

The reality in Syria
US Stand from the Syrian Crisis
Matar Matar, MD
Syrian American Forum

Minneapolis-MN
Anti War Committee
20-Oct- 2013



Turkey

Syria

Lebanon
West Bank
Gaza Strip

Iraq

Iran

Egypt

Israel

Jordan

Kuwait

Saudi Arabia

Bahrain
Qatar
Dubai

UAE

Oman

Yemen



UK Sovereignty Base Area

CEASE-FIRE LINE under UN control

WEST BANK under provisional status

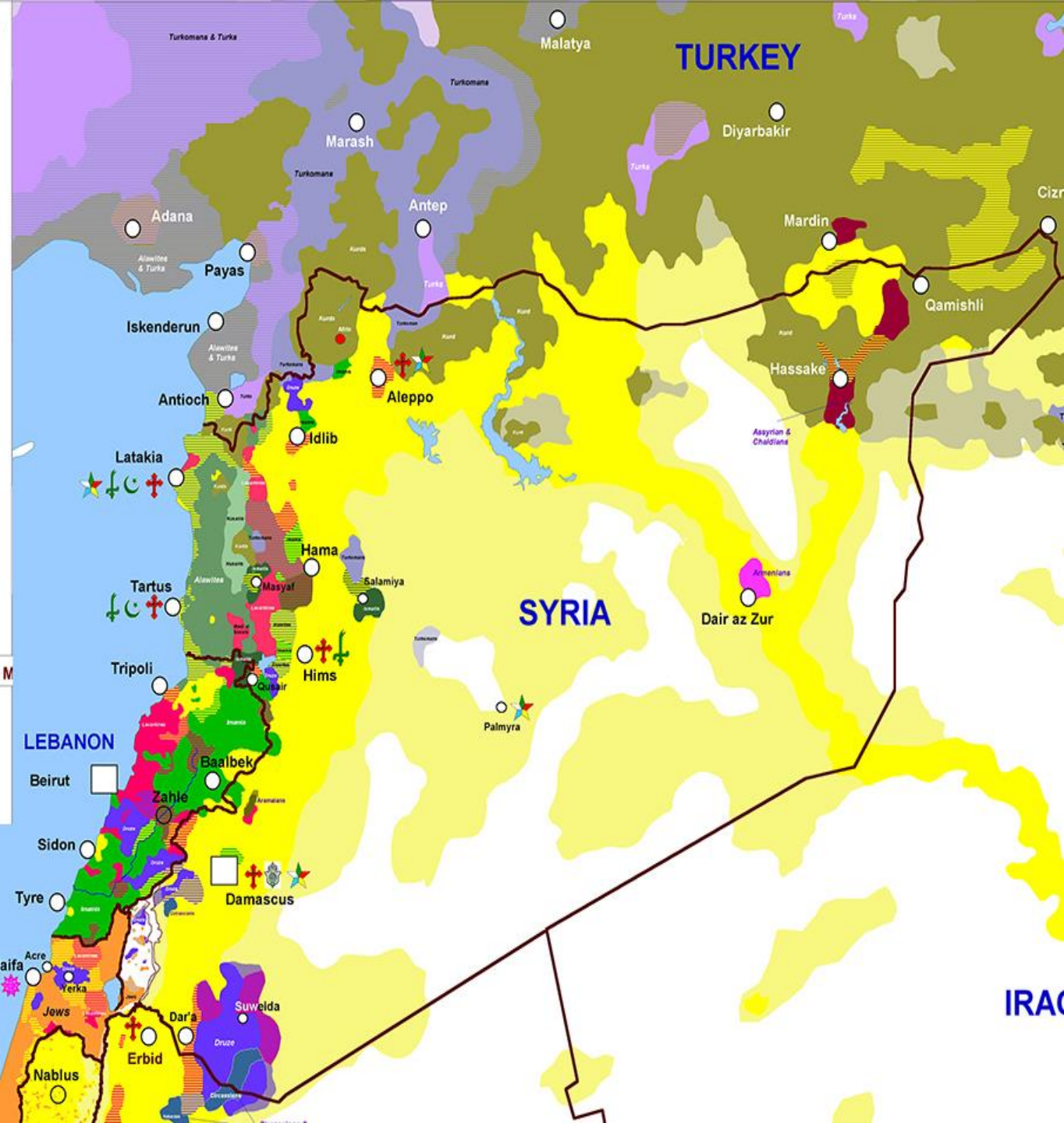
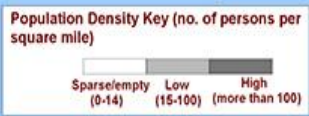
- National Capital (2,270,000 in 1999)
- over 1,500,000
- over 200,000
- over 50,000
- other main city
- other city
- Chief town of governorate



The Levant: Ethnic Composition (Actual)

- Arabs (Sunni Muslims) *
- Jews
- Alawites (Arabic speaking)
- Kurds
- Levantines (Arabic speaking Christians) *
- Imamis (Twelver Shia of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, nearly all Arabic speaking) *
- Turkomans (Azeri speaking Alevis)
- Ismailis (Arabic speaking Sevener Shias of Syria and Lebanon)
- Nusairis (Arabic speaking)
- Druze (Arabic speaking)
- Circassians and the Kabarda
- Armenians
- Copts (of Egypt, Arabic speaking) *
- Assyrians, Chaldeans/Syriacs
- Turks
- Aramaeans
- Other
- Mixed religion areas (hachured)

* See remarks



Mediterranean Sea

ISRAEL

IRAQ

The Levant: Ethnic Statistics (Actual)

Population figures are in millions and are based on 2008-09 censuses and/or estimates.

	Total popul.	Arab*	Jew	Levantine (Christian)	Alawite	Shia (Imami)	Kurd	Druze	Ismaili	Turkoman	Nusairi	Circassian	Assyrian and Chaldean	Other**
Syria	21.9m	59.1	-	9.3	11.8	1.1	8.9%	3.2	2.1%	0.7%	1.3%	0.5%	1.1%	1.2%
Israel	7.4m	16.1	75.21	5.3	-	-	-	1.5	-	-	-	-	-	1.5
Jordan	6.5m	87.9	-	6.3	-	0.5	-	1.3	0.1	-	-	2.2	-	1.8
Lebanon	4.4m	21.7	-	18.7	3.4	46	2.6	7.0	-	-	-	-	-	0.3
(Palestine)	3.8m	92.2	-	7.84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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Percentages		55.4%	12.65%	9.0%	6.9%	6.1%	4.74%	2.74%	1.4%	0.35%	0.26%	0.25%	0.23%	0.14%
Totals	44.0m	24.38m	5.49m	3.96m	3.0m	2.62m	2.09m	1.21m	0.53m	0.15m	0.11m	0.11m	0.1m	0.61m

* An ethnic Arab is an Arabic-speaking person confessing Sunni or Wahhabi forms of Islam.

Others include Armenians, Baha'is, Kabarda, Chechen, Nawar (Gypsies/Roma/Dom), Aramaeans, etc.

Pending a final peace settlement, all Jews who have settled in the West Bank and the Golan Heights --more than 650,000--are here counted under the figures for Israel per se.

Levantine Christians in Israel comprise of the natives (approx 90k) and the recent non-Jewish Russian immigrants (approx 300k). Figures for the Alawites do not include the Alevis.

Transitory and refugee populations are not included in these figures.

Totals may not be equal to the sum of their increments due to the rounding of the figures.

