



Annual Report

2019

الحوار

مركز الحوار السوري

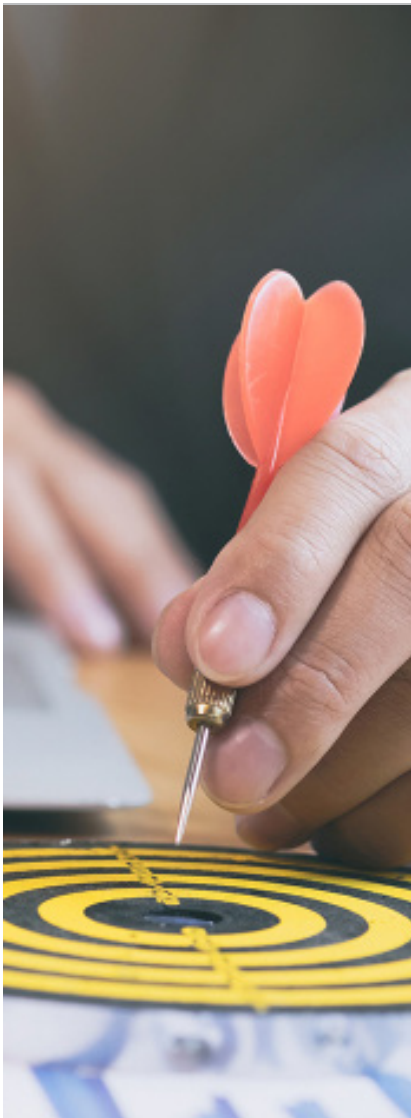
Syrian Dialogue Center



Introduction

The Syrian Dialogue Center is a Syrian civil institution that aims to revive and empower dialogue around the issues that interest the Syrian people. Its goal is to consolidate and empower relations and cooperation between Syrians. The center began its activity in Rabia Al-Awwal of 1435 AH/2014 AD with its first seminar, which it followed up with three seminars over the years 1435-1436 AH/2014-2015 AD, until the Syrian Dialogue Center's establishment was announced in response to the broad spectrum which had participated in its previous seminar at the end of 2015.

The Syrian Dialogue Center runs three thematic units: Shared Identity and Consensus Unit, Policy Analysis Unit, and Social Unit.



The Vision

To be a trustworthy home for Syrian dialogue and a pioneering model for promoting a culture of dialogue.



The Mission

To initiate constructive dialogue that enables the Syrians to find practical solutions to face their common challenges, achieving integration, coexistence and rationalization of national decision-making.



The Mission

- Professionalism in the tools of dialogue and its ethics commitment .A professional commitment to the ethics, tools, and processes of dialogue
- Excellence in identifying and facing challenges
- Prioritizing the national interest over any factious or external affiliation
- Understanding and accommodating diverse opinions and respecting all viewpoints



The Center Thematic Units

Shared Identity and Consensus Unit

The Shared Identity and Consensus Unit works on researching and enhancing the common shared identity of the Syrian society. It seeks building the necessary amount of Consensus among the various groups of the Syrian people by bringing together the diverse perspectives of Syrian forces and their currents with the aim of coming out with common stances towards major national issues.

