



# Conflict in the Middle East: Iraq and Syria

Resource Booklet

# CONTENTS

## Table of Contents

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>UNIT RATIONALE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>SECTION 1: THE ISSUE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1. WHAT IS THE ISSUE? .....	4
2. SELECTED KEY EVENTS FOR UNIT .....	7
3. COUNTRIES AND GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT .....	10
4. KEY ORGANISATIONS.....	17
<b>SECTION 2: CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT</b> .....	<b>26</b>
5. CAUSE 1: DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC UPRISING.....	26
6. CAUSE 2: SECTARIANISM AND EXTREMISM .....	28
7. CAUSE 3: INVOLVEMENT OF FOREIGN POWERS .....	33
8. CAUSE 4: HISTORY OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE .....	36
<b>SECTION 3: EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT ON INDIVIDUALS</b> .....	<b>38</b>
9. EFFECT 1: HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE AND HUGE LOSS OF LIFE .....	38
10. EFFECT 2: MASS DISPLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS .....	39
11. EFFECT 3: CHEMICAL WEAPONS .....	46
12. EFFECT 3: PERSECUTION AND GENOCIDE .....	48
<b>SECTION 4: EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON COUNTRIES AND GOVERNMENTS</b> .....	<b>52</b>
13. EFFECT 1: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY IN REGIONAL COUNTRIES.....	52
14. EFFECT 2: REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE.....	54
15. EFFECT 3: HEIGHTENED TERROR THREAT .....	57
16. EFFECT 4: RISE IN FAR RIGHT ACROSS EUROPE.....	59
<b>SECTION 5: ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE ISSUE BY INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES</b> .....	<b>61</b>
17. TARGETING ISIS .....	61
18. SUPPORT FOR REGIMES AND GROUPS FIGHTING IN SYRIA AND IRAQ .....	62
<b>SECTION 6: ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS</b> .....	<b>64</b>
19. UN PEACE EFFORTS.....	64
20. ARAB LEAGUE .....	66
21. EUROPEAN UNION (EU).....	67
<b>SECTION 7: SAMPLE ESSAYS</b> .....	<b>69</b>

# UNIT RATIONALE

According to the SQA:

Learners will study a significant contemporary world issue which will be a significant recent issue or conflict which has a global impact.

The major world issue chosen for study should be one which has contemporary relevance, has implications beyond a single country or region and affects other countries either as direct participants or as parties to an attempted resolution:

Content for Course Assessment:

- Causes of the issue:
  - nature and extent of the world issue
  - political, social and economic factors that give rise to the international issue.
- Effects of the issue on:
  - Individuals
  - countries and their governments — the international community.
- Attempts to resolve the issue:
  - role and effectiveness of individual countries
  - role and effectiveness of international organisations.

# SECTION 1: THE ISSUE

## 1. What is the Issue?

### Definitions

Civil War: A war between citizens of the same country.

Insurgency: An active revolt or uprising.

Rebel: A person who rises in opposition or armed resistance against an established government or leader.

### What is happening in Syria?

It is estimated that more than 400,000 Syrians have lost their lives in five-and-a-half years of armed conflict, which began in March 2011 with anti-government protests before escalating into a full-scale civil war. More than 11 million others have been forced from their homes as forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and those opposed to his rule battle each other - as well as jihadist militants from so-called Islamic State.

The trouble began in 2011 in the Syrian city of Deraa.

Locals took to the streets to protest after 15 schoolchildren were arrested - and reportedly tortured - for writing anti-government graffiti on a wall.

The protests were peaceful to begin with, calling for the release of the children, democracy and greater freedom for people in the country.

The government responded angrily, and on 18 March 2011, the army opened fire on protesters, killing four people.

The following day, they shot at mourners at the victims' funerals, killing another person.

People were shocked and angry at what had happened and soon the unrest spread to other parts of the country.

### What do the protesters want and what have they got?

At first the protesters just wanted democracy and greater freedom.

But once government forces opened fire on peaceful demonstrations, people demanded that the President, Bashar al-Assad, resign. President Assad refused to step down.

As the violence worsened he offered to change some things about the way the country was run, but the protesters didn't believe him. President Assad also has quite a lot of people in Syria that still support him and his government.

### Who are the rebel fighters?

There isn't a clear single group of rebels, united against President Assad.

The opposition, who all want the president to step down, is split between groups of rebel fighters, political parties and people living in exile, who cannot return to the country.

It's thought there could have been as many as 1,000 groups opposing the government since the conflict began, with an estimated 100,000 fighters.

### The Rise of IS

The war is now more than just a battle between those for or against President Assad.

In early 2014, in neighbouring Iraq, an extremist group called **Islamic State, or IS, began to take over large areas of the country**. IS is a radical militant group which has used violence against anyone who doesn't agree with their extremist views.

### Foreign Involvement

The complex web of allegiances and enmities has drawn regional players such as Iran, Lebanon and Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Global powers such as the United States and Russia and, albeit to a lesser extent, France and the United Kingdom have also used military force in the country.

## What is happening in Iraq?

Iraq, too, is in a state of civil war. In 2014 an insurgency by armed extremist groups escalated into a civil war, with the extremist organisation Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS / IS). ISIL militants seized at least 70% of Anbar Province in Iraq by June 2014, including the cities of Falluja and Al Qaim, and half of the provincial capital of Ramadi.

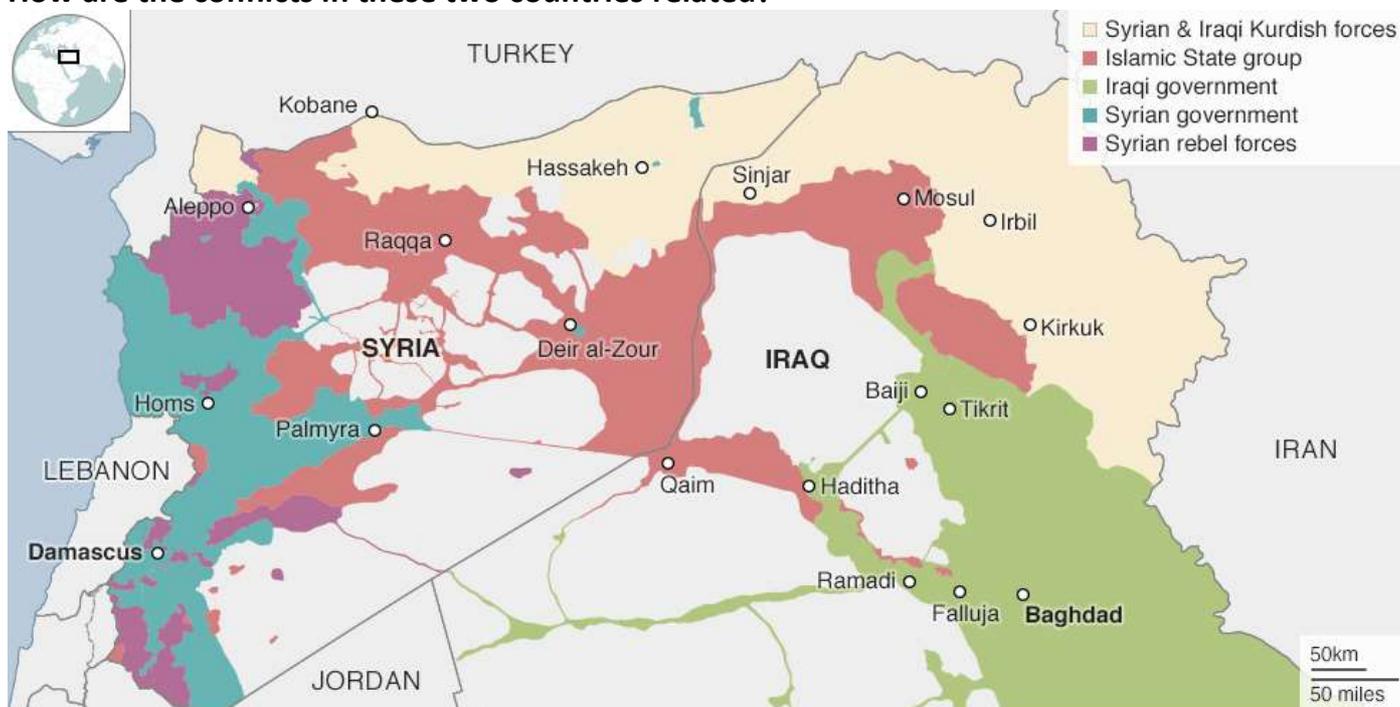
In early June 2014 ISIL seized control of Mosul, the second most populous city in Iraq. ISIL extended its reach into further nearby provinces, with the ultimate goal of capturing Baghdad. By the end of 2014, nearly 10 million people were under the group's control across Syria and Iraq.

### Foreign Involvement

In August 2014, after the militants advanced on the Iraqi Kurdish city of Irbil, the US launched air strikes on IS positions in Iraq. Since then, IS has lost approximately 40% of the populated territory it once held in Iraq, and 10-20% of the populated territory it had seized in Syria, according to the US.

The US-led coalition has launched more than 9,200 air strikes against IS targets since August 2014. The UK launched its first air strikes on the group the following month. Other nations taking part include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, and the Netherlands.

## How are the conflicts in these two countries related?



Source: IHS (1 August 2016)

BBC

The nature of the conflict in Syria means that there are multiple groups vying for control of territory, infrastructure and governing institutions. Various rebel groups which are opposed to the Syrian government have taken over large parts of the country. Because government forces no longer occupy much of the land near Syria's border with Iraq, the border has, in a sense, become meaningless as people and weapons are able to cross the border quite easily.

In 2014 militants from so-called Islamic State (IS) seized large parts of Syria and Iraq, putting as many as 10 million people under their control. In June of that year, the jihadist group overran the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, and then moved southwards towards Baghdad, routing Iraq's army and threatening to eradicate the country's many ethnic and religious minorities.

Two months later, after the militants advanced on the Iraqi Kurdish city of Irbil, the US launched air strikes on IS positions in Iraq. A multinational coalition led by the US extended the air campaign to Syria that September.

Therefore, while Syria and Iraq are separate countries, with their own unique cultures and political systems and economies, both countries are in a state of civil war. The militant extremist group IS (ISIS / ISIL) is active force in both countries and has successfully gained control of large swathes of territory. Within both Iraq and Syria, communities are also often divided along religious lines: while Islam is the majority religion in both countries, most Muslims identify as being either Sunni or Shia, which are two separate branches of Islam. While Syria is a Sunni-majority country, the majority of Iraqis are Shia. These divisions have played a role in the unrest and conflict experienced in both countries currently and historically.

Various ethnic groupings also span the two countries (and often several other countries). The most prominent ethnic group are the Kurds, who live in an area known as Kurdistan, which is not a country in itself, but rather it is a roughly-defined geo-cultural region wherein the Kurdish people form a prominent majority population, and Kurdish culture, language, and national identity have historically been based. Kurdish communities have been drawn into armed conflict in both countries, often fighting on several fronts in order to preserve security as well as their varying levels of autonomy.

Until fairly recently, both Iraq and Syria were both governed by **dictatorships**. When Saddam Hussein was overthrown as Iraqi leader following the 2003 Iraq War, President Bashar al-Assad remained in control of neighbouring Syria. Ineffective decision-making and governance in both countries, linked to a legacy of dictatorship has also been the source of conflict.

The current conflicts in both countries have caused devastation within the confines of their own borders, as well as internationally. This has prompted a multitude of responses from foreign countries and from international organisations. You will learn much more about all of this very soon!

## 2. Selected Key Events for Unit

Date	Location	Event
2002	Iraq	US President George W. Bush tells UN that Iraq poses “grave and gathering danger”. British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s government publishes later-discredited dossier on Iraq’s military capability.
2003 March	Iraq	US-led invasion topples Saddam Hussein’s government, marks the start of years of violent groups competing for power.
2003 December	Iraq	Saddam Hussein captured in Tikrit.
2004	Iraq	Sectarian conflict (along Sunni Muslim and Shia Muslim lines) intensifies, including regular suicide bombing and rising death toll. Hundreds are reported killed in fighting during the month-long US military siege of the Sunni Muslim city of Falluja.
2004 June	Iraq	US hands sovereignty to interim government, but civil conflict continues.
2006 May- June	Iraq	An average of more than 100 civilians per day are killed in violence in Iraq, the UN says.
2006 November	Iraq AND Syria	Iraq and Syria restore diplomatic relations after nearly a quarter century.
2006 December	Iraq	Saddam Hussein is executed for crimes against humanity.
2007 October	Iraq	The number of violent civilian military deaths continues to drop, as does the frequency of rocket attacks.
2010 August	Iraq	Seven years after the US-led invasion, the last US combat brigade leaves Iraq.
2012	Iraq	Bomb and gun attacks target Shia areas throughout the year, sparking fears of a new sectarian conflict.
2012 April	Iraq	Violence intensifies: Insurgency intensifies with levels of violence matching those of 2008. By July the country is described as being yet again in a state of full-blown sectarian war.
2013 July	Iraq	At least 500 prisoners, mainly senior al-Qaeda members, escape from Iraqi prisons in a mass breakout.
2013 October	Iraq	Government says October is the deadliest month since April 2008, with 900 killed. By the year-end the UN estimates the 2013 death toll of civilians as 7,157 – a dramatic increase in the previous year’s figure of 3,228.
2014 June- September	Iraq	Sunni rebels led by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL / ISIS) surge out of Anbar Province to seize Iraq’s second city of Mosul and other key towns. Tens of thousands flee amid atrocities. Kurdish forces, US and Iran assist the government in repelling attacks.
2014 September	Iraq	US announces new forward strategy against Islamic State, carries out raids in support of Iraqi Army near Baghdad. International conference in Paris, including ten Sunni Arab states but excluding Iran and Syria, agrees to support strategy.
2015	Iraq	Government forces manage to recapture some territory from ISIS.
2015	Iraq	Stalemate in fighting between Iraqi government and ISIS.
2002 – 2007	Syria	Tensions heighten between Syria and the US over regional alliances.
2007 – 2010	Syria	Disputes between Syrian government, led by Bashar Assad and the international community (particularly the West) over allegations that the Syrian regime is involved with producing and spreading weapons of mass destruction.

2011 March	Syria	Security forces shoot dead protesters in southern city of Deraa demanding release of political prisoners, triggering violent unrest that steadily spread nationwide over the following months.
2011 May	Syria	Army tanks enter towns and cities in several parts of Syria in an effort to crush anti-regime protests. US and European Union tighten sanctions.
2011 June	Syria	The government says that 120 members of the security forces have been killed by “armed gangs” in a town in the north west. Troops besiege town and more than 10,000 people flee to Turkey.
2011 November	Syria	Arab League votes to suspend Syria, accusing it of failing to implement Arab peace plan, and imposes sanctions.
2012	Syria	Government steps up the bombardment of Homs and other cities.
2012	Syria	France, UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada and Australia expel senior Syrian diplomats in protest at killing of more than a hundred civilians in Houla, near Homs.  Tensions between Turkey and Syria escalate following a series of cross-border exchanges.
2012 November	Syria	National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces formed in Qatar, excludes Islamist militias, Arab League stops short of full recognition.
2013 August-Sept	Syria	Syrian government believed to be responsible for attacks on civilian area using chemical weapons. UN weapons inspectors conclude that chemical weapons were used in an attack on the Ghouta area of Damascus in August that killed about 300 people. Causes outrage in Western countries, US and Britain threaten military action against Assad government.
2013 October	Syria	President Assad allows international inspectors to begin destroying Syria’s chemical weapons on the basis of US-Russian agreement.
2013 December	Syria	US and Britain suspend “non-lethal” support for rebels in northern Syria after reports that Islamist rebels seized bases of Western-backed Free Syrian Army.
2014 Jan-Feb	Syria	UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva fail, largely because Syrian authorities refuse to discuss a transitional government.
2014 June	Syria	UN announces removal of Syria’s chemical weapons material complete.  Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants declare “caliphate” in territory from Aleppo to eastern Iraqi province of Diyala.
2014 September	Syria	US and five Arab countries launch air strikes against Islamic State around Aleppo and Raqqa.
2015 January	Syria	Kurdish forces push Islamic State out of Kobane on Turkish border after four months of fighting.
2015 March	Syria	Islamic State fighters seize the ancient city of Palmyra in central Syria and proceed to destroy many monuments at pre-Islamic World Heritage site.
2015 September	Syria	Russia carries out its first air strikes in Syria, saying they target the Islamic State group, but the West and Syrian opposition say it overwhelmingly targets anti-Assad rebels.
2015 December	Syria	Britain joins US-led bombing raids against Islamic State in wake of Paris suicide bombing attacks.
2016 February	Syria	A US-Russia-brokered partial ceasefire between government and major rebel forces comes into effect, after a major pro-government drive to capture Aleppo. Islamic State is not included.
2016 March	Syria	Syrian forces retake Palmyra from Islamic State, with Russian air assistance.
2016 May	Syria	The US-Russian brokered ceasefire is extended to Aleppo (northern Syria) after an upsurge in fighting there.

Following the election of Donald Trump in November 2017, US policy towards the Assad regime has changed. Trump identifies IS as the main enemy in Syria, and, with the increased concord with Russia, sees the elimination of IS as Syrian war priority number one. Anti-Assad forces are now ignored if they don’t contribute to the fight against IS. This has led to President Assad consolidating territorial gains, and a shrinking number of IS held towns and cities. Some of these battles have been incredibly bloody and destructive: like the battle for Aleppo at the end of 2016. What the

future holds if Assad regains control over Syria remains to be seen. There have been some population returns to war-ravaged towns and cities: but the infrastructure of the country – its housing, its schools, its hospitals, its power supplies, its fresh running water, and its roads, are ruined in many areas where the fighting was fiercest – that is, areas once held by IS.

For instance, in Aleppo in 2016, 300,000 people returned to the city. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, are providing daily meals, winter supplies like blankets, medical assistance, and post-traumatic rehabilitation services. **So Syria, especially in its war-zones, is not self-sufficient, and continues to rely on international agencies for basic services.** Given that it has no functioning economy, this level of help seems likely to continue.

The figures involved are startling: 6 million people displaced within Syria, and 6 million displaced outside Syria. The biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War. It has changed politics in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, Italy, Germany and the USA.

### **Kurdish Syria: a disturbing development.**

In September 2019 US President Donald Trump announced that US armed forces would no longer support Kurdish forces in north-eastern Syria. Kurdish forces, defending a stretch of land in north-eastern Syria called Rojava, which had its own autonomous Government, were protected by the fact that US troops were stationed there. When President Trump announced his unilateral withdrawal, agreed on a phone call with Turkey's President Erdogan, it was to allow Turkish forces entry across the border into Syria to deal with what Erdogan called 'terrorists' in Kurdish-held Syria. Fearing for their safety, the Kurds called on both Syria's Bashir Al-Assad and his Russian allies to help them. Kurds, bravest and longest fighters against ISIS, are now back under Syrian control, and their chances of autonomy are much diminished.

Kurds exist in Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, but no Government allow them self-Government. Strongest and most effective fighters against both Saddam Hussein in Iraq and ISIS in Syria, they are routinely a victim of organised states in the region. This latest episode is particularly damaging, since Kurds thought they had a dependable ally in the USA.

### 3. Countries and groups involved in the conflict

#### The Middle East

##### What is the Middle East?

The Middle East is a loose term, not always used to describe the same territory. It usually includes the Arab countries from Egypt east to the Persian Gulf, plus Israel and Iran. Turkey is sometimes considered part of the Middle East, sometimes part of Europe. Sometimes the Middle East includes North Africa as well. Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are usually described as South Asia.

##### Who is an Arab?

“Arab” is a cultural and linguistic term. It refers to those who speak Arabic as their first language. Arabs are united by culture and by history. Some have blue eyes and red hair; others are dark skinned; many are somewhere in between. Most Arabs are Muslims but there are also millions of Christian Arabs and thousands of Jewish Arabs, just as there are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Americans.

##### What is the Arab World?

The Arab World consists of 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Iran and Turkey are not Arab countries and their primary languages are Farsi and Turkish respectively. Arab countries have a rich diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities. These include Kurds, Armenians, Berbers and others. There are over 300 million Arabs.

What is the Muslim World?

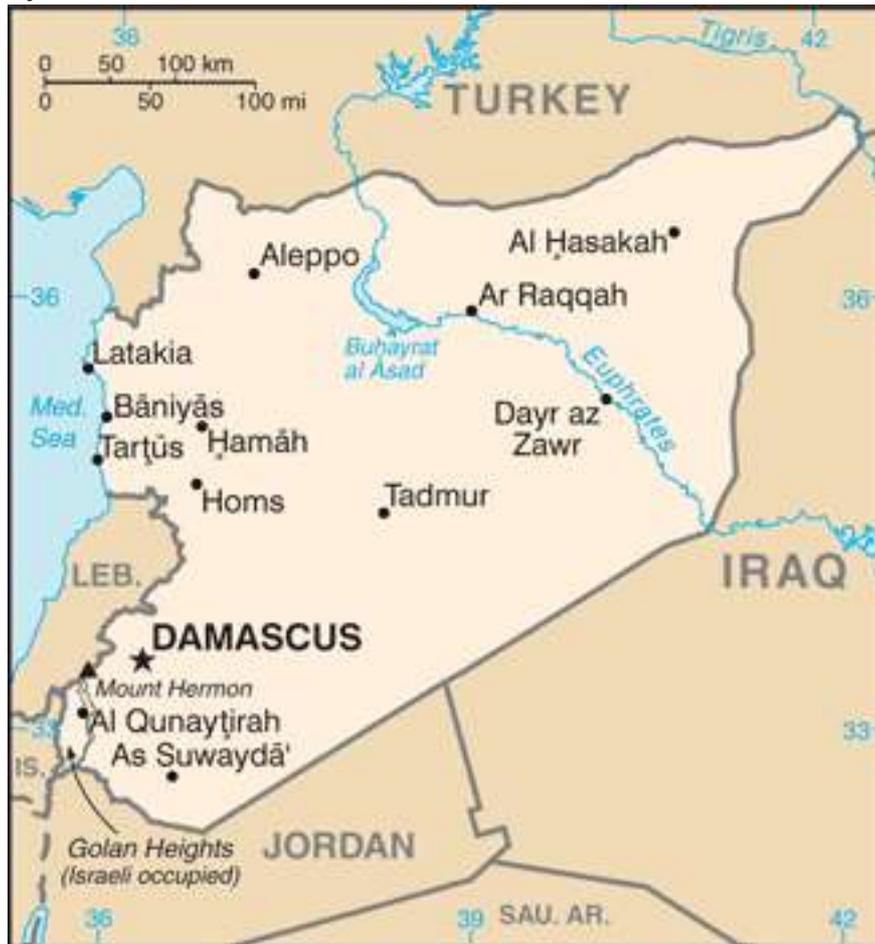
There are an estimated 1.57 billion Muslims in the world. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has 57 member states. The ten countries with the largest Muslim population are: Indonesia (202.9 million), Pakistan (174.1 million), India (160.9 million), Bangladesh (145.3 million), Egypt (78.5 million), Nigeria (78.1 million), Iran (73.8 million), Turkey (73.6 million), Algeria (34.2 million), and Morocco (31.9 million). Of these countries, only three are Arab countries: Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco. Most Arabs are Muslims, but most Muslims are not Arabs.