Source: [The one map that shows why Syria is so complicated Washingtonpost](#), 27 Aug 2013, By Max Fisher



Hints on SYRIA and USA relation history:

- When Syria gained its independence in 1946, the United States sought friendly relations with its new government, but President Truman's decision soon thereafter to support the state of Israel turned Syria against the United States.[2]
 - For most of its history as an independent nation, Syria has been a national security concern of the United States primarily because of its importance to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[2]
 - After the start of Madrid peace talks between Israel and Arabs on 30 Oct 1991, the SYR-US relation was very good. Then later in that year the Soviet union collapsed.
 - US didn't object appointing Bashar AL-Assad as a president in 2000
 - After 9/11 attacks, G.W. Bush in his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, he accused governments for helping terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction. **Iran, Iraq and North Korea – The Axis of Evil**
-



- Then later on May 6th 2002, Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton gave a speech entitled "**Beyond the Axis of Evil**". In it he added three countries to the list “ **Syria, Libya, and Cuba**”.
 - The tension against Syria has reached to degree of threat of military intervention by US, after invasion to Iraq in Apr 2003, because Americans have accused Syria of supporting Al-Qaeda fighters in Iraq, which Syria always denied.
 - Then later there was a new sanction package against Syria after assassination of Rafic Al-Hariri on 14 Feb 2005, (Ex-prime minister of Lebanon, who is very close to the Saudi king Abd Alaah).
 - Then the Syrian crisis erupted on 18 Mar 2011
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The Syrian crisis stages

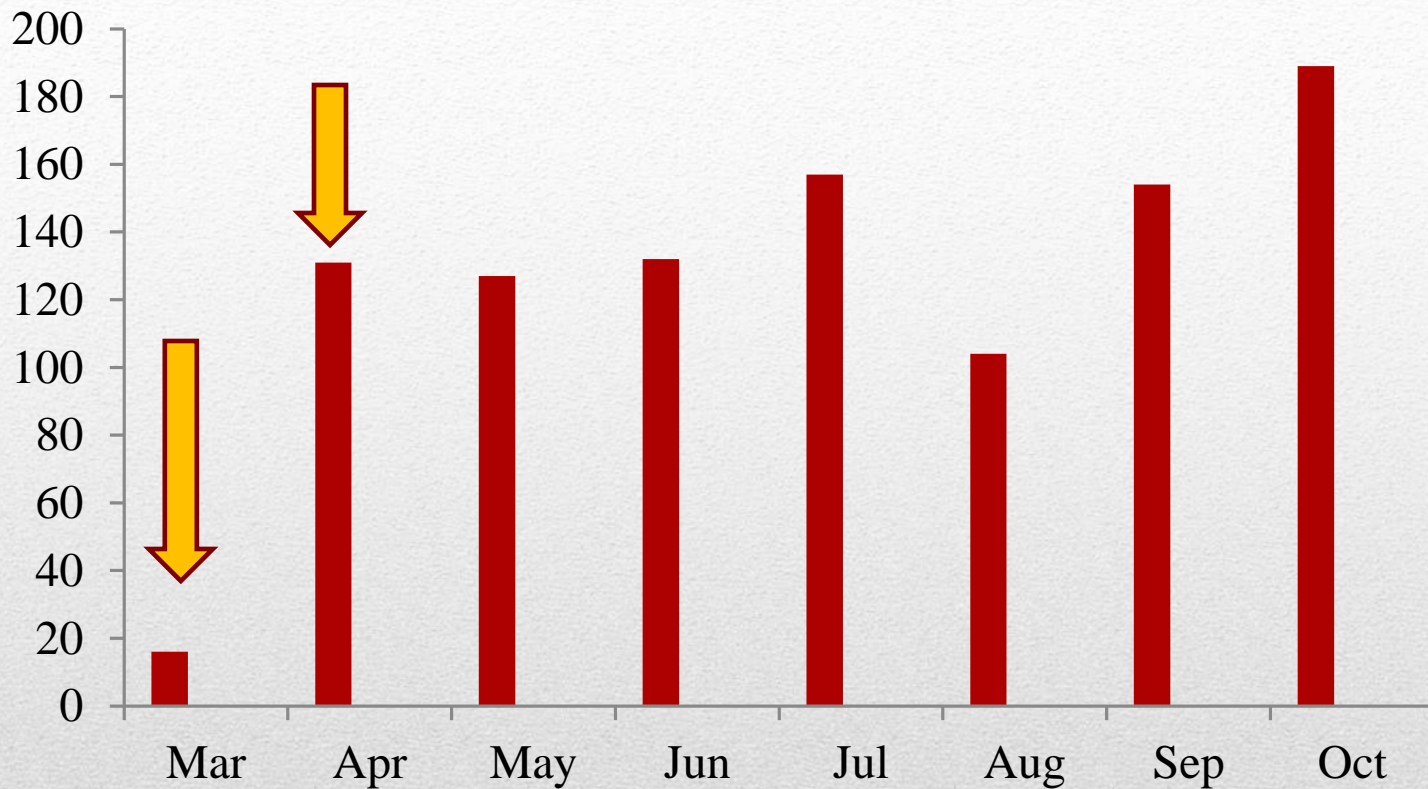
Peaceful demonstrations

- Protests started in Daraa (south of Syria) on 18-Mar-2011 after the Friday Muslim prayer :
 - Requesting reforms, especially political ones
 - Condemning corruption in the government
 - Seeking more freedom in political life, since the Baath Party was the only power to lead the country according to the Syrian Constitution since 1963
 - Protesting the state of emergency law which was active since 1963
 - The release of political prisoners
 - The investigation and potential removal of certain corrupt government officials
-



Two contradicting stories: (on Mar 18th 2013)

- The London-based Syrian Human Rights Committee reported on its website, quoting sources in Daraa, that Syrian authorities shot and killed soldier Khaled al-Masri for refusing orders to take part in storming al-Omari mosque. The report could not be independently confirmed.[\[1\]](#)
- State TV said that an "armed gang" had attacked an ambulance in the city and security forces killed four attackers and wounded others and was chasing others who fled. It denied that security forces had stormed the mosque, but also showed footage of guns, AK-47s, hand grenades, ammunition and money that it claimed had been seized from inside.[\[1\]](#)
- **Haytham Manna**[\[](#) Head of National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change] (who is a well known opponent figure) has said that in March 2011: regional intelligence agencies have called him requesting to send arms to Daraa but he rejected, and he condemned the claim of the presence of Shiite fighters(from Iran and Hizb Allah){ which was used widely by the propaganda machine on Aljazeera and Alarabiya channels for the sake of fueling the sectarian tension among Sunni majority population in Daraa and other Syrian cities.



Syrian Regime casualties in 2011

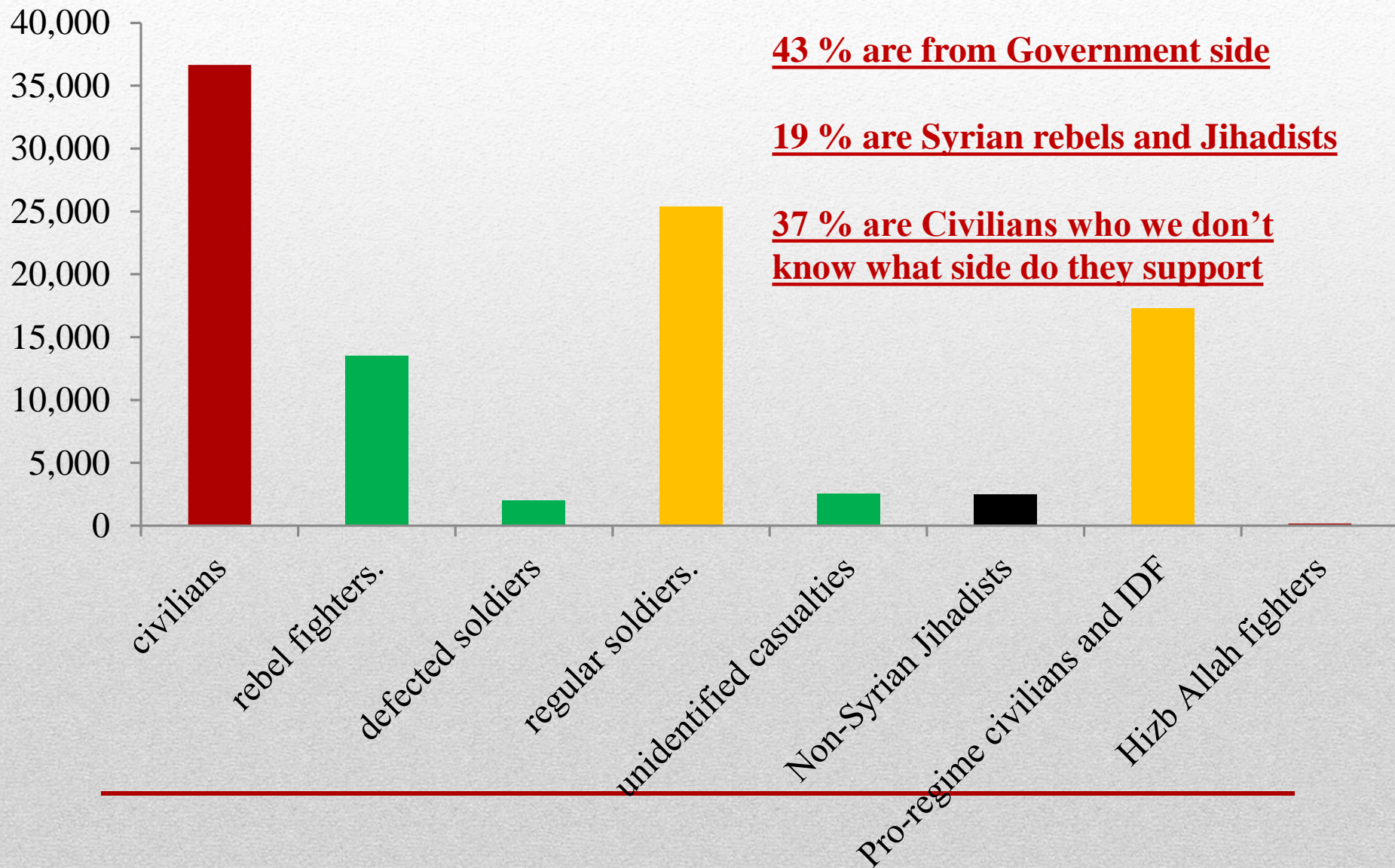
The Syrian Casualty numbers

According to Opposition sources below is the distribution of Syrian Casualties

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented 100,191 casualties since the beginning of the uprisings in 18/3/2011, from the first casualty in Dera'a, up till 24/06/2013.

