

# **On the Wrong Direction**

## **The American Strike and the Scenarios of Syrian Crisis**

**Syrian Center for Policy Research**

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### **Main messages:**

According to the statements of its administration, the United States intends to launch a limited military strike against Syria, a decision from outside the Security Council. The stated aim of the strike is to weaken the military capacity of the regime, in particular with regard to chemical weapons. The study adopted this scope of the strike as the basis of its analysis.

This study provides an analytical impact assessment of the potential American strike on the scenarios of the crisis in Syria. The study complements continuous research efforts within the framework of “Exploring Alternative Solutions for the Syrian Crisis”, a project launched and implemented by the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR). This project is conducted in cooperation with a large number of Syrian experts and activists. Several other papers and reports were produced as part of the project including an assessment of the socioeconomic and institutional roots and impacts of the crisis, a draft "Vision for Future Syria", and an analysis and assessment of the different scenarios for possible pathways of the Syrian Crisis. The analysis identified the probability and the preferability of the suggested scenarios, and drew a map of different actors in the crisis.

The study concludes:

- 1- The strike would increase the likelihood of the “continuation of the armed conflict”, “military takeover by the armed opposition”, and the “failure of the state” scenarios, while significantly reduce the likelihood of political solutions' scenarios and of course the “military takeover by the regime” scenario.
- 2- According to the analysis of the weight of actors and their level of support and influence on each of the different crisis scenarios, the study shows that, on internal level the Islamic brigades would benefit the most from the three most likely scenarios resulting from the strike. On the external level, Israel would benefit the most from the strike, being the first supporter of “continuation of the armed conflict” and “failure of the state” scenarios. The United States would also benefit from these scenarios, but to a lesser degree. Saudi Arabia and Qatar would also benefit from the strike because as they support to varying degrees, the three scenarios that the strike promotes.
- 3- The results show that United States support in the first place “negotiations with substantial external influence”. However, the strike would reduce significantly the likelihood of negotiations' scenarios at the expense of increased chances for other scenarios such as “the continuation of the armed conflict” and the “failure of the state”. This shows a contradiction between the strike possible results and American declared support to “negotiations with substantial external influence”.

- 4- The strike increases the likelihood of “continuation of the armed conflict”, and to a lesser extent the “failure of the state”. The American strike significantly supports the interests of Israel and the Islamic brigades.
- 5- There is a clear contradiction between the most likely promoted scenarios by the strike and the most favourable scenarios according to the "Vision of Future Syria", in which the “continuation of the armed conflict” is the worst scenario. It means that the impact of the strike is in the opposite direction of the best interest for Syria’s future. In turn, the strike reduces the probability of the two most favourable scenarios evolving around political solutions.
- 6- taking into consideration its most promoted scenarios, the strike would lead to further deterioration in humanitarian situation in Syria, including losses in human, social, and material capitals, and increasing in poverty rates, number of migrants, IDPs, and refugees, and fuelling social fragmentation.

## **A. Background on the Syrian Crisis:**

Since March 2011, Syria has witnessed one of the most critical challenges in its modern history represented in a deep socio-political crisis that escalated into an internal armed conflict and violent confrontation among internal and external political powers. This ongoing crisis revealed the complexity in many dimensions; political, economic and social, at both internal and external levels. The social movement in Syria has undoubtedly been political “par excellence”. It has right from the beginning, upheld and consistently adhered to the value of freedom, demanded by most parties in different forms and organizations. It has come as an expression of the essence of the crisis that is marked by denial of political freedoms and lack of efficient, transparent, and representative institutions.

Syria’s development record was hindered by “institutional bottlenecks” which marginalized large segments of society and deprived them from effectively contributing to the political, economic and social development. Syrian institutions were unable to evolve in a way to reflect the aspirations, interests and expectations of the society.

The pre-crisis low equilibrium development model in Syria kept a large segment of the country’s economic, social and institutional potential unexploited. The features of this model included the emergence of new well connected interest groups "crony capitalism", low productivity, large informal sector, and low accountability of formal institutions. On the other hand, this model included expanded public employment, sponsoring education, health, providing consumer subsidies, public services, and infrastructure. However, and during the last decade, implementing neo-liberal policies has negatively affected public employment and the provision of consumer subsidies (SCPR 2013a).