##### What's in a name

The “Middle East” is a term derived from a European perspective. For 19th-century Europeans, the Middle East was differentiated from India and the Far East (Southeast Asia and China). Originally, the Near East referred to areas under Ottoman control, from the Balkans to the border of Iran. The term Middle East was introduced in the early 20th century to include the area around the Persian Gulf, and the Near East was used to refer to the Ottoman Balkans. After World War II, Middle East became the dominant term for the whole region.



## Syria



Ethnic Groups: Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%

Religions: Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian, French, English

Population: Muslim 87% (official; includes Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%), Christian 10% (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian), Druze 3%, Jewish (few remaining in Damascus and Aleppo)

Government type: highly authoritarian regime

Capital: Damascus

Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French administered the area as Syria

until granting it independence in 1946. The new country lacked political stability and experienced a series of military coups (takeovers by the military).

Syria united with Egypt in February 1958 to form the United Arab Republic. In September 1961, the two entities separated, and the Syrian Arab Republic was re-established. In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Syria lost the Golan Heights region to Israel. During the 1990s, Syria and Israel held occasional, albeit unsuccessful, peace talks over its return. In November 1970, Hafiz al-Assad, seized power in a bloodless coup and brought political stability to the country. Following the death of President Hafiz al-Assad, his son, Bashar al-Assad, was approved as president by popular referendum in July 2000. In May 2007, Bashar al-Assad's second term as president was approved by popular referendum.

Influenced by major uprisings that began elsewhere in the region, and compounded by additional social and economic factors, anti-government protests broke out first in the

**1918** October - Arab troops led by Emir Feisal, and supported by British forces, capture Damascus, ending 400 years of Ottoman rule.

**1920** - San Remo conference splits up newly-created Arab kingdom by placing Syria-Lebanon under a French mandate, and Palestine under British control.

**1946** - Independence.

**1958-61** - Short-lived union of Syria with Egypt as the United Arab Republic (UAR).

**1967** - Egypt, Jordan, and Syria are defeated in the Six-Day War with Israel. Israel seizes the Golan Heights.

**1970** - Hafez al-Assad comes to power in a coup. His rule is characterised by stability, repression and a major arms build-up.

**1973** - Egypt and Syria launch surprise attack on Israel in October to try reverse defeats of 1967.

**1976** - Syria intervenes in the Lebanese civil war. It maintains military presence there for next three decades and exerts significant influence on Lebanese politics.

**1982** - Muslim Brotherhood uprising in the city of Hama is suppressed in a month-long siege by the military, who are accused of killing tens of thousands of civilians.

**2000** - Assad dies and is succeeded by his son Bashar.

**2005** - Syrian forces withdraw from Lebanon under international pressure following assassination of Lebanese premier Rafiq al-Hariri.

**2011** - Unrest inspired by "Arab Spring" uprisings. Confrontation between government and opposition soon develops into civil war that draws in world powers and triggers refugee crisis.

southern province of Dar'a in March 2011 with protesters calling for the repeal of the restrictive Emergency Law allowing arrests without charge, the legalization of political parties, and the removal of corrupt local officials. Demonstrations and violent unrest spread across Syria with the size and intensity of protests fluctuating. The government responded to unrest with a mix of concessions - including the repeal of the Emergency Law, new laws permitting new political parties, and liberalizing local and national elections - and military force. However, the government's response has failed to meet opposition demands for Assad's resignation, and the government's ongoing violence to quell unrest and widespread armed opposition activity has led to extended clashes between government forces and oppositionists.

International pressure on the Assad regime has intensified since late 2011, as the Arab League, EU, Turkey, and the US expanded economic sanctions against the regime. In December 2012, the Syrian National Coalition, was recognized by more than 130 countries as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Unrest continues in Syria, and according to an April 2016 UN estimate, the death toll among Syrian Government forces, opposition forces, and civilians had reached 400,000. As of January 2016, approximately 13.5 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, with 6.5 million people displaced internally, and an additional 4.8 million Syrian refugees, making the Syrian situation the largest humanitarian crisis worldwide.

## Iraq



### Iraq timeline - the short version



**1534-1918** - Ottoman rule.

**1917** - Britain seizes control, creates state of Iraq.

**1932** - Independence, followed by coups.

**1979** - Saddam Hussein becomes president.

**1980-1988** - Iran-Iraq war.

**1990** - Iraq invades Kuwait, putting it on a collision course with the international community.

**1991** - Iraq subjected to sanctions, weapons inspections and no-fly zones.

**2003** - US-led coalition invades, starting years of guerrilla warfare and instability.

Ethnic Groups: Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Turkoman, Assyrian, other 5%

Religions: Muslim (official) 99% (Shia 60-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), Christian 0.8%, Hindu <0.1, Buddhist <0.1, Jewish <0.1%]

Population: 37,056,169 (July 2015 est)

Capital: Baghdad

Government type: federal parliamentary republic

Formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq was occupied by Britain during the course of World War I; in 1920, it was declared a League of Nations mandate under UK administration. In stages over the next dozen years, Iraq attained its independence as a kingdom in 1932. A "republic" was proclaimed in 1958, but in actuality a series of strongmen ruled the country until 2003. The last was Saddam Hussein. Territorial disputes with Iran led to an inconclusive and costly eight-year war (1980-88). In August 1990, Iraq seized Kuwait but was expelled by US-led UN coalition forces during the Gulf War of January-February 1991. Following Kuwait's liberation, the UN Security Council (UNSC) required Iraq to scrap all weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles and to allow UN verification inspections. Continued Iraqi noncompliance with UNSC resolutions over a period of 12 years led to the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and the ouster of the SADDAM Husayn regime. US forces remained in Iraq under a UNSC mandate through 2009 and under a bilateral security agreement thereafter, helping to provide security and to train and mentor Iraqi security forces.

In October 2005, Iraqis approved a constitution in a national referendum and, pursuant to this document, elected a 275-member Council of Representatives (COR) in December 2005. The COR approved most cabinet ministers in May 2006, marking the transition to Iraq's first constitutional government in nearly a half century. Nearly nine years after the start of the Second Gulf War in Iraq, US military operations there ended in mid-December 2011. In January 2009 and April 2013, Iraq held elections for provincial councils in all governorates except for the three comprising the Kurdistan Regional Government and Kirkuk Governorate. Iraq held a national legislative election in March 2010 - choosing 325 legislators in an expanded COR - and, after nine months of deadlock the COR approved the new government in December 2010. In April 2014, Iraq held a national legislative election and expanded the COR to 328 legislators. Prime Minister Nuri al-MALIKI dropped his bid for a third term in office, enabling new Prime Minister Haydar al-Abadi, a Shia Muslim from Baghdad, to win parliamentary approval of his new cabinet in September 2014. Since early 2015, Iraq has been engaged in a military campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to recapture territory lost in the western and northern portion of the country.

## **ISIS**

The jihadist group Islamic State (IS), also known as ISIS, ISIL or Daesh, burst on to the international scene in 2014 when it seized large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. It has become notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings. The group though has attracted support elsewhere in the Muslim world - and a US-led coalition has vowed to destroy it.

### **What does IS want?**

In June 2014, the group formally declared the establishment of a "caliphate" - a state governed in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia, by God's deputy on Earth, or caliph.

It has demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi - and migrate to territory under its control.

IS has also told other jihadist groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority. Many already have, among them several offshoots of the rival al-Qaeda network.

IS seeks to eradicate obstacles to restoring God's rule on Earth and to defend the Muslim community, or umma, against infidels and apostates.

The group has welcomed the prospect of direct confrontation with the US-led coalition, viewing it as a harbinger of an end-of-times showdown between Muslims and their enemies described in Islamic apocalyptic prophecies.

### **What are its origins?**

IS can trace its roots back to the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In 2004, a year after the US-led invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which became a major force in the insurgency.

After Zarqawi's death in 2006, AQI created an umbrella organisation, Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). ISI was steadily weakened by the US troop surge and the creation of Sahwa (Awakening) councils by Sunni Arab tribesmen who rejected its brutality.

Baghdadi, a former US detainee, became leader in 2010 and began rebuilding ISI's capabilities. By 2013, it was once again carrying out dozens of attacks a month in Iraq. It had also joined the rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, setting up the al-Nusra Front.

In April 2013, Baghdadi announced the merger of his forces in Iraq and Syria and the creation of "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (Isis). The leaders of al-Nusra and al-Qaeda rejected the move, but fighters loyal to Baghdadi split from al-Nusra and helped Isis remain in Syria.

At the end of December 2013, Isis shifted its focus back to Iraq and exploited a political stand-off between the Shia-led government and the minority Sunni Arab community. Aided by tribesmen and former Saddam Hussein loyalists, Isis took control of the central city of Falluja. In June 2014, Isis overran the northern city of Mosul, and then advanced southwards towards Baghdad, massacring its adversaries and threatening to eradicate the country's many ethnic and religious minorities. At the end of the month, after consolidating its hold over dozens of cities and towns, Isis declared the creation of a caliphate and changed its name to "Islamic State".

In September 2014, the then director of the US National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Matthew Olsen, said IS controlled much of the Tigris-Euphrates river basin - an area similar in size to the United Kingdom, or about 210,000 sq km (81,000 sq miles).

A year later, the US defence department declared that IS frontlines in much of northern and central Iraq and northern Syria had been pushed back significantly by US-led coalition air strikes and ground operations. IS could no longer operate freely in roughly 20-25% of populated areas in Iraq and Syria where it once could, it said. The defence department estimated that IS had lost approximately 15,000-20,000 sq km (5,790-7,720 sq miles) of territory in Iraq, or about 30-37% of what it controlled in August 2014, and 2,000-4,000 sq km (770-1,540 sq miles) in Syria, or about 5-10%.

Despite this, IS has been able to capture new territory of strategic value over the same period, including the city of Ramadi in Iraq's Anbar province and Palmyra in Syria's Homs province.

Analysts also note that the US figures do not necessarily reflect the situation on the ground. In reality, IS militants exercise complete control over only a small part of that territory, which includes cities and towns, main roads, oil fields and military facilities. They enjoy freedom of movement in the largely uninhabited areas outside what the Institute for the Study of War calls "control zones", but they would struggle to defend them.

Similarly, it is not entirely clear how many people are living under full or partial IS control across Syria and Iraq. In March 2015, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross put the figure at more than 10 million. Inside areas where IS has implemented its strict interpretation of Sharia, women are forced to wear full veils, public beheadings are common and non-Muslims are forced to choose between paying a special tax, converting or death.

### How many fighters?

In February 2015, US Director for National Intelligence James Clapper **said** IS could muster "somewhere in the range between 20,000 and 32,000 fighters" in Iraq and Syria.

But he noted that there had been "substantial attrition" in its ranks since US-led coalition air strikes began in August 2014. In June 2015, US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken **said** more than 10,000 IS fighters had been killed.

In October 2015, National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen told Congress that the group had attracted more than 28,000 foreign fighters. They included at least 5,000 Westerners, approximately 250 of them Americans, he said.

Studies by the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR) and the New York-based Soufan Group suggest that while about a quarter of the foreign fighters are from the West, the majority are from nearby Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Jordan and Morocco.

## US

The USA is the world's foremost economic and military power, with global interests and an unmatched global reach.

America's gross domestic product accounts for close to a quarter of the world total, and its military budget is reckoned to be almost as much as the rest of the world's defence spending put together.

### The origins of the Cold War

During the Second World War, the USA and the Soviet Union fought side by side against Hitler and the Nazis, but they were not allies for long. These were the two most powerful countries in the world, but they were completely different to each other. The Soviet Union was a **Communist** country whilst the USA was a **Capitalist** country.

Because both countries had the atomic bomb it was impossible for them to go to war against each other. Instead, they engaged in a **Cold War** between 1945 and 1989 – a war without actual fighting between American and Russian soldiers.

In November 1989, the most symbolic evidence of the Cold War, the **Berlin Wall**, was torn down. As the two Germanys moved toward reunification, the Soviet Union was faced with the development it had opposed for nearly half a century, a united and prosperous Germany.

### 9/11 aftermath

The terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 had a momentous impact as the country continued to re-define its role as the world's only superpower.

In October 2001 the US led a military campaign in Afghanistan that unseated the Taleban regime. However, the man who ordered the 9/11 attacks, Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, survived until 2011, when killed in a US special forces operation in Pakistan.

In March 2003 Washington initiated military action in Iraq which led to the toppling of the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

US foreign policy has often mixed the idealism of its "mission" to spread democracy with the pursuit of national self-interest.

Given America's leading role on the international stage, its foreign policy aims and actions are likely to remain the subject of heated debate and criticism, as well as praise.

The election of Donald Trump has changed the dynamic of US policy towards Syria. The US is keener now to participate, and allow, the destruction of IS, even at the expense of strengthening the Syrian dictator, Bashar Al Assad. In this effort, the USA has the enthusiastic support of Russia, which has long wanted its own 'client' state in the Middle East. As American interests move away from establishing the possibility of a future democratic Syria, rejecting both Assad and IS used to US policy in Syria, it remains to be seen how far changing US war aims are influenced by Trump's friendly attitude towards Putin's Russia.

#### Key figures:



**Barack Obama:** President of the United States, elected as a member of the Democrat Party, January 2009 - January 2017.



**Hillary Clinton:** Secretary of State (in charge of foreign affairs) January 2009 - February 2009; Democrat candidate for President of the United States, current favourite to replace Barack Obama in January 2017.



**John Kerry:** Secretary of State February 2013 – present.



**George W. Bush:** President of the United States, elected as member of Republican Party, January 2001 – January 2009.

## Russia

### Key figures:

**Vladimir Putin:**

President of Russia, 2012-present, 2000-2008; Prime Minister of Russia, 2008-2012

**Sergey Lavrov:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2004-present

**Russian Federation**

Capital: Moscow

**Population** 142.7 million

**Area** 17 million sq km (6.6 million sq miles)

**Major language** Russian

**Major religions**

Christianity, Islam

**Life expectancy** 63 years (men), 75 years (women)

UN, World Bank

Russia became an independent country in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed and, together with Ukraine and Belarus, formed the Commonwealth of Independent States, which is eventually joined by all former Soviet republics except the Baltic states.

Russia - the largest country on earth in terms of surface area - emerged from a decade of post-Soviet economic and political turmoil to reassert itself as a world power.

Income from vast natural resources, above all oil and gas, have helped Russia overcome the economic collapse of 1998. The state-run gas monopoly Gazprom is the world's largest producer and exporter, and supplies a large share of Europe's needs.

Economic strength has allowed Vladimir Putin - Russia's dominant political figure since 2000 - to enhance his control over political institutions and the media - a process supplemented more recently by an emphasis on fierce nationalism and hostility to the West.

In 2014, Russia caused outrage in the international community when it used military force to seize the Ukrainian region of Crimea, prompting the biggest East-West showdown since the Cold War. A long-term supporter of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Russia has inserted itself fully into the conflict in Syria, wanting both a client state and access to a warm water Mediterranean port, highlighting a desire for Russia to once again have a prominent role in international affairs, and an increased footprint in the Middle East.

## 4. Key Organisations

### United Nations (UN)

#### Origins

The idea of the United Nations was not new. The League of Nations formed after the First World War had similar aims but failed to prevent the rise of fascism and the Second World War. By the time of the outbreak of the Second World War the League of Nations was confined to the dustbin of history; however, the idea of international cooperation remained. Britain and the United States sowed the seeds of the UN with the 'Atlantic Charter' in 1941. On 1 January 1942 the 'Declaration by United Nations' endorsed the aims of the Atlantic Charter when 24 allies of Britain and the USA signed it. At the end of the war, a 'Conference of United Nations' was organised. Delegates from 50 nations met between April and June of 1945 to draw up a charter with 111 articles. The United Nations Organisation officially came into being on 24 October 1945. By this time Poland had joined, so the membership was 51 countries. Membership grew steadily and by 1998 there were 185 member states. The end of colonial rule in Africa and Asia created new nations in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which ensured a steady stream of countries who wished to take their place in the UN. With the collapse of communism in the early 1990s the Soviet Union and many of its Eastern European allies reverted to the geographical boundaries that had existed earlier. Joining the UN was a 'badge' of nationhood for these 'new' countries. The UN has continued to grow steadily and there are currently 194 members.

#### Aims

The main aims of the UN are set out in the charter. Before a country can join it must accept the charter and the obligations that are contained in it. The main aims are set out in the preamble and articles 1 and 2 'Purposes and Aims' as the following extracts show:

##### **Preamble**

'...To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...'  
'...reaffirm faith in fundamental Human Rights...'  
'...Practice tolerance...'  
'Unite our strength to maintain international peace and security...'

##### **Article 1**

'...To maintain international peace and security and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace...'  
'...To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect...for equal rights and self determination of peoples...'

##### **Article 2**

'...All members...shall fulfil in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present charter...'  
'...All members shall give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present charter...'



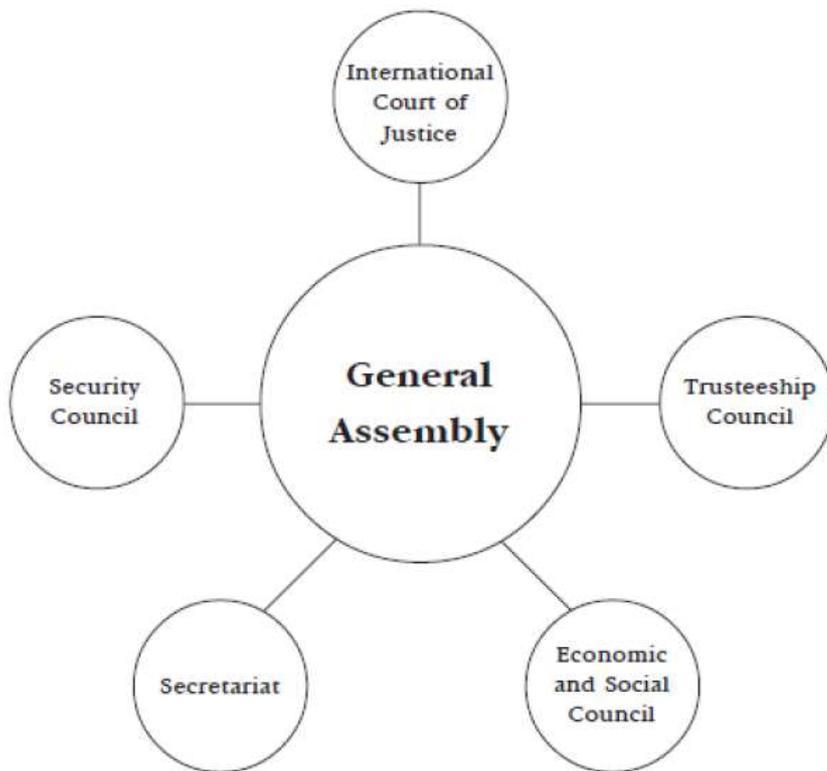
The United Nations tries to:

- Prevent the outbreak of war.
- Stop it once it has started.
- Help the victims of war.

#### Structure

The charter established six main organs to plan, carry out and oversee the work of the UN.

**The General Assembly** - The General Assembly is the 'Parliament' of the United Nations; it is the main forum for debate and discussion. All members are represented, and each country has one vote regardless of size. Decisions on



ordinary matters are taken by simple majority. Important questions, such as recommendations to the Security Council on peace and security matters, election of non-permanent members of the Security Council, the admission of new members and financial issues, require a two-thirds majority.

The Assembly holds its regular sessions from mid-September to mid-December. Special or emergency sessions are held when necessary and can be called at the request of the Security Council or a majority of member states. When it is not in session, its work goes on in special committees and bodies. Its function is to debate and make proposals about international issues, to consider the budget, including the peacekeeping budget, and what amount each member state should pay, to elect the non-permanent Security Council members and to supervise the work of the many UN agencies. Although the

Assembly can make recommendations and pass resolutions on matters relating to international peace and security it has no power or authority to enforce them or to compel action by any government.

With regards to upholding international peace and security the General Assembly:

- can make recommendations on the principles and maintenance of international peace and security except where a dispute is presently being considered by the Security Council
- can highlight to the Security Council situations that are likely to endanger international peace and security
- can make recommendations to promote international co-operation
- can make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation.

The Assembly also sets policies and determines programmes for the UN, and directs activities for development. It admits new members and appoints the Secretary General.

### ***The Security Council***

Under Article 24 of the UN Charter the Security Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Council can be convened at any time, whenever peace is threatened. The decisions of the Security Council are mandatory on all UN member states.

The Security Council is made up of 15 members. Five of these, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, are permanent members. The other 10 are elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. Each member state has one vote. Decisions require nine yes votes (including all five permanent members) except votes on procedural questions. A decision cannot be taken if there is a negative vote by a permanent member (known as the 'veto'). Permanent members of the Security Council can use their power of veto to block decisions they do not favour. The UK used its veto to block decisions that went against its interests during the Falklands dispute with Argentina. Both the USA and the Soviet Union used their vetoes to block decisions that did not favour their superpower interests during the period often referred to as the Cold War. For example, the USA used its veto on the demand to Israel to halt all military operations in northern Gaza and withdraw from the area. The UK has used its veto 32 times and America has used its veto 80 times. Permanent members of the Security Council not wishing to vote either for or against a decision may abstain from voting; an abstention by any permanent member does not amount to a veto.

When a threat to international peace is brought before the Council, it usually first asks the parties to reach agreement by peaceful means. It may undertake mediation or set forth principles for a settlement. In the event of conflict the

Council will try to secure a ceasefire and it may even send a peacekeeping mission to help the parties involved maintain the truce and to keep opposing forces apart.

The Council may take measures to enforce its decisions, for instance by imposing economic or military sanctions on countries or parties that threaten the peace. It may send peacekeeping missions to troubled areas, to keep opposing forces apart or to put a peace agreement into effect. These actions are preceded by fact-finding missions to provide advice on courses of action. In some cases, the Council has authorised coalitions of member states to use military action to deal with conflict, as it did in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and in Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti. These actions, although endorsed by the Council, were entirely under the control of participating states. The Council employs them only as a last resort. The Council also makes recommendations to the General Assembly on the appointment of a new Secretary-General and on the admission of new members to the UN.



## European Union (EU)



The European Union, or EU, describes itself as a family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. There are presently 28 members of the EU, with Croatia being the most recent

country to join, in 2013. The organisation oversees co-operation among its members in diverse areas, including trade, the environment, transport and employment.