- **36,661** civilians (including 5,144 children and 3,330 women aged above 18 years).
 - **13,539** rebel fighters.
 - **2,015** defected soldiers and officers.
 - **25,407 regular soldiers.**
 - **2,571** unidentified casualties (documented with pictures and footages).
 - **2,518** unidentified and non-Syrian rebel fighters (most of which are non-Syrians).
 - **17,311** combatants from the popular defense committees, national defense forces, and pro regime civilians (who were accused of being informers or so-called shabiha which most of them are from Syrian minority sects).
 - **169** fighters from the Lebanese Hezbollah.
-

The number of Syrian casualties from 18-Mar-2011 till 24 Jun 2013 according to Opposition cources





Violence inside Syrian Cities

- People started to see armed men on streets accompanying the peaceful protesters, and sometimes they were hiding in high buildings, to snipe the security forces.
 - Death among protesters and security forces was by shots that nobody could verify from where.
 - The Syrian Arab Army had to intervene inside Daraa because the armed protesters were planning to establish an Islamic Imara in Daraa which is just next to Jordanian borders
 - The Syrian Arab Army had to defend the Syrian cities after the armed gangs were trying to establish their laws and controlling the districts they are in.
-



- Because of the chaos and havoc that erupted among protesters who didn't get permit to demonstrate, a lot of people were arrested because of their stand or links to extremist groups .
 - Some protesters were shot by anonymous armed men; security forces were blamed for the casualties, and an investigation started promptly by the supreme national court in Damascus.
 - The opposition asked for Market strike to pressure the weak Syrian economy to weaken the regime. But most people in major cities didn't respond, so the armed gangs started to threaten people not to go to their jobs, schools, universities, or even opening their shops. A lot of people were attacked and harassed because they opened their shops.
 - Kidnapping civilians and soldiers while they are on their ways to work, because of sectarian tensions. Then asking for ransom to release them, and of course this is not actions of freedom seekers.
-



Declaration of JIHAD against the Syrian Arab Army

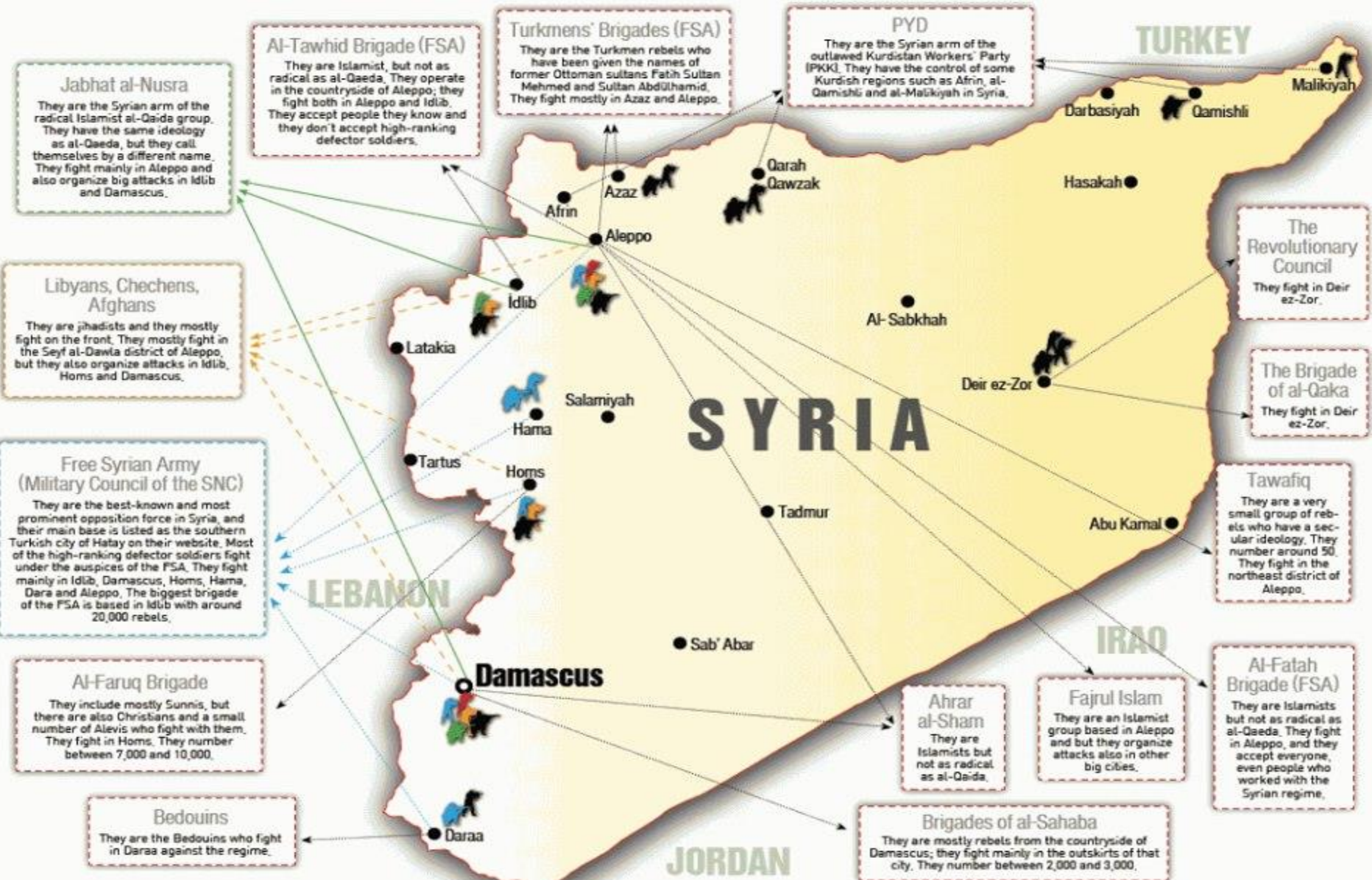
- This declaration of JIHAD was enhanced by Wahhabi clerks especially in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Lebanon.
 - Media started to support the announcement for Jihad especially Aljazeera
 - The radicals who joined Jihad in Syria, by help from Gulf countries, came to Syria to establish Islamic State, and Sharia Law.
-



Formation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA)-29-Jul-2011

- FSA formed on Jul 29th 2011, led by a former Syrian officer Riad Al-Assad
 - The FSA was just a cover umbrella which all armed insurgents were fighting under its name.
 - No central leadership for FSA except on media, but on the ground the FSA leader was not able to order any brigade to adhere to any truce.
 - FSA was funded and armed by Gulf states, Turkey, and some European countries such as France, Britain, and Croatia. In addition to intelligence and logistic support by CIA agents in Turkey.
 - On 22 Jun 2012, an exclusive article by Guardian, Saudi Arabia will pay FSA fighters their salary.
 - This led to increase of death among Syrian security officers and soldiers.
 - Destroying more of infrastructures to create a case of chaos and make Syria to look like failed and nonfunctional state.
-