The Syrians increasing awareness of the possibility of institutional change increased their expectations of the justice they deserve, and consequently widened the distance between their current situation and the possible one and raised the level of social pressure in the direction of change (Sen, 2009). This was fuelled by young educated generations widely exposed to other countries experiences and increased people awareness, expectations and belief in the capability of changing the current political institutional structure aiming at a just and developed society.

The crisis impact is clearly reflected in a severe deterioration of the people situation on human, social and economic levels. The most tragic impact of the conflict is the loss of human life, with more than 100 thousand Syrian killed and 400 thousand Syrian wounded, most of them resulted in handicapping or life lasting illnesses. The preliminary indicators show a negative population growth rate in 2012 as a result of the increased number of Syrian immigrants and refugees and the increase in death

rates, besides a change of the demographic distribution in Syria as a result of the internally displaced population.

Syrians suffer from a severe deterioration of their living conditions including human security and public services; health, education, energy sources and transportation, added to that the improper housing conditions as a result of buildings and houses destruction. Refugees inside and outside the country suffer the most of these effects. Syria has lost a large part of its achievements and capacities to achieve in the education and health sectors. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Syria clearly reflects the impact of the crisis, where by June 2013 it is estimated to have decreased to a level lower than the one in early 80s of the last century, which means that Syria has lost the achievements of three decades of Human Development.

The armed conflict in Syria generated a total economic loss estimated at USD 103.1 billion by 2013-Q2, which is equivalent to 174 per cent of the GDP of 2010 in constant prices. The loss of 2.3 million job opportunity resulted in the increase of unemployment rate to 48.6% which deprives more the 9 million Syrian citizens of their main income sources. The material poverty rates severely increased where more than 6.7 million Syrian entered the poverty circle, among them 3.1 million entered under severe poverty rate (SCPR 2013a).

Despite the increasing role of the civil society and the large spread of the citizenship concept, the crisis has tragically affected values and social relationships in Syria. The loss of unrecoverable social capital in terms of trust and communication between Syrians has increased the polarization and hostility within the social fabric and the spread of vengeance trends and the emergence of economics of violence which pushes the conflict towards more violent edges.

## **B. Methodology of “Exploring Alternative Solutions for the Syrian Crisis”:**

The Syrian Center or Policy Research depends on scientific and participatory methodologies to explore the scenarios of the crisis, and its alternative solutions. The study drew a map of internal, regional and international actors in the crisis, measured the probabilities of each suggested scenario of the crisis, taking in consideration the weight of supportive actors for each scenario, and finally assessed the compatibility of each scenario to the “Vision of Future Syria”, to consider the “most favourable scenario”, (SCPR, 2013c).

The “most favourable scenario” enables the identifications of its main and least supporters among actors, therefore strategies can be suggested and built up to push for the favourable scenario through influencing the actors.

A questionnaire was prepared, tested and used to collect and analyze experts' opinions on the weight and influence of actors, the most probable scenarios, and the most favourable of them. The questionnaire consists of three main parts:

The *first part* aims to draw a map of actors in the Syrian crisis on both internal and external levels, and the interaction of these actors and their influences on each other, and the weight of their influence. The study has identified the following actors:

- On external level: 21 actors

The five permanent members of Security Council: United States of America, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China.

Regional countries: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, and Israel

Neighbouring Arab countries: Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan

Arab Gulf countries: Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates

International organizations: the United Nations, the Arab League, the European Union, the BRICS

- On the internal level: 13 actors

Military actors: Official Army, Security Services, Free Syrian Army, Islamic Brigades

Political actors: the Presidency, Political Opposition, the Government Institutions.

Civil actors: Official and Non-official Religious Institutions registered NGOs, Local Coordination Entities<sup>1</sup>, Private Sector, and the Media.

The *second part* of the questionnaire aims to identify the most probable scenario by studying the degree of support of each scenario by the different actors, with consideration of each actor's weight of influence in the crisis. The study identified eight scenarios in a participatory approach; these scenarios represent the main feature of the crisis until the end of 2014:

- **Military scenarios (scenarios of military nature):**

**The continuation of armed conflict**, derived by the following factors: the inability of any of the parties of military takeover to their advantage, maintaining the flow of military, logistical, and financial foreign support for all involved parties, inability to reach an agreement or common understanding for viable negotiations on internal and external levels, and the deterioration of the Syrian economy and the public sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Civil society informal entities have established through the crisis to organize social movement known as "Tansikiat".

