

Professional Summary: Foreign policy and development professional with 10+ years of experience in diplomacy, interagency coordination, and regional programming. Proven ability to lead cross-sector initiatives, manage donor-funded projects, and shape strategic outreach in complex political environments. Recognized for analytical excellence and regional expertise by the U.S. Department of State.

Core Competencies:

Foreign Policy Analysis · Strategic Communication and Outreach · Counterterrorism · Technology Policy · MENA Regional Expertise · Conflict Resolution · Research & Policy Writing · Stakeholder Engagement and Public Diplomacy

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) New York, U.S.
Master of International Affairs, International Security Policy May 2023
Specializations in International Conflict Resolution and Technology and Media
Columbia University Fellowship for Outstanding Achievements (2021-2023)

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY, Schools of Middle Eastern Studies Leiden, The Netherlands
One semester dialectology studies under the E.U.'s ERASMUS MUNDUS Scholarship July 2010

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

GENERAL DYNAMICS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY New York, U.S.
Senior Functional Analyst, supporting the Office of Refugee Resettlement February 2024 – Present

- Led interagency outreach efforts as part of the Division of Interagency Outreach and Response, coordinating with federal and non-governmental partners to integrate refugee experience into national refugee resettlement programs.
- Supervised federal grant implementation across all stages, including funding announcements, application reviews, grantee training, and project closeout.
- Developed standardized tools to collect and analyze best practices for economic mobility integration, enhancing program efficiency and impact.

US MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT, Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) New York, U.S.
Research Consultant June 2022 – January 2023

- Investigated Iran-affiliated attacks on U.S. facilities (2017–2023), identifying actors' network, weapons used, and escalation trends.
- Analyzed the main Iran-affiliated extremist groups in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, their command and control, and methodology of attacks on U.S. facilities and interests, leading to the assessment of higher risks from the use of Iranian weaponized drones and the evolving role of AI in drone targeting, ISR, and escalation patterns.
- Co-authored articles analyzing Iran's drone proliferation and explaining Iran's political signaling in the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and the Levant.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE Istanbul, Turkey/Washington, U.S.
Political Assistant February 2019 - August 2021

- Awarded the U.S. Department of State Superior Honor Award (2020) for exceptional analytical contributions and diplomatic reporting.
- Drafted deeply researched cables and sit-reps on terrorist groups in Syria, and examined the interconnectedness with Syria's political, military, and security developments.

- Represented the State Department at regional diplomatic meetings on multiple occasions discussing the D-ISIS campaign.
- Briefed visiting U.S. senior diplomats, including the U.S. Special Envoy to D-ISIS Amb. James Jeffrey, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Amb. Nikki Haley.
- Collaborated with the State Department's sanctions office to list senior Syrian government security officials and military commanders responsible for human rights violations and uses of chemical weapons.

GIZ (The German Agency for International Development)

Istanbul, Turkey

Research Consultant

October 2018 – February 2019

- Conducted qualitative and quantitative research on the involvement of extremist groups in the civil administration, security, and military structures in Syria.
- Provided advice and recommendations for the implementation of Germany-funded education, governance, health, and political projects in Syria in ways to avoid benefiting al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

INTEGRITY GLOBAL

Istanbul, Turkey

Syria Stabilization Mechanism, Deputy Research Manager

June 2016 - September 2018

- Managed and mentored a 15-member research team across conflict-affected areas of Syria, delivering field-informed policy insights to donors and government clients.
- Developed a strategy for robust evidence-based research surrounding the security and political situation in areas of operations and potential areas of operations.
- Briefed project management and the British General Consulate on political, social, and conflict-related topics and provided recommendations to better the impact of UK-funded projects in northern Syria.

Additional Experience:

- Researcher, Chemonics, (2016): Drafted political and security updates to keep management informed on the developments in assisted communities in Syria.
- *Deputy Project Officer, IOM (2015–2016)*: Led winterization aid project for 30,000 Syrian refugees, overseeing 18 field assistants.
- *Assistant Teacher, University of Aleppo (2011–2012)*: Taught English to 250+ students, enhancing cross-cultural communication skills.

Publications and Writing Samples

“*Washington’s Dicey Opportunity in Syria is Getting Even Dicier*,” Medium, March 12, 2025

<https://medium.com/@najjar.mu/washingtons-dicey-opportunity-in-syria-is-getting-even-dicier-4c0d9f669f3a>

“*Sanctions Worked and Assad is Gone, but What Comes Next for Syria*,” Medium, February 5, 2025

<https://medium.com/@najjar.mu/sanctions-worked-and-assad-is-gone-but-what-comes-next-for-syria-03b7aac4722b>

“*Iran Drone Proliferation is Scaling Up and Turning More Lethal*,” War on the Rocks, September 8, 2023

www.warontherocks.com/2023/09/iranian-drone-proliferation-is-scaling-up-and-turning-more-lethal

“*How Iranian-Backed Militias Do Political Signaling*,” Law Fare, December 18, 2023

www.lawfaremedia.org/article/how-iranian-backed-militias-do-political-signaling

“*Commercialized Combat: Non-Military Technologies in the War in Ukraine*,” Columbia University, May 14, 2023

https://www.sipa.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/2023-05/For_Publication_NSIN_Bonfili.pdf

“*The Consent-Based Agreement Granted the Government of Syria Influence over Cross-border Access*,” Medium, October 29, 2023

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Honors and Awards:

- U.S. Department of State Superior Honor Award (2019)
- U.S. Presidential Management Fellowship Semi-finalist 2025
- Columbia University Fellowship for Outstanding Achievements (2021)
- Fulbright Foreign Student Program Nominee (2012)

Language Proficiency: Arabic (*native*), English (*fluent*), and Turkish (*intermediate*)

Technical Skills: MS Office (*professional*), Python (*intermediate*), Stata (*intermediate*)