The jihadist groups in Syria, by <http://21stcenturywire.com> on 15-May-2013



Battle for control in Syria

WHO'S IN CONTROL

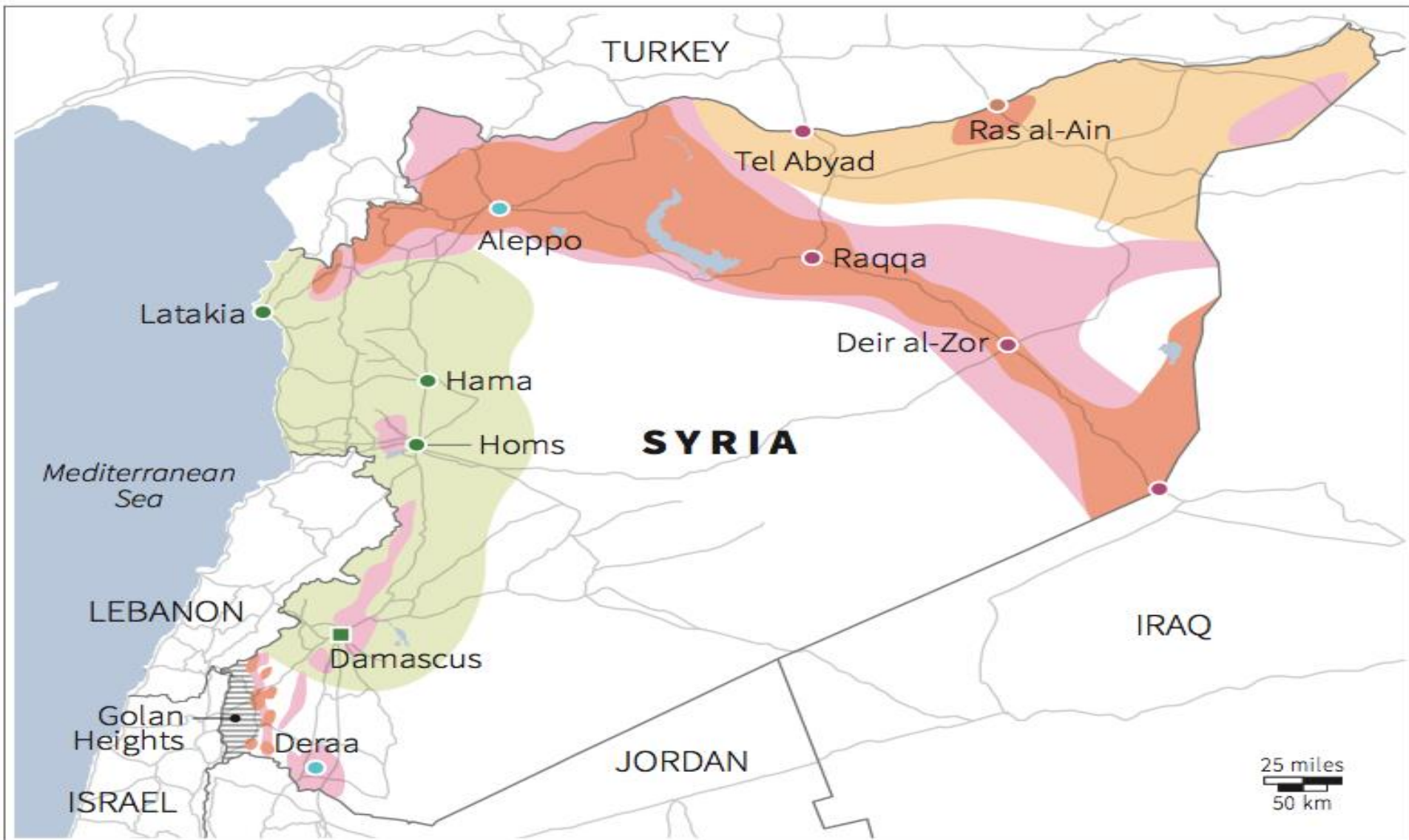
● Mostly government

● Mostly rebel

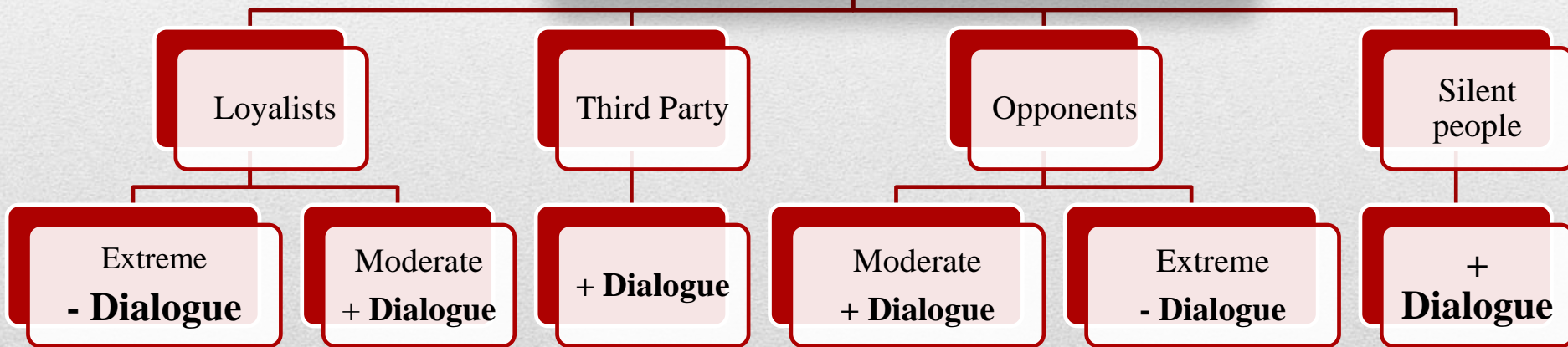
● Kurds

● Contested

● Al Qaeda-linked groups



Syrian People



The Syrian stands of the crisis

Arming Syrian Rebels

Important points about Arming Syrian rebels:

- 1- US has started already **helping** Syrian Rebels since early 2012, so the intervention is already on.
 - 2- US is gonna arm the weakest factions of the rebels, who they may easily defect to the extremist groups
 - 3- What does Obama really want from arming rebels? toppling Assad?, Reversing the gains on the ground by the Syrian Army?, Humanitarian because of alleged use of Chemical weapons?
 - 5- Sending Arms to Syrian rebels won't topple Assad, but will extend the Civil War, and probably will spread it to neighbor countries such as Lebanon and Iraq.
 - 6- But even if the Assad will be defeated, then what's next? Another struggle will start between the war lords. Struggle for power.
 - 7- Is that really important for USA interests to get involved in Overseas war? is it really in the American interests to topple Assad?
 - 8- Finally; What if the Assad Regime will survive for another year, Are US and its allies gonna continue helping rebels and arming them forever? what's the time line for this help? who will determine when US should stop arming?
-



General Dempsey 5 options on Syria-22 Jul 2013:[4]

- Train, advice, and assist the opposition:

Several hundreds of troops and about \$500 million a year

- Limited Stand-off strikes:

Need hundreds of aircraft, submarines, and ships, Cost about \$ 1bn per month

- No-Fly Zone:

will cost about \$ 1bn per month over the course of a year, and this fail to reduce the violence or shift the momentum.

- Buffer-Zone inside Syria at the borders with Turkey and Jordan:

need thousands of troops on the ground, \$1bn a month

- Control Chemical Weapons : thousands of special forces operations will be needed and cost over 1bn per month.



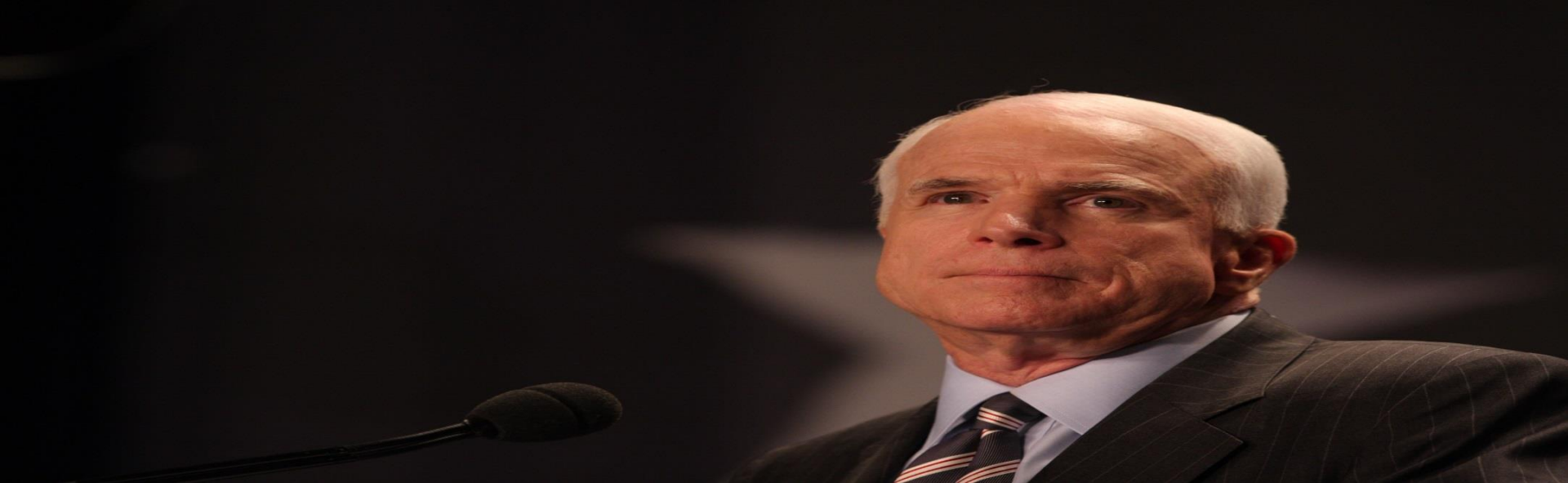
Gen. Dempsey Warning:

warned that joining the war in Syria could:

- Assist Islamist extremists**, help them gain access to chemical weapons,
- Erode U.S. military readiness, already suffering from defense budget cuts.
- Turn Syria to nonfunctional State, as we learned from our intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

“We must also understand risk—not just to our forces, but to our other global responsibilities”
Dempsey said

“Once we take action, we should be prepared for what comes next,” he said. “Deeper involvement is hard to avoid.”