**Foreign Military Intervention**, derived by the following factors: the continuation of armed conflict with no advantage to any of the involved parties, an international agreement to support one side against the other, no signal of national agreement, claiming the use of weapons of mass destruction, cross borders military operations with neighbouring and Israel.

**Military takeover by the regime**, derived by the following factors: unbalanced military assistance in favor of the regime (the cessation of military support to the opposition), radical and extensive military operations to regain military and security control over the areas now under the armed opposition, a major shift in Syrian public opinion toward military takeover by the regime, a shift in the international community toward supporting the regime and ending the armed opposition.

**Military takeover by the armed opposition**, derived by the following factors: an increase in the direct military or non-military assistance to the armed opposition, an increase in defections in the army and security forces, a major shift in the Syrian public opinion toward military takeover by the armed opposition, a shift in the position of the regional and international community toward changing the current regime.

- **Radical Changes Scenarios:**

**Failure of state** scenario derived by the following factors: the continuation of armed conflict and inability to start negotiation process, the loss of the state of its control over national territories and its legitimacy to take and implement decisions, inability of the state to provide a minimum level of public services, inability to react with other countries, inability to meet internal and international commitments.

**Division of Syria** scenario, derived by the following factors: the continuation of armed conflict with no local or international agreement on viable solution, the formation of regional de facto non-state authorities, external support to those authorities with facilitations to international recognition.

- **Negotiations Scenarios:**

**Negotiations with substantial external influence**, derived by the following factors: the inability of the involved parties to continue the armed conflict, internal pressure from within involved parties toward negotiations, an international and regional agreement toward ending the conflict in Syria, imposing international and regional agendas in the negation process, and distribution of power between of internal actors who has external support.

**Negotiations with substantial internal influence**, derived by the following factors: the inability of the involved parties to continue the armed conflict, internal pressure from within involved parties toward negotiations, imposing of national priorities by

civil society, inclusive negotiations process toward forming a consensus government and reconstruction agenda.

The *third part* aims toward identifying the most favourable scenario through assessing the possible scenarios mentioned above with the desired values and principals in future Syria. Those values and principals were agreed on in a participatory approach with a large number of Syrian experts and activists inside and outside Syria. The identification of the favourable scenario helps in determining both supportive and non supportive actors of this scenario. Thereafter, setting the general lines of policies and influencing mechanisms aimed at these actors toward reaching the desired values and principles (SCPR, 2012*b*).

The questionnaire was sent to 120 Syrian experts and activists from different backgrounds have capacity of objectivity, and the interest in public issues. The respondents' rate reached almost 50%. The results of the study was discussed widely with Syrian experts, including discussions during "Toward a strategic solution of the Crisis in Syria, Beirut, 2013" conference.

### **C. Mapping the Syrian Crisis Actors**

The results show that 63% of the total Syrian crisis actors' impact is related to external actors. As 40% of the total impact is a result of interaction between the external actors, which demonstrate the reflection of the international struggle among the super powers to increase its influence in the world on this conflict; whereas 23% of the total impact is due to the effect of these external parties on the internal ones through financing and arming in addition to providing political and media support. However, the effect of the internal parties on the Syrian crisis is 37% of the total impact; this includes the impact of these parties on each other 21.5% in addition to the impact of internal parties on external ones, which is the lowest at 15.5%. Thus, it could be said that the Syrian crisis is internationalized to a large extent, and that this has a negative effect on the possibility of finding internal solutions that take into account the priorities of Syrian people. The conflict is getting more complicated and it is involving more regional and international actors, this increases the probability of crisis escalation.

The below table shows that the United States is the most effective actor in the Syrian crisis, followed but with a relatively large difference, by Saudi Arabia. The Security Services are the third actor in terms of effectiveness ranking the first among the internal actors followed by the Presidency by a minor difference. The actor with the least effect is Libya at the external level, and NGOs and Formal Religious Institutions at the internal level. It is notable that the Syrian crisis is militarized since

the civil parties have the least impact at internal level; whereas, the military parties have the highest one.

