in order to maintain Sunni hegemony in the Middle East. However, to support self-determination in Arab Spring countries, Sudan intends to continue supplying rebels such as those in Libya and Yemen with aid, including weapons and military assistance.

Powerful Individuals

Omar al-Bashir (President), Bakri Hassan Saleh (Prime Minister), Hassabu Mohamed Abdelrahman (Second Vice President)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Offer to host dialogues with South Sudanese rebel leaders - South Sudan's rebel groups have struggled to articulate their demands and purpose. Sudan's leaders could initiate conversations with the rebel leaders, could lead to a comprehensive overall peace agreement.
Convince China to intervene in South Sudan - Chinese investments in Sudanese oil refineries and a planned nuclear reactor are threatened by instability in South Sudan. China has the necessary leverage, resources, and interest to attract parties to the table. May cause tension with the United States. The South Sudanese civil war has been rife with human rights abuses.

Internal Conflicts

Sudan is largely recognized to be an authoritarian state devoid of free and fair elections. In the 2010 presidential elections, the candidate from the main opposition party withdrew from the race, and pro-democracy activists reported government intimidation.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

EGYPT Government, INDIA

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, PALESTINE Fatah, SAUDI ARABIA

Rivals

IRAN, ISRAEL, LIBYA Government of National Accord, UNITED STATES

Adversaries

SOUTH SUDAN

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

AU, EUROPEAN UNION, OIC, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

SYRIA GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Since its ascent to power in 1963, the ruling Ba’ath Party has sought to forge a national identity based on a Syrian nationalism that, while incorporating elements of pan-Arab ideology, is rooted in the invocation of a specifically Syrian heritage. The government has simultaneously marshalled the Syrian region’s Arab-Islamic, pre-Islamic, and post-Ottoman past to craft this identity. Despite the regime’s desire for an ideologically-unified state, much of the population has not fully accepted the identity propagated by state officials. In particular, many Syrian Sunnis—the country’s religious majority—view the government as a vehicle for the interests and aspirations of Alawites and other religious minorities at their own expense. The Syrian military, which is predominantly staffed in its upper levels by Alawites, has remained fiercely loyal to the regime. This religious divide has contributed to the increasingly sectarian nature of the civil war. The Syrian government, headed by President Bashar al-Assad, controls large sections of central and western Syria—but seeks to assert sovereignty over all of Syria’s pre-conflict territory.

Key Interests

- Reassert government sovereignty over as much of its pre-war territory as possible
- Maintain full Syrian territory with no rival groups wielding political or territorial authority within Syrian borders
- Ensure that Sunni groups do not usurp power and thus pose a risk to the safety and prosperity of Alawites and other religious minorities

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power - Increasing prominence of hard-line Islamist groups in the Syrian opposition means the regime can claim to be a necessary bulwark against jihadi terrorism. International powers, particularly in the west, will be less willing to seek the removal of Assad from power.
Military - Has support from Russia and Iran, which greatly enhances military capabilities, also constrains military and political choices.
Geography - The government coalition currently controls most strategically-important areas of Syria, including the major cities, which places it in a strong bargaining position.

Regional Strategy

Maintain military action in an ongoing, large-scale, civil conflict with a range of groups to regain control of Syria. Align with Russia, invite it to deploy its military within the country in service of the regime’s goals, and build coalition with Iran, Hezbollah, other non-Syrian Shi’ite volunteers to increase military power. Engages in military operations despite internationally-agreed ceasefire agreements, expresses willingness to engage with opposition armed groups in (indirect) bilateral and potentially even multilateral negotiations, with the precondition that Assad remain in power.

Powerful Individuals

President Bashar al-Assad (President, son of Hafez al-Assad, the former long-time President), Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani (commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ elite Quds Force)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Negotiate - Engage in political negotiations on the condition that the process preserves its control over the country. More likely to engage in talks when it is in a position of military pre-eminence on the ground in Syria; views negotiations as a way of cementing its territorial gains. It is possible that Assad may be forced to make greater concessions in negotiations if losing militarily.
Gain American Support - Seek to gain the tacit support of America by emphasizing anti-ISIS focus, thus buttressing the government against international pressure

Internal Conflicts

Government presents itself as the legitimate, sovereign authority, assailed by an opposition backed by foreign forces. However, Assad regime increasingly presents itself in sectarian terms as protector of Alawites. Forces comprise military largely controlled by Alawite officers, Shi’ite auxiliaries from Iran, Hezbollah and other countries and groups. These groups are vital to their military capacity. Syrian armed forces, whose commanders are bound to the regime by their shared religion, are likely to defend the government to the end. There are signs that some Alawite Syrians seek to distance themselves from Assad and downplay the sectarian aspects of the civil war.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE (Suspended), IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