McCain calls Dempsey's warning against attack on Syria 'disingenuous'[\[3\]](#)

Sen. John McCain criticized military brass on Aug 7th 2013 for allegedly overstating the costs and requirements of US military action in Syria.

Here are some costs:

- **Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) = \$650,000 per missile**
 - **Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM) = \$700,000 per missile**
 - **Joint Stand Off Weapon(JSOW) = \$500,000 per piece**
-



Most Still Oppose Arming Anti-Government Groups in Syria

<i>U.S. and its allies sending arms to anti-govt groups in Syria</i>	Mar 2012	Dec 2012	June 2013
	%	%	%
Favor	29	24	20
Oppose	63	65	70
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 12-16, 2013.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.



ARE WE INTERVENING IN SYRIA YET?

ARE WE INTERVENING IN SYRIA YET?

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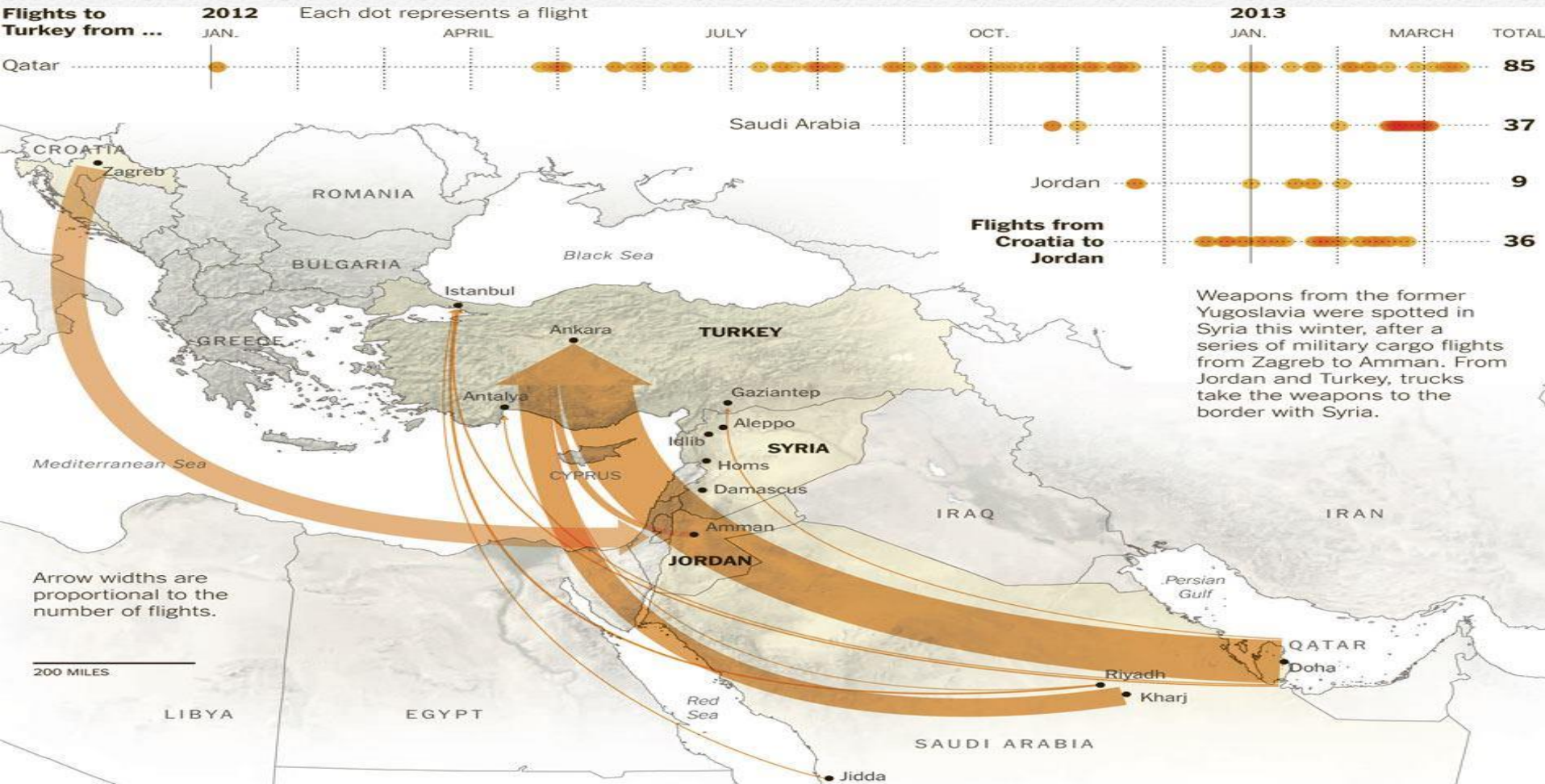
Arms Airlift to Syria Rebels Expands, With Aid From C.I.A. New York Times^[5] 24 Mar 2013

- Even as the Obama administration has publicly refused to give more than “nonlethal” aid to the rebels, the involvement of the C.I.A. in the arms shipments — albeit mostly in a consultative role, American officials say — has shown that the United States is more willing to help its Arab allies support the lethal side of the civil war.
 - From offices at secret locations, American intelligence officers have helped the Arab governments shop for weapons, including a large procurement from Croatia, and have vetted rebel commanders and groups to determine who should receive the weapons as they arrive, according to American officials speaking on the condition of anonymity. The C.I.A.
 - Most of the cargo flights have occurred since November, after the presidential election in the United States and as the Turkish and Arab governments grew more frustrated by the rebels’ slow progress against Mr. Assad’s well-equipped military.
-

New York Times- 24-Mar-2013

An Arms Pipeline to the Syrian Rebels

More than 160 military cargo flights for Syria's rebels, mostly from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have landed in Turkey and Jordan since January 2012.



Sources: Plane spotters in Cyprus and Turkey; regional air traffic control officials; Hugh Griffiths of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute



Why Should US avoid intervening militarily in Syria?