#### Syrian Crisis Actors by their weights (internal/external)

| Rank | Actors            | Type     | % weight | Rank | Actors                          | Type     | % weight |
|------|-------------------|----------|----------|------|---------------------------------|----------|----------|
| 1    | United States     | External | 4.65     | 18   | Political Opposition            | Internal | 2.90     |
| 2    | Saudi Arabia      | External | 3.65     | 19   | BRICS                           | External | 2.83     |
| 3    | Security Services | Internal | 3.64     | 20   | China                           | External | 2.71     |
| 4    | Presidency        | Internal | 3.63     | 21   | Egypt                           | External | 2.60     |
| 5    | EU                | External | 3.59     | 22   | Arab League                     | External | 2.60     |
| 6    | Iran              | External | 3.53     | 23   | Iraq                            | External | 2.59     |
| 7    | UK                | External | 3.45     | 24   | Private Sector                  | Internal | 2.57     |
| 8    | Russia            | External | 3.44     | 25   | Local Coordination Entities     | Internal | 2.55     |
| 9    | Qatar             | External | 3.39     | 26   | Lebanon                         | External | 2.44     |
| 10   | Turkey            | External | 3.39     | 27   | Informal Religious Institutions | Internal | 2.44     |
| 11   | Official army     | Internal | 3.30     | 28   | Government Institutions         | Internal | 2.33     |
| 12   | France            | External | 3.22     | 29   | Emirates                        | External | 2.30     |
| 13   | Israel            | External | 3.20     | 30   | Jordan                          | External | 2.28     |
| 14   | Free Syria Army   | Internal | 3.11     | 31   | Kuwait                          | External | 2.23     |
| 15   | Islamic brigades  | Internal | 3.09     | 32   | Formal Religion Institutions    | Internal | 2.19     |
| 16   | United Nations    | External | 3.08     | 33   | Registered NGOs                 | Internal | 2.14     |
| 17   | Media             | Internal | 2.92     | 34   | Libya                           | External | 2.01     |

Source: Syrian Center for Policy Research, Syrian Crisis Scenarios, 2013

#### **D. Scenarios ordered by probability:**

The study results show probability of the eight suggested scenarios, assuming they cover all possible developments of the crisis. The close probabilities of the scenarios show crisis complications and the possibility of radical transformations throughout different stages of the crisis. Although actors could support different scenarios to different extent, still, each actor supports one scenario more than all the others. So the scenarios order according to their probability of happening came out as follows (from the most probable to the less probable):

##### **1. Negotiations with substantial external influence:**

With a probability of 16.2%, this scenario is supported internally by the Political Opposition (which supports in the first place the military takeover by the armed opposition), and the Private Sector (that supports in the first place negotiations with substantial external influence). Regionally, this scenario is supported by Iran and Iraq (which support in the first place the military takeover by the regime), in addition to Jordan, the Arab League, Lebanon and Egypt (which all support in the first place negotiations with substantial external influence). Internationally, this scenario is also supported by Russia and China (both countries support in the first place military takeover by the regime), and the United States, European Union, France, the United Nations, United Kingdom, and the BRICS (which all support in the first place negotiations with substantial external influence), in addition to Turkey (which supports in the first place military takeover by the armed opposition). These results show that this scenario is supported by some internal actors and many of the regional and international actors. On the other hand, this scenario is supported internally the least by Government Institutions, Formal Religious Institutions, the Syrian Army, Security Services (which all support in the first place military takeover by the regime), and the Islamic Brigades (which supports in the first place military takeover by the armed opposition).

##### **2. Negotiations with substantial internal influence:**

With a probability of 13.3%, this scenario is supported internally by registered NGOs, Formal Religious Institutions, Government Institutions, Private Sector, and the Official Army (which all support military takeover by the regime, except for private sector which supports negotiations with substantial external influence). Regionally, this scenario is supported by Iran (although Iran supports in the first place military takeover by the regime). Internationally, this scenario is supported by Russia (which supports in the first place military takeover by the regime).

On the other hand, this scenario is supported internally the least by the Islamic Brigades (which supports in the first place military takeover by the armed opposition). Regionally, it is least supported by Turkey, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and

Qatar (which support in the first place military takeover by the armed opposition), in addition to Israel (which supports in the first place the continuation of armed conflict). Internationally, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States do not support negotiations with substantial internal influence (they support negotiations with substantial external influence).

### **3. Military takeover by the armed opposition:**

With a probability of 13.3%, this scenario is supported internally by the Free Syrian Army, Islamic Brigades, Local Coordination Entities, Non-official Religious Institutions and the Political Opposition. Regionally, this scenario is supported by Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Libya. Internationally the military takeover by the armed opposition is supported by France and the United Kingdom.