Policy Analysis Unit

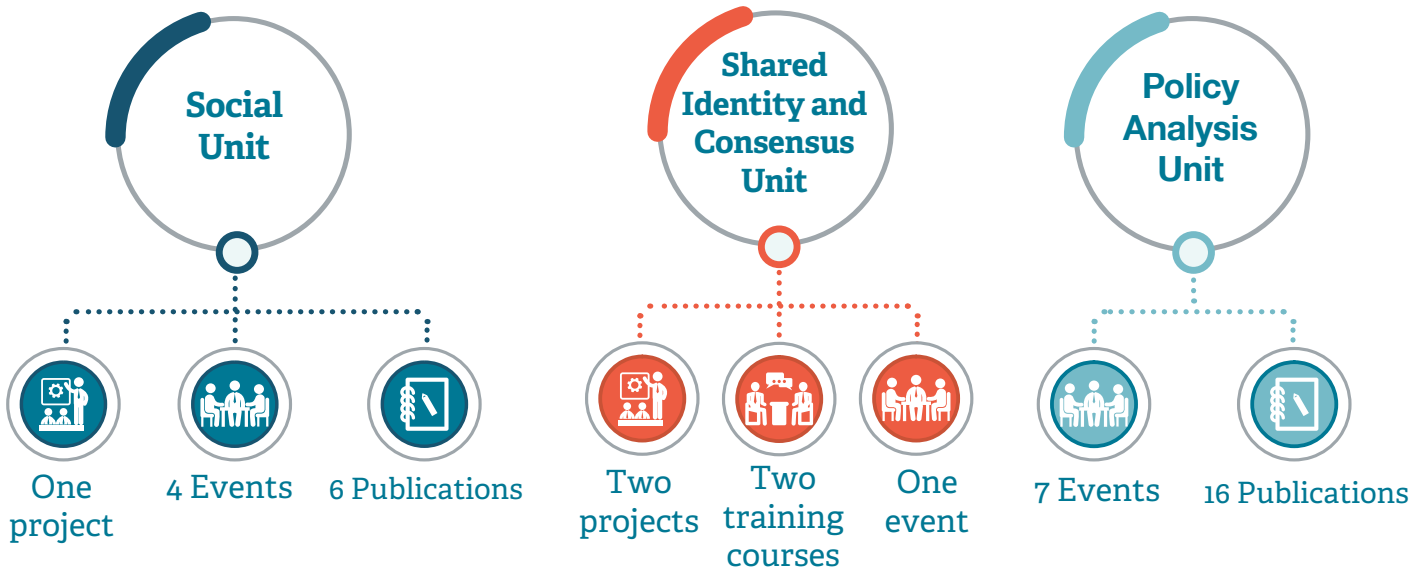
The Policy Analysis Unit aims to analyze the policies of the various international, regional and local actors in the Syrian context. SDC maintains that developing recommendations and policies in support of Syrian dialogue and consensus on major issues requires a thorough understanding of the policies of the different actors in the Syrian context, their interests and the motives behind their policies.


Social Unit

The Social Unit aims at taking the initiative to participate in reviving the vitality and well-being of Syrian society after decades of general authoritarian state domination. In addition, it researches the societal repercussions of the Syrian Revolution to contribute to reforming what can be salvaged, and it also seeks to strengthen the culture of community work. It contributes to strengthening society by removing obstacles standing in its way and mobilizing its inherent potential powers, activating these within institutions or individuals so that the concern for its advancement becomes a self-concern. Furthermore, the Social Unit works to create a culture that holds the importance of society in high esteem, acknowledges its centrality, and cherishes its potential and powers.

Achievements of the Year 2019

Throughout the year 1440 AH-2019, the Syrian Dialogue Center held 14 events and issued 22 reports and research papers. In addition, it implemented three projects distributed among the center's units, as follows:



A photograph of a business meeting around a table with various charts and documents. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid in the center, containing the text 'Projects in 2019'. The background shows hands pointing at documents and a laptop.

Projects in 2019

The National Dialogue Project

The "National Dialogue" project comes as one of the projects that the "Shared Identity and Consensus Unit" is working on in SDC. This project seeks to promote and build the national dialogue according to organized and calculated steps that include identifying common points among the various social spectra and capitalizing while also identifying points of discord and developing mechanisms for managing these and coexisting with them.

Duration for Completion the Previous Phases

The initiative started almost three years ago when its basic ideas were discussed. The work is still ongoing within the framework of the fourth phase- which consisted the bulk of our work in 2019 - with the aim of holding a general conference in which the National Consensus Initiative Document will be presented and discussed as well as to the problematic and consensus points two documents.

Project Goal

The project aims to build objective synergies among the various components of the Revolution and Opposition forces, with the aim of coming up with a shared vision of the foundations of the social contract among the Syrians.