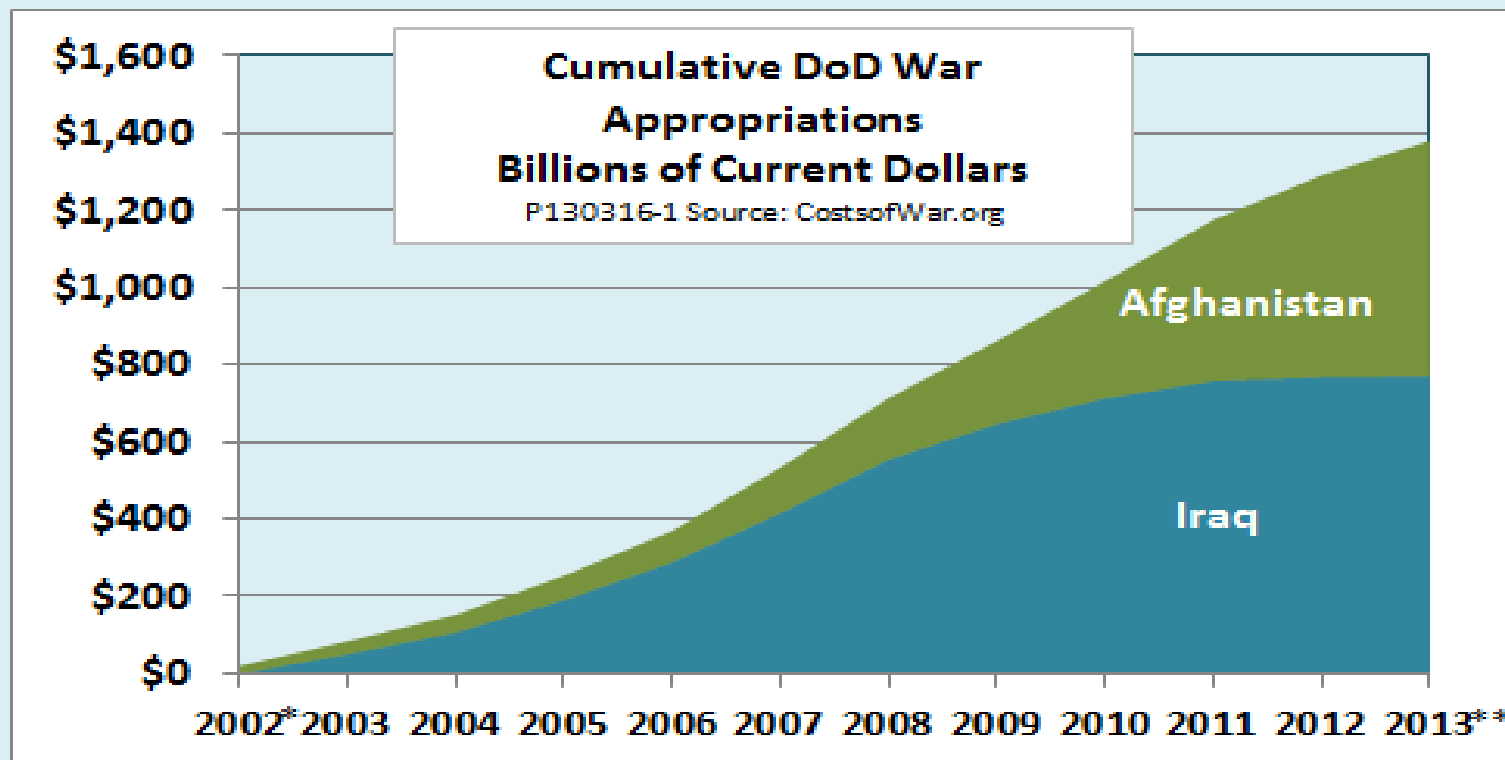
- Sending Arms to Syrian rebels will not topple Assad, but will extend the Civil War, and probably will spread it to neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Iraq.
 - US wants to arm the “Good rebels” which are hard to discern. The rebels affiliated with Al-Qaeda are the strongest fighters on the ground. US can be arming the weaker factions of the rebels, which are less capable and less experienced.
 - Toppling President Assad militarily will cause a lot of sectarian violence and cleansing. It will cause the world’s next genocide.
 - The upper hand among opposition fighters on the ground are The Extremists, so destroying the Syrian Army (which is the only power facing them) will create a power vacuum and an environment for supporting terrorism. Many rebel groups are already calling for Islamic Caliphate that is similar to Amara that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda established in Afghanistan in 90s.
-



- The violence will increase the suffering of Syrian people and will multiply the refugee crisis.
 - Intervening militarily will cause US billions of dollars, which is not in the interest of American people
 - Intervening will destroy the weak Syrian economy, which will be reflected on increasing the Syrian People Misery
-

Cost of wars is 3.1 Trillion and Counting

- Spending to Date:** The Pentagon's total allocation for war from 2001-2011 in current dollars was \$1,406 billion. The DOD was also allocated additional funds for its base budget. This totals between \$706 and \$780 billion. (DOD: Dep. Of Defense)



*Includes 2001 costs for Afghanistan **2013 requested



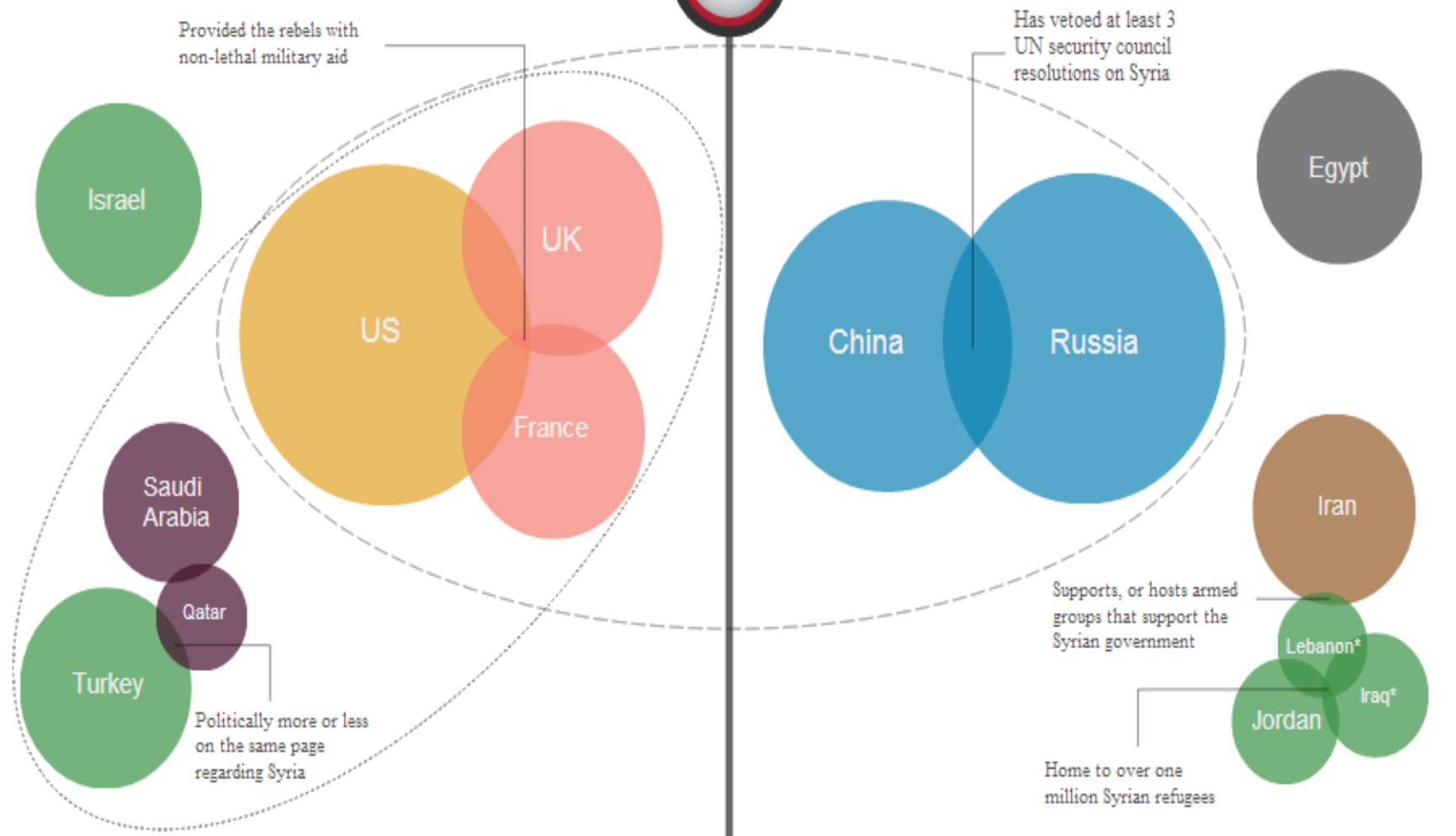
Intervening militarily or arming Syrian Rebels Consequences:

- **Prolonging the fight**
 - **Increasing the refugees' numbers**
 - **Increasing death casualties**
 - **Destroying more and more of Syria's infrastructures.**
 - **Dividing Syria will be hard to avoid it.**
 - **Turning Syria to failed State**
 - **Increasing the sectarian tension in Middle East**
-

Supports military intervention

Syria

Opposes military intervention



Circles are sized according to the GFP Power index which measures a country's relative military strength.