As for actors who do not support this scenario, they include internally the registered NGOs, Government Institutions and Formal Religious Institutions, and Official Army. They also include regionally Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. The international actors who do not support this scenario are China and Russia.

### **4. The continuation of armed conflict:**

With a probability of 12.8%, this scenario is supported locally by the Islamic Brigades (which supports in the first place military takeover by the armed opposition), regionally by Israel (which supports in the first place this scenario), in addition to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (which support military takeover by the armed opposition). Internationally, the United States and United Kingdom support the continuation of the armed conflict (which support in the first place negotiations with substantial external influence).

As for actors who do not support this scenario, they include internally the Local Coordination Entities, the Private Sector, the Official Army, Government Institutions, Formal Religious Institutions, and registered NGOs. Regionally, they include Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon, the Arab League, and Egypt. The international actors who do not support this scenario are the United Nations and the BRICS.

### **5. Military takeover by the regime:**

With a probability of 12.5%, this scenario is supported internally by the Presidency, Security Services, the Official Army, Government Institutions, registered NGOs and the Media. This scenario is supported regionally by both Iran and Iraq, and internationally by Russia and China.

As for actors who do not support this scenario, they include internally Free Syria Army, the Islamic Brigades, Local Coordination Entities, Informal Religious Institutions and the Political Opposition. Regionally, they include United Arab

Emirates, Kuwait, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Israel. The international actors who do not support this scenario are the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, France, and the United Kingdom.

#### **6. Foreign military intervention:**

With a probability of 11.7%, this scenario is supported internally by the Free Syria Army, the Islamic Brigades, and the Political Opposition. Regionally, this scenario is supported by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. None of the international actors support foreign military intervention.

As for actors who do not support this scenario, they include internally the Presidency, Security Services, the Official Army, Government Institutions, Official Religious Institutions, and registered NGOs. Regionally, they include Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran. The international actors who do not support this scenario are Russia, China, the United Nations and the BRICS.

#### **7. Division of Syria:**

With a probability of 10.4%, this scenario has absolutely no internal supporters, while it is supported regionally by Israel and internationally by the United States.

As for actors who do not support this scenario, they include internally the Presidency, Security Services, Official Army, Government Institutions, registered NGOs, Formal Religious Institutions, the Media, the Private Sector, Non-formal Religious Institutions, the Political Opposition, and the Local Coordination Entities. Regionally, they include Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, the Arab League, Iraq, Libya, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. The international actors who do not support this scenario are Russia, China, the BRICS, the United Nations and the European Union.

#### **8. Failure of the state:**

With a probability of 9.9%, this scenario is supported internally only by the Islamic Brigades, and regionally by Israel and to a lesser extent Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Except for the United States, international actors do not support this scenario.

As for actors who do not support this scenario, they include internally the Presidency, Security Services, the Official Army, the Media, Government Institutions, Formal Religious Institutions, registered NGOs, the Private Sector, the Non-formal Religious Institutions, Local Coordination, and the Political Opposition. Regionally, they include Libya, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon, the Arab League, Egypt Iraq, and Iran. The international actors who do not support this scenario are the European Union, the United Nations, the BRICS, Russia and China.

## E. Preferable scenarios

In order to identify the most preferable scenarios of the crisis in Syria, the study assessed the contributions of the eight probable scenarios to the values and principles of the Future Syria vision. These values and principles were determined based on continuous work with Syrian experts inside and outside the country. These values include justice, equality, respect of human being, freedom, morals, integration of civilizations, creativity and innovation, culture and knowledge, and effective institutions.

The study concludes that the most preferable scenarios toward the above values and principles are: negotiations with substantial internal influence that takes the priorities of Syrian society into consideration, followed by negotiations with substantial external influence. The below table shows that negotiations in general, and internal negotiation in particular, achieve the highest percentage of the values and principles, and much higher than percentages achieved by other scenarios. This reflects clearly that most of Syrians prefer a political solution through negotiation for the current crisis.