YEMEN Houthis

Partners

LEBANON Hezbollah

Rivals

EGYPT Government, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, JORDAN, PALESTINE Fatah,

Adversaries

BAHRAIN, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, GERMANY, ISRAEL, KURDS of Syria, LEBANON Government, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS, SYRIA Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

RUSSIA, IRAN

Aid Recipient

UNITED NATIONS

Aid Donor

N/A

SYRIA JABHAT FATEH AL-SHAM

Party Portrait

Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, is a radical Islamist salafi-jihadist group operating in Syria, particularly in Idlib province. It is an offshoot of al-Qaeda in Iraq (now known as ISIS), and, until recently, was the Syrian affiliate of the global al-Qaeda organization. Jabhat Fateh al-Sham aspires to forge an Islamic emirate and, eventually, a caliphate governed under sharia law. The group has also pursued a policy of presenting itself as Syrian, rather than global jihadi, movement, with the specific goal of leading the Syrian revolution and overthrowing the Assad regime.

Key Interests

- Create an Islamic state in Syria, governed under sharia law
- Destroy Western influence in the Middle East
- For some members: Wage a global jihad against western interests – including carrying out attacks in North America. Such aspirations have been absent from its rhetoric but, considering its close ties to al-Qaeda and transnational Islamic terrorism, it is likely that this goal has not been jettisoned.

Sources of Leverage

Military - The group maintains 5,000 - 10,000 fighters and military capabilities in the war against the Assad regime
Geography - Jabhat Fateh al-Sham controls areas in the North-West of Syria in and around Idlib province
Political - Although its ideology and links to al-Qaeda will continue to make it unacceptable to Western powers, Gulf nations and Turkey may begin to view the group as the only one capable of thwarting an outright regime victory, and thus as a potential proxy.

Regional Strategy

Jabhat Fateh al-Sham has worked to become a dominant player in the Syrian opposition, with a primary strategy of gaining control of large tracts of territory from the Syrian government and winning the support of the Sunni Syrian populace in the areas its governs. The group cooperates militarily with other opposition groups, both moderates and radicals, and uses moderate public rhetoric to appear more acceptable to Syrians. It recently changed its name to distance from al-Qaeda and attempt to appeal to a broader range of partners. Jabhat Fateh al-Sham maintains opposition to participation in internationally-negotiated peace-talks.

Powerful Individuals

Abu Muhammad al-Julani (emir), Abdul Mohsen Abdullah Ibrahim al-Sharikh (senior strategist), Sami al-Oreidi (senior religious figure and second in command)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Continue to Oppose Political Negotiations - Negotiation moves are constrained both by its own hostility towards international efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement to the Syrian conflict, and by international players' refusal to engage with the terrorist group. Furthermore, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham's support amongst the Syrian populace has generally benefitted from ongoing conflict, which binds civilians more closely to an armed group that can protect it militarily (but is less capable of protecting it politically in times of peace).
Build Coalition - Build negotiated political coalition among other opposition groups to gain power and create vision for negotiations with Assad regime.

Internal Conflicts

Jabhat Fateh al-Sham comprises both foreign and Syrian fighters. While both are committed to the same salafi-jihadist cause, it is likely that some more pragmatic Syrian fighters will be more amenable to limiting the group's medium-term aims to establishing an Islamic state in Syria than foreign jihadists, who harbor a more global vision. However, the more 'moderate' faction of the group is small and an ideological minority. Jabhat Fateh al-Sham is now formally separated from al-Qaeda, but is part of battlefield alliances with a shifting array of other opposition groups.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

AQAP

Rivals

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

Adversaries

LEBANON Hezbollah, IRAN, UNITED STATES

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS, RUSSIA, SYRIA Government

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

Individuals in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey.

SYRIA OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS

Party Portrait

Other than ISIS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the Syrian opposition comprises a broad array of often-competing groups that operate within an unofficial system of fluid and regionally-specific battlefield alliances. They range in ideology from relatively secular democrats, to Kurdish nationalists, to hardline Sunni radicals. Many of the groups comprise communities that previously suffered from the uneven and crony-capitalist economic policies of the Assad regime. The decentralization of the network of groups known as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) means it holds relatively little clout; more powerful is the Southern Front coalition (some of whose members are FSA-affiliated), and the Islamist Ahrar al-Sham group. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-Arab-Christian coalition, are also fighting the regime.