Implementing agencies

Syrian Dialogue Center and Civilians for Justice and Peace Organization

Sponsor

The Consultative Forum

Phases of the Project Completed

- 1- Building the Knowledge Framework Phase: This phase included the preparation of a study that identified the most common and most problematic points in the visions of the various powers and national bodies, in addition to surveying the opinions of the general public and elites towards issues related to the future of Syria.
- 2- Proposing the Initiative and Validating the Results of the Knowledge Framework Phase: This phase included making visits to the various national forces and currents (amounting to 46 visits) to validate the results of the completed study, which confirmed the existence of a significant Consensus rate among the forces of the revolution and the opposition targeted under the project.
- 3- Preparing the Ground for Consensus on Problematic Issues: Following defining the problematic points, detailed questions on each point were developed and sent to a group of national entities and personalities (37 parties and personalities). Their written answers were received and analyzed, leading to defining the contentious roots of these problematic issues. Next, consensual phrasing was developed based on the suggestions submitted by the target parties themselves.
- 4- Reaching Consensual Options and Holding a National Conference Phase (under implementation): This phase includes preparing consensual options for the most prominent problematic issues, visiting entities and personalities, and submitting to them the National Consensus Initiative document in addition to the consensus points and problematic points two documents. This is done in preparation for a call to a general conference that aims at coming up with a Consensus document that represents the forces of revolution and opposition to a future Syria.



The National Consensus Index



Third Edition



Over the past years, the Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary forces have faced difficulties in coming together in unified entities for various reasons, and this has led to a general impression of the separation of these forces and the difficulty of bringing them together to a unified political vision or position.

Project Goal:

In order to contribute to the Consensus of the Opposition and Revolutionary forces, and in line with the center's mission in "achieving integration, coexistence and rationalization of the national decision", the center developed an index to monitor the positions of these forces towards the most prominent current political events. The index was developed based on a disciplined scientific methodology that includes monitoring and analyzing these positions in a manner that measures the extent of consensus.

Project Duration:

In view of the importance of the indicator in the Syrian national context, the center adopted the indicator as a primary project based on the feedback from stakeholders from the monitored forces, those interested, and researchers. In addition, the center is working to develop the index further in cooperation with the bodies interested in rationalizing the Syrian national movement. Its outputs are to be issued and published to all national agencies and Syrian political actors periodically (semi-annually initially).

After publishing **The First Edition** of the index in 2018, the center published in 2019 two editions of the National Consensus Index:

Second Edition: For the second half of 2018 and published during the month of Jumada Al-Akhera 1440 AH corresponding to February 2019

Third Edition: For the first half of 2019 and published in the month of Muharram 1441 AH corresponding to September 2019



Video interviews

Dialogue on Values in the Syrian Society Series

The "Dialogue on Values in the Syrian Society Series" initiative consists of thematic videotaped dialogue interviews with a group of experts and thinkers with the aim of identifying the value system in the Syrian society in various political, individual, religious and social fields. It also discusses the negative effects on the Syrian value System as a result of the behavior of the Assad regime, in addition to the changes that occurred to it, and proposes suitable solutions to avoid its negative aspects and enhance the positive ones.

The series was prepared,
produced and published
during the second half of
2019

To watch
the series:



A stack of books is placed on a wooden table. The top book is open, showing its pages. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is centered over the books, with two thin blue lines forming concentric circles around it. The background is a blurred bookshelf filled with books.

Some Publications During 2019



Publication of a Seminar

Towards a Methodological Approach to Confront Extremist Discourse in the Syrian Context through Learned Lessons and Experiences

Date of Publication: 1-8-1440 AH - 6-4-2019

This publication is an extension of the Center's early work in monitoring the phenomenon of extremism and fanaticism and warning against it in the context of the Syrian opposition. The Center aims to benefit from the experiences of the Syrian opposition by setting a roadmap for a model approach that guides discourse against such thought. It seeks to reach recommendations for an integrated approach to confront fanatic and extremist discourse by understanding its life cycle, its growth and the factors contributing to shaping its incubating environments; reviewing the role of Sharia discourse, and the impact of the formation of a unified Sharia on increase of fanaticism, including proposals to enhance the legitimacy and impact of the unified Sharia reference and activating it; in addition to analyzing the factors that led to the transformations of some of the affected factions towards relative moderation.