### Possible Scenarios according to their Percentages in Achieving Values and Principles of Syria Vision

| Rank | Scenarios  | % in achieving the Vision |
|------|--|---------------------------|
| 1    | Negotiations with substantial internal influence | 68%                       |
| 2    | Negotiations with substantial external influence | 54%                       |
| 3    | Military takeover by the armed opposition        | 37%                       |
| 4    | Division of Syria                                | 35%                       |
| 5    | Foreign military intervention                    | 34%                       |
| 6    | Military takeover by the regime                  | 30%                       |
| 7    | Failure of the state                             | 25%                       |
| 8    | Continuation of armed conflict                   | 24%                       |

Source: Syrian Center for Policy Research, 2013

The above table shows that continuation of the armed conflict and failure of the state scenarios are the least preferable scenarios for the Syrian society in terms of achieving the values and principles of Syria vision.

#### **F. The impact of the American strike on the crisis scenarios in Syria:**

The possible impact of the potential American strike on the eight Syrian crisis scenarios mentioned-above was assessed during a consultancy workshop with Syrian experts. The experts adopted a definition for the American military strike based on the recent American official statements. The strike was defined by the American administration as a limited and proportional missiles attack targeting strategic locations of the regime, with the aim of punishing the Syrian regime without overthrowing it. The workshop concluded the effects of the possible “limited and proportional” strike on the Syrian crisis scenarios, either by increasing or decreasing the possibility of each one of the eight scenarios.

The results highlighted that the strike increases, in the first place the probability of, continuation of the armed conflict since the missile strike aims at weakening the regime’s military and logistics capacity without mainly affecting its ability to continue fighting the armed opposition. In the second place, the strike would possibly increase the scenario of military overtake by the armed opposition, since it will weaken the regime forces. In the third place, the failure of the state scenario is probable to happen since a foreign military intervention may lead to weakening the state ability to fulfil its commitments and as the armed conflict continues.

The results show that the strike increases in the fourth place the probability of wide foreign military intervention, since the strike is considered as a gate to such intervention and it increases the likelihood of a wider armed conflict includes the intervention of foreign ground troops. As in the fifth place, the strike is expected to increase the probability of division of Syria because the military strike is expected to decrease state control over its territories and thus creating more space for autonomy tendencies in some areas.

On the other hand, it is likely that the limited military strike results in a decline in the possibility of political solution scenarios, including both internal and external negotiations, since it exacerbates the armed conflict and encourage stronger and more polarized attitudes in case neither of the parties was defeated. However, in case the strike leads to overtake of one of the parties, it is likely that the victorious one would reject negotiations. Finally, for the possibility of military overtake by the regime, it is expected that the limited military strike will weaken this possibility since its stated objective is to hit and punish the regime, and thus reduce its ability to achieve military victory.

The most important scenarios that the strike is expected to increase their probabilities are by order: the continuation of the armed conflict, military overtake by the opposition, and failure of the state. Using the results of the most probable scenarios before the strike which identified the scenario that each actor supported

in the first place, the most important actors in support of continuation armed conflict scenario are Israel, America, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic brigades, United Kingdom, and Turkey. As for the scenario of military takeover by the armed opposition, the main supporting actors are, depending on the “degree of support”, the Free Syrian Army, Islamic brigades, Qatar, and Local Coordination Entities, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, France, and United Kingdom. As for the scenario reinforced by the potential strike at third place, which is the failure of the state it is supported by Israel, the Islamic Brigades, Qatar, United States, and Saudi Arabia, respectively.

Therefore, it is more likely that internally the Islamic Brigades would benefit the most from the three most likely scenarios resulting from the strike, followed by the Free Syrian Army, and to a lesser extent, Local Coordination Entities since they support the military overtake by opposition scenario. At the external level, the foremost potential actors that support the strike is Israel since it is the most supporter of continuation of armed conflict and failure of the state scenarios, United States is also supportive of these two scenarios, but to a lesser degree. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are supportive of the potential strike since they support, in different degrees, the three scenarios that the strike promotes their probability to occur.