Neighbour to Syria



Is leading a coalition to strike Syria



EU member which has supported an embargo and sanctions on Syria



Permanent member of the UN Security Council



Reportedly funding the rebels



Active trading partner with Syria



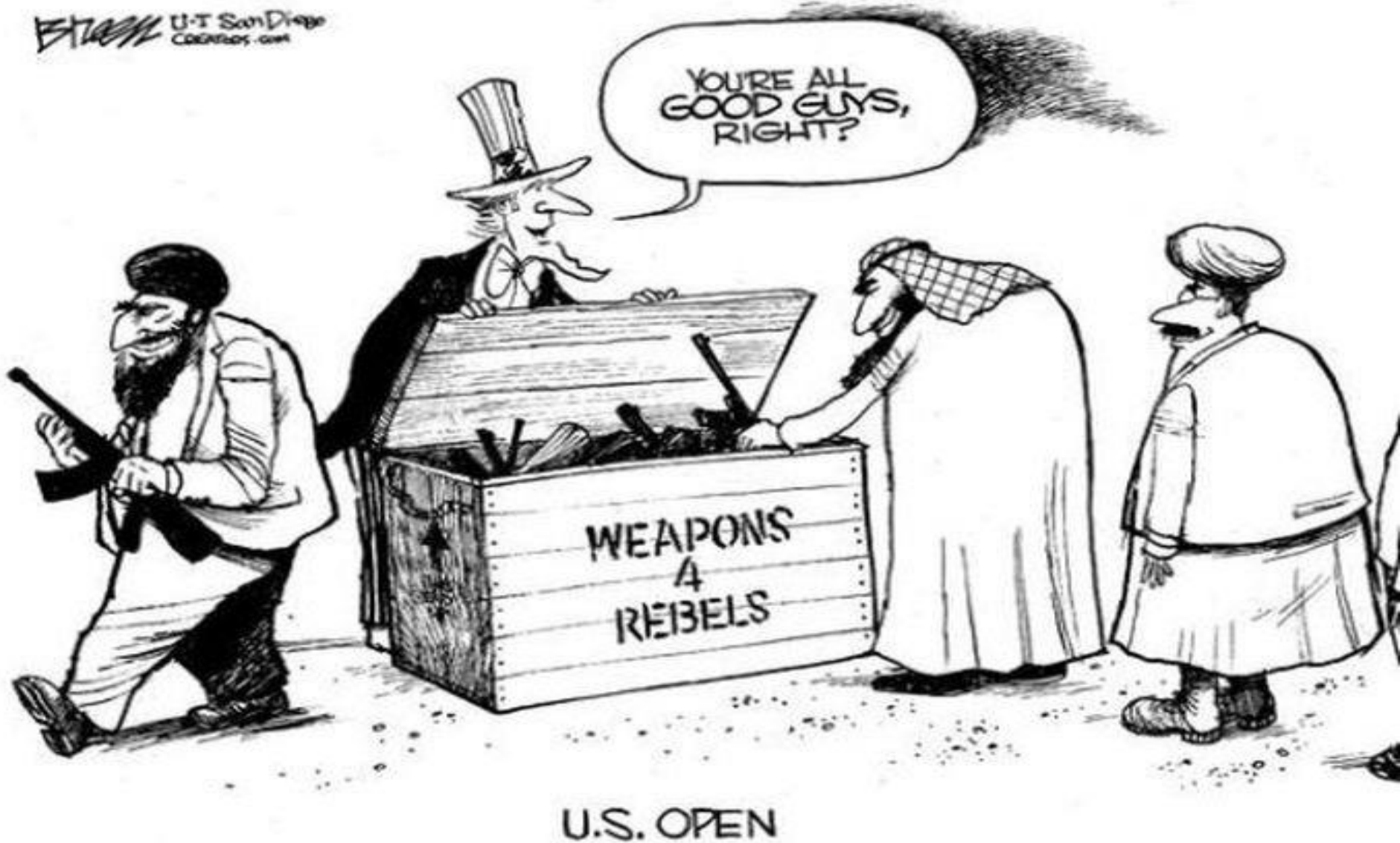
Has given support to the rebels



Ally of Syria

*While officially remaining neutral on military intervention, these countries have repeatedly called for a political solution to the conflict

Who Are the Syrian Rebels ?





Jihadists in Syria

- The complex reality is that there are as many as 1,000 individual armed rebel groups, each of which fall somewhere on the spectrum from al-Qaeda ideology to secular Syrian Arab Army defectors.
 - The leaders of the largest brigades among the opposition have announced their objection to the western backed opposition(Syrian Coalition) because they want Islamic rule and rejected any constitution other than Sharia Law.
 - Many of those jihadists are wanted by the American state department such as the leader of ISIS “ Abu Bakr Albaghdadi”
 - Jihadists from more than 50 countries have joined the Syrian rebels in what’s so called the Holy War against Shiites.
-

The Syrian Opposition Extremism Spectrum

By Business insider , 19-Sep-2013 [6]

A Breakdown Of The Roughly 100,000 Rebel Fighters In Syria, From Most Radical To Most Moderate



12K

18K

9K

30K

31K

Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), Jabhat al-Nusra and similar groups

These groups have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri and aim to establish an Islamic caliphate. They are explicitly hostile to the West and are increasingly hostile to certain rebel groups.

Ahrar al-Sham and the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF) coalition

SIF forces, led by Ahrar al-Sham, coordinate operations with Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS.

Ahrar al-Sham is an independent Salafist brigade that rejects the concept of democracy and has called for an Islamic state.

Suqor al-Sham

Suqor al-Sham regularly fights alongside Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS in addition to rejecting democracy and embracing an Islamic state.

Commander Sheikh Ahmed Abu is head of SILF, which is technically aligned with the Supreme Military Council (SMC) of the FSA.

Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (SILF) Liwa al-Tawhid

The largest rebel group in Aleppo. It is nominally linked to the SMC but receives much of its funding from elsewhere.

Liwa al-Islam

One of the biggest and best-equipped brigades in Damascus. It is credited with the July 2012 bombing that killed several members of Assad's crisis management cell.

Farouq Brigades

This large, Islamist-leaning group was created in Homs province in the beginning of the uprising. It has a strong presence across the country and has long-running hostilities with al-Qaeda linked groups.

Roughly 15 other groups account for 5,000 fighters.

The Rest of the Free Syrian Army (FSA)

The rest of the rebels are localized independent moderate units and larger moderate units loyal to the SMC. A lot of defectors from the Syrian Army fall into this group. These pro-democracy forces work with more radical groups out of necessity or fight them depending on the area. They are particularly strong in the south, where they receive training and other support from the West in Jordan.

YOUR GUESS
IS AS GOOD
AS MINE....





What Should US Do About Syria ?

- **NO US Military Intervention in Syria**, this should be declared clearly, then the Syrian opposition and their backers in the middle east won't be waiting for it, then they will be convinced to go to Geneva without preconditions
 - Encouraging the Syrian Opposition to accept the dialogue with Assad, no preconditions
 - To make enough pressure on Gulf states, to stop arming and funding Syrian Rebels
 - To make enough pressure on Turkey and Jordan to stop hosting Military camps for rebels
 - To continue helping the Syrian Refugees with Humanitarian aids
 - To have an agreement with **Russia** the strongest Assad's ally for the **MAP OF SOLUTION IN SYRIA**
-



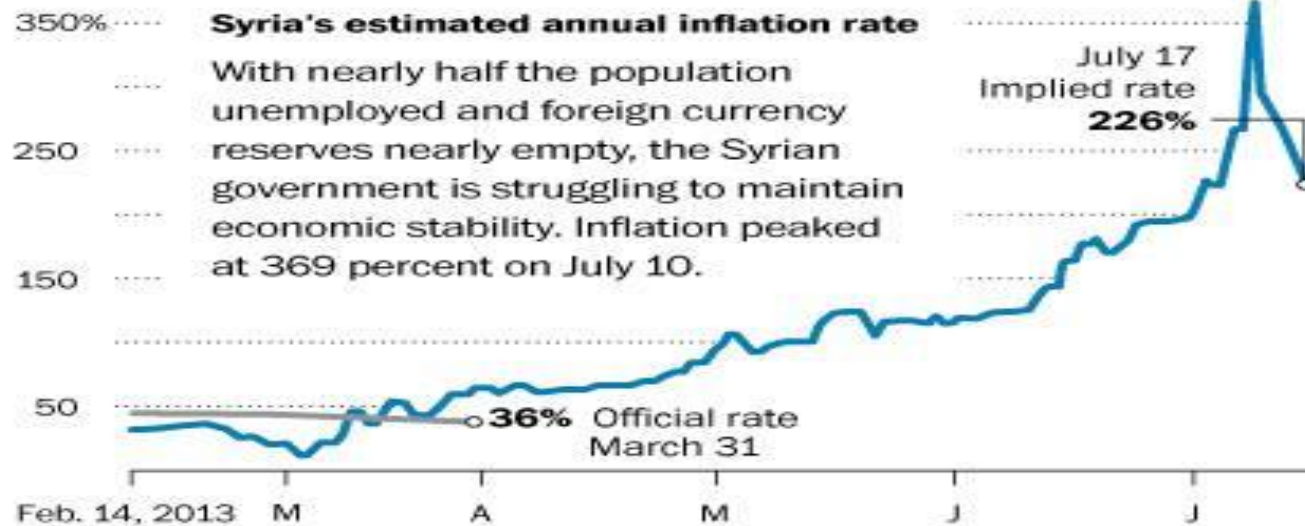
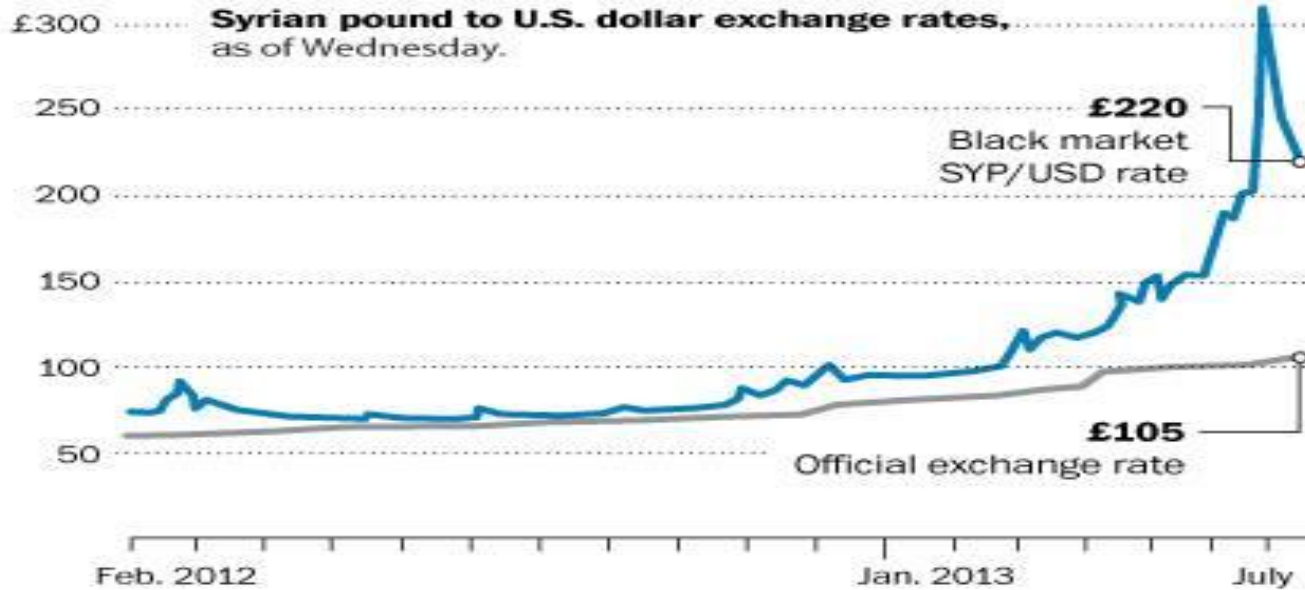
MAP OF SOLUTION IN SYRIA