## History

Following World War II, traditional European rivals sought to solidify peace by bringing their nations together under a common institutional structure. Influenced by his compatriot Jean Monnet, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman officially tabled a plan on May 9, 1950 to pool French and German coal and steel production under an organization that would be open to other European countries. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer supported this proposal, and six founding countries - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands - took an early step toward European integration by establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) the following year.

After failing to establish a European Defense Community in the 1950s, the six countries then decided to set up a common market. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, they created the European Economic Community (EEC), with an objective of liberating the movement of goods, capital, workers and services. As of July 1, 1968, the EEC abolished customs duties between Member States on manufactured goods. New policies, including a common agricultural policy (CAP) and a common trade policy, were in place by the end of the 1960s.

The success of the European integration project during a period of steady economic growth in the 1960s set the stage for a first enlargement - the accession of the UK, Ireland and Denmark - in 1973. Further "deepening" of European integration followed: the Community acquired executive authority in social, regional, and environment policies. The benefits of economic convergence became more evident in the context of the 1970s energy crisis and financial turmoil, which led to the launch of the European Monetary System in 1979. In the same year, the first direct elections to the European Parliament (EP) took place. Previously, delegates from national parliaments had represented their country's legislative bodies at the EP in Strasbourg, France.

The Community further expanded southward with the accession of Greece (1981, the second enlargement), followed by Spain and Portugal (1986, the third enlargement). These accessions led the EEC to adopt "structural programs" in order to reduce economic and social disparities among its regions.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall and German unification prompted Member States to negotiate the 1992 Treaty on European Union (the "Maastricht Treaty"). In addition to establishing the European Union, the Maastricht Treaty set an ambitious program of further integration: establishment of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) by 1999 (part of the "First or 'Community' Pillar"), setting up of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) ("Second Pillar"); and cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) ("Third Pillar"). Shortly thereafter, in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU - the fourth enlargement.

In May 1998, EU heads of government officially designated eleven Member States eligible to adopt a single currency. Greece initially did not qualify, and Sweden, the UK and Denmark "opted out." On January 1, 1999, the euro became the official currency of the EU, and the [European Central Bank \(ECB\)](#) put euro notes and coins into circulation on January 1, 2002. Today, 19 of the 28 member states of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain

In May 2004, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the EU, bringing total membership to 25. In 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, which currently stands, and in 2013 Croatia became the 28<sup>th</sup> and most recent country to join the union. There are currently five candidate countries for EU accession: Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

## Major institutions

### ***The European Commission***

The role and responsibilities of the [European Commission](#) place it at the centre of the EU's decision-making process. Acting as the EU's policy and executive engine, the Commission is composed of 28 Commissioners, one from each Member State and is supported by a substantial staff located primarily in Brussels, Belgium. In matters relating to

economic integration ("First or 'Community' Pillar"), only the Commission has the right to propose legislation for approval by the EU Council and European Parliament. As "guardian of the Treaties," the Commission ensures that EU laws are applied and upheld throughout the EU, prosecuting Member States and other institutions for failing to follow treaty precepts or otherwise apply Community law.

The Commission President is appointed by agreement of the EU heads of government and is subject to approval by the European Parliament. Commissioners serve for a renewable five-year term. The current President of the EU Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, a former Prime Minister of Luxembourg.

### ***The European Council***

The [Council of Ministers](#) of the European Union (the "EU Council") is the body in which representatives of the individual Member State governments, usually ministers, legislate for the EU, set its political objectives, coordinate national policies and resolve differences among their governments and with other EU bodies. Legally speaking, there is only one Council, but it meets in nine different formations, depending on the matters on its agenda. Foreign ministers usually meet at least once a month in the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), which deals with major foreign policy issues and plays a coordinating role. Ministers for the Economy and Finance (ECOFIN) and ministers responsible for agriculture also hold monthly meetings. Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) hold regular meetings to coordinate policies within their competence.

The Council holds formal sessions in its Brussels headquarters, except in April, June and October, when all sessions take place in Luxembourg. Most formations of the Council also meet informally (tasking no legally binding decisions) in the country holding the EU Presidency, usually once in the course of the Presidency's six-month term. The most prominent of these informal meetings is the so-called "Gymnich" meeting of foreign ministers, named for a town in Germany where the first such meeting took place.

The Council takes most decisions under the Community Pillar by qualified majority voting (QMV) but endeavors to reach the broadest possible consensus before approving legislation. Unanimity is required for a number of specific areas related to economic integration (e.g. taxation), constitutional matters such as amendments to the treaties, the launching of a new common policy, the accession of a new Member State, and matters falling within the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, European Security and Defense Policy, and aspects of law enforcement and judicial cooperation. The number of votes cast by each Member State when the EU Council votes by qualified majority voting was determined by the Nice Treaty and roughly correlates to the size of its population.

### ***The European Parliament***

Members of the [European Parliament](#) are directly elected by EU citizens for five-year terms; elections follow national election procedures. Members do not sit in national delegations; rather, they sit in groups according to political affiliation (including Socialists, Christian-Democrats/Conservatives, Liberals, Greens, etc.).

The European Parliament is one of the two branches with budgetary authority - the Council is the other. The signature of the EP president brings the overall EU budget into effect.

### ***The European Court of Justice***

The [European Court of Justice \(ECJ\)](#) ensures uniform interpretation and application of both the Treaties establishing the European Communities and the secondary legislation and other law adopted under their authority.

### ***Challenges***

Today, in 2016, the leaders of the EU face unprecedented challenges. EU institutions and members have struggled to deal with problems faced by the global economic downturn since 2008, which has resulted in several EU countries, and Greece in particular, accumulating huge and unsustainable debts. The EU must also deal with the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, including the turmoil in neighbouring Turkey, and the worsening refugee crisis. On top of this, the EU must determine a strategy for dealing with the heightened threat of terrorism and Russian aggression. Given all of this, the decision of UK voters to leave the EU in June 2016 could not have come at a worse time.

## Arab League



### Quick facts:

- Founded: 1945
- Headquarters: Cairo, Egypt
- Key players: Egypt, Saudi Arabia
- Members: 22 members including Palestine
- Population: 300 million (approximately)

The League of Arab States, or Arab League, is a voluntary association of countries whose peoples are mainly Arabic speaking or where Arabic is an official language.

Its stated aims are to strengthen ties among member states, coordinate their policies and direct them towards a common good.

It has 22 members including Palestine, which the League regards as an independent state.

The idea of the Arab League was mooted in 1942 by the British, who wanted to rally Arab countries against the Axis powers during the Second World War (Germany, Italy, and Japan). However, the league did not take off until March 1945, just before the end of World War II. At that time the issues that dominated the league's agenda were freeing those Arab countries still under colonial rule, and preventing the Jewish community in Palestine from creating a Jewish state.

The highest body of the league is the Council, composed of representatives of member states, usually foreign ministers, their representatives or permanent delegates. Each member state has one vote, irrespective of its size. The council meets twice a year, in March and September, and may convene a special session at the request of two members.

Day-to-day, the league is run by the general secretariat. Headed by a secretary-general, it is the administrative body of the league and the executive body of the council and the specialised ministerial councils.

### Secretary-general: Nabil el-Arabi

Nabil el-Arabi was elected secretary-general of the Arab League in May 2011, succeeding fellow-Egyptian Amr Moussa. He took office in July.

Born in 1935 and a lawyer by training, Mr El-Arabi had a long career in the Egyptian diplomatic corps, and played a significant role in negotiations with Israel from the Camp David accords onwards.

During the uprising against President Hosni Mubarak in early 2011 Mr El-Arabi was one of a group of senior public figures who mediated the president's departure. He briefly served as foreign minister before taking up his post at the

Arab League. All secretaries-general of the League have been Egyptians, except for the period 1979-1991 when Egypt was expelled over its peace treaty with Israel.

### Division between members a big issue

The Arab League's effectiveness has been severely hampered by divisions among member states. For example, during the Cold War some members were Soviet-oriented while others fell within the Western camp. There has been rivalry over leadership, notably between Egypt and Iraq.

Then there have been the hostilities between traditional monarchies - such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco - and new republics, or "revolutionary" states such as Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser, Baathist Syria and Iraq, and Libya under Muammar Gaddafi.

The league was severely tested by the US-led attack on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, with some backing the war, some opposing it and others standing on the side-lines. Because decisions made by the Arab League are binding only on members who voted for them, these divisions have in effect crippled the league in the sphere of "high politics".

### 'Arab spring' brings new purpose

Thus it failed to coordinate foreign, defence or economic policies, rendering core league documents such as the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation and key bodies such as the Joint Defence Council completely ineffectual. More recently the League has shown a greater sense of purpose since the "Arab spring" uprisings in early 2011. It backed UN action against Muammar Gaddafi's forces in Libya.

It also suspended Syria over its repressions of nationwide protests, but its monitoring mission to Damascus fell apart over divisions between member-states who support a UN resolution against the Assad government and those that shy away from "internationalising" an Arab matter.

Where members do agree on a common position, such as support for the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, this rarely if ever goes beyond the issuing of declarations. Perhaps the sole exception has been the economic boycott of Israel, which between 1948 and 1993 was almost total.

However, the Arab League has been a little more effective at lower levels, such as shaping school curricula, preserving manuscripts and translating modern technical terminology. It has helped to create a regional telecommunications union.

## North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato)



### Formation

NATO was formed on 4 April 1949. The original signatories were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and the United States. Greece and Turkey were admitted to the alliance in 1952, West Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. In 1990 the newly unified Germany replaced West Germany as a NATO member and in since then a number of eastern European states like Poland and the Czech Republic have joined. Former Soviet states such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have joined too, but other former Soviet states have found entry much more difficult, especially in recent years. NATO was designed as a defensive political and military alliance to provide common security for its members.

### Background

During the Second World War, Britain, America and the Soviet Union fought together against Nazi Germany but as the war went on the relationship between the Allies grew increasingly frosty. By the end of the war the Soviet Union went its own way and used its power to bully and ultimately dominate Eastern Europe, much of which came under

Moscow's control with the establishment of 'satellite states of the Soviet Union'. In the years after the Second World War (1939–1945), many Western leaders saw the policies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as threatening to stability and peace. These fears prompted the signing of the Dunkirk Treaty in 1947 between Britain and France, pledging common defence against aggression. Subsequent events, including the creation of Cominform, a European Communist organisation, in 1947, led to the Brussels Treaty signed by most Western European countries in 1948. Among the goals of that treaty was the collective defence of its members. The Berlin blockade that began in March 1948 led to negotiations between Western Europe, Canada and the United States that resulted in the North Atlantic Treaty.

The key elements of the treaty are:

- to promote the common values of its members
- to develop economic and political co-operation
- to use members' armed forces for 'collective self-defence'.

### Why do countries want to join NATO?

- Collective security gives added protection to a country from possible hostile enemies.
- New members, who come from Eastern Europe where they were previously tied politically and militarily to the Soviet Union, have added protection should the political situation change.
- New democracies in Eastern Europe, for example Czech Republic and Poland, are stabilised and membership ensures no return to communism.
- Ideologically the new members are drawn closer to the West.

### The Role of NATO

NATO originally consisted of twelve countries; most of Western Europe, the USA and Canada. The USA, with its massive military machine, including its nuclear capacity, has always been the driving force of NATO.

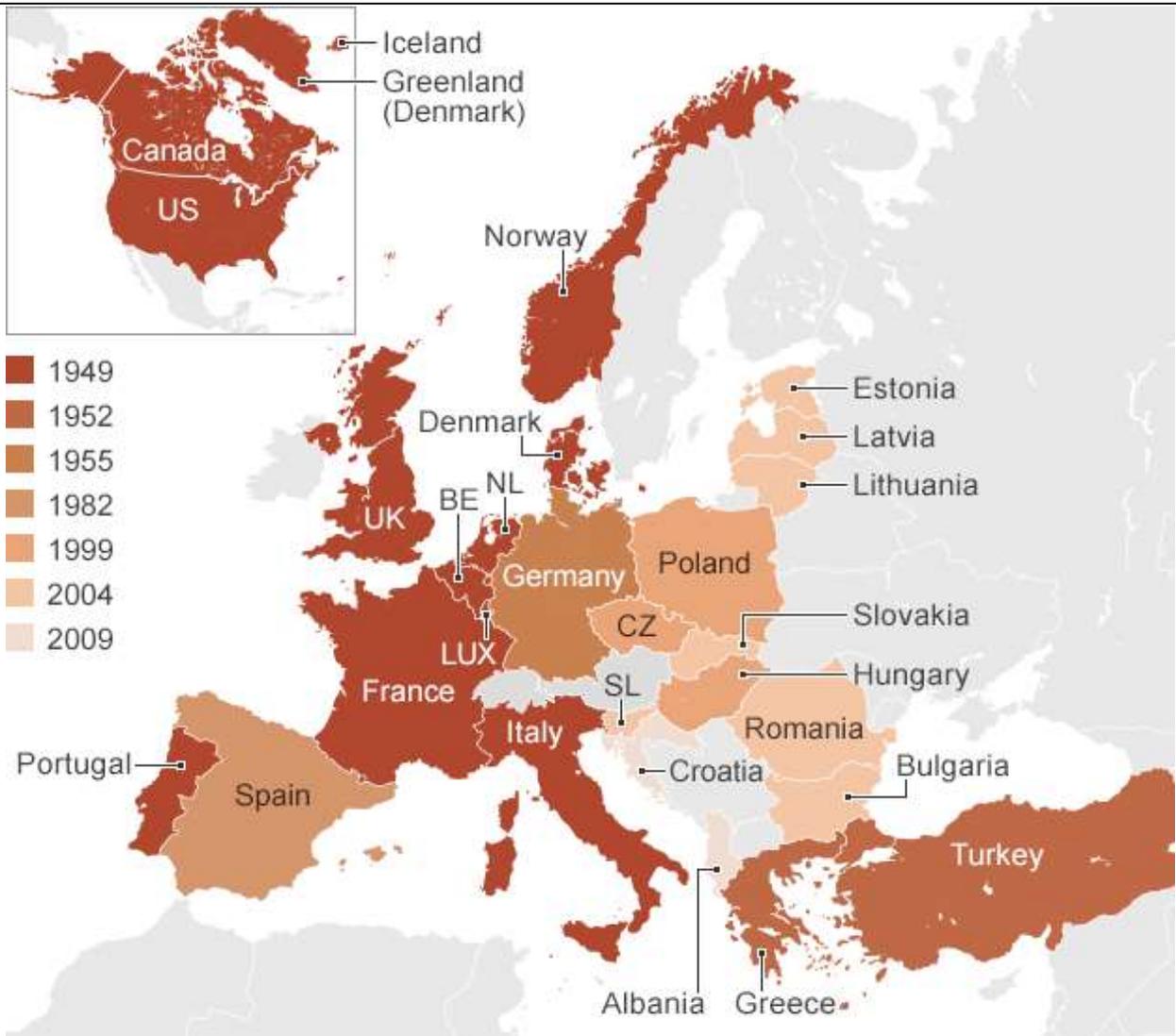
In accordance with the NATO Treaty of 4 April 1949, the fundamental role of NATO is to "Safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means. NATO is playing an increasingly important role in crisis management and peacekeeping". Interestingly, Turkey, which is nowhere near the North Atlantic, is a member of NATO. But its abuses of human rights have de-barred the country from membership of the EU. Yet, it has always been welcome as a member of NATO. One can only assume its strategic position next to the former Soviet Union is more important than its democratic credentials. No-one ever said war had to be fair.

When the Soviet Union eventually collapsed in 1991, NATO's existence came into question. If the organisation was set up to defend the West against communism, what role did it have now there was no communism? For a while, the "communism might come back" argument was used. The "Partnership for Peace" agenda of the mid-90s wooed the former Soviet allies with invitations to take part in joint exercises and information sharing. Any remaining credibility the return of communism argument had was lost when the former Soviet allies of Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999.

Today, NATO, far from disappearing is growing in size. By 2015, there are 28 member states, with an agreement for the 29th, Montenegro, to join established that year. The alliance, originally designed to defend the North Atlantic, is moving East, with an eye on the Middle East, and possibly even South, as it seeks to combat terrorist groups based in North Africa.

In 2002, NATO invited other former Communist conscripts such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania to join as well. Even Albania, the last outpost of Marxism in Europe (apart from Cowdenbeath that is, which still has a Communist local councillor) now wants to join NATO.

These countries are now all firmly on the road to establishing free market, capitalist economies.



Most are now members of the EU too. Lisbon 2010 This important NATO summit moved the organisation further away from its Cold War aims to prioritise: 1 easing relations with Russia 2 countering terrorism 3 tackling the drugs trade (which fuels terrorism) 4 commissioning a new £170 million European missile defence system Aim (4) in particular has made Russia question aim (1): as they see it, the alliance is now firmly in what used to be their “sphere of influence” or “near abroad” and apparently intent on stationing missiles there, regardless of NATO’s explanation that it is to protect Europe from “rogue states” in the Middle East.

## SECTION 2: CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

In your exam, you could be asked to explain what has caused the 'world issue' that you have studied. The world issue you are studying – Conflict in the Middle East: Syria and Iraq – has several key causes, which are outlined in this section.

If you are asked to write about this in the exam, the question might ask, broadly, that you *analyse / evaluate / discuss* the factors you have studied that have caused the conflict. E.g.:

Analyse the different factors which have caused this issue. (SQA 2015)

In this case you would talk about the various causes which you are about to learn about.

Alternatively, the question could identify a cause of a specific nature: political, economic or social (or socio-economic). E.g.:

*"World issues are caused by a mixture of political and/or socio-economic problems."* Evaluate the extent to which a world issue you have studied has been caused by only political problems. (Hodder Gibson model paper 3).

In this case of the question above, which specifically identifies political problems, you **must** directly refer to this in your answer. Once you have discussed the political problems that have caused the issue, you can then go on to compare the political causes with the other factors.

Here are some definitions which you should familiarise yourself with first:

**Political:** Relating to the government or public affairs of a country, including where decisions are made and by whom, and where power lies. Relating to the ideas or strategies of a particular party or group in politics.

**Economic:** A discipline concerned with the production, consumption and transfer of wealth. Relates to employment, income and wealth.

**Social:** Relating to society or its organisation; relating to rank and status in society.

**Socio-economic:** Relating to or concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors.

### 5. Cause 1: Dictatorship and Democratic Uprising

#### Syria

President Bashar al-Assad assumed power in 2000 after the death of his father Hafez who had ruled Syria since 1970. Assad quickly dashed hopes of reform, as power remained concentrated in the ruling family, and the one-party system left few channels for political dissent. With no peaceful transfer of power since the 1950s, change can seemingly happen only through a military coup or a popular uprising.

To make matters worse, a persistent drought has devastated farming communities in north-eastern Syria, affecting more than a million people since 2008. Tens of thousands of impoverished farmer families flocked into rapidly expanding urban slums, their anger at the lack of government help.

Whether it's a license to open a small shop or a car registration, well-placed payments make wonders in Syria. For those without the money and good contacts, it's a powerful grievance against the state.

Syria's vast intelligence services, the infamous mukhabarat, penetrate all spheres of society. The fear of the state is one of the reasons why so many Syrians simply take the regime as a fact of life. But the outrage over the brutal

response of the security forces to the outbreak of peaceful protest in Spring 2011, documented on social media, helped generate the snowball effect as thousands across Syria joined the uprising. More funerals, more protest.

Last but not least, the wall of fear in Syria would not have been broken at this particular time had it not been for Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street-vendor whose self-immolation in December 2010 triggered a wave of anti-government uprisings across the Middle East, termed the 'Arab Spring' by political commentators. Street protests against oppressive dictatorships spread across North Africa and the Middle East in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Syria. Watching the fall of Tunisian and Egyptian regimes in early 2011, broadcast live on the satellite channel Al Jazeera, made millions in Syria aware that change was possible - for the first time in decades. Many had hoped that this Arab Spring would bring in new governments that would deliver political reform and justice. But the reality is more war and violence.

The pro-democracy protests in Syria began in the southern city of Deraa after the arrest and torture of some teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall. After security forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing several, more took to the streets. The unrest triggered nationwide protests demanding President Assad's resignation. The government's use of force to crush the dissent merely hardened the protesters' resolve. By July 2011, hundreds of thousands were taking to the streets across the country.

Opposition supporters eventually began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas.

Violence escalated and the country descended into civil war as rebel brigades were formed to battle government forces for control of cities, towns and the countryside. Fighting reached the capital Damascus and second city of Aleppo in 2012.

Therefore, the brutal dictatorship in Syria and lack of democracy are a central cause of the current conflict. The government's uncompromising response to dealing with the pro-democracy protests by using overwhelming armed force generated further resentment and anger among communities who opposed the regime. Both pro-government fighters and anti-government fighters are battling for their very survival, which helps to explain why the conflict has lasted more than nine years, with neither side willing to back down.

## **Iraq**

Since the overthrow of Iraq's former dictator, Saddam Hussein, in 2003, Iraq had been on a gradual journey of democratisation (a process of adopting democratic institutions and principles). However, this transition has been imperfect, and the post-2003 Iraqi governments have been plagued with corruption and infighting. This has resulted in ineffective decision-making: forces loyal to the government have struggled to exercise control over large parts of the country and citizens in communities across the country have been marginalised (not looked after fully, been treated as insignificant).

Anti-government protests in Iraq since 2011, and the harsh crackdown that followed, gave various armed groups a new reason for political action. Weekly protests in predominately Sunni-populated cities, like Ramadi and Fallujah, created a new momentum demanding political rights for Sunnis. The government's inability to effectively manage large swathes of Iraq has enabled numerous armed groups to seize territory and gain in strength, including, for a time, Sunni militia like ISIS. Thus, while the government in Iraq has not been the *cause*, per se, of the conflict in that country, the government failings have allowed conflict to escalate.

Other factors (as you will learn), such as sectarianism, extremism and the involvement of foreign powers can help to more fully explain the conflict in Iraq.

## 6. Cause 2: Sectarianism and Extremism

### The difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims

Clashes between Islam's two big sects, the Sunni and the Shia, take place across the Muslim world. In the Middle East a potent mix of religion and politics has [sharpened the divide](#) between Iran's Shia government and the Gulf states, which have Sunni governments. Last year a [report by the Pew Research Centre](#), a think tank, found 40% of Sunnis do not consider Shia to be proper Muslims. So what exactly divides Sunni and Shia Islam and how deep does the rift go? The argument dates back to the death in 632 of Islam's founder, the Prophet Muhammad. Tribal Arabs who followed him were split over who should inherit what was both a political and a religious office. The majority, who would go on to become known as the Sunnis, and today make up 80% of Muslims, backed Abu Bakr, a friend of the Prophet and father of his wife Aisha. Others thought Muhammad's kin (family members) the rightful successors. They claimed the Prophet had anointed Ali, his cousin and son-in-law—they became known as the Shia, a contraction of "shiaat Ali", the followers of Ali. Abu Bakr's backers won out, though Ali did briefly rule as the fourth caliph, the title given to Muhammad's successors. Islam's split was cemented when Ali's son Hussein was killed in 680 in Karbala (modern Iraq) by the ruling Sunni caliph's troops. Sunni rulers continued to monopolise political power, while the Shia lived in the shadow of the state, looking instead to their imams, the first twelve of whom were descended directly from Ali, for guidance. As time went on the religious beliefs of the two groups started to diverge.