Key Interests

- Remove the Assad regime from power. In light of their disadvantageous battlefield position, many groups may be recalibrating their goals seeking instead to remove Assad from power while leaving the regime largely intact and/or to achieve a stake in a post-conflict government
- Establish new government system: Create new, democratic government (for some groups), establish Islamic state based on sharia law (for others), underlying objectives can differ even within groups

Sources of Leverage

Political - Moderate opposition factions hold little political leverage due to their relative weakness on the battlefield and dependence on stronger, more hard-line groups in military endeavours. The strongest opposition elements on the ground are the radical Islamist Ahrar al-Sham and Kurdish-Arab-Christian SDF coalition. SDF can rely on foreign backing as the major opposition force combatting ISIS.

Military - Some groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham, can leverage military strength and territorial control to gain international support.

Soft Power - Groups seek external support on the basis that they are the only credible groups within Syria that have a chance of rolling back the regime's gains and defeating ISIS to become a moderate governing body in Syria.

Regional Strategy

These groups have generally been willing to engage in bilateral and multilateral peace-talks, although the future of Bashar al-Assad as President has proved a sticking-point in the past. With their decline in battlefield fortunes, opposition groups may decide to pursue a negotiated end to the conflict while they still have some military and political power to bargain with, or to seek expanded aid from external sources. Some have also sought military and financial aid from foreign powers. Also foreseeable is a combination of both strategies whereby opposition groups seek increased military hardware and funds from abroad to underpin military efforts to reach a point of stalemate (the outright defeat of Assad being unlikely) in which negotiations would be in both parties' interests.

Powerful Individuals

Ali al-Omar (leader of Ahrar al-Sham), Riad Hijab (head of the High Negotiations Committee)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Negotiate - Pursue a policy of engaging in political negotiations, possibly at the same time as seeking increased foreign support to achieve territorial gains, put Syrian government forces under pressure

Regime Change - Improve military position generated increased support to increase the opposition's ability to press for regime change and inclusion in a new government during political negotiations.

Moderate Rhetoric - Attempt to moderate rhetoric of hard-line groups in order to attract backing from western states.

Internal Conflicts

The non-ISIS/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham opposition suffers from a lack of overall cohesion and a divide between foreign-based political groups and domestic military groups. The foreign-based Syrian National Coalition enjoys little support amongst Syrians in Syria, while the High Negotiations Committee, a Saudi-backed bloc of both political and military entities created to engage in peace talks, does not include several major groups on the ground in Syria. The 'moderate' network of Free Syrian Army-affiliated militias is militarily weak, lacks a broad national command. Stronger factions include the SDF, based in the primarily-Kurdish north of the country, and Islamists including Ahrar al-Sham.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

KURDS of Syria, ISIS (nb: some groups in this category partner with ISIS, while others are actively fighting ISIS), JORDAN, UNITED STATES (certain groups only)

Rivals

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, SYRIA Jabhat Fateh al-Sham

Adversaries

LEBANON Hezbollah

Active Armed Opponents

SYRIA Government, RUSSIA, IRAN, ISIS (certain groups only)

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, UNITED STATES (certain groups only)

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

KUWAIT

TUNISIA

Party Portrait

Tunisia is currently governed by a coalition government of the Islamist party, Ennahda, and Nidaa Tounes, a diverse grouping of secularists, leftists, former regime members, traditional elites and oligarchs. Though working in a coalition, these parties, disagree on many issues, particularly in the lower bureaucratic levels. Outside of politics, the Tunisia General Labor Union (UGTT) is a powerful force with a large and diffuse membership.

Key Interests

- Ennahda: Remain a central player in Tunisian politics. Do not allow itself to be isolated.
- Niddaa Tounes: Maintain its position as a counterbalance to Ennahda in influencing national reforms and important political decisions.
- UGTT: Continue to push for political reforms that benefit its members and do not allow the national government to be delegitimized or to become deadlocked.

Sources of Leverage

Political - Capitalize on Tunisia’s status as the success story of the Arabic Spring to convince donor countries to invest in its development and faltering economy. This status also makes it a desirable partner and recipient of Western security and economic assistance.

Regional Strategy

Tunisia’s primary regional strategy is to build security and economic development partnerships to stave off insecurity and extremism next door in Libya. Additionally, Tunisia seeks to stem the flow of young Tunisians joining ISIS, as Tunisia is its largest contributor of foreign fighters.