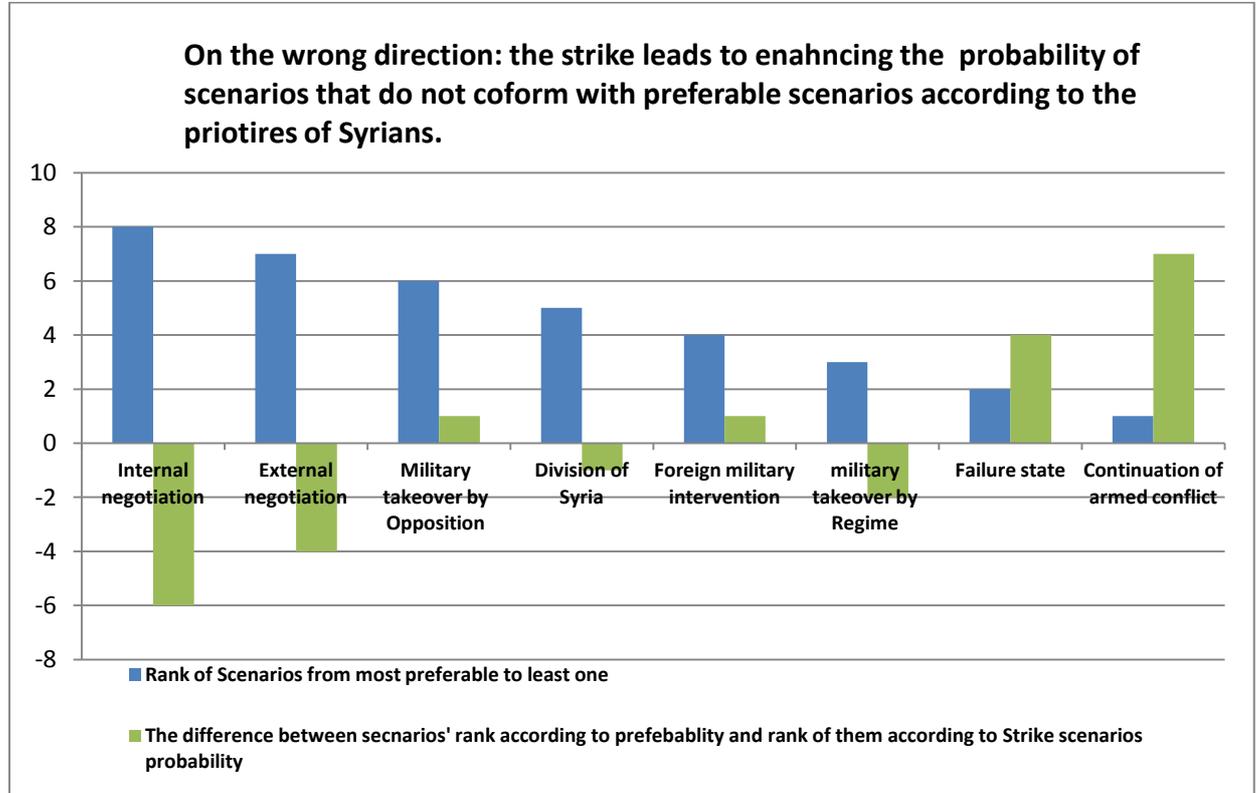
Comparing the scenarios reinforced by the strike and the support degree of main actors for each of the scenarios, the results show that United States support in the first place negotiations with substantial external influence. However, with the strike it would reduce significantly the likelihood of negotiations' scenarios at the expense of increased chance for other scenarios such as the continuation of the armed conflict and the failure of the state. This shows a contradiction between the strike impact and American declared support to negotiations with substantial external influence.

The strike increases the likelihood of continuation of the armed conflict, and to a lesser extent the failure of the state. The American strike significantly supports the interests of Israel and the Islamic Brigades in the first place.

The question is how conforming is the strike to the most preferable scenarios according the Future Syria vision? In other words, to what extent does this military intervention increase the probability of the scenarios that fit the most priorities of Syrian society that are derived from the Syria vision?

In this context, the following figure shows a comparison of the rank of the Syrian Crisis scenarios from the most preferable to the least preferable according the Vision of Future Syria (8 being the most preferable, 1 being the least), against the difference between the above rank (preferable) and the rank of scenarios according to probability upon the strike, with all other things held constant "ceteris paribus" (varies between minus 7 reducing the probability of scenario and plus 7 increasing

the probability of scenario), which can be explained as the difference between the priorities of preferable scenarios and the probability of scenarios that can be enhanced by the strike. So the following can be concluded:



Source: Syrian Center for Policy Research - 2013

The figure shows a clear contradiction between the most likely promoted scenarios by the strike and the most favourable scenarios according to the "Vision of Future Syria", in which the "continuation of the armed conflict" is the worst scenario. This means that the main impact of the strike is in the opposite direction of the best interest for Syria's future; and the same applies to the increase in the probability of failure of the state scenario. In turn, the strike reduces in the first place the probability of the two most favourable scenarios evolving around political solutions.

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