Today the world's 1.6 billion Muslims all agree that Allah is the only God and Muhammad his messenger. They follow five ritualistic pillars of Islam, including Ramadan, the month of fasting, and share a holy book, the Koran. But while Sunnis rely heavily on the practice of the Prophet and his teachings (the "sunna"), the Shia see their ayatollahs as reflections of God on earth. This has led Sunnis to accuse Shia of heresy (having beliefs which contradict the teachings of the religion), while Shia point out that Sunni dogmatism and uncompromising approach has led to extremist sects such as the puritanical Wahhabis. Most Shia sects place importance on the belief that the twelfth and final imam is hidden (called "in occultation") and will reappear one day to fulfil divine will.

The lines that divide Muslims in the Middle East today are being drawn by politics as much as by religion. The "Shia Crescent" that runs from Iran, through Mr Assad's regime in Damascus to Hizbullah in Lebanon was once praised by Sunni figures. But the revolutions in the region have pitted Shia governments against Sunni Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who have supported their co-religionists with cash. This is [strengthening Sunni assertiveness](#) and making the Shia feel [more threatened](#) than usual. In most cases, though, members of the two sects still live harmoniously together.

#### The differences between Sunni and Shia Islam

Despite the bitterness of their internal quarrels, all Muslims worship Allah as the one true God, they see the Koran as the revealed word of God and they regard Muhammad as God's ultimate messenger. But precisely because Muhammad is such a revered figure, every aspect of his legacy, including his legitimate line of succession, is a matter of vast importance. That is where Sunnis and Shias differ.

The Economist

#### SUNNI

About 85% of the world's Muslims are Sunnis, guided by the *Sunnah* or body of tradition concerning the life, teaching and practices of Muhammad. They consider themselves the orthodox branch of Islam, and some hard-line Sunnis regard people outside their ranks as non-believers. Sunnis believe that Abu Bakr, the father-in-law of Muhammad, was rightly chosen as caliph (political and religious leader of the Muslims) after the prophet's death in 632.

#### SHIA

Shia Muslims believe that Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, should have been acknowledged as successor immediately after the prophet's passing. Ali did rule for five years before his assassination in 661, but the Shia sense of grievance deepened after Ali's son Hussein was killed in 680 during a battle in present-day Iraq. Most Shias regard Ali as the first of a dynasty of 12 legitimate leaders of the Muslims, after which the leadership vanished from the earth, although it is expected to return one day.

### Syria

Syria is a Sunni-majority country, although the ruling class are the Alawites, who follow the Shia branch of Islam, while a majority of the population (around 73% identify as Sunni Muslim). The uprising in Syria did not arise from these religious differences: as we have already seen, the revolution grew out of widespread anger and dissatisfaction with the authoritarian nature of the country's rulers. Nevertheless, when the power of dictatorships is challenged or when dictators are challenged—for example in Iraq, Syria and Libya—this often cause create power vacuums which extremist groups can easily move into. This is because decades of one-party rule, whereby dissent and opposition are swiftly

stamped out, have prevented the formation of alternative sources of power and influence to step in if the regime collapses.



The sectarian (division and discrimination according to different religious sects / groups) nature of Syrian society has, with the advent of armed conflict, become an incubator of religious extremism. It should be re-emphasised, however, the protesters and groups who took up arms against President Assad. Rather, it was only as the conflict accelerated that the divisions between Sunni-Shia became more entrenched, with a rise in Jihadist / Islamist extremism, which its fighters claim have its roots in Sunni Islam. The armed rebellion has now evolved significantly since its inception, and secular moderates are now outnumbered by Islamists and Jihadists, whose brutal tactics have caused global outrage.

However, the main Islamist / Jihadist group fighting in Syria, ISIS, has not aligned itself with the other groups who are fighting against the government. Rather, ISIS, has set itself apart from the other groups operating in the region, in terms of its objectives and its brutal methods



## Assad and ISIS

There is also evidence to suggest that, despite Jihadists appearing to directly oppose the Syrian regime, the Syrian regime has enabled the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS and the al-Nusra Front, including cooperation on trade and infrastructure, particularly in the early days of the conflict.

The Assad regime has a history of supporting extremist forces, in Iraq and Lebanon, who have subsequently come back to fight in Syria. But it gets worse. For when Syrians rose up against Assad, the government's strategy seems to have been to crush the moderate protesters and allow extremist groups. But why would Assad allow ISIS to put down roots? He needed a threat to show the West why his regime's survival mattered; he needed to demonstrate that there was a worse Syrian face than his own—that of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS's leader.



**ALJAZEERA**

## Assad's fatal strategic mistakes

*Bashar al-Assad's support for armed groups might lead to his regime's demise. 29 March 2014*

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/03/al-assad-fatal-strategic-mistak-201432910353132476.html>

The Syrian State Army's victory in the battle of Yabroud in early March is widely seen as evidence of the regime's increasing military dominance in the Syrian conflict. But this win is undermined by two strategic mistakes by President Bashar al-Assad, which are likely to eventually lead to his demise. Those mistakes revolve around the growing influence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the National Defence Force (NDF).

In attempting to quell the opposition in 2011, Assad opened prison doors, letting out jihadists who later became the founders of ISIS, a radical group that has been terrorising the Syrian population, and in doing so, confirming the regime's narrative that it is engaged in a fight against Islamist extremism. Reports from Syria show that the regime **has been cooperating** with ISIS both directly and indirectly, allowing ISIS access into certain towns, refraining from bombing areas under ISIS control, and even buying petrol from oil wells run by ISIS in the north.

But this strategic alliance with ISIS will backfire once ISIS becomes self-reliant. Like other mercenary groups, ISIS has been profiteering from the war economy. In Iraq, the group has reportedly become largely self-financing due to its control of oil wells. If ISIS in Syria heads in the same direction - a highly likely scenario - then it will become very difficult for the regime to control it.

Assad later sponsored the creation of NDF, a name given to groups of "shabeeha" (pro-regime thugs) and mercenaries operating in a decentralised manner across Syria, which have been armed by the regime as a measure of "self-protection" against jihadists. As with ISIS, the NDF has also profited from the war, leading to the rise of several warlords whose economic stature has made it difficult for the regime to rein them in.

Even though the NDF is largely **composed** of Alawis, Christians, and Druze, its mercenaries have been indiscriminate in their raids on Syrian neighbourhoods, sometimes attacking regime loyalists. This has led to growing dismay among the Alawi and other minority populations, who have started staging protests in rural Latakia against the NDF, calling on the regime for protection.

In looking at the above two trends, it appears that Assad first contributed to the creation of a problem - jihadism - then sought to create a solution for it - the NDF. But both the problem and its "solution" are slipping out of Assad's control. Because he needs the NDF to fight jihadist groups not linked with the regime, like al-Nusra Front, he will be forced to continue arming the NDF.

As the NDF becomes less reliant on regime funding, Assad will need to sustain NDF support to maintain its loyalty. The more the NDF is empowered, the less able the regime will be to meet the protection demands of minority groups threatened by the NDF. As for ISIS, Islamist extremist groups rarely stay loyal to their original sponsors once they feel empowered enough to begin to set their own agendas.

Empowering those two groups may have helped Assad in the short term, but the long-term implications will not be in his favour. The power structure in Syria is changing from a top-down dictatorship into a decentralised, almost-failed state, one where different regions and even neighbourhoods are under the mercy of semi-independent groups.

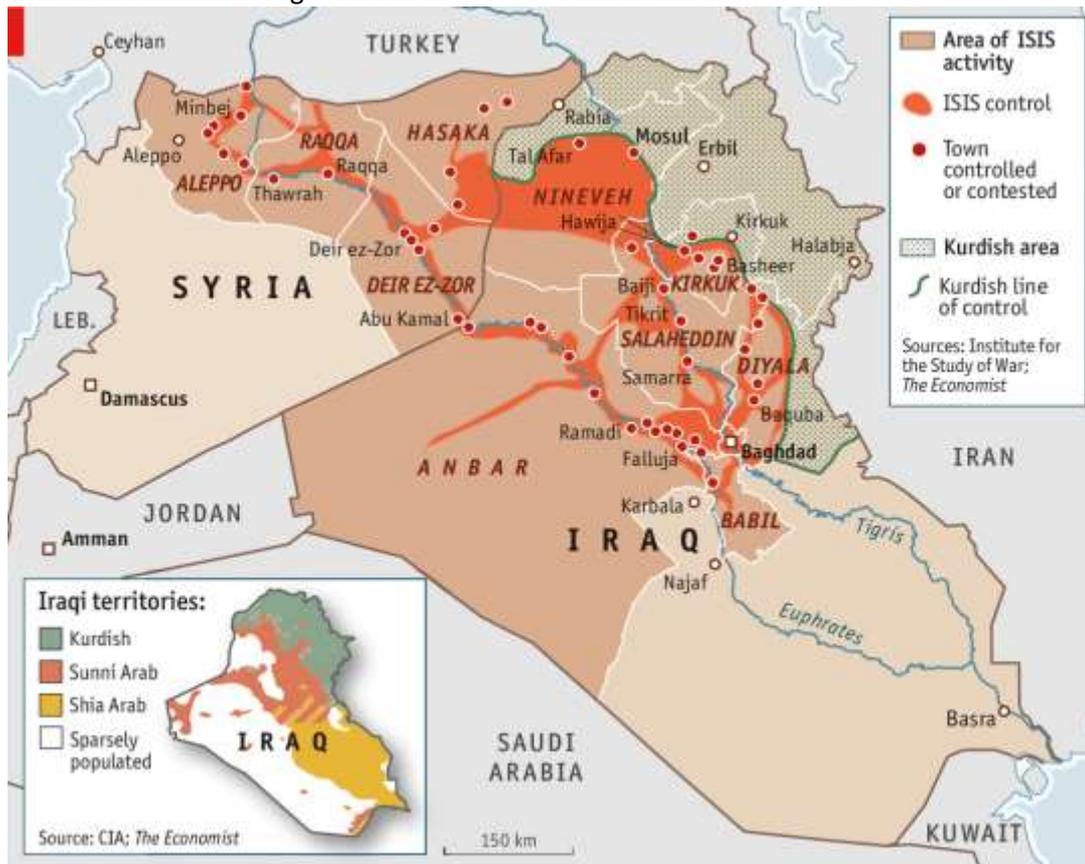
Those groups' independence and influence grow as the conflict continues. Although Assad remains influential today, his strategic mistakes will eventually lead him to become captive to the volatile groups he has helped create, and whose loyalty he will need to buy in order to stay in power. But by then, staying in power will cease to mean having significant political or military influence.

Assad's own undoing may, therefore, not be at the hands of the opposition, but the result of his own shortsighted strategic decisions.

## Iraq

Sunni-majority parts of Iraq have experienced rising tension in the years leading up to 2014. When this finally erupted in June 2014, violence spread with the unforeseen force. Within 48 hours of seizing Mosul, Iraq's second-biggest city, Sunni rebels had barrelled down a 200-mile stretch of the Tigris river valley, scattering troops loyal to Iraq's Shia-dominated central government and threatening Baghdad, the capital.

The surge was spearheaded by a fearsomely brutal, al-Qaeda-inspired group, the ISIS, but it was bolstered by a range of other armed Sunnis and was backed by many ordinary citizens. It has wrested the Sunni quadrant in the north and west of Iraq from government control. And it has driven a Sunni wedge between the Shia-majority south of the country and the autonomous region of Kurdistan in the north and east.



The slide into the sectarian violence currently engulfing Iraq has been linked to several historical events and underlying issues. While some blame say the Americans, whose invasion in 2003 wrecked what was left of Iraq's administrative and social fabric after the sadistic rule of Saddam Hussein, fingers often also point at Saudi Arabia and Iran, whose rivalry has helped stoke sectarian mayhem in Syria as well as Iraq, and poisons Sunni-Shia relations more widely.

Yet Iraqis themselves bear much blame. The historically dominant but minority Sunnis have never acknowledged their reduced status or indeed their numerical inferiority since the end of Saddam Hussein's government (who was himself a Sunni). They turned their noses up at Iraq's new democracy and squabbled endlessly, failing to unite behind credible leaders, so encouraging the now Shia-dominated establishment in Baghdad to rule over them with bribes, threats and thuggery.

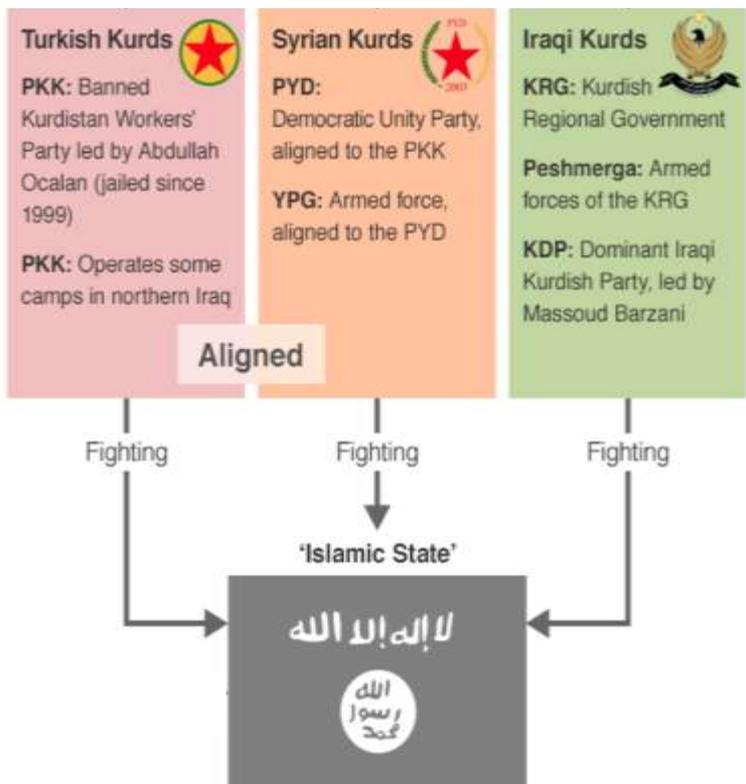
Iraq's Shias, for their part, have largely flocked behind rabble-rousing, corrupt politicians. Those men, including the prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, during his eight years in office, have done little to build sound or just institutions. Instead they have played political games, packing offices with cronies and siphoning cash from the oil wells that Iraq sits on top of. This system of spoils has signally failed to lessen the misery of most Iraqis.

In response to the admittedly egregious and constant provocation of attacks by Sunni terrorists, Shia leaders have countenanced or sponsored vicious militias bent on vengeance, some armed and financed Iraq's Shia neighbour, Iran.

Therefore, the deep sectarian divisions have produced great dissatisfaction and anger amongst the Sunni population. While it is only a small minority of the Sunni population who are sympathetic to extremist jihadist groups such as ISIS, the unrest and inability of the Shia government and Sunni communities to coincide peacefully in many areas that has created a power vacuum which ISIS has moved into and which has allowed it to flourish.

### Kurds

The Kurds, a separate ethnic group who are spread across multiple countries in the region, have also entered the conflict, primarily to defend their territory against jihadist aggression in Iraq. The Kurds are not a homogeneous group, and Syrian Kurds, known as the PYD, have a different set of objectives from the Iraqi Kurds, known as the KRG. However, both the Kurdish governments in both parts of their respective countries are concerned with, at the very least, maintaining control of and security within the areas they currently control.



## 7. Cause 3: Involvement of Foreign Powers

What began as another Arab Spring uprising against an autocratic ruler has mushroomed into a brutal proxy war that has drawn in regional and world powers. A proxy war is a conflict where there are countries on each side who do not directly fight each other.

Iran and Russia have propped up the Alawite-led government of President Assad and gradually increased their support. The Iranian government is believed to be spending billions of dollars a year to bolster Mr Assad, providing military advisers and subsidised weapons, as well as lines of credit and oil transfers. Russia has meanwhile launched an air campaign against Mr Assad's opponents.

The Syrian government has also enjoyed the support of a group called Hezbollah which originates in Lebanon. Hezbollah is a Shia Islamist militant group, whose fighters have provided important battlefield support since 2013.

The Sunni-dominated opposition has, meanwhile, attracted varying degrees of support from its international backers - Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, along with the US, UK and France.

Until late 2015, rebel appeals for anti-aircraft weapons to stop devastating government air strikes were rejected by the US and its allies, amid concern that they might end up in the hands of jihadist militants. A US programme to train and arm 5,000 rebels to take the fight to IS on the ground also suffered a series of setbacks before being abandoned.



### Military support – Syrian government

- Russia: has supplied Syrian military with weapons and equipment throughout the conflict. It has a contract with the Syrian government for supplying sophisticated S-300 surface-to-air missile defence systems. Since September 2015, Russia has become directly involved in the conflict, with Russian airplanes carrying out air strikes on opponents of President Bashar al-Assad.
- Iran: Iran stepped up its military support of Syrian government forces since the end of 2012. The Iranian government is a key supplier of rockets, anti-tank missiles, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. The American assassination of Qassem Suleimani on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, has to some extent revealed the reach of Iranian influence in Syria. Where the region goes after this assassination, is difficult to say, but Iranian influence in Syria will likely deepen.

### **Military support – Syrian rebels**

- Qatar: Qatar has been widely believed to have been the main supplier of weapons to the rebels. Most of the weapons are thought to have been given to hardline Islamist rebel groups, some of them extremist groups with links to ISIS.
- Saudi Arabia: is reported to have taken the lead in channelling financial and military support to the rebels.
- Turkey is a firm supporter of the rebels, but not of Kurdish rebels, and has not officially approved the sending of military aid. A Turkish incursion into Kurdish Syria effectively ended Kurdish autonomy in the region.
- US: Supported rebels who believed in a future democratic Syria, but the support was patchy, sporadic and unsustainable.

### **Proxy Conflict: Gulf States vs. Iran**

The fighting in Syria (and also in Iraq) can be seen in the context of a wider regional dispute along sectarian lines (as you have already learned about) between Sunni gulf states aligned with Saudi Arabia against Shia /Shiite states aligned with Iran.

Throughout the wider Middle East, numerous countries are being wracked by unrest and civil conflict. And, in a majority of the conflicts, the ongoing crises can be seen as an expansion of a proxy war between two of the region's main powers.

On the one hand, Shiite Iran has been expanding its influence in Iraq and Yemen while also trying to keep its influence in Syria intact through the support of the Syrian government. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has responded in kind by backing Sunni forces throughout the region.

On January 2016, Saudi Arabia executed 47 alleged terrorists, including a prominent Shiite cleric. The execution immediately drew outrage from the Shiite world and culminated in an Iranian mob torching the Saudi Arabian embassy in Tehran and clashes between the Shiite majority in Bahrain and the police in the Sunni-run country.

In response to these events, Saudi Arabia has severed diplomatic ties with Iran. So far, Sudan, Bahrain, and Somalia have also cut diplomatic ties (with Iran in an expansion of tensions throughout the region).

This underlines the point that you learned about in the previous section that, although the conflicts in Iraq and Syria are now being fought along sectarian lines, between Sunni, Shia and Kurdish groups, among others, these divisions have been **exploited** and **exacerbated (worsened)** chiefly for political purposes (to gain power and influence) by the main regional actors, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and their allies.

### **Proxy Conflict: Russia vs. The West**

Russia has its own unique role as an ally of the Assad regime. Since the 1950s, Russia has managed to maintain a strong relationship with the Assad's Ba'ath party in the region. In recent decades, ties with the regime of Bashar al-Assad have strengthened, as Russia became Syria's main source of arms and ammunition.

Russia has also provided significant support for Assad during the current war. It has used its right to veto in the UN Security Council, along with China, on four consecutive occasions to protect the Assad government from international

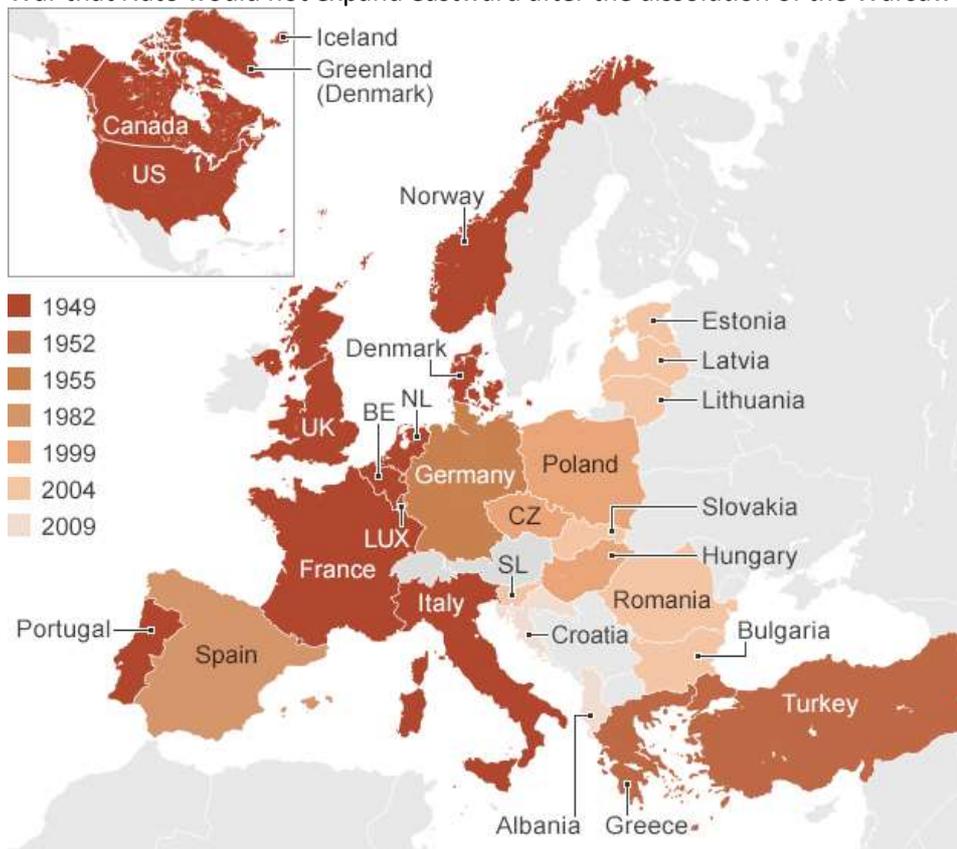
intervention (more on this later!). The flow of arms and ammunition from Russia to Syria has remained entirely uninterrupted, despite significant international pressure on Moscow to disengage.