Powerful Individuals

Rachid Ghannouchi (leader of Ennahda), Beji Caid Essebsi (leader of Nidaa Tounes), Houcine Abbassi (leader of the UGTT)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Restart Western Sahara peace talks – Mediate peace talks between Morocco and Polisario Front/Algeria on the subject of Western Sahara. Direct attention and assistance from Western powers to the conflict using Tunisia’s status as the success story of the Arab Spring.

Internal Conflicts

Tunisia’s internal political structure is still in many ways transitioning out of authoritarian rule. The main struggles exist between the Islamist and secular parties, and between progress in coastal and regional development. Corruption and police abuse are also still major concerns.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, AU, IAEA, MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, OIC, UN

Allies

EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, TURKEY, UNITED STATES

Partners

ALGERIA, IRAN, LEBANON Government, MOROCCO Government, NATO, PALESTINE Fatah, SAUDI ARABIA

Rivals

LIBYA Government of National Accord

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

EUROPEAN UNION, KUWAIT, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, UNITED STATES

TURKEY

Party Portrait

Kemalism and the common Muslim identity have been the pivotal points around which the Turkish State and society have revolved during the last century. Turkey has remained non-interventionist as long as states are politically stable and turns interventionist when states go through political transition. A large part of this interventionism stems from its threat perception of Kurdish separatism, which in turn has its roots in Kemalist. The transnational political networks of PKK in Syria and Iraq are seen as a direct threat to territorial integrity. Post WWI events also have likely had a lasting impact on Turkey's policy formulation. At the end of the war, the allied powers signed the Treaty of Sevres, dividing the Anatolian region. Turks launched an armed struggle to drive out the foreigners and scrap the treaty of Sevres. After several years of struggle, Turks did succeed, but the legacy of Sevres continues in resistance to imperialist policies.

Key Interests

- Extend area of influence to Syria, Iraq, and beyond
- Have supportive Syrian government that can limit autonomy of YPG (considered a franchise of PKK). Establish buffer zone in Syria close to Turkish border to create bulwark between Kurd populations in Turkey and Syria
- Push back ISIS through direct military intervention in Syria
- Strengthen KRG in northern Iraq
- Take part in any military offensive launched against ISIS in Mosul.

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power - The greatest source of leverage to Turkey are its historical ties with Arabs, which make it easier to forge relationships. This is reflected in the way Turkey was readily accepted by the Arab countries under AKP, despite the fact that it had turned its back on the region after WWI.

Geography- Turkey's geo-strategic location allows it to influence decisions in Middle East.

Economic/ Military - Turkey has an advantage in the region in aggregate economic, military and geo-strategic strengths

Regional Strategy

Turkey is using its own military alongside Arab militias in Syria against ISIS and YPG. It was also supporting Jabhat al Fatah al Sham to fight Syrian government forces. Currently, its strategy is to keep northern Syria under its influence. Turkey is using its ties with Russia to limit the influence of YPG. In Iraq, it has established a mutually beneficial, economic relationship with the KRG. It also supports Turkmen and Sunni Arabs in northern Iraq.

Powerful Individuals

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AKP), Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly Ismail Kahraman

Potential Negotiation Moves

Syrian Solution - In the short term, agree to the proposal that would keep Assad in power during the transition period in Syria, with the caveat that Assad will be replaced eventually. Aim for a loose federal structure in Syria with areas of influence of different countries.

Balance Powers - Keep a balance in its relations with the US and Russia to have more flexibility in its decisions in the region.

Ceasefire with Kurds - Negotiate a ceasefire with Abdullah Ocalan in order to focus exclusively on ISIS.

Internal Conflicts

The conflict between the Turkish State and the PKK is the most prominent cleavage in the Turkish society. The PKK engaged in a devastating guerilla war with the Turkish State during the 1990s, resulting in deaths of over 40,000 people. Between 2013-2015, a ceasefire was enforced after an understanding was reached between PKK and Turkish government. But in June 2015, Erdogan's reluctance to extend military support to Syrian Kurds in Kobane against the Islamic State forces in Syria led to the truce breaking down. 2015-16 was one of the deadliest years in the history of Turkey's PKK conflict. The impact of Kemalist policies were limited to urban centers, while rural Anatolia remained aloof of these policies and conservative. A number of recent attacks in Turkish cities were claimed by the PKK.

