

# [What are the major foreign policy issues facing syria today](https://assignbuster.com/what-are-the-major-foreign-policy-issues-facing-syria-today/)

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SYRIA: POSITION PAPER The Syrian Arab Republic remains at the forefront of numerous Arab causes in the Middle East and has been one of the most ardent supporters of the Palestinian right to self-determination in the face of historical Israeli aggression and extremism. As President of the Syrian Arab Republic, the following outlines the important foreign policy challenges facing our great country and my perspectives on the most important and viable policy options for the future of our state. As a leader in the Arab and Muslim world, the Syrian Arab Republic must maintain its position at the forefront of the global Muslim community while remaining flexible to new circumstances and a changing world.   
What are the major foreign policy issues facing Syria today? As with all of our neighbors, the American decision to invade Iraq and overthrow a fellow Ba’athist regime in Iraq has presented a variety of new challenges. Contending with a pro-American regime in Iraq is something which we have had to understand since 2004 and this represents an important foreign policy challenge. Lebanon, a neighbor and Arab brotherly state, has recently asserted its independence in regional and domestic affairs and the result has been a lessening of Syrian influence in the region. The invasion of Iraq and the establishment of a pro-US government in that country has had a variety of regional ramifications. Finally, the constant belligerent relationship with Israel remains one of the most protracted foreign policy issues facing Syria today (Bloom, 2005; Zubaida, 2002).   
As I see it, there are three major policy options for Syria in the short to long-term. The first relates to Lebanon and the dwindling influence of Syria in this country. While we continue to exert influence in Lebanon through a variety of proxy sources as well as through the Hezbollah Resistance Movement, Syria must maintain its regional supremacy through an active Lebanon policy which ensures that Lebanon remains pliant to the wishes of its Syrian neighbor and remains decidedly pro-Arab in its inclinations as opposed to pro-Western. This will be a challenge to maintain in a new 21st century in which national assertiveness is expressed in Beirut but we must continue to maintain a foothold in Lebanon in order to remain effective. Another important policy option encompasses our relationship with the United States and its aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East. American aggression in Israel is threatening to Syria but after years of isolation we may have little choice but to warm up to the United States and their allies in Iraq and establish positive relations with both the US and the Iraqi state. The time has come for Syria to return to the international stage and contribute in a positive dialogue with both our Arab neighbors in Iraq and with the United States of America. If we choose to remain resistant to American overtures, we may one day find ourselves as unfortunate victims of their aggression. Syria must now respond to American overtures and seek a dialogue based upon mutual respect and understanding. The final foreign policy issue facing Syria today is the protracted border dispute with Israel over the Golan Heights and the self-determination of the Palestinian people. Our position has always been that Syria will not negotiate over the Golan Heights nor the issue of Palestinian self-determination. Perhaps the time has come for flexibility, both with the Americans and the Israelis, in our dialogue. Accordingly, pragmatism lies at the heart of this Syrian foreign policy position paper. The time has come for Syria to get out from the cold and commence a dialogue with both our allies and our global competitors (Korany & Hillal, 2008; Quandt, 1998).   
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