Tense relations between the US and Russia have played out in the arena of the Syrian war, and the US has been clear that it is determined to prevent Russia from determining the fate of such an important region. The animosity between the US and Russia can be traced back to the so-called 'Cold War', which was a great power rivalry between the ideologically opposed groupings: The Soviet Union / USSR (of which Russia was the largest part) and its Eastern allies including Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, were dictatorships and communist; versus the USA and its Western allies including the UK, France and West Germany were democratic and capitalist. Both countries developed alliances with other nations around the world in order to enhance their spheres of domination. The US and USSR did not engage in direct conflict (which would have resulted in a World War 3!), instead the Cold War featured: an arms race – with both sides accumulating thousands of nuclear warheads; space race; economic competition; war of words with propaganda and culture; 'proxy conflicts', e.g. in Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan. It was during this period that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) was formed. The idea behind Nato was that it would protect all its member states against Soviet aggression, as an attack on one Nato member would be seen as an attack on all.

Although hostilities ebbed following the end of the Cold War between Russia and the West, in recent years Russia has grown in strength and has expressed irritation at the way the West has behaved since the 1990s. Nato has expanded Eastward, which many in Russia see as a direct threat.

Moscow has made it quite clear that it views NATO expansion into Eastern Europe as part of a campaign to isolate and encircle Russia.

Many Russians view that expansion as a blatant violation of promises made by Western leaders at the end of the Cold War that Nato would not expand eastward after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.



In March 2014, for instance, Vladimir Putin asserted pointedly that “they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs...This has happened with NATO expansion to the East.” Russia has begun challenging the influence of the West in countries which have traditionally fallen within Russia / the USSR’s sphere of influence, including Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014-present) and now Syria.

On top of this, several other explanations have been provided by foreign affairs experts to explain Russia's support for the Syrian regime:

- Russia has a naval base in western Syria, Tartus, on the Mediterranean Sea – some believe Russia will do all it can to hold on to this
- Tartus can dock nuclear submarines, it is the receiving point for weapons shipments to Syria and is linked to a well-developed network of roads and railways
- Under 1971 deal with Syria, Russia has leased the Tartus facility as part of billion-dollar deal
- Thousands of Russians live and work in Syria
- Russian influence there is symbolic of the power of the Soviet Union in the region.

### Summary

Therefore, the extensive interference of outside forces in Syria and Iraq, in terms of Sunni regional powers versus Shia powers, and Western forces versus Russian forces has had a devastating effect in Syria and Iraq. While these forces did not initiate the conflict in 2011, they have undoubtedly caused the conflict to perpetuate (keep it going) and intensify.

Weaponry has been provided by countries supporting the various sides of the conflict, and other assistance, including financial, military training and non-lethal equipment has prolonged the conflict.

The fact that the opposing foreign powers engaged in proxy conflict have been unable or unwilling to make compromises to find a peaceful solution can also be blamed for the continuing conflict in both countries (more on this later!).

## 8. Cause 4: History of Foreign Interference

The conflicts in Iraq and Syria have also been linked to the US-led invasion of Iraq which took place in 2003. The way this war was conducted and the failure of its architects to effectively plan for the aftermath of the invasion has been specifically blamed for the rise of the group now known as Islamic state (IS) or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The United States and several of its allies decided to invade Iraq in 2003 based on several arguments:

- The then leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, was seen to be a threat to neighbouring countries, having attacked four of his neighbours in the years. He was believed to be more of a threat than other dictators in the region, including Syria's Assad.
- Weapons of Mass Destruction. This was the reason most often given by the governments in the US and the UK for why action must be taken in Iraq. The argument that Saddam Hussein still possessed WMDs and that these posed a threat to the West was seen as being the most compelling argument for generating public support for the action. British Prime Minister Tony Blair's and US President George Bush's governments claimed that all the evidence, or 'intelligence', that they had analysed proved that Iraq did possess these weapons.

Following the invasion, several investigations have proven that the intelligence used was flawed and that Iraq no longer possessed WMDs.

The current state of affairs in Iraq and Syria is not blamed on the 2003 invasion *as such*; rather, experts have argued that the rise in extremism, and the prominence of groups such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and, latterly, ISIS is a result of insufficient planning for the aftermath of the invasion.

ISIS was born out of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. When U.S. administrators decided to remove members Saddam Hussein's political party from all levels of government - of the Iraqi civil and military services, hundreds of thousands of Sunnis formerly loyal to Saddam Hussein were left without a job — and they were mad. Al Qaeda chose to capitalize on their anger and established al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to wage an insurgency against U.S. troops in Iraq (Saddam was secular, but his intelligence and military supporters were able to make common cause with the jihadis of al Qaeda).

During this time they were quite active in waging a sectarian war against Iran-backed Shiite militias in central Iraq and bombing hotels in neighbouring Jordan. Many of their members were imprisoned in U.S.-run "Camp Bucca," where they were able to meet up and radicalize.

Fast forward to the Arab Spring and the uprising against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. During the Iraq War, AQI would frequently go back and forth between Syria and Iraq to resupply, so it had a lot of contacts in the country. When Assad began shooting and gassing his own people, and the peaceful uprising turned into a civil war, AQI saw an opportunity to establish a presence there.

It quickly moved into Syria, renamed itself as The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and merged with its Syrian counterpart. This angered al Qaeda's HQ, because they were already establishing a separate al Qaeda in Syria (aka al-Nusra front) and wanted it to remain separate. The two groups fought another mini-war amongst themselves and officially separated with AQI rebranding itself into the ISIS we hear about today.

As the Syrian civil war ground on, ISIS became the first rebel group to capture major cities (Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor). In the summer of 2014, the group had its breakout moment. In a lightning offensive, it captured Mosul in Iraq and drove south until it was on the borders of Baghdad. A few weeks later it rebranded itself as a Caliphate and demanded that all Muslims pledge allegiance).

Thus, the entry of ISIS into the conflict in Syria, which has in fact worsened the conflict and made any resolution to the conflict more difficult to find, can be traced back to the policy mistakes of Western powers more than a decade ago. While this does not explain the uprising which took place in Syria in 2011, it does help to explain, at least in part, the near-constant state of unrest and current civil war that Iraq now finds itself in. Groups such as ISIS have taken advantage of the chaos which resulted from the failure to plan effectively for the aftermath of the removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The removal, for now, of ISIS as an operational threat to both Al-Assad in Syria and the Iraqi Government has ended one chapter, but we have turned the page to another, less predictable part of this conflict. The tectonic plates of power politics in the Middle East are shifting, from Turkey in the north of the region to Yemen in the south. Saudi and Iranian rivalry seems likely to intensify short of actual conflict between the two, which means the rivalry will be played out in other countries. Syria being the obvious example.

## SECTION 3: EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT ON INDIVIDUALS

### 9. Effect 1: Humanitarian catastrophe and huge loss of life

#### **The Guardian, Report on Syria conflict finds 11.5% of population killed or injured, February 2016**

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/11/report-on-syria-conflict-finds-115-of-population-killed-or-injured>

Syria's national wealth, infrastructure and institutions have been "almost obliterated" by the "catastrophic impact" of nearly five years of conflict, a new report has found. Fatalities caused by war, directly and indirectly, amount to 470,000, according to the [Syrian Centre for Policy Research](#) (SCPR) – a far higher total than the figure of 250,000 used by the United Nations until it stopped collecting statistics 18 months ago. In all, 11.5% of the country's population have been killed or injured since the crisis erupted in March 2011, the report estimates. The number of wounded is put at 1.9 million. Life expectancy has dropped from 70 in 2010 to 55.4 in 2015. Overall economic losses are estimated at \$255bn (£175bn).

The stark account of the war's toll came as warnings multiplied about Aleppo, Syria's largest city, which is in danger of being cut off by a government advance aided by Russian airstrikes and Iranian militiamen. The Syrian opposition is demanding urgent action to relieve the suffering of tens of thousands of civilians. The International Red Cross said on Wednesday that 50,000 people had fled the upsurge in fighting in the north, requiring urgent deliveries of food and water.

Of the 470,000 war dead counted by the SCPR, about 400,000 were directly due to violence, while the remaining 70,000 fell victim to lack of adequate health services, medicine, especially for chronic diseases, lack of food, clean water, sanitation and proper housing, especially for those displaced within conflict zones

"We use very rigorous research methods and we are sure of this figure," Rabie Nasser, the report's author, told the Guardian. "Indirect deaths will be greater in the future, though most NGOs [non-governmental organisations] and the UN ignore them.

"We think that the UN documentation and informal estimation underestimated the casualties due to lack of access to information during the crisis," he said.

In statistical terms, Syria's mortality rate increase from 4.4 per thousand in 2010 to 10.9 per thousand in 2015.

The UN high commissioner for human rights – which manages conflict death tolls – stopped counting Syria's dead in mid-2014, citing lack of access and diminishing confidence in data sources.

The SCPR was based until recently in Damascus and research for this and previous reports was carried out on the ground across Syria. It is careful not to criticise the Syrian government or its allies – Iran, Hezbollah, Russia. And with the exception of Islamic State, it refers only to "armed groups" seeking to overthrow President [Bashar al-Assad](#). But despite the neutral tone the findings are shocking.

In an atmosphere of "coercion, fear and fanaticism", blackmail, theft and smuggling have supported the continuation of armed conflict so that the Syrian economy has become "a black hole" absorbing "domestic and external resources". Oil production continues to be an "important financial resource" for Isis and other armed groups, it says.

Consumer prices rose 53% last year. But suffering is unevenly spread. "Prices in conflict zones and besieged areas are much higher than elsewhere in the country and this boosts profit margins for war traders who monopolise the markets of these regions," it says. Employment conditions and pay have deteriorated and women work less because of security concerns. About 13.8 million Syrians have lost their source of livelihood.

"The common characteristics across all regions are lack of security, the allocation of all resources to the fighting, the creation of violence-related job opportunities and imposition of authority by force."

The shrinking of the population by 21% helps explain the waves of refugees reaching Turkey and Europe. In all, 45% of the population have been displaced, 6.36 million internally and more than 4 million abroad. Health, education and income standards have all deteriorated sharply. Poverty increased by 85% in 2015 alone.

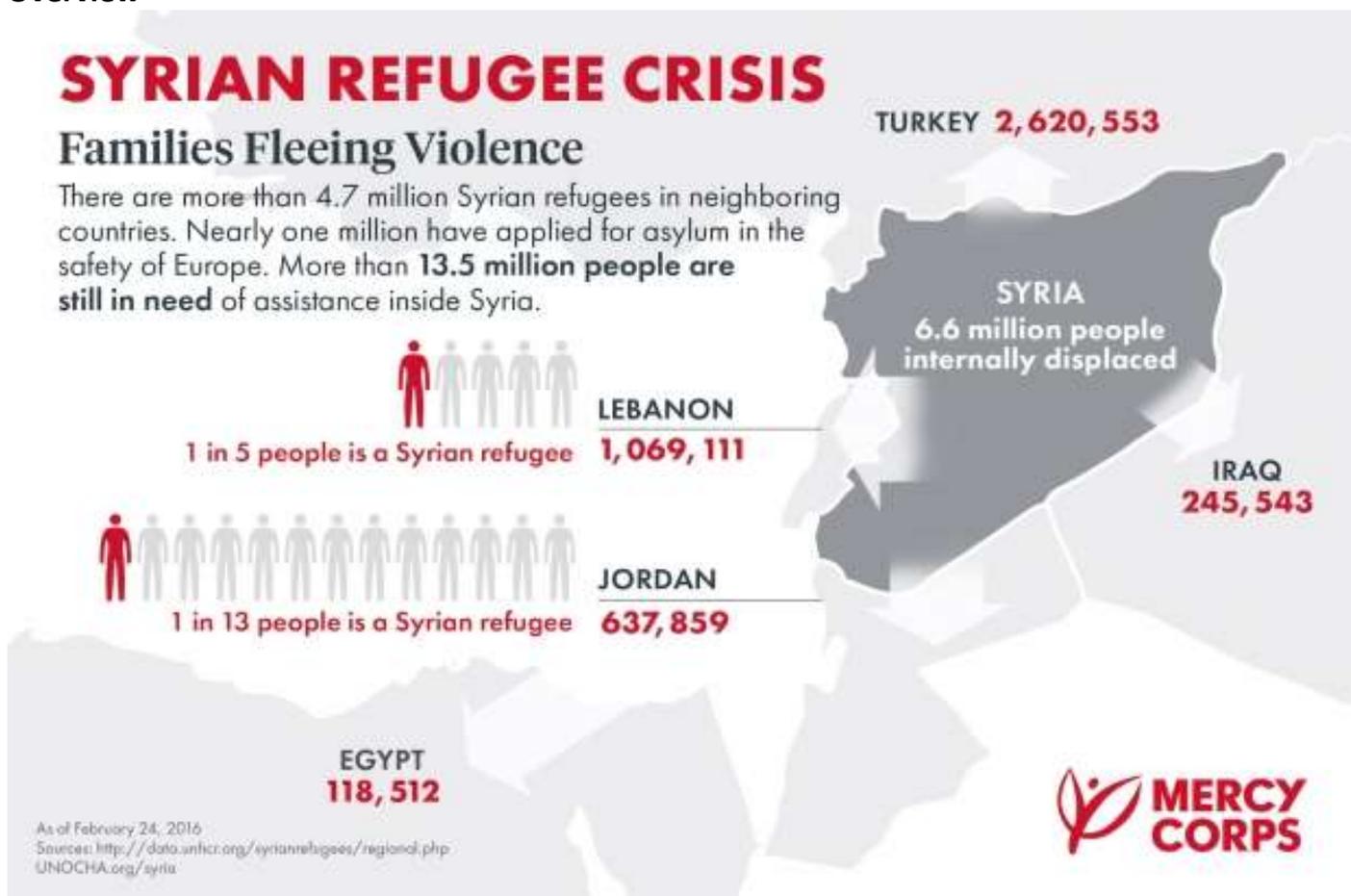
The report notes that the rest of the world has been slow to wake up to the dimensions of the crisis. “Despite the fact that Syrians have been suffering for ... five years, global attention to human rights and dignity for them only intensified when the crisis had a direct impact on the societies of developed countries.”

The conflict “continues to destroy the social and economic fabric of the country with the intensification of international interventions that deepen polarisation among Syrians. Human development, rights and dignity have been comprehensively ruined.”

The report is entitled *Confronting Fragmentation*. Previous titles in the series track the unfolding of the world’s biggest humanitarian disaster: *Syrian Catastrophe*, *War on Development*, *Squandering Humanity*, and *Alienation and Violence*.

## 10.Effect 2: Mass Displacement of Individuals

### Overview



Syria’s civil war is the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. Half the country’s pre-war population — more than 11 million people — have been killed or forced to flee their homes.

Families are struggling to survive inside Syria, or make a new home in neighbouring countries. Others are risking their lives on the way to Europe, hoping to find acceptance and opportunity. And harsh winters and hot summers make life as a refugee even more difficult. At times, the effects of the conflict can seem overwhelming.

### What is happening to Syrians caught in the war?

More than five years after it began, the full-blown civil war has killed over 250,000 people, half of whom are believed to be civilians. Bombings are destroying crowded cities and horrific human rights violations are widespread. Basic necessities like food and medical care are sparse.

The U.N. estimates that 6.6 million people are internally displaced. When you also consider refugees, well over half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million is in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, whether they still remain in the country or have escaped across the borders.

In October 2015, Russia began launching airstrikes at ISIS targets in Syria. The bombings have continued, so far killing at least 2,000 civilians and forcing even more Syrians to flee for safety.

In early February 2016, fighting around Aleppo city intensified and the main route for humanitarian aid was cut off. This has severely limited access, and Mercy Corps' operations in northern Syria have been effectively sliced in half due to the fighting.

### **Where are they fleeing to?**

Many Syrian refugees are living in Jordan and Lebanon. In the region's two smallest countries, weak infrastructure and limited resources are nearing a breaking point under the strain.

In August 2013, more Syrians escaped into northern Iraq at a newly opened border crossing. Now they are trapped by that country's own insurgent conflict, and Iraq is struggling to meet the needs of Syrian refugees on top of more than 1 million internally displaced Iraqis.

An increasing number of Syrian refugees are fleeing across the border into Turkey, overwhelming urban host communities and creating new cultural tensions.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees are also attempting the dangerous trip across the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Greece, hoping to find a better future in Europe. Not all of them make it across alive. Those who do make it to Greece still face steep challenges — resources are strained by the influx, services are minimal and much of the route into western Europe has been closed.

### **How are people escaping?**

Thousands of Syrians flee their country every day. They often decide to finally escape after seeing their neighbourhoods bombed or family members killed.

The risks on the journey to the border can be as high as staying: Families walk for miles through the night to avoid being shot at by snipers or being caught by soldiers who will kidnap young men to fight for the regime.

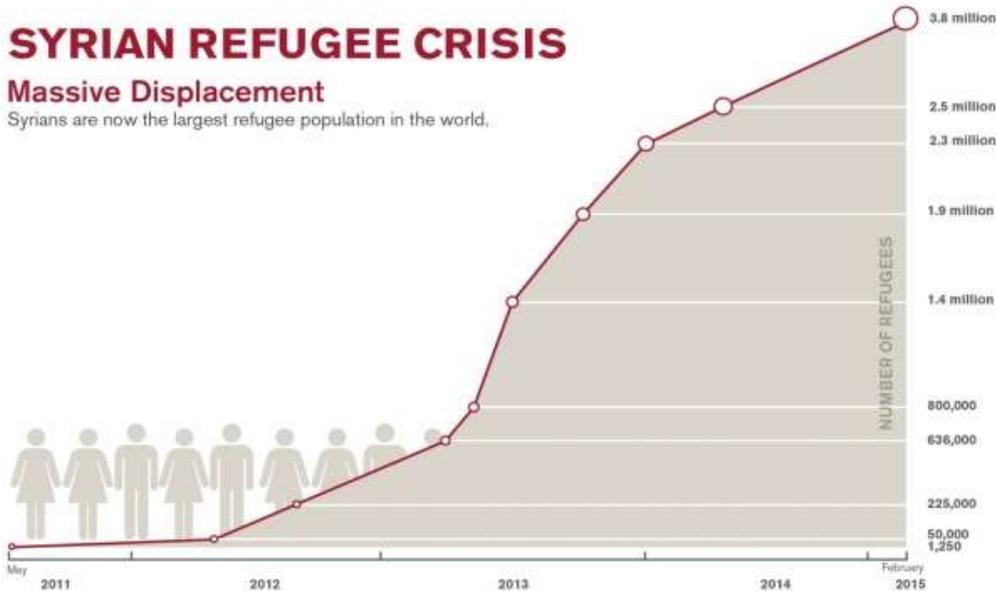
### **How many refugees are there?**

Almost 6 million Syrians have registered or are awaiting registration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is leading the regional emergency response.

# SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

## Massive Displacement

Syrians are now the largest refugee population in the world.



Every year of the conflict has seen an exponential growth in refugees. In 2012, there were 100,000 refugees. By April 2013, there were 800,000. That doubled to 1.6 million in less than four months.

There are now 4.8 million Syrians scattered throughout the region, making them the world's largest refugee population under the United Nations' mandate. There are 6 million Syrian refugees outside Syria, and 6 million internal refugees, that is, displaced within Syria itself. It's the worst exodus since the Rwandan genocide 20 years ago. It has affected the Governments of Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Italy, Germany and the USA.

### Do all refugees live in camps?

The short answer: no. Jordan's Za'atari, the first official refugee camp that opened in July 2012, gets the most news coverage because it is the destination for newly-arrived refugees. It is also the most concentrated settlement of refugees: Approximately 79,000 Syrians live in Za'atari, making it one of the country's largest cities. The formerly barren desert is crowded with acres of white tents, makeshift shops line a "main street" and sports fields and schools are available for children. A new camp, Azraq, opened in April 2014, carefully designed to provide a sense of community and security, with steel caravans instead of tents, a camp supermarket, and organised "streets" and "villages."

Because Jordan's camps are run by the government and the U.N. — with many partner organisations coordinating services — they offer more structure and support. But many families feel trapped, crowded, and even farther from any sense of home, so they seek shelter in nearby towns.

Iraq has set up a few camps to house the influx of refugees who arrived in 2013, but the majority of families are living in urban areas. And in Lebanon, the government has no official camps for refugees, so families establish makeshift camps or find shelter in derelict, abandoned buildings. In Turkey, the majority of refugees are trying to survive and find work, despite the language barrier, in urban communities. The fact is, the majority of refugees live outside camps.

### What conditions are refugees facing outside camps?

Some Syrians know people in neighbouring countries who they can stay with. But many host families were already struggling on meagre incomes and do not have the room or finances to help as the crisis drags on.

Refugees find shelter wherever they can.

Most refugees must find a way to pay rent, even for derelict structures. Without any legal way to work in Jordan and Lebanon, they struggle to find odd jobs and accept low wages that often don't cover their most basic needs. The situation is slightly better in the Kurdish Autonomous region of northern Iraq, where Syrian Kurds can legally work, but opportunities are now limited because of the conflict there. And language is still a barrier.

The lack of clean water and sanitation in crowded, makeshift settlements is an urgent concern. Diseases like cholera and polio can easily spread — even more life-threatening without enough medical services. In some areas with the largest refugee populations, water shortages have reached emergency levels; the supply is as low as 30 litres per person per day.

The youngest refugees face an uncertain future. Some schools have been able to divide the school day into two shifts and make room for more Syrian students. But there is simply not enough space for all the children, and many families cannot afford the transportation to get their kids to school. Nine years into the conflict, and no end in sight, there is a whole generation of young Syrians who know no home beyond 'temporary' refugee camps.

### How many refugees are children?

According to the U.N., more than half of all Syrian refugees are under the age of 18. Most have been out of school for months, if not years.

## SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

Children Caught in War



More than 50% of Syrian refugees are children who've lost everything.



The youngest are confused and scared by their experiences, lacking the sense of safety and home they need. The older children are forced to grow up too fast, finding work and taking care of their family in desperate circumstances.

### Refugee travelling to Europe

BBC, Migrant Crisis Explained, March 2016 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34131911>

More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, sparking a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, and creating division in the EU over how best to deal with resettling people.