Memberships

IAEA, NATO, OIC, OECD, OSCE, UN

Allies

UNITED STATES, TUNISIA, GERMANY, PALESTINE Hamas

Partners

SAUDI ARABIA, ISRAEL, EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood, LIBYA Government of National Accord, KURDS of Iraq, JAPAN, JORDAN, PALESTINE Fatah, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, IRAN, UNITED STATES, HOLY SEE, TUNISIA, QATAR, EUROPEAN UNION, RUSSIA, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, SOMALIA Government

Rivals

IRAN, EGYPT Government, KURDS of Iran

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

ISIS, KURDS of Turkey, SYRIA Government

Proxy

SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

External Sponsor

PALESTINE Fatah

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Party Portrait

The UAE, while a small state, is a key regional player as a result of its economic strength, particularly in oil, finance, tourism, shipping. Furthermore, it has gained political strength in recent years as a result of its increased role in regional affairs, ranging from intervention in Libya to intervention in Yemen. Though its regional and global ambitions are increasing, its main interests lie in strengthening economic growth in the long term, continuing its modernization and diversification agenda, and ensuring the continuity of the current regime.

Key Interests

- For the most part, the UAE acts primarily on its economic interests. To this end, the country aims to paint itself as the cosmopolitan business capital of the GCC and the Arab world.
- Critically, it also focuses on regime stability, and maintaining a stable federative relationship among the various emirates

Sources of Leverage

Economic - Its economic might and role as an investment and business hub in the Arab world are a significant source of soft power.
Political - Regime stability, particularly given a region characterized by conflict and instability, is a strong source of leverage.
Convening Power - The UAE's strong partnerships with key GCC allies, as well as Western states (including hosting a French military base), contributes to being seen as a responsible actor in the region that can be counted on to support key regional initiatives (including military missions).

Regional Strategy

Its regional strategy is largely anchored in strengthening its economic position as a hub for investment in the MENA region. Recently though it has assumed a greater regional leadership role, participating in air strikes in Libya in 2011, and most recently in Yemen.

Powerful Individuals

President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Prime Minister Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Potential Negotiation Moves

Strengthen ties with GCC allies - The UAE may further strengthen its ties with Saudi Arabia and other GCC partners, therefore fortifying the GCC as an economic and political bloc, and increasingly as a military alliance.
Consolidating ties with Western partners - Strengthening ties with the United States and European partners are key interests in order to maintain external legitimacy and financial/military support.

Internal Conflicts

Perceived threat of political dissenters and in particular Muslim Brotherhood factions, terrorist threats (often related to perceived political dissenters)

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, IAEA, ISTANBUL COOPERATION INITIATIVE, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, KUWAIT

Partners

OMAN, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE

Rivals

IRAN, QATAR

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

EGYPT Government, YEMEN Government

Aid Donor

N/A

UNITED KINGDOM

Party Portrait

The United Kingdom is third most populous state in the EU and the second largest economy. The UK voted to leave the EU in June 2016. As a result, the UK remains primarily focused on negotiations of future economic and political relationships with the EU. The UK has been an active player in world politics. In addition to membership in NATO and permanent seat on the UN Security Council, the UK wields influence through longstanding cultural and political relationships, with the experience of centuries of diplomacy and crisis management. Actors in the Middle East remain skeptical of the UK as an impartial actor, given the UK's history of imperialism and intervention. Domestic conflict over the course of the UK overshadows the UK's interest in the Middle Eastern conflicts. With terms for the UK's exit from the EU far from settled, Brexit has widened cleavages in the major political parties.

Key Interests

- Ensure its own stability and the stability of its neighbors and the EU by eliminating the threat of Islamist terrorism, limiting the impact of refugees
- Retain role as one of Europe's most important powers post-Brexit
- End Syrian Civil War
- Defeat ISIS
- Aid Middle East Peace Process
- Strengthen global trade through economic ties and investment

Sources of Leverage

Convening Power - Although the UK is losing global influence by leaving the EU, it maintains a strong influence through its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, its membership in NATO

Economic - Increasing economic investment in the region, and is a large UK is also a bilateral donor of development and humanitarian aid

Military - Founding member of the Global Coalition to counter ISIS, and second biggest contributor to the military campaign. Provides close air support and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activity as well as a military training mission in both Syria and Iraq.

Regional Strategy

The UK's approach to the Middle East is limited by domestic concerns, especially in the wake of the uncertainty surrounding the UK's exit from the EU. Any potential moves are considered first by their impact on security and commercial interests, and then from a desire to define a new role in international politics and to strengthen international institutions. The UK seeks an end to the Syrian civil war, to concentrate military efforts on the fight against ISIS.

