

Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy (IPS Institute for Policy and Strategy







# SIMULATION :

The Middle East after the territorial elimination of the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria



## Three foreign research institutions participate in the simulation:

**China Foreign Affairs University** 

Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University

**Sciences Po Paris** 

## Actors



## SIMULATION SCENABIO

### ISIS

- > During the year 2016, two battles (The battle for a-Raqqa and the battle of Mosul) led to the territorial elimination of the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria.
- > ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi hasn't been captured and it is estimated that he escaped to Libya.
- > In response to the defeats it suffered in Iraq and Syria, the Islamic state carried out a series of attacks around the world.

## SIMULATION SCENABIO

### International conference

As a result of the fighting against the Islamic state there was a sharp rise in the number of refugees in the region.

United States, the European Union and Russia are in close contact regarding an international convention sponsored by the UN to reach a solution to the refugee crisis and political agreements for the Syrian and Iraqi crises.

## SIMULATION SCENARIO

#### The Kurds

 Secret talks are being held between the Kurdish leaders in Iraq, Syria and PKK with the purpose of announcing the establishment of a Kurdish state.

## SIMULATION SCENARIO

#### **Palestinian Authority**

- The president of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu-Mazen) declared he intends to demand that the international convention sponsored by the UN to discuss the future of the Middle East will discuss the solution for the Palestinian problem as part of the solutions to resolve the crises in the Middle East.
- Abu-Mazen also called Hamas to join a national unity government.

### SIMULATION SCENARIO

Israel - Syria border

- Forces loyal to Assad, forces of Hezbollah and elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard have taken control over the Syrian Golan Heights.
- Hezbollah reinforced its forces in southern Lebanon using units of the organization that returned from Syria to Lebanon.

# Primary issues for discussion in the working groups:

- The preferable solution for the settlement of the crises in Syria and Iraq.
- The actor's position concerning the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.
- Solutions for the refugee problem and the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.
- How to promote a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ?
- How will the Islamic state operate within the new circumstances ?

# Main insights from the simulation

### ISIS

- After the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi a portion of its members went underground while others joined Al-Qaeda \ Jabhat al-Nusra.
- The organization maintains its terror infrastructure in Syria and Iraq strengthens its and reinforce alternative centers of operation across the Muslim world (Libya, the Maghreb, Sinai peninsula).
- The ISIS continues to act as a global terrorist organization.



- Israel perceives Hezbollah and Iran in its northern border as its main threat.
- The influence of ISIS in the region continues to pose a threat.
- Israel does not negate an option of inclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the regional conference, a move which may contribute to the cooperation between Israel and its neighbors, but objects to the issue being the main topic of the conference.

# The Palestinian Theatre

- An international conference The last opportunity to consolidate an Israeli-Palestinian move towards negotiations on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative.
- The lack of progress concerning the Palestinian issue will lead to the resignation of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and the collapse of the Palestinian authority.
- Hamas shows readiness to enter indirect negotiations with Israel made by mediation of one of the moderate Muslim countries in order to reach Hudnah (Cease-Fire).

## United States

- The US implements a moderate and measured policy which allows Russia to take significant military and political actions and lead initiatives.
- The US takes measured actions in order to achieve stability in Syria, Iraq and the rest of the Middle East within the framework of an international conference and other political initiatives.
- The US supports a two-states solution and does not agree that the international conference for regional stability is the right stage for the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The US does not support the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

# Pax-Russia in the Middle East

- Russia became a dominant actor shaping the Middle East according to its interests. Moscow broke the geopolitical setting of the scenario, and imposed its logic on all actors by sophisticated cross-domain operation.
- It used military force (covertly assassinating Assad and Qasem Suleimani) to get rid of strategic liabilities, waged successful deception campaign to attribute this move to the Iranian IRGC, and then, by political manipulations, acquired full control over Syria.
- Also, it assassinated, together with Egyptians, al Baghdadi in Libya, and acquired an image of the dominant and constructive regional power.
- It formulated new strategic reality, and led US, EU, China and Middle Eastern powers to reach regional order (in Syria and Iraq) favoring Russia.
- It normalized its relations with all international and regional (Shia and Sunni) actors by providing benefits and minimizing costs to everyone, produced win-win outcomes, and eventually acquired global image of "security and stability provider " - Pax Russia in the Middle East.

## China

- China promotes international initiatives in cooperation with Russia, the EU and the US to restore the stability to the Middle East.
- China is willing to give financial support to the rehabilitation of the region.
- China is obligated to the principal of sovereignty of all states.

# The European Union

- The European Union supports International initiatives to restore the stability to Syria and Iraq and is willing to aid and allocate funds for these initiatives.
- Abstains from taking a stand on the issue of an independent Kurdish State.

### Kurdistan - An Independent state to the Kurds

- The Kurds are not making significant progress creating a united front of all Kurds relating to the issue of an independent Kurdish state.
- Most of the countries in the region and the great world powers (except Russia) are opposed to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.
- Turkey is prepared to accept an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq in exchange for recognition of Turkish military presence in Mosul, Iraq.
- Iraq objects firmly to any initiative which violates its sovereignty.

# Final Conclusions

- The elimination of ISIS in Syria and Iraq and the removal of Bashar al-Assad in Syria are jointly the key to the internationally sponsored initiative to restore stability to the region.
- Russia will play a key role in the initiative but it will do so with full cooperation of the other great powers.
- An international conference on the basis of the Arab Peace initiative is the opportunity for creating a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A lack of progress in the political process may lead to the resignation of President Abbas and the collapse of the Palestinian Authority.