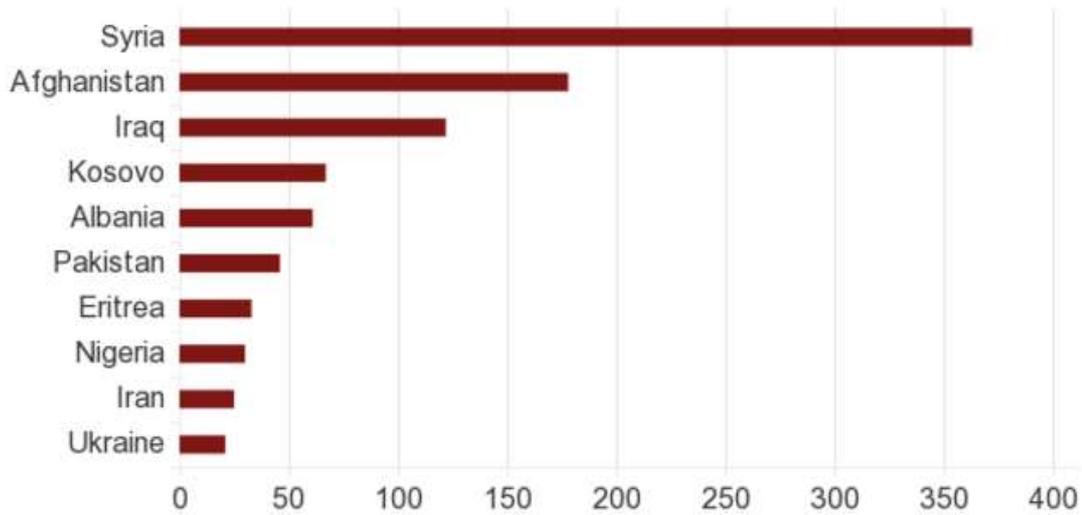
The vast majority arrived by sea but some migrants have made their way over land, principally via Turkey and Albania. Winter has not stemmed the flow of people - with 135,711 people reaching Europe by sea since the start of 2016, according to the UNHCR.

### Which countries are migrants from?

The conflict in Syria continues to be by far the biggest driver of migration. But the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea, as well as poverty in Kosovo, are also leading people to look for new lives elsewhere.

## Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU

First-time applications in 2015, in thousands



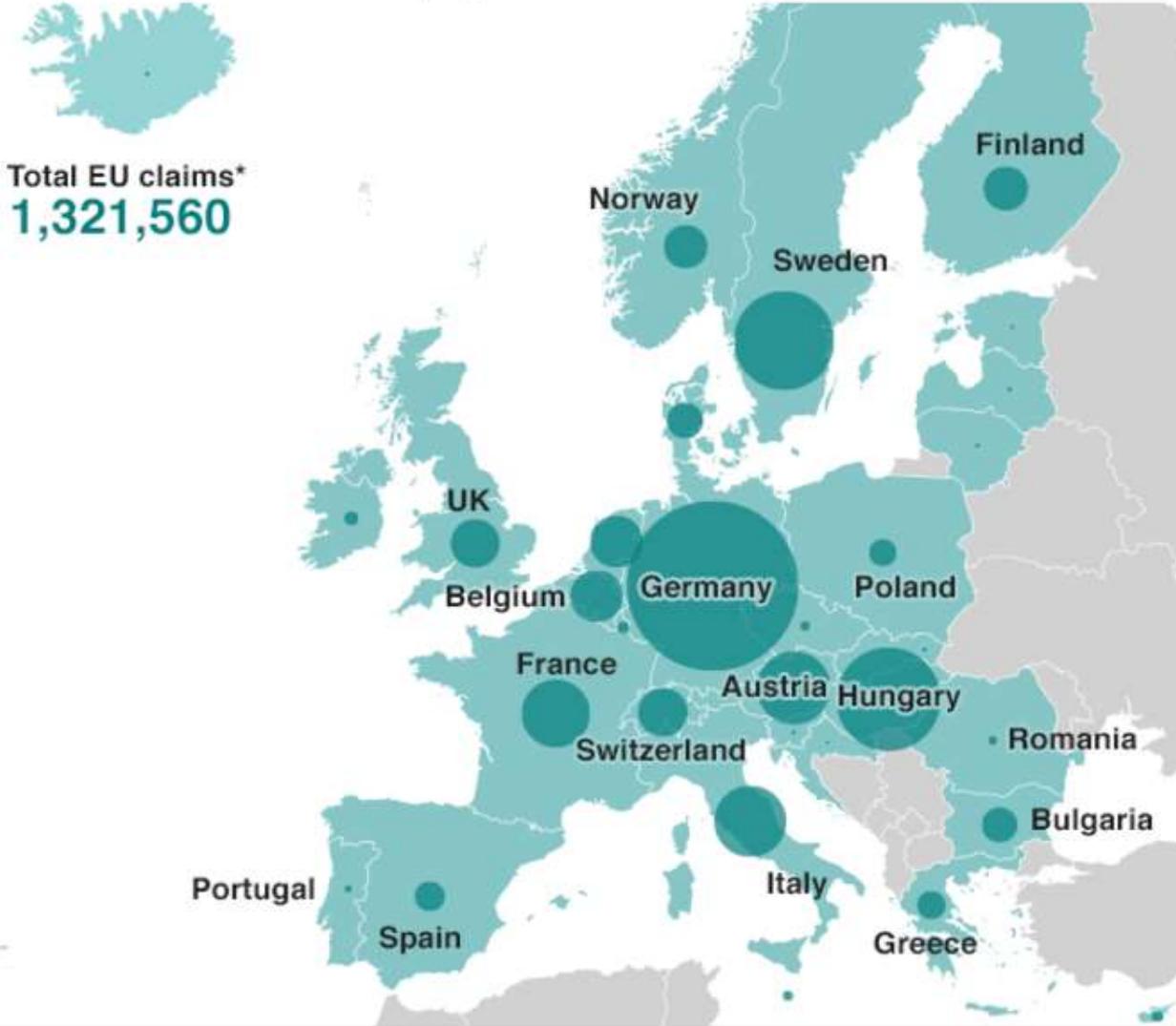
### Where are migrants going?

Although not all of those arriving in Europe choose to claim asylum, many do. Germany received the highest number of new asylum applications in 2015, with **more than 476,000**.

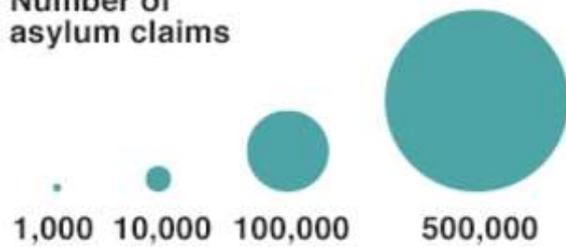
But far more people have arrived in the country - German officials said **more than a million** had been counted in Germany's "EASY" system for counting and distributing people before they make asylum claims.

Hungary moved into second place for asylum applications, as more migrants made the journey overland through Greece and the Western Balkans. It had **177,130** applications by the end of December.

# Asylum claims in Europe, 2015



Number of asylum claims



■ No data

\* Map also shows claims for non-EU members Norway and Switzerland

### How do migrants get to Europe?

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than **1,011,700** migrants arrived by sea in 2015, and almost **34,900** by land.

This compares with 280,000 arrivals by land and sea for the whole of 2014. The figures do not include those who got in undetected.

The EU's external border force, Frontex, monitors the different routes migrants use and numbers arriving at Europe's borders and put the figure crossing into Europe by 2019 at more than 2 million.

Most of those heading for Greece take the relatively short voyage from Turkey to the islands of Kos, Chios, Lesbos and Samos - often in flimsy rubber dinghies or small wooden boats.

### How dangerous is the journey?

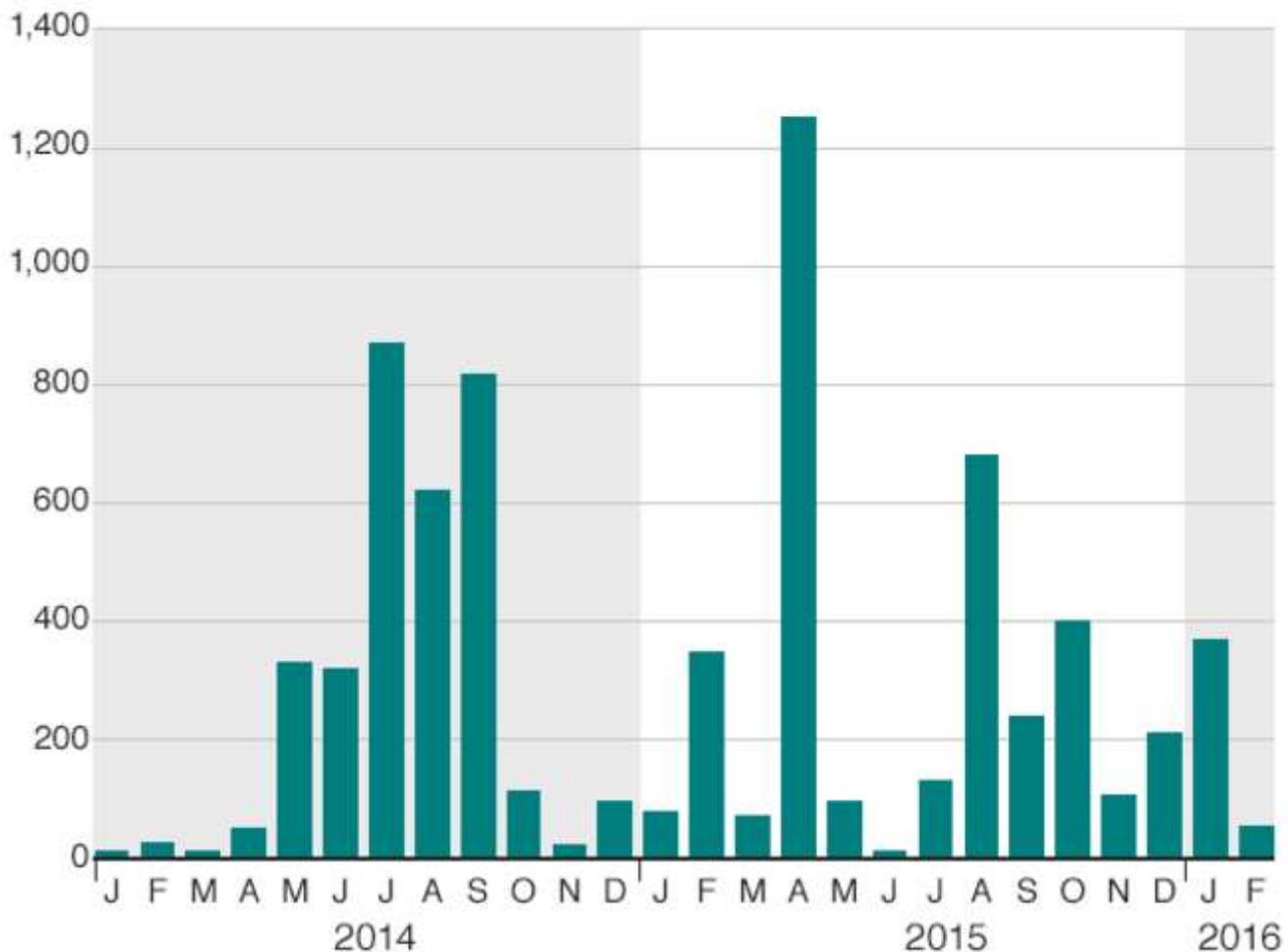
According to the IOM, more than 3,770 migrants were reported to have died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. This number has stayed consistently high in recent years.

Most died on the crossing from north Africa to Italy, and more than 800 died in the Aegean crossing from Turkey to Greece.

The summer months are usually when most fatalities occur as it is the busiest time for migrants attempting to reach Europe.

But in 2015, the deadliest month for migrants was April, which saw a boat carrying about 800 people capsize in the sea off Libya. Overcrowding is thought to have been one of the reasons for the disaster.

## Migrant deaths in the Mediterranean by month



## 11. Effect 3: Chemical Weapons

Adapted from BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22307705>

In September 2013, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) received an initial disclosure from the Syrian government of its chemical weapons programme, the first time the country had made a formal declaration. Syria also signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and agreed to the destruction of its chemical weapons.

The OPCW has yet to release the details of the declaration, leaving the size of Syria's arsenal subject to speculation. But experts believe the stockpile, considered to be one of the world's largest, contains the blister agent sulphur mustard, the nerve agent sarin, and the more potent and persistent nerve agent VX.

Following a deadly chemical weapons attack in Damascus on 21 August 2013, the United States and Russia agreed a plan with Syria to remove and destroy its chemical weapons by mid-2014.

### Weapon development and delivery

The US stated in 2002 that Syria had a "long-standing chemical warfare programme", which was first developed in the 1970s. A recent report from the US Congressional Research Service said Syria probably began stockpiling chemical weapons in 1972 or 1973, when it was given a small number of chemicals and delivery systems by Egypt before the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

Damascus started acquiring the materials and knowledge necessary to produce chemical weapons in the 1980s, reportedly with the help of the Soviet Union. Equipment and chemicals are also thought to have been procured from European companies.

#### Chemical weapons in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- Chemical agents used as weapons was first introduced by Germany in WWI
- Mustard gas has been used in several wars including by British forces in Russian Civil War of 1919, Soviet forces in China in 1930s, Spanish and Italian troops in North Africa
- Sarin was invented by a German scientist in the 1930s in preparation for WWII
- Iraq's former leader Saddam Hussein used nerve agents such as sarin and mustard gas on Kurds in 1987-8 and on Iran 1980-8
- Japanese militant sect Aum Shinrikyo used sarin nerve agent in a Tokyo subway in 1995

In 2011, the US director of national intelligence concluded that Syria remained "dependent on foreign sources for key elements" of its chemical weapons programme, including precursor chemicals, which are generally dual-use chemicals that can be combined to produce blister or nerve agents.

Before the uprising, the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (CERS) was believed to run at least four chemical agent manufacturing plants - at Dumayr, Khan Abou, Shamat and Furklus - and operate additional storage sites dispersed across the country in some 50 different towns and cities.

The exact size of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal is not known, but in June 2012, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Deputy Chief of Staff Maj Gen Yair Nave described it as "the largest in the world".

According to a **French intelligence assessment published in September 2013**, Damascus has more than 1,000 tonnes of chemical agents and precursor chemicals, including:

- Several hundreds of tonnes of sulphur mustard
- Several hundreds of tonnes of sarin
- Several tens of tonnes of VX.

**According to the White House**, the Syrian military has access to "thousands of munitions" that can be used to deliver chemical warfare agents, including a variety of long- and short-range ballistic missiles, aerial bombs and artillery rockets.

Since the beginning of the uprising, ammunitions carrying lesser volumes are believed to have been developed for more focused and local tactical use.

Regarding the chain of command, the French intelligence assessment said the section of the Syrian military responsible for filling munitions with chemical agents and for security at storage sites - "Branch 450" of the CERS - was staffed only by members of the president's minority Alawite sect and was "distinguished by a high level of loyalty to the regime". "Bashar al-Assad and certain influential members of his clan are the only ones permitted to give the order for the use of chemical weapons. The order is then transmitted to those responsible at the competent branches of the CERS," it added. "At the same time, the army chiefs of staff receive the order and decide on targets, the weapons and the toxic agents."

Human Rights Watch says 330mm surface-to-surface rockets were used to attack Zamalka in Eastern Ghouta on 21 August. At least four strike sites have been found.

From remnants of the weapons found, HRW has reconstructed the characteristics of the rocket. It says it was capable of carrying up to 60 litres of chemical nerve agent.

The payload of the rocket consisted of a large, thin-walled container. A small explosive charge at the front would detonate on impact and rupture the skin, dispersing the chemicals inside.

### **Sulphur Mustard**

Syria is widely believed to possess large quantities of the blister agent sulphur mustard. The term "mustard gas" is commonly used to describe the agent, but it is liquid at ambient temperature. Sulphur mustard sometimes smells - like garlic, onions, or mustard - and sometimes has no odour. It can be clear to yellow or brown.

People can be exposed through skin contact, eye contact or breathing if it is released into the air as a vapour, or by consuming it or getting it on their skin if it is in liquid or solid form. It causes blistering of the skin and mucous membranes on contact.

Though exposure to sulphur mustard usually is not fatal, there is no treatment or antidote to mustard which means the agent must be removed entirely from the body. Syria started to produce tube and rocket artillery rounds filled with mustard-type blistering agents in 1993, presumed to be the first weaponisation of its kind.

### **Sarin**

Sarin is a neurotoxic organophosphorus compound that is highly toxic and lethal. It is considered 20 times as deadly as cyanide and is impossible to detect because it is a clear, colourless and tasteless liquid that has no odour in its purest form. It can also evaporate and spread through the air. As with all nerve agents, Sarin inhibits the action of the acetylcholinesterase enzyme, which deactivates signals that cause human nerve cells to fire. This blockage pushes nerves into a continual "on" state. The heart and other muscles - including those involved in breathing - spasm.

Sufficient exposure can lead to death via asphyxiation within minutes.

### **Use of Sarin**

**According to a report by UN chemical weapons inspectors**, there is "clear and convincing evidence" that surface-to-surface rockets containing sarin were fired at suburbs to the east and west of Damascus in an attack on 21 August 2013 that killed hundreds of people.

According to US, British, French and Israeli officials, there is also evidence that Syrian government forces used sarin against rebels and civilians on several previous occasions. French intelligence said analysis of samples taken from the northern town of Saraqeb and the Damascus suburb of Jobar in April showed that munitions containing sarin had been deployed. However, doubts have been expressed about the chain of custody of those samples as they travelled from their original locations in Syria to laboratories in other countries.

**theguardian** 'Almost 1,500 killed in chemical weapons attacks' in Syria, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/14/syria-chemical-weapons-attacks-almost-1500-killed-report-united-nations>

Nearly 1,500 people have been killed in chemical weapons attacks in [Syria](#) during the five-year civil war, according to a report that highlights the uninhibited ferocity of the conflict. The attacks amount to a strategic policy to displace civilians in opposition-controlled territory, the report by the Syrian-American Medical Society (Sams) concludes.

The vast majority of the documented attacks and the ensuing civilian casualties were perpetrated by the government of Bashar al-Assad, it says.

“In response to chemical attacks in Syria, the international community sends us more antidotes,” Mohammed Tennari, a doctor in the rebel-held province of Idlib, is quoted as saying in the report. “This means that the world knows that chemical weapons will be used against us again and again.

“What we need most is not antidotes – what we need is protection, and to prevent another family from slowly suffocating together after being gassed in their home,” he added.

The report documents 161 chemical attacks in Syria, details of which were gathered from doctors operating on the ground in the areas that bore the brunt of chemical warfare, and which led to the deaths of 1,491 people and 14,581 injuries due to exposure to chemicals. More than a third of the attacks used chlorine gas, and the vast majority of those came after a UN security council resolution condemning its use.

A further 133 reported attacks could not be fully verified by the organisation, which works with about 100 health facilities in Syria.

The report’s release came as peace talks in Geneva brokered by the US and Russia begin almost five years to the day since protests against Assad erupted in the city of Deraa. The conflict has since led to the killing of almost 500,000 people by some accounts, and displaced half of the country’s population.

The most devastating chemical attack was carried out by the Assad government in August 2013 in the besieged Eastern Ghouta, a sprawling agricultural hinterland near Damascus. The attack used sarin gas and may have killed more than 1,000 civilians.

That incident prompted the brokering of a deal by major powers that dismantled much of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles, but attacks using chlorine have since continued in the country. Moreover, Islamic State has also deployed chlorine and mustard agent in attacks on opposition and anti-ISIS fighters.

Last year witnessed the greatest use of chemical agents in the war, with 69 documented attacks, despite the dismantling of much of Syria’s stockpile, as the use of nerve agents such as sarin all but ceased, only to be replaced with widespread attacks using so-called “barrel bombs” laced with chlorine.

“Chemical attacks are used strategically to cause civilian displacement in Syria,” the report says. “The fear caused by these silent and unpredictable weapons causes civilians to flee in larger numbers than in the aftermath of conventional attacks.”

## 12. Effect 3: Persecution and Genocide

### ISIS in Dohuk

The extremist group Islamic State (also known as ISIS) has carried out systematic rape and other sexual violence against Yezidi women and girls in northern Iraq. Human Rights Watch conducted research in the town of Dohuk in January and February 2015, including interviewing 20 women and girls who escaped from ISIS, and reviewing ISIS statements about the subject.

Human Rights Watch documented a system of organized rape and sexual assault, sexual slavery, and forced marriage by ISIS forces. Such acts are war crimes and may be crimes against humanity. Many of the women and girls remain missing, but the survivors now in Iraqi Kurdistan need psychosocial support and other assistance.

ISIS forces took several thousand Yezidi civilians into custody in northern Iraq’s Nineveh province in August 2014, according to Kurdistan officials and community leaders. Witnesses said that fighters systematically separated young women and adolescent girls from their families and other captives and moved them from one location to another inside Iraq and Syria.

The 11 women and 9 girls Human Rights Watch interviewed had escaped between September 2014 and January 2015. Half, including two 12-year-old girls, said they had been raped – some multiple times and by several ISIS fighters. Nearly all of them said they had been forced into marriage; sold, in some cases a number of times; or given as “gifts.” The women and girls also witnessed other captives being abused.

All of the women and girls interviewed exhibited signs of acute emotional distress. Many remain separated from relatives and sometimes their entire families, who were either killed by ISIS or remain in ISIS captivity. Several said they had attempted suicide during their captivity or witnessed suicide attempts to avoid rape, forced marriage, or forced religious conversion.

In October 2014, ISIS acknowledged in its publication *Dabiq* that its fighters had given captured Yezidi women and girls to its fighters as “spoils of war.” ISIS has sought to justify sexual violence claiming that Islam permits sex with non-Muslim “slaves,” including girls, as well as beating and selling them. The statements are further evidence of a widespread practice and a systematic plan of action by ISIS, Human Rights Watch said.

ISIS commanders should immediately release all civilian detainees, reunite children with their families, and end forced marriages and religious conversions, Human Rights Watch said. They should take all necessary action to end rape and other sexual violence by ISIS fighters. International and local actors who have influence with ISIS should press the group to take these actions.

## **ISIS Violations of International Law**

### **Abduction and Detention**

Since ISIS attacks in and around Sinjar began on August 3, 2014, more than 736,000 Iraqis, primarily Yezidis and other religious minorities, fled their homes in Nineveh province, most to the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, according to the [International Organization for Migration](#). ISIS fighters executed hundreds of male Yezidi civilians and then abducted their relatives, the [United Nations](#) and local and international human rights [organizations](#) reported. A recent UN [report](#) stated that further investigation is needed to establish the number of those held captive or killed by ISIS, which is “estimated to be in the thousands.”

Although several hundred Yezidis have since escaped, [according to KRG officials](#), many are still in captivity in various parts of Iraq and Syria. Escaped abductees that Human Rights Watch interviewed said ISIS is holding Yezidis in multiple locations across northern Iraq, including Mosul, Tal Afar, Tal Banat, Ba’aj, Rambusi, and Sinjar, and in areas it controls in eastern Syria, including Raqqa and Rabi’a. They said that ISIS is holding female captives, including girls, in houses, hotels, factories, farm compounds, schools, prisons, military bases, and former government offices.

Young women and girls told Human Rights Watch that ISIS fighters first separated them from men and boys and older women. The fighters moved the women and girls several times in an organized and methodical fashion to various places in Iraq and Syria. While most of the ISIS fighters appeared to be Syrian or Iraqi, survivors said that some of their abusers told them that they came from other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, including from Libya, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as from Europe and Central Asia.