Powerful Individuals

Prime Minister Theresa May (Tory Party); Jeremy Corbyn (opposition Labor Party leader); Nigel Farage (leader of the nationalistic right-wing UK Independence Party); First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon

Potential Negotiation Moves

Syrian Settlement - Support Syrian-led political settlement based on a transition away from the Assad regime.

Military Involvement - Constrained by reliance on outside support, domestic challenges, and the demands of international law.

Soft Power - Will likely remain one of the leading development actors in the region.

Two State Solution - Remains committed to a negotiated two state solution, by binding practical, concrete improvements on the ground to de-escalate the conflict and drive forward political progress.

Internal Conflicts

Domestic political leaders remain split on the UK's international role. Prime Minister May has called for further engaging with the region, while opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has called for UK withdrawal from NATO and opposes all military intervention unless explicitly approved by the UN. Nigel Farage, leader of the nationalistic right-wing Independence Group has gained international recognition. It remains unclear if a post-Brexit UK will turn to isolationism, international irrelevance, or seek to demonstrate that it is still a force in the world.

Memberships

EU (anticipated departure by 2019), IAEA, NATO, OECD, OSCE, UN (Security Council)

Allies

UNITED STATES, FRANCE, GERMANY, SAUDI ARABIA, LIBYA Government of National Accord, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, JORDAN

Partners

ISRAEL, INDIA, LIBYA House of Representatives, SOUTH SUDAN, KUWAIT, OMAN, QATAR, SOUTH SUDAN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Rivals

RUSSIA

Adversaries

SYRIA Government

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

JORDAN

Aid Donor

N/A

UNITED NATIONS

Party Portrait

The two most significant actors in the UN are the Secretary-General and the Security Council. The new Secretary-General largely views strife in the Middle East as a failure of the international community to effectively lead the region and a lack of international capacity to prevent and/or solve violent conflicts there. He therefore seeks a proactive leadership role in the region to promote peace and stability. The Security Council, however, views conflict in the Middle East as disparately as the countries that compose it.

Key Interests

The key interests of the UN are as varied as its member states. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' primary interest is alleviating the humanitarian refugee crisis in the Middle East. Within the Security Council and other organs of the UN, there is no consensus on key interests (such as the Syrian conflict) outside of the nominal ideological interest of preserving international peace and security.

Sources of Leverage

Political - The Secretary-Generals' primary source of leverage is his influence and high visibility within his position. In addition, he has the ability to rearrange, restructure, and refocus the agencies that make up the Secretariat.

Military/Economic/Convening Power - The Security Council has more tools available, including military action (peacekeeping operations), economic sanctions, and legally binding resolutions.

Regional Strategy

Secretary-General Guterres' regional strategy is squarely aimed at achieving great power consensus and participation in conflict management. His overarching goal is to address the refugee challenge and, then, to develop and improve the regional capacity to prevent and solve the violent conflicts that lead to large-scale displacement. Within the Security Council, there is no clear regional strategy, and division on key regional conflicts has been the norm in recent years.

Powerful Individuals

The most visible unitary actor is Secretary-General Guterres, the chief administrative officer of the UN Secretariat and spokesperson for the UN. Within the Security Council, the permanent five members (P5) – China, France, Russia, UK, and US – are undoubtedly the most powerful states due to their veto power over Security Council resolutions.

Potential Negotiation Moves

The Secretary-General may:

- Pressure Great Powers** - Use public pressure against great powers or obstructionist states to encourage productive conflict resolution
- Restructure agencies** to focus on certain conflicts or regional challenges such as forced displacement
- Shuttle Diplomacy** - Vigorously engage in shuttle diplomacy to mitigate or end conflicts

The Security Council may:

- Sponsor Political Resolution** - Seek to sponsor a political resolution to the Syrian conflict through the Geneva talks or similar fora that is acceptable to all P5 members

Internal Conflicts

Due to the sprawling bureaucracy of the UN and the diversity of interests and positions within each committee and each member state, the UN can often appear to send disparate and, often, conflicting signals on the various issues it discusses. Given the structure of the different committees – the Security Council, which can be bogged down by the threat of a P5 veto versus the more-open General Assembly, which passes resolutions with 50 percent plus one vote – certain organs offer smaller states the opportunity to play an "activist" role and "get ahead" of the UNSC or other committees.