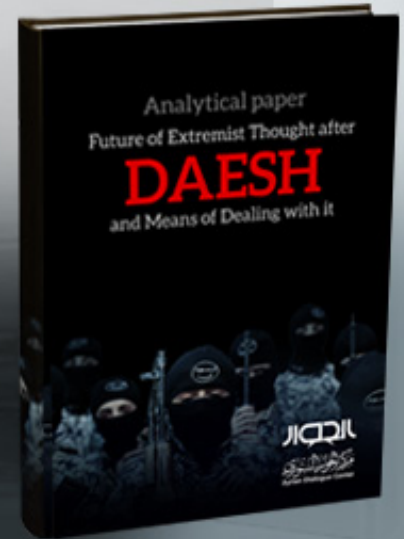
To download the publication:

<http://sydialogue.org/en/128>

Analytical paper

Future of Extremist Thought after Daesh and Means of Dealing with it

Date of Publication: 29-8-1440 AH - 4-5-2019



In order to present readings foreseeing how to deal with the phenomenon of extremism within the Syrian context after the elimination of Daesh's geographic space, and the return of extremist discourse on the military, media and societal levels, the Syrian Dialogue Center held a group discussion under the title of "Future of Extremist Thought after Daesh and Means of Dealing with it." The group discussed a number of issues, such as trying to foresee what Daesh and like organizations will look like after its military elimination and the expected consequences of the end of Daesh on the intellectual, security, societal and political levels. The discussion also touched on the proper means and tools to treat the negative consequences of this organization's end, strengthen society and heal the disastrous effects this thought, and behavior has had.

To download the publication:
<http://sydialogue.org/en/118>

Analytical paper

The Phenomenon of Extremism: its effects and consequences

Date of Publication: 6-2-1441 AH - 5-10-2019

This publication focuses on three contexts that were not fully tackled in the previous sessions and releases in the center's cumulative research of fanaticism and extremism. It examines the intellectual dimension of fanaticism and extremism, in addition to its social dimension. Next, it strikes a comparison between the Syrian case and cases in other countries to ensure balanced understanding and measurement of extremism, its conditions, and its effects in the various regions in which it has appeared.

To download the publication:

<http://sydialogue.org/en/134>



Analytical paper

Options of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces in Idlib in Light of the Ankara Summit

Publication date: 14-2-1441H - 13-10-2019

This paper was issued following the Tripartite Summit among the guarantor countries for the "Astana" track on the political solution in Syria, which was hosted by the Turkish capital, "Ankara" on September 16th, 2019. The paper discussed the military, political, humanitarian and international situations on what is happening in northwestern Syria and shed light on the prospects that the announcing of the Constitutional Committee and the possibility of investing it to influence the field reality. The analytical paper was prepared based on the propositions of a number of politicians and actors in the political, military and humanitarian fields.

To download the publication:
<http://sydialogue.org/en/133>



Preliminary Report

Iranian-Affiliated Militias in Syria (1) ... Categorization, Dependency and Factors of mobilization

Publication date: 4-3-1441H - 1-11-2019

This preliminary report tries to study and break down the structure of the militias Iran either brought to Syria or supported through understanding the internal and ideological links which unite them. It aims to know the factors and causes which participated in mobilizing such huge numbers and exploiting them in a trans-border regional project, which threatens the region in general and aims to change its demographic make-up.

To download the publication:
<http://sydialogue.org/en/138>



Analytical paper

Iranian-Affiliated Militias in Syria (2) ... Roles and Areas of Influence

Publication date: 25-3-1441H - 22-11-2019

In the Syrian Dialogue Center’s second publication in the three-part “Iranian-affiliated Militias in Syria” series, the paper entitled “Iranian-affiliated Militias in Syria: Roles and Areas of Influence” aims to understand the roles which these militias have played throughout the previous years and follows the transformations these roles have undergone as they move from military functions to economic and social domination.