The precise number of Yezidis still captive is unknown because of continuing fighting in Iraq and Syria and because significant numbers of Yezidis fled to areas across Iraq and neighboring countries when ISIS attacked. On March 13, 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated in its [report](#) that about 3,000 people, mainly Yezidis, allegedly remain in ISIS captivity. Local officials, service providers, and community activists estimate that the number of Yezidis still held is much higher.

In September 2014, a Yezidi group provided Human Rights Watch with a database with 3,133 names and ages of Yezidis they said ISIS had kidnapped or killed, or who had been missing since the ISIS assaults of early August. The database was based on interviews with displaced Yezidis in Iraqi Kurdistan. The group said that as of late March 2015, the number of dead, abducted, and missing Yezidis had risen to 5,324.

### **Sexual Violence and Other Abuse**

The women and girls who spoke to Human Rights Watch described repeated rape, sexual violence, and other abuse in ISIS captivity.

Jalila (all survivors’ names have been changed for their security), age 12, said that Arab men whom she recognized from her village north of Sinjar accosted her and seven family members on August 3, 2014, as they were trying to flee ISIS. The men handed the family over to ISIS fighters, who separated Jalila, her sister, sister-in-law, and infant nephew from the other family members and took them to Tal Afar. Later, the fighters took Jalila and her sister to Mosul. Thirty-

five days later they separated Jalila from her sister and took her to a house in Syria that housed other abducted young Yezidi women and girls.

### Forced Marriage

Women and girls told Human Rights Watch that ISIS fighters told them they had been bought for as much as US\$2,000 from other ISIS members.

In some instances, ISIS fighters forcibly married their Yezidi captives rather than buy them. Narin, 20, said that when a fighter named Abu Du'ad brought her to his home, his wife left in protest. He brought a religious judge to perform a marriage ceremony but Narin refused to participate. Abu Du'ad persisted by trying to get permission from Narin's family and called her brother in Germany. "But [my brother] said no to the marriage and offered to pay \$50,000 for my release," Narin said. "Abu Du'ad said no."

### War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

Rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, cruel treatment, and other abuses committed during an armed conflict violate the laws of war. International criminal courts have ruled that rape and other sexual violence may also amount to torture.

### Villagers of Iraq's Makhmur District Suffer During 21-Month Occupation

The Islamic State ruled Iraq's Makhmur district for 21 months with summary executions, torture, and collective punishment of villagers. The extremist armed group, also known as ISIS, prevented civilians from fleeing and placed them at unnecessary risk of attack.

"Out of the headlines, ISIS routinely destroys lives and families in the Iraqi towns and villages it occupies," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director. "Simply trying to escape ISIS's cruel rule can be a death sentence."

In May 2016, Human Rights Watch interviewed 20 residents from villages in Makhmur district, in northwest Iraq, who had fled to a displaced persons camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). ISIS forces captured Qayyara, Khabata, and Makuk, among other towns and villages in mid-2014.

The villagers told Human Rights Watch that before Iraqi government forces retook the area in March, 2016, ISIS executed or "disappeared" government security personnel, civilians attempting to flee, and suspected government informants.

Villagers described ISIS mistreatment of those suspected of violating the group's strict version of Islam. One man said ISIS fighters beat him in custody every day for 18 days to force him to confess to selling cigarettes, which ISIS bans. He said he also witnessed 15 female ISIS guards biting a woman in public as punishment for not covering her face.

The villagers also said that ISIS put them at grave risk of attack by firing artillery next to homes without moving civilians away, subjecting them to return fire. Villagers said that ISIS deployed weapons and fighters in or near schools, leading in one instance to an airstrike that damaged the building.

ISIS frequently enforced its rules through collective punishment, which is prohibited by international law, Human Rights Watch said. Villagers said that ISIS blew up at least six homes of families as punishment after their relatives fled. ISIS also mined areas to deter people from fleeing. When a police officer died in May 2015 after stepping on an IED while trying to flee, ISIS sent the man's family a photo of his remains and ordered them to leave.

"Executions, collective punishment, and a disregard for civilian life are part and parcel of ISIS rule," Stork said.

### Summary

### Executions

Villagers reported a number of cases in which people trying to flee ISIS-controlled villages were captured and executed. In May 2015, ISIS captured Muhammad Husain Ghadhban, a 20-year-old security officer who was trying to escape from Khabata. ISIS shot him and sent his family a photo of his body, two villagers said.

ISIS captured Abd al-Aziz Muhammad Gharib, 20, a police officer who had also attempted to escape from Khabata, and executed him in Makuk on July 17, 2015. In Makuk's main square, Gharib was made to kneel blindfolded with his hands tied behind his back and an ISIS fighter shot him in the head, denouncing him as a traitor, a villager said. ISIS did not return the body to the family and did not allow them to hold mourning ceremonies, villagers from Khabata said.

In August 2015, ISIS fighters gathered the men from the village of al-'Itha, near Shirqat, and accused four men between the ages of 19 and 31 of transmitting information by mobile phone to the Popular Mobilization Forces, the official

body set up to bring mainly Shia militias under government control. ISIS fighters lined up the four men and executed them, three with shots to the head and one by beheading, said a villager who was there.

In January 2016, ISIS summarily executed Saif al-Din Ahmad Muhammad, 32, a shepherd who was tending his sheep in Makuk. A teacher from Khabata, the shepherd's home town, said that ISIS alleged that Muhammad had passed information to opposition forces. The shepherd's family received a photo of Muhammad's body from ISIS. ISIS then returned Muhammad's body, allowing the family to bury him but barring mourning ceremonies, the teacher said.

### **“Disappearances”**

ISIS forces have abducted and are feared to have executed several people without providing information to their families about their fate, effectively committing “disappearances.”

On July 3, 2014, ISIS allegedly took a military intelligence officer from his home in Dur al-Qaeda, near Qayyara bridge. The officer has not been seen or heard from since. A relative said he asked many times about the officer but that ISIS did not respond. He said ISIS fighters forced the officer's wife and mother to leave their home and seized their car.

On October 8, 2014, ISIS fighters in Kharabardan demanded that 10 military officers “repent” for their work for the state, pay US\$2,000 each, and surrender their weapons, a relative of one of the men said. ISIS arrested the officer two days later, before he could pay, and he has not been seen or heard from since, the relative said.

The defeat of ISIS, and whether this is a permanent defeat remains to be seen, means that scarred communities are beginning to tell their stories of what happened. But the threat of an ISIS return, means that many crimes will go unpunished, since people in these communities may fear reprisals.

## SECTION 4: EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON COUNTRIES AND GOVERNMENTS

### 13. Effect 1: Political and Economic Instability in Regional Countries

#### **Case study: Iraq**

In 2015 Baghdad has seen its budget deficit expand rapidly owing to extra spending on the ongoing war against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the collapse in oil prices, which have fallen by two thirds since June 2014 due to increased production in the US, OPEC's decision not to reduce production, and slowing growth in China.

In October 2015, Iraq's government forecast a deficit worth 11.9 percent of gross domestic product for 2016. That figure is now expected to be even higher owing to further declines in the price of oil.

However, over the past three years Iraqi oil exports have shown incredible resilience, hitting new highs despite ISIL taking control of large swaths of the country in June 2014.

One of the key factors behind Iraq's success in increasing oil output amid political turmoil is geographical.

More than three quarters of the country's oil is produced and exported from Basra and neighbouring provinces in the south, which lie more than 500km from the fighting with ISIL.

In January Iraq exported an average of 3.88 million barrels a day, including exports from Iraqi Kurdistan.

This is 660,000 barrels a day more than it was exporting before ISIL's advance across the country in the summer of 2014, which saw the group secure around a third of the country's territory.

#### **Case study: Turkey**

Formerly an ally of Syria, Turkey turned against Bashar al-Assad within months of the conflict breaking out, publicly condemning the brutality of Syria's response to the uprising. Turkey has allowed the Syrian political and military opposition to base themselves on its territory, given sanctuary to defectors and served as a conduit for arms to reach rebels inside Syria, inflaming Syrian anger. Turkey has called several times for President Assad to step down, and for a safe zone for refugees to be established inside Syria.

The conflict has created a crisis for Turkey though, with hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing across the shared border to seek shelter. The longer the conflict lasts, the more refugees will flood into Turkey, which is footing the bill. There is a large Kurdish separatist presence in north-east Syria, and Turkey, where Kurds form the largest minority group, fears the repercussions if Syrian Kurds are allowed to establish an autonomous region there.

Tensions between Syria and Turkey have also been heightened by intermittent shelling across the border from Syria, which has killed civilians.

As the conflict in Syria has intensified, with the emergence of Jihadist groups, the Turkish mainland has experienced a wave of attacks. For so long a beacon of stability between Europe and the Middle East, Turkey has entered a period of high tension.

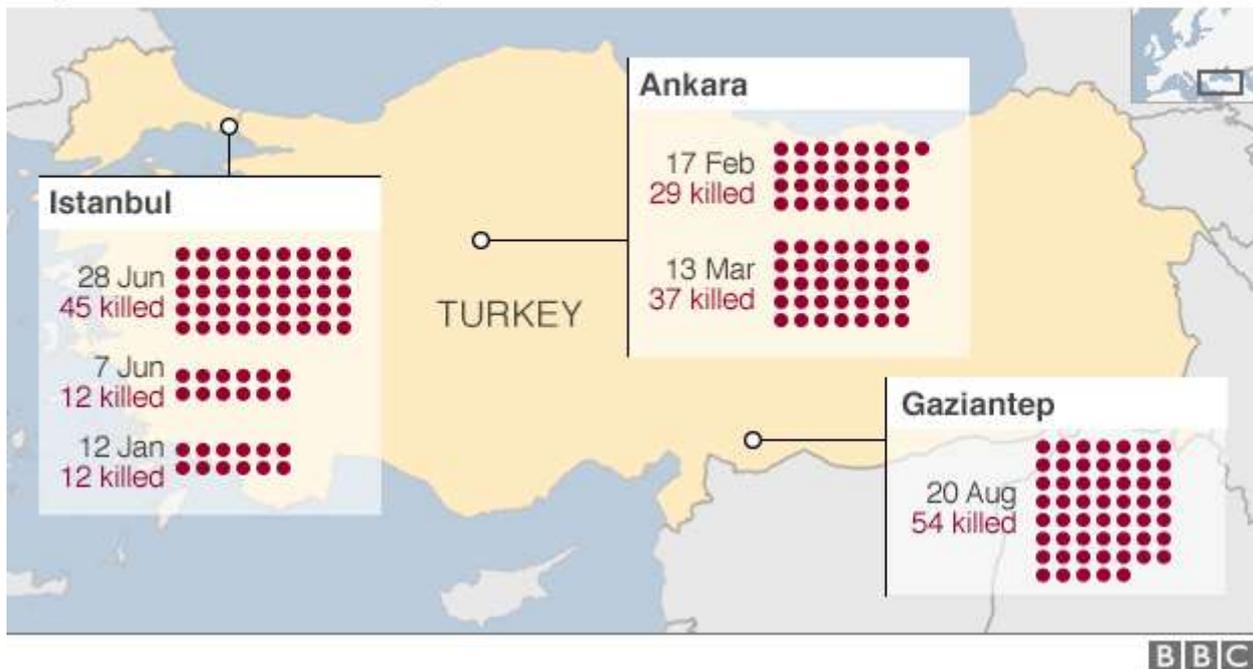
It has long fought Kurdish militants in its east. Now it is trying to prevent Islamist militant violence spreading up from Syria and is cracking down on thousands of people suspected of supporting the failed coup which occurred in the Summer of 2016.

The latest bombing, on 20 August 2016, targeted a wedding in Gaziantep, close to the south-eastern border with Syria, well away from the main population centres.

But Istanbul and the capital Ankara have seen a series of deadly attacks too, and the failed coup took place on the streets of both cities, with the loss of 240 lives on 15 and 16 July 2016. Tanks rolled on to the streets and fighter jets targeted parliament in Ankara, as rebel troops commandeered the bridges across the Bosphorus.

The message for Turks is clear: that the risk of violence is not limited to the border and it is on several fronts.

## Major attacks in Turkey in 2016



The biggest attacks, including the Gaziantep bomb, have been blamed on jihadist group Islamic State (IS):

IS killed 45 people in a coordinated attack targeting Turks and foreign visitors alike at Ataturk airport in Istanbul

- IS suicide bombers murdered tourists from Germany, Israel and Iran in attacks on Istanbul in January and March
- The bloodiest attack blamed on IS was on a peace rally near Ankara station in October 2015, when more than 100 people died. Many of the victims were Kurds

But Kurdish militants have been behind a string of bombings since a ceasefire collapsed in July 2015:

- The TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks) **killed seven police and five civilians** when it blew up a bus carrying riot police in Istanbul in June
- The group murdered 37 people in a car bomb attack on a transport hub in Ankara in March, close to Turkey's justice ministry and the prime minister's office
- The TAK killed 29 in February in an attack on military buses in central Ankara. Among the victims were staff streaming out of government offices after work
- The main Kurdish militant PKK is blamed for the deaths of 600 Turkish security forces in the year since the ceasefire collapsed.

Until recently, the bloodshed was largely confined to the mainly Kurdish areas of the east and south-east, where the Turkish military has battled the militant **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)** for decades.

Violence in the main cities tended to target party offices, particularly those of the left-wing and pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party). The banned Marxist DKHP-C has periodically carried out attacks on police and Western embassies.

Turkey is no longer the safe destination that made it one of the world's biggest tourist draws.

Contagion (the spreading of a harmful idea or practice) from the Syrian conflict had been feared for some time. Kurds had long battled the spread of IS militants in Syria without any help from Turkey. The Suruc bombing sparked new attacks on both sides, triggering the Turkey-PKK ceasefire's collapse.

For IS, there was a clear benefit in seeing Turkey drawn into renewed domestic conflict. Turkey's security forces have become bogged down in a military campaign against the PKK in the east and south-east. Curfews were imposed on towns and cities for months this year as the Turkish military hunted down Kurdish militants.

Although reluctant to help the Kurds fight IS and carve out territory in Syria, Turkey nevertheless agreed in 2014 to take part in the US-led operation against so-called Islamic State. IS considered Turkey part of a Nato alliance carrying out air strikes on its Syrian and Iraqi bases.

And Turkey has worked hard to seal off the supply of militants crossing a previously porous Turkey-Syria border to join IS.

Although PKK leader Cemil Bayik has accused President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of "**protecting IS**", to stop Kurds advancing against the jihadist group, Turkey is supporting the campaign by Syrian Arab rebels to oust IS from the city of Jarablus. The Gaziantep bombing has been seen as an IS reprisal for losing ground in the border areas, and Turkey's foreign minister has spoken of fighting "Daesh (IS) to the end".

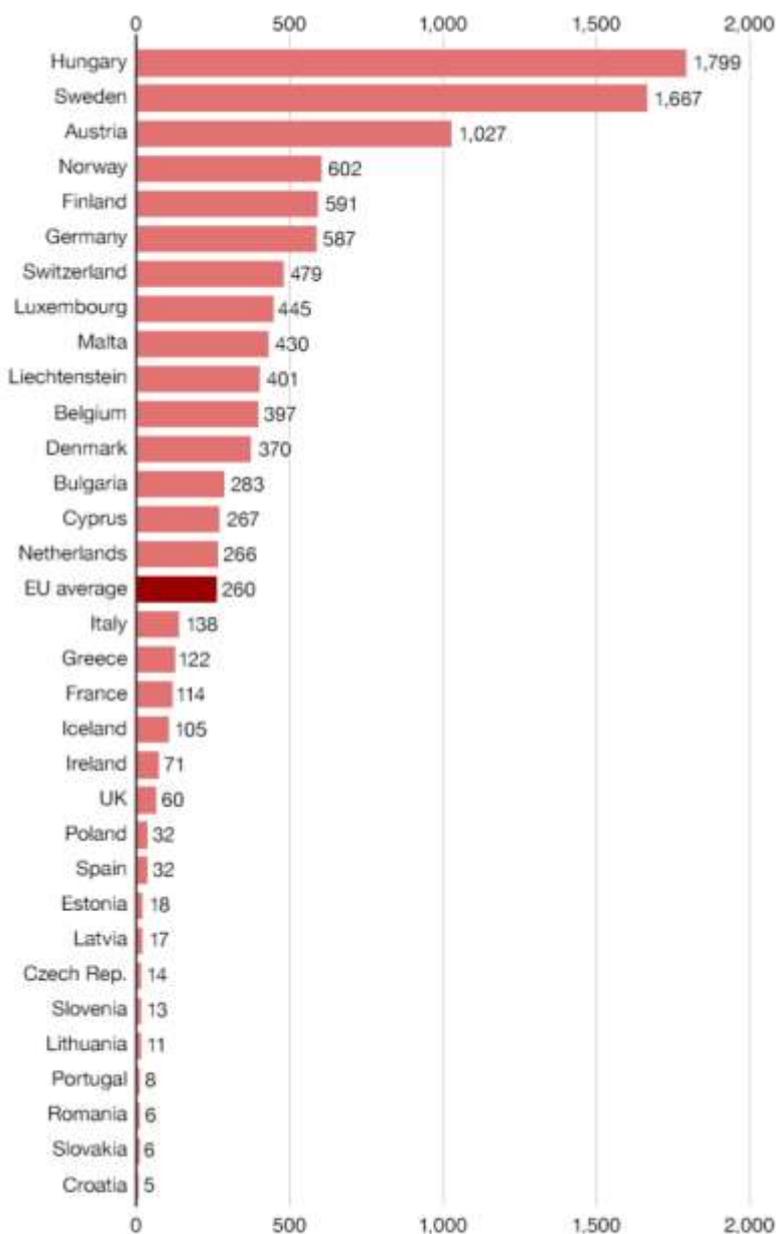
With the defeat of ISIS, Turkey has now turned its attention to defeating Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria. With the approval of Donald Trump in 2019, this 'clearing out exercise' along the Turkish-Syrian border took place. It led Kurds to give up their autonomous Rojava Government, and to invite the Syrian leader Bashir Al-Assad, and his Russian allies, back as the lesser of two evils.

## 14. Effect 2: Refugee Crisis in Europe

### **Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained 4 March 2016**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34131911>

Asylum applications per 100,000 local population, 2015



**Which European countries are most affected?**

Although Germany has had the most asylum applications in 2015, Hungary had the highest in proportion to its population, despite having closed its border with Croatia in an attempt to stop the flow in October. Nearly 1,800 refugees per 100,000 of Hungary's local population claimed asylum in 2015.

Sweden followed close behind with 1,667 per 100,000. The figure for Germany was 587 and for the UK it was 60 applications for every 100,000 residents. The EU average was 260.

**How has Europe responded?**

Tensions in the EU have been rising because of the disproportionate burden faced by some countries, particularly the countries where the majority of migrants have been arriving: Greece, Italy and Hungary.

In September, EU ministers voted by a majority to relocate 160,000 refugees EU-wide, but for now the plan will only apply to those who are in Italy and Greece.

Another 54,000 were to be moved from Hungary, but the Hungarian government rejected this plan and will instead receive more migrants from Italy and Greece as part of the relocation scheme. The UK has opted out of any plans for a quota system but, according to Home Office figures, 1,000 Syrian refugees were resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme in 2015. Prime Minister David Cameron has said the UK will accept up to **20,000** refugees from Syria over the next five years.

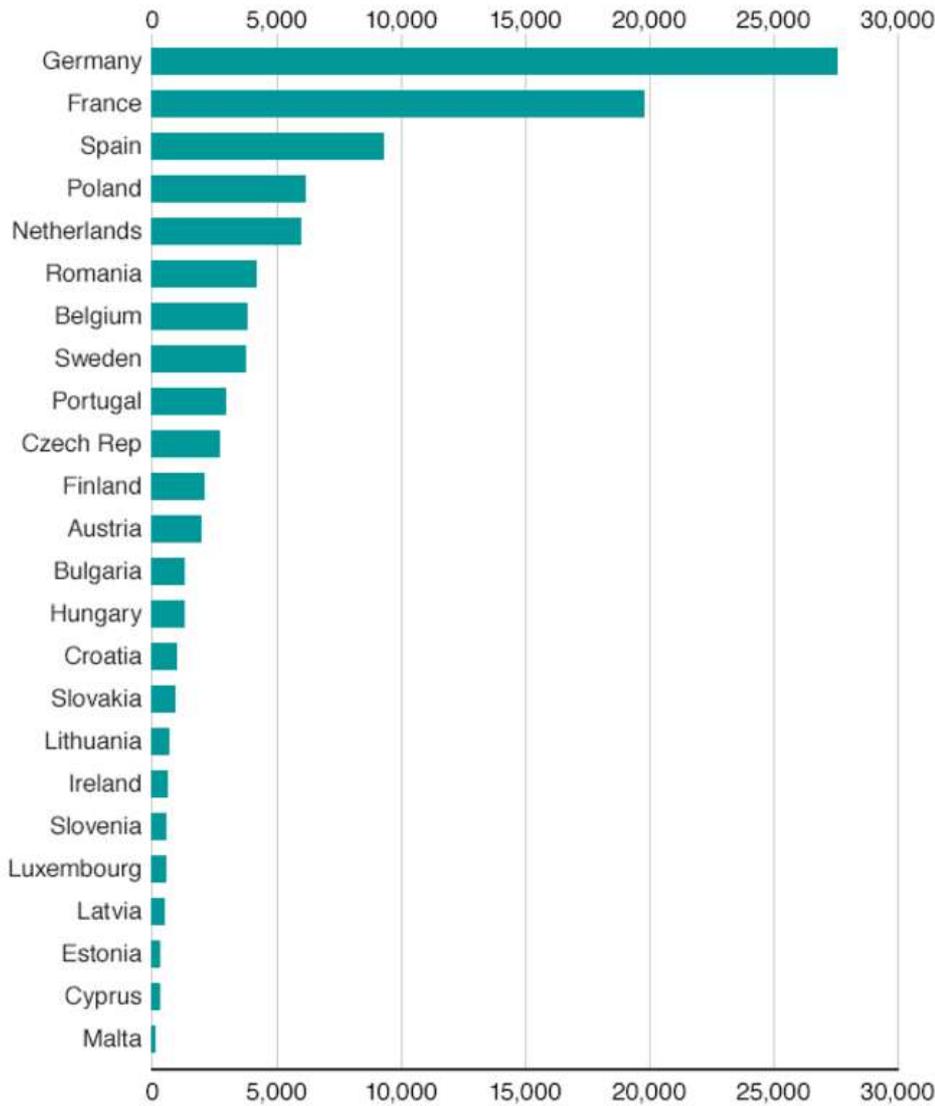
**How many asylum claims are approved?**

Although huge numbers have been applying for asylum, the number of people being given asylum is far lower. In 2015, EU countries offered asylum to 292,540 refugees. In the same year, more than a million migrants applied for asylum - although applying for asylum can be a lengthy procedure so many of those given refugee status may have applied in previous years.