Memberships

Quartet on the Middle East

Allies

N/A

Partners

N/A

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

N/A

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

SYRIA Government, PALESTINE Fatah, LEBANON Government, JORDAN, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, EGYPT Government

Aid Donor

UNITED STATES, JAPAN, GERMANY, UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE

UNITED STATES

Party Portrait

Since World War II, the U.S. has been a significant stakeholder in the Middle East. From WWII to the end of the Cold War, the US parried the USSR's moves under a strategy of "offshore balancing," primarily relying on partners in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, to pursue US interests as allies and clients. In this balance, each major power ordered its priorities in the region based on the other's movements. Later, from the end of the Cold War to the mid-2000s, the US reigned undisputed as the most influential power in the Middle East. However, US power has begun to wane in the past decade. US popular fatigue from military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, in concert with uncertainty born of the 2008 financial crisis, have encouraged US allies like Turkey and Israel toward warmer relations with Russia. Although the US still exerts the largest influence in the region, in recent years Russia and China have stepped up to more aggressively pursue their own interests.

Key Interests

- Promote national security/counterterrorism by degrading and deterring terrorist groups through intelligence sharing/coalitions
- Maintain balance of power/regional alliance; do not allow Russia or China to obtain dominance in the Middle East
- Enhance energy security for substantial imports of oil
- Partner with Israel to protect security and democracy in the region. Support peace between Israel and Palestinian Territories
- Encourage human rights and democracy, especially in the face of Russian and Chinese ascendance in the region

Sources of Leverage

Energy - Despite lessening dependence on Middle East oil, the US maintains access to significant energy resources in the region
Military - The US boasts the most powerful military in the world, allocating hundreds of billions of dollars more budget than its closest competitor, China.
Convening Power - Funds peace negotiations and uses its considerable motivating power to bring warring parties to peace talks
Soft Power - Exercises public diplomacy, private diplomacy and persuasion tactics, as well as exporting culture through popular music, movies, fashion, etc
Economic - Since the 1950s, the US has sent about \$170 billion in financial assistance to countries in the Middle East; Israel alone received another \$62bn
Political - The US holds partnerships and alliances with powerful local stakeholders, like Israel and Saudi Arabia, and coalitions in Syria and elsewhere
Technological - The US has the most advanced technology in the world, to be used destructively (drone strikes) or peacefully (technology transfers).

Regional Strategy

Still exerts wide influence through soft and hard power. Strong interest in maintaining energy security, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, promoting human rights and democracy, and partnering with regional allies to combat terrorism. Lessening energy dependence by lowering consumption and developing domestic resources. New US administration's negative view toward the Iranian nuclear agreement may threaten its implementation. A new strategy has been for the US' allies to bear more of the brunt of maintaining stability in the Middle East.

Powerful Individuals

Donald Trump (President), Steve Bannon (Chief Strategist), Reince Priebus (Chief of Staff), Gen. James Mattis (Secretary of Defense), Gen. Joseph Dunford (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff), Rex Tillerson (Secretary of State), Dan Coats (Director of National Intelligence), Earle Litzenger (Acting Permanent Representative to NATO), Nikki Haley (Ambassador to the UN)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Pursue collaboration over confrontation - US can choose to engage positively with China and Russia, and pool resources over shared interests like political stability and energy security.
Organize joint efforts around universal concerns - If US could organize efforts toward finding solutions for scarce water resources, it would benefit from the critical mass of resources and publicity

Internal Conflicts

When characterizing Democrat and Republican political parties, it is important to note that many smaller factions within the parties have differing views on U.S. interests. Nonetheless, in terms of broad strokes, the Republican party tends more toward hawkishness and hard power, while the Democratic party tends toward dovishness and soft power.

Memberships

IAEA, NATO, Quartet on the Middle East, OECD, OSCE, UN (Security Council)

Allies

BAHRAIN, EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, GERMANY, ISRAEL, JAPAN, JORDAN, KUWAIT, MOROCCO Government, TUNISIA, TURKEY, UNITED KINGDOM

Partners

ALGERIA, ARAB LEAGUE, DJIBOUTI, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INDIA, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, IRAQ Secular Nationalists, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Turkey, KUWAIT, LIBYA Government of National Accord, LIBYA House of Representatives, OPEC, PALESTINE Fatah, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, SOMALIA Government, SOUTH SUDAN, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups,

Rivals

CHINA, RUSSIA, SUDAN

Adversaries

IRAN, IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, IRAQ Sadrist Movement, LEBANON Hezbollah, PALESTINE Hamas, SOMALIA Al Shabaab, SYRIA Government, SYRIA Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, YEMEN Houthis

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

LEBANON Government, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

ALGERIA, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, ISRAEL, JORDAN, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria, LEBANON Government, MOROCCO Government, PALESTINE Civil Society, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN, TUNISIA