To download the publication:
<http://sydialogue.org/en/142>



**Some Events
During 2019**



Seminar

The Scenarios for Northern Syria: Signs of Escalation and the Opportunities of the Safe Zone

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1440-6-15 AH - 2019-2-20 AD	Antakya	Policy Analysis Unit

The goal of the event

Discussing the Northern Syria situation, possible scenarios and signs of escalation, as well as opportunities to establish a safe zone

Its main points

- Review of recent developments in Northern Syria
- Discussing the implications of the expansion of the Headquarters for Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham in the North on the future of the area militarily, security-wise and service-wise
- Discussing the results of the tripartite summit in Sochi, and the future of the area in light of recent developments
- Discussing the course of the political solution, forming the Constitutional Committee, its viability, and whether or not it is right to engage in it



Seminar

A seminar on National Consensus Index (Second Edition)

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1440-6-25 AH - 2019-3-2 AD	Istanbul	Shared Identity and Consensus Unit

The goal of the event

This is a continuation of the Center's commitment to developing the National Consensus Index and improving its outputs, in cooperation with parties interested in rationalizing the Syrian national movement

Its main points

- Discussing the mechanism of selecting the agencies that monitor it, and how the indicator deals with the monitored entities
- Discussion of expanding the idea of the indicator and examining the possibility of developing other indicators in the same context
- Discussing the technical aspects of the indicator and ways to develop it



Seminar

Future of the Interim Government and Challenges of the Coming Stage (in partnership with Civilians for Justice and Peace Organization)

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1440-8-6 AH - 2019-4-11 AD	Gaziantep	Policy Analysis Unit

The goal of the event

Discussing the roles of the Interim Government, the most prominent obstacles and challenges it faced, in addition to the various questions related to it and its future

Its main points

- Discussing the legitimacy of the Interim Government and the regional and international context
- Discussing the mechanisms used by the Interim Government to manage service projects, and the Interim Government's relationships with local councils, directorates, and the judiciary in the Syrian interior
- Discussing the situation of the Ministry of Defense and its relationship with the factions and the National Army
- Discussing all possible solutions to enhance and evaluate the role of the interim government



Training course Skills and Ethics of Dialogue

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1440-8-12 AH - 2019-4-4 AD	Gaziantep	Shared Identity and Consensus Unit

The goal of the event

Promoting and spreading a culture of dialogue among the various groups of Syrian society - specifically the youth -

Its main points

- Acquainting the participants with the knowledge frame of dialogue skill
- Explaining dialogue strategies and tools
- Training participants in communication skills, persuasion and influencing using dialogue



Seminar

The phenomenon of extremism: its effects and consequences

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1441-1-14 AH - 2019-9-14 AD	Istanbul	Social Unit

The goal of the event

Continuation of the research and consultation with specialists and experimenters on the issue of fanaticism because of its importance and because fanaticism and extremism come in various forms and in multiple phases, and to take advantage of the accumulation of experiences and experiences on the topic with the aim of enriching it and extracting lessons learned for the general benefit

Its main points

- Examining cases related to issues of fanaticism in other countries and assessing their past and future impact on the emergence and spread of extremist ideology
- Discussion of the social implications of the rule of extremist organizations and their penetration in some societies
- Foreseeing the future of fanaticism and extremism, through political and Sharia induction



Seminar

Options of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces in Idlib in Light of the Ankara Summit

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1441-1-26 AH - 2019-9-29 AD	Antakya	Policy Analysis Unit

The goal of the event

Discussing the options that the Revolution and Opposition forces have in Idlib governorate in light of the developments that followed the Ankara tripartite summit, and studying their requirements and their strategic, political, military, and humanitarian implications

Its main points

- Discussing the military, political and humanitarian reality
- Discussing various regional and international positions on the Syrian North
- Discussing the solutions that can be used in Idlib and its countryside to enhance resilience



Discussion Group

Roles of NGOs towards the Rights of Forcibly Displaced Persons in North Syria

Date	Place	Implementing Unit
1441-3-26 AH - 2019-11-23 AD	Al Bab	Social Unit

The goal of the event

Promoting a culture of dialogue and disseminating it within the Syrian society through conducting local dialogues between the social incubator and NGOs on the extent to which NGOs working in northern Syria contribute to preserving and promoting the rights of the displaced

Its main points

- Discussing the most important roles that NGOs play in protecting the rights of forcibly displaced people
- Examination of the most important positive and negative aspects surrounding the work of these organizations towards the rights of forcibly displaced persons
- Discussing the possibility of developing the work of these organizations within the framework of promoting and protecting the rights of the displaced



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