Germany's Angela Merkel, horrified by the humanitarian crisis of millions of refugees on European soil again, and recognising Germany's 20<sup>th</sup> Century history, decided to take in **over 1 million refugees**. This is vastly more than any other European country, albeit it's less than half of the number taken in by Turkey. However, this influx has brought political uncertainty to Germany, and the rise of far right parties like AfD has been a worrying trend. Merkel herself, for so long a leader with unrivalled support within her own country, has decided to step down from power within the next year.

## EU member state migrant quotas

Number of people countries have agreed to relocate from Greece and Italy

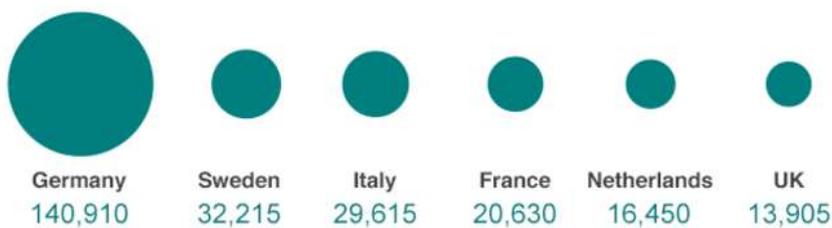


Note: the UK and Denmark are not taking part in the relocation scheme

## Asylum applications approved 2015



## Total claims granted by country



## 15.Effect 3: Heightened Terror Threat

### Fifteen years of terrorism

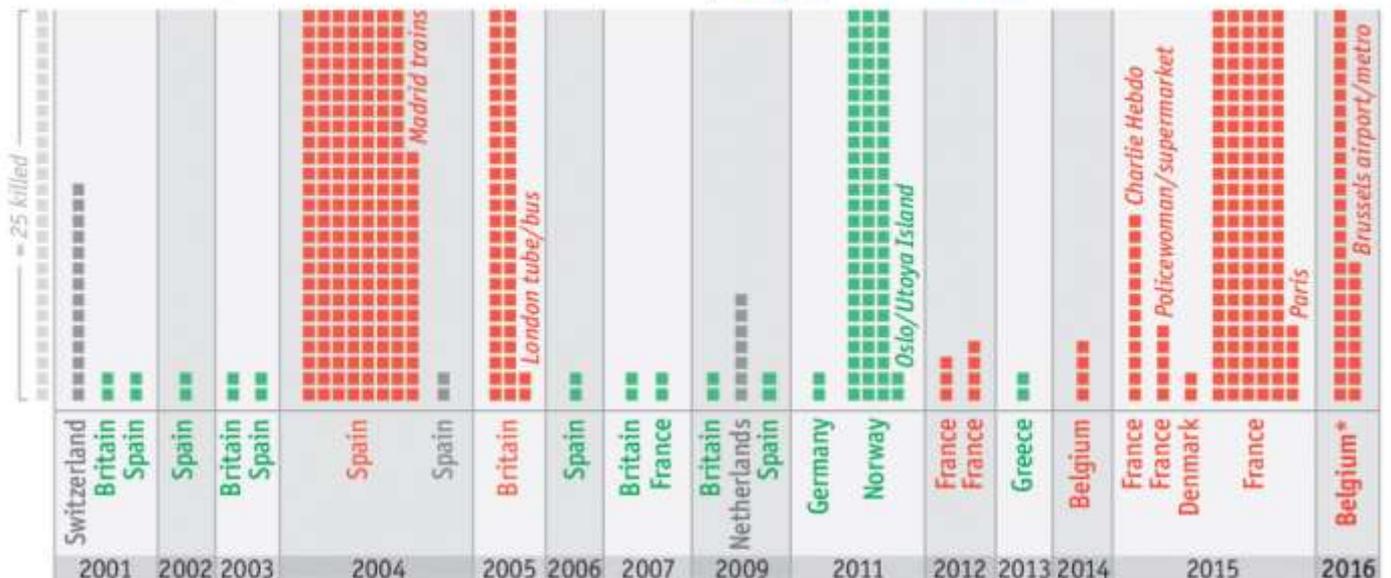
Main attacks in western Europe, September 11th 2001 - March 22nd 2016

Attacks causing two or more deaths □ =1 killed

By: ■ jihadists

■ other

■ unknown affiliation



#### Attacks causing one death

Cumulative total: Austria 1; Belgium 1; Britain 14; France 6; Greece 5; Ireland 2; Italy 3; Netherlands 3; Spain 9; Sweden 1

Sources: Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland; press reports; *The Economist*

\*Latest reports (6pm GMT, March 22nd)

## The Economist: Terror in Belgium

The Brussels attacks show that Islamic State is still growing in ambition and capability

Europe must confront the possibility of such attacks on a regular basis, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016

<http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21695308-europe-must-confront-possibility-such-attacks-regular-basis-brussels-attacks-show>

BELGIUM'S satisfaction at finding Salah Abdeslam, the man believed to have been the Islamic State (IS) logistics chief behind the Paris terror attacks, which took the lives of 130 people four months ago, was always likely to be fleeting. That it had taken so long to track Mr Abdeslam down was worrying. That he was found staying in the apartment of a friend's mother in Molenbeek, the district of Brussels that is probably home to the highest concentration of jihadist sympathisers in Europe, is an indication of chronic intelligence failure on the part of Belgium's State Security Service and the police.

But perhaps the biggest worry is the discovery that IS's network in Belgium, and perhaps across Europe, is so extensive. To be able to conduct serial complex attacks—such as the multiple bombings in Brussels' international airport and metro system, which killed at least 30 people on the morning of March 22<sup>nd</sup>—suggests IS can draw on perhaps hundreds of supporters, some of whom have reliable bomb-making expertise and know how to communicate securely. Some will argue that the timing of the attacks on Brussels, coming so soon after the arrest of Mr Abdeslam, is a coincidence. But that probably underestimates the scale of the IS operation in Belgium. Indeed, Mr Abdeslam's arrest may well have been the trigger for another cell to go into action with a plan that had been some weeks or months in preparation.

There are still hopes that Mr Abdeslam's arrest and almost certain extradition to France will yield information that fills in the gaps in what is known about the Paris and Brussels attacks. But what has been learned so far by French investigators after the interrogation of witnesses and investigation of both the crime scenes and places where the terrorists had lived is disturbing enough.

An overriding concern is the extent of the network across Europe that IS appears to have been building for at least the past three years as a platform for sustaining a series of major terrorist outrages in different cities. There are known to be 18 people being held in six countries who are suspected of helping the Paris attackers. That is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg.

Intelligence services are faced with a lethal combination: thousands of European citizens radicalised on the internet and drawn to IS by its military and propaganda successes; battle-hardened fighters returning from Syria and Iraq who have received expert training; and the opportunities to infiltrate back into Europe unnoticed amid the huge flows of genuine refugees.

French investigators have also been taken aback by the sophistication of the IS external operations wing. It appears from the traces left by the Paris suicide bombers that IS bomb-makers in Europe have mastered manufacturing explosive devices that use triacetone triperoxide, known as TATP, whose precursors can be found in easily available products such as nail polish remover and hair lighteners. Making multiple TATP devices that detonate reliably requires a good deal of skill, but police have yet to locate either a bomb factory or any of the bomb-makers, some of whom are likely to have been sent directly from Iraq or Syria.

Another sign of their competent tradecraft is the discipline of their communications security. The French authorities had no clue of what was to unfold on the evening of November 13th and there seems to have been no actionable intelligence before the attacks earlier today, despite warnings from the Belgian interior minister that more attacks were likely. Sim cards taken from "burners" (pre-paid mobile phones that are used only once before being discarded) show no evidence of text messaging, e-mails or chat-room use. The conclusion is that the terrorists are using encryption for all their electronic communication, but precisely what kind may still not be known.

Finally, it increasingly looks as if IS operational planning always aims at carrying out multiple, sequenced attacks to spread confusion and to stretch the ability of emergency services to respond. Over the weekend, there were reports that London's police and the army's SAS special forces are now working on the possibility that the capital could be hit by up to 10 attacks, all occurring on the same day. It is also clear that such attacks will be against soft targets with the aim of causing as many casualties as possible.

Europe now has to confront the possibility that IS has acquired the capability to make devastating attacks on what amounts to a fairly regular basis. Yet faced with such a threat, it is still far from certain that Europe can react in the way that America did in the aftermath of September 11th 2001, when it was quickly understood that the failure of different agencies to pool and share intelligence had been instrumental in allowing the plot to proceed. America's long run of preventing another foreign-borne attack on its soil is an indication of how well the lessons were learned. In Britain too, with its experience of combating IRA terrorism for decades, the security agencies and the police have shown how it should be done.

But to replicate that example across all the countries of the European Union is a tall order, even though the open borders of the Schengen passport-free zone should have suggested the need for joined-up intelligence long ago. In Belgium itself, politically riven between two language groups, inter-agency co-operation is known to be dire. Europol, the law-enforcement agency of the EU, does a useful job in facilitating information exchange and analysis. But it has no executive powers to carry out investigations and has an annual budget of around €100m (\$112m).

The threat from IS is belatedly forcing national intelligence agencies to co-operate in ways they have not previously done, but there is a huge range in capabilities and IT systems, some pretty antiquated, that cannot yet share data effectively. Another question that may need to be answered at the European level is whether mass data collection on the American model is acceptable in terms of privacy and human rights. Having lived under Nazi and communist totalitarian states, Germans, in particular, are deeply opposed to the notion of the surveillance state.

No doubt, the political imperative to be seen to be doing something will result in some improvements in Europe's ability to foil mass terror attacks. It may also be that as IS experiences further defeats on the battlefields of Iraq and

Syria (it has lost about 40% of the territory it held in the former and about 15% in the latter), some of its sheen will disappear and it will no longer be a magnet for every budding jihadist. But for now, the flaws in Europe's security remain gaping, while IS shows every sign both of increasing ambition and the capability to go with it.

## 16. Effect 4: Rise in Far Right Across Europe

The toxic combination of the most prolonged period of economic stagnation and the worst refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War has seen the far-Right surging across the continent, from Athens to Amsterdam and many points in between.

The parties may be fronted with softer faces these days – think Frauke Petry of Germany's Alternative for Deutschland (AfD), Marine Le Pen of France's National Front or Norbert Hofer of Austria's Freedom Party – but their underlying ideology of xenophobia and nationalism remain unchanged.

Optimists continue to argue that the concerns about the rise of nationalist fringes in Europe are overblown and that the best strategy is still to ignore them.

They cite Marine Le Pen winning big in the first round of France's regional elections last year, and then being thoroughly squashed in the second; or point out that AfD are indeed a nasty outfit that borrow language from the 1930s, but they have no chance of displacing Germany's rock-solid centrist coalitions.

But complacency about the power of the far-Right in Europe today is misplaced

the surge of far-Right parties across Europe, including elements of Britain's own Ukip, are already materially impacting Europe's ability to govern itself, even if they are not actually in power.

In Germany, the rise of the AfD has clearly eroded Angela Merkel's position, she lost ground in Germany's 2017 election, her attempts at forming a coalition have just foundered, and, at time of writing, her chances of remaining Chancellor in the long-term are fading fast. One of the reasons there is unlikely to be an election in Germany is it is feared that the radical right, the AfD, would gain in popularity in the current climate. Wolfgang Schäuble, Germany's finance minister, says it's one reason why Berlin must hold the line on its austerity-agenda, making necessary Eurozone integration look a more distant prospect than ever.

In France, where on current polling Marine Le Pen will force Francois Hollande out of the second round of next year's presidential election, the nationalist dynamic already makes it harder to resolve the refugee crisis and – should it happen – will surely toughen any post-Brexit negotiations.

And across eastern European EU member states – not so long ago taken as a symbol of the inexorable triumph of Western values over Communism – leaders like Hungary's Viktor Orban and Slovakia's Robert Fico, talk about defending a "Christian culture" against Muslims and foreigners.

It is the same barely concealed dog-whistle rhetoric that leads the AfD to propose banning mosques – it doesn't need to happen to have an impact that ripples across Europe, pushing mainstream parties into more extreme positions and causing an open East-West rift among EU member states.

These far-Right parties also tend to sympathise with Vladimir Putin, whose own brand of nationalism led to the annexation of Crimea and now menaces the Baltic States, where nationalism is also on the rise again.

The growing influence of the far-Right in countries like Austria may also yet erode the economic sanctions on Moscow that remain one of Europe's few concerted diplomatic actions in recent years.

Thanks to the failure to keep control over the migration crisis and escape austerity-economics in the Eurozone, the far-Right drumbeat has now become the constant knocking in the pipes of Europe's politics at a time when the plumbing looks increasingly fit to burst.

The solution cannot be suppression or "more Europe" – that will have the opposite effect – but the urgent creation of what David Cameron called in his Bloomberg speech a Europe of "flexible cooperation, respecting national differences".

This may – as Mr Cameron's negotiation showed – be difficult for Europe's inner-core, but as the Freedom Party inches towards power in Austria, and Britain seriously considers the EU exit door, they should carefully consider the alternatives.



## SECTION 5: ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE ISSUE BY INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

### 17. Targeting ISIS

#### **One way that foreign powers are trying to bring to conflicts in Iraq and Syria to**

A US-led coalition of Western and Middle Eastern countries began air strikes against the group in Iraq in August 2014 and in Syria a month later. The UK began striking IS targets in Iraq in September 2014 and extended its involvement to Syria in December 2015. Russia began carrying out its own air strikes in Syria in September 2015 after a request from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who has clung on to power despite more than four years of civil war.

#### **United States**

The US air force has carried out the majority of air strikes against IS targets since forming a coalition of Western and regional powers in August 2014. President Barack Obama is extremely reluctant to send ground troops to fight IS after protracted and unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the US does have about 3,500 troops in Iraq to train the country's armed forces. The US has also provided weapons and training to "moderate" Syrian rebel groups, and unconfirmed reports suggest US special forces have been fighting alongside anti-IS forces in both Iraq and Syria.

In October US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter signalled a possible shift in the US campaign against IS, telling reporters that US forces were prepared to engage in "direct action on the ground". Mr Carter did not go into detail about the circumstances under which the US might carry out ground operations against IS, but said: "Once we locate them, no target is beyond our reach."

#### **Russia**

Russia is not part of the US-led coalition but started carrying out air strikes in Syria in September 2015. It has also launched missiles from warships in the Caspian Sea. President Vladimir Putin says his country is targeting IS strongholds and other militant fighters. However, the US fears Russia is actually targeting opponents of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is a Russian ally.

#### **Effectiveness?**

An analysis of the battlefield shows that territory held by ISIS has shrunk 12% in 2016, with losses in both western Iraq and northern Syria.

Iraqi forces have regained control of key territory including the Al-Qayyarah air-base, 75 kilometers (about 50 miles) south of the city of Mosul. ISIS seized the base two years ago when its fighters swept south to the edge of Baghdad. But ISIS continues to demonstrate resilience and versatility. Its fighters are clinging on to positions inside the Syrian town of Manbij, a critical waypoint between Raqqa -- the group's administrative headquarters -- and the Turkish border.

**However, there are concerns that the fight against Isis is creating an even worse humanitarian situation.** The [United Nations](#) warned in June 2016 that fighting against Islamic State in Iraq could force up to 2.3 million people from their homes this year, as the battle for Falluja grinds on days after Baghdad officially declared victory.

Tens of thousands of lives – and the future of Iraq – are at stake as the country's forces and Shia militias fight Isis for the city.

A loose alliance of government forces, local fighters and Shia militias, backed by airpower from the US-led coalition, has managed to push back Isis militants from large parts of the city.

The allies plan to continue across the country and eventually move against the Isis stronghold of Mosul, the largest urban centre held by the militants. But slow progress through Falluja, after the initial collapse of Isis defences, has underlined how tough the fight may be.

Meanwhile, as fears grow for tens of thousands of civilians who are living in desperate conditions after risking their lives to escape Falluja, aid organisations say far more needs to be done to support those displaced by the fighting.

## 18. Support for Regimes and groups fighting in Syria and Iraq

### **Russian Support for Assad**

The global powers which support different sides of the conflict have attempted to use military might to tip the balance of power on the battlefield in their favour. The United States has offered support to 'moderate' rebel groups fighting against President Assad's army, while Russia has provided military assistance to the Syrian regime.

By escalating its military involvement in Syria, through a concerted bombing campaign focused on destroying rebel-held strongholds, Russia has made it clear that it intends to support the Syrian government towards achieving military victory.

From the very beginning of the Russian military intervention in September 2015, it was clear that the bulk of the Russian airstrikes were being directed at the Western-backed Free Syrian Army and other "moderate groups." The Russian intervention had been prompted by the need to stabilize the client Assad government in Damascus, then getting dangerously close to losing key territory to the Free Syrian Army.

It was equally clear that the Russian intent was to eliminate any Western-backed alternatives to the government of Bashar al-Assad as a viable option and force the United States and its allies to choose between either accepting a continuation of the Assad regime or allow Syria to come under the control of radical jihadist groups like Islamic State or the al-Nusra Front.

With the tide of battle now shifted strongly in favor of Syrian military forces and both the Free Syrian Army and Islamic State on the defensive, Damascus has made it clear that Bashar al-Assad has no intention of stepping down and that the only viable "political solution" would be some kind of "national unity government" under Assad that would incorporate the more moderate elements of the anti-Assad opposition and which, with Russian and U.S. support, would continue military operations against Islamic State and the al-Nusra Front.

The Free Syrian Army has rejected its participation in any unity government that includes Assad but has indicated it would accept members of his inner circle provided they were not guilty of any "war crimes".

### **Western Support for Rebels**

In the US, White House officials offered the rebels humanitarian aid and some military gear. But they argued over whether they should provide heavy weapons and help in a more serious way.

The philosophical discussion at the White House was heated and fierce, leading to stalemate, not resolution.

For years Obama and his deputies refused to say categorically: we're not doing this. Instead a decision was postponed. Four years later, the result is a splintered Syrian opposition, the growth of the Islamic State group and a humanitarian disaster stretching across Europe.

Last year, in a move that was more symbolic than serious, Obama asked Congress for money to fund a programme allowing US personnel to teach rebels marksmanship, navigation and other skills.

The goal was to train about 15,000 rebels in Jordan and other countries so they could return to Syria and fight. However, US defence officials admitted last month that only four or five of the recruits in the programme had actually returned to the battle.



Virtually everyone in the US, including Obama, wanted to support the opposition in Syria. But the question was whether the US should send Stinger missiles and rocket-propelled grenades, or offer moral support and humanitarian aid and stay out of the conflict.

Rather than providing weapons, US officials provided food, medical kits and non-lethal military gear. Obama's national-security advisors argued that Syria was at least relatively stable with Assad in power. These advisors, as US officials who supported the programme told me, were presenting a false choice: Either Assad stays or Syria will be overrun with terrorists.

In the end, said those who supported the programme, Syria got the worst of both outcomes. They believe Obama's advisors should shoulder the blame for the failure of the programme and also for the failure of the US to help in Syria.

President Trump has exacerbated this drift away from helping Syrian rebels to Assad by stating clearly that his principal war aim is the elimination of IS. Obama had been reluctant to involve the US in another Middle East war, Trump seems happy to assist Russia and Assad to eliminate IS. Now that ISIS seem to have been defeated, America has withdrawn support from Kurdish rebels in northeastern Syria, and it remains unclear what American commitments to Syria and the wider region beyond Israel mean.

## SECTION 6: ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

### 19. UN Peace Efforts



UN security council is failing Syria, Ban Ki-moon admits, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/07/un-security-council-is-failing-syria-ban-ki-moon>

The UN secretary general, [Ban Ki-moon](#), has admitted that the UN security council is failing Syria because of big power divisions which have prevented action to end a conflict that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and driven the biggest refugee exodus in a generation.

The UN secretary general told [The Guardian](#) that [Russia](#) and China should “look beyond national interest” and stop blocking security council action on the conflict in Syria as the flow of refugees to Europe reaches unprecedented levels. “We need some solidarity, unity of purpose, particularly among the permanent members of the security council,” he said in an interview. “When they are divided, it is extremely difficult for the [United Nations](#) to deliver. That’s why I’ve been urging the members of the security council to look beyond national interest. We have to look for the global interest.

“When the security council members are united we have seen very speedy and tremendous impact in addressing the issues, as we have seen in the case of chemical weapon investigation in [Syria](#).”

Although Ban did not name [Russia](#) and [China](#), the two countries have on several occasions blocked resolutions critical of the Syrian government, threatening sanctions or pressing it towards a negotiated settlement. Last year, Moscow and Beijing also vetoed a move backed by the 13 other permanent and non-permanent members of the security council to refer the Syrian conflict for investigation by the international criminal court.

Ban had backed the referral to the ICC, saying the Syrian people “have a fundamental right to justice”.

He has previously spoken of his “shame” and “anger” at the international community’s “impotence to stop the war” in Syria, and said the UN’s credibility had suffered as a result.

There are various estimates for the death toll in Syria, extending up to more than 300,000, while about half the pre-war population of 22 million has been uprooted.

The UN high commissioner for refugees has described the exodus of people fleeing the fighting as the largest refugee crisis in a generation. About 4 million people have crossed into neighbouring countries with almost half of those going to Turkey. Tens of thousands have made the difficult and often dangerous journey to Europe.

The UNHCR said nearly 350,000 Syrians [had applied for political asylum in Europe](#) since the war began.

In August, the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, said he was confident Russia would continue to back his regime.

“We have strong confidence in the Russians, as they have proven throughout this crisis, for four years, that they are sincere and transparent in their relationship with us,” he said in an [interview with Hezbollah’s al-Manar television network](#).

Assad described Russia as “principled”, while “the United States abandons its allies, abandons its friends”.

Last month, Barack Obama called on Russia and Syria’s principal regional ally, Iran, to “recognise that the trend lines are not good for Assad”.

Speaking to [The Guardian](#) at the start of an investigative series on the future of the UN as it turns 70 this autumn, Ban acknowledged that growing demands within the UN for the security council to be reformed.

“A lot of interesting ideas have been proposed by the member states and there is widespread feeling and opinion among member states that considering such dramatic changes in political and security field in the world, the security council should change also, in a more democratic way, transparent and accountable way,” he said.

While there is frustration that international action to try to end Syria’s deepening humanitarian crisis is being blocked by Moscow and Beijing, criticism of the permanent members’ use of the veto for narrow political interest is longstanding. The US has used its veto to protect Israel from criticism more times than the total number of vetoes cast by the other permanent members combined.

## **How the disunity among UN agencies is failing Syria**, Al Jazeera 6th July 2016

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/07/disunity-agencies-failing-syria-160705073104363.html>

"The UN doesn't have to change ... the system isn't broken, it's simply broke."

This quote comes from the head of the United Nations' humanitarian office (OCHA). It was met with outrage by anyone who has