- To go with Russians to Geneva II peace talks this coming Nov
 - To create a transitional Government from opposition and ruling regime
 - To ask all Syrians who carried arms and fought against their government to put their weapons down.
 - To force all foreigner fighters who entered Syria for Jihad to leave the country, because they are not welcomed among Syrians, and their agenda is inapplicable on Syrian people
 - To start rebuilding the country infrastructures with the help of EU.
 - To put a date for the coming Presidency elections in 2014, and to be monitored by the UN
 - To start the Nuclear talks with Iranians, which it will help to solve the Syrian Crisis
 - To encourage Saudi-Iranian talks, which it will help to relive the Sectarian Tension in Middle East
 - Helping Syrian Refugees to return to their homes
-

Geneva II Peace talks and the participation of Iran

- World powers are making moves that could finally bring about the end of the crisis in Syria: After months of delays, the long-awaited Geneva 2 peace conference is expected to take place before the end of the year. Better still, [the State Department recently suggested](#) the United States might welcome Iran at the bargaining table. And [judging by the positive reaction of all parties to this week's negotiations on Iran's nuclear program](#), the offer might actually be serious. If it is, we could see an end to the Syrian civil war before long.[\[6\]](#)
 - The UN-backed Geneva conference is an attempt by the United States and Russia to bring stakeholders to the table in order to reach a consensus on how to settle the civil war in Syria. The participants are looking to implement the [Geneva Communiqué](#) that was issued at the Geneva 1 conference in June 2012. The communiqué establishes a framework for diplomatic resolution of the crisis and seeks to create a transitional government formed on the basis of mutual consent of the government and the opposition in Syria.[\[6\]](#)
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The Syria's annual inflation rate, washingtonpost



Note: Inflation rates are implied from movements in the black-market USD-SYP exchange rate.



What About The Syrian Refugees

- The Syrian crisis has generated the world's largest refugee crisis for 20 years.
 - There are around 500 K in Jordan, 600 K in Lebanon, 400 K in Turkey and around 250 K in Iraq and Egypt.
 - The conflict causes around 6000 to 10000 refugees to cross the borders everyday.
 - The Zaatari camp is the fourth largest city in Jordan. It costs around \$0.5 M a day to run.
 - UN estimates the Syrian refugees in Lebanon to reach one million by end of 2013 (20% of Lebanon population).
 - There are around 4.25 Million displaced people inside Syria.
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Radical ideologies in secular Syria were declared by Jihadists in the areas they control

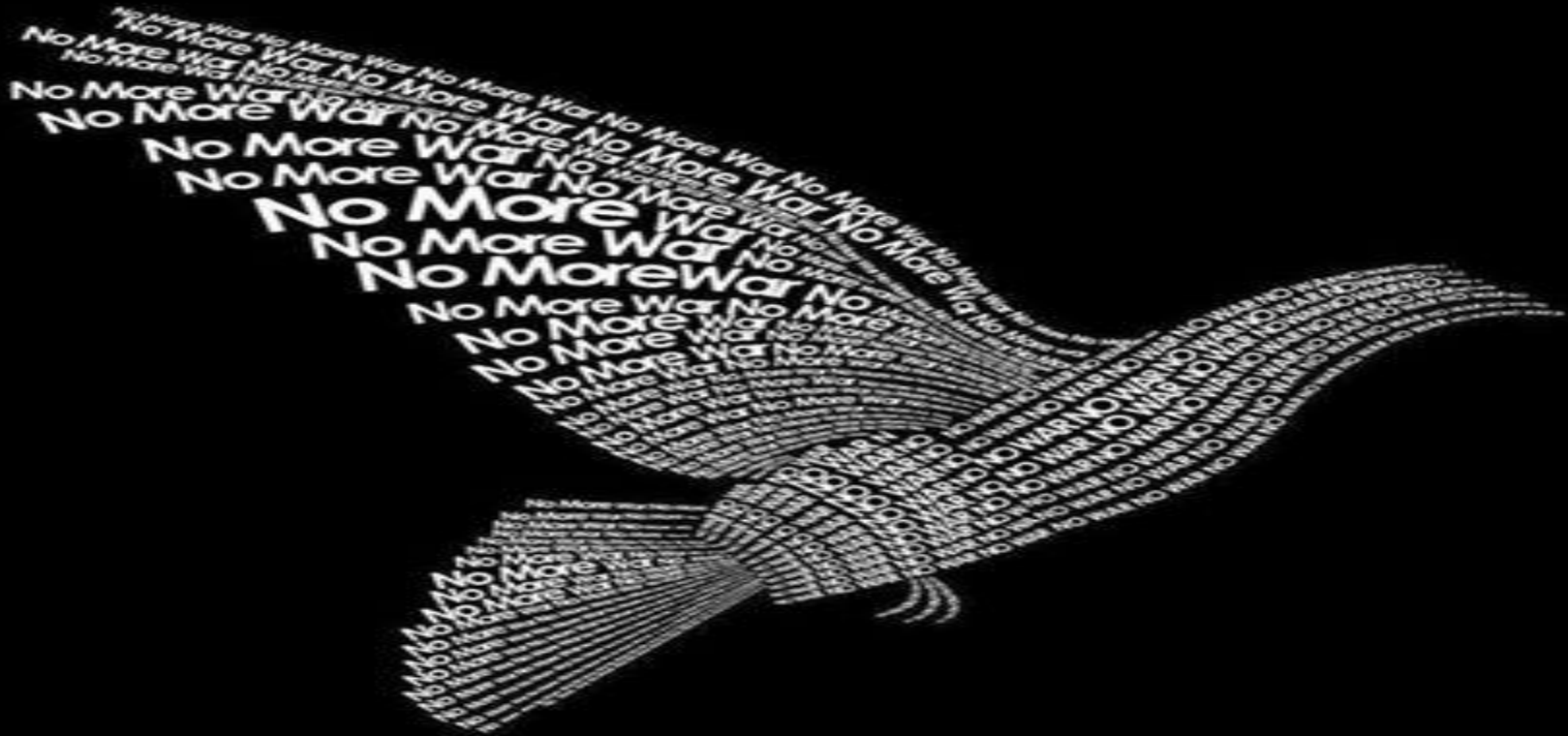


We seek Islamic State - Hims



Whoever changes his religion from Islam; kill him





No More War



SYRIA

FOR SYRIANS ONLY

**Peace For, Hands Off
and Long Live**

SYRIA

The word "SYRIA" is rendered in a bold, stylized font. Each letter is filled with the colors of the Syrian flag: red at the top, white in the middle, and black at the bottom. Two green stars are positioned on the white background within the letters 'Y' and 'I'. The letters have a slight 3D effect with a dark shadow at the bottom.