Aid Donor

N/A

YEMEN GOVERNMENT

Party Portrait

Yemen's ongoing civil war limits the ability of President Hadi's administration to govern. Having fled to Riyadh, Hadi has now returned to Yemen but is limited to the second city of Aden, unable to operate out of the capital Sana'a. Yemen is a major source country of refugees in the Middle East, with many millions of IDPs within the country's borders. Hadi's government faces significant challenges in meeting the immense humanitarian needs of his people, with insecurity limiting the ability of international development agencies to access vulnerable populations in need. Hadi has depended on the military intervention of a coalition of Arab states, led by ally Saudi Arabia, to counter the threat of the Shia Houthi rebels - and to challenge their control of Sana'a. The Yemeni government has also depended to a significant degree on Western powers - and in particular the US Government - to counter the threat posed by AQAP.

Key Interests

- End civil war in the country.
- Disarm and neutralize the Houthis and AQAP.
- Revitalize the economy and export industries.

Sources of Leverage

Political – Yemen's ability to secure its borders and potentially decrease the volume of people leaving the country is a potential source of leverage for engagement with other Middle Eastern and European states.

Regional Strategy

Yemen's capacity to influence wider events in the Middle East is significantly constrained, given its preoccupation with the crisis at home. However, maintaining its alliance with Saudi Arabia is a critical priority for Hadi's government - particularly given Riyadh's ability to mobilize other Arab states to take military action against the Houthis.

Powerful Individuals

President Abdrabbuh Mansur Madi; Prime Minister Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr

Potential Negotiation Moves

Leverage the knowledge of Yemen's military, defense and intelligence communities on AQAP and the Houthis' locations in engaging with external powers intent on neutralizing these groups' threat.

Internal Conflicts

The Yemeni government is engaged in a civil war involving the Houthis, also seeking to neutralize AQAP.

Memberships

ARAB LEAGUE, IAEA, OIC, UN

Allies

DJIBOUTI, ERITREA, INDIA, SOMALIA Government, EGYPT Government, MOROCCO Government, JORDAN, SUDAN, KUWAIT, UAE, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, CHINA

Partners

UNITED STATES, EUROPEAN UNION, FRANCE, UNITED KINGDOM, INDIA

Rivals

IRAN, ERITREA

Adversaries

ISRAEL

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, YEMEN Houthis

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

SAUDI ARABIA

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

UAE, UNITED STATES, EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN, TURKEY, RUSSIA, KUWAIT

YEMEN HOUTHIS

Party Portrait

The Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, are a Zaydi-Shi'ite organization currently engaged in a loose coalition with Yemen's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Having mobilized a broad coalition of religious parties, leftists and rebels, uniting in a radical anti-establishment movement, the Houthis are a potent political and military force. While the Houthis' capacities have been damaged by Saudi-led airstrikes, they retain control of Yemen's capital city of Sana'a. Their capacities are buttressed by extensive financial and material support from Iran, the Houthis' main external sponsor.

Key Interests

- Establish new, independent state in northeast of Yemen
- Restore the Zaydi Imamate and rule over Yemen
- Return of former President Saleh
- Continue flow of weapons and resources from Tehran
- Defeat AQAP
- Ensure dominance of Shia groups

Sources of Leverage

Military - The Houthis have the potential to threaten the Yemeni government and its allies with violence. This could also include stoking Sunni - Shia tensions.

Regional Strategy

The Houthis' regional strategy has consisted of recruiting allies to provide political, military and financial support to the rebellion. Most importantly, this includes Iran, a natural ally to this Shia political-religious movement. The Houthis have also built alliances with Hezbollah, Russia and Syria. Furthermore, they have also engaged former President Saleh in a coalition, given his widespread popularity amongst many Yemenis and the armed forces. The precise ultimate objective of this strategy, however, remains unclear - and different factions of the Houthis may articulate different objectives.

Powerful Individuals

Abdul-Malik al-Houthi (leader), Yahia al-Houthi (brother of leader)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Secure more direct engagement from Iran, escalating tensions from a proxy war between Tehran and Riyadh to direct conflict between the parties drawing in much of the Sunni and Shia alliances in the region.

Internal Conflicts

The Houthis are engaged in a civil war with the Yemeni Government, while also fighting to weaken AQAP.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

SYRIA Government, RUSSIA, LEBANON Hezbollah, IRAN

Partners

N/A

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES, UNITED NATIONS, EUROPEAN UNION, ISREAL, EGYPT Government, MOROCCO Government, JORDAN, SUDAN, KUWAIT, UAE, QATAR, BAHRAIN

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, YEMEN Government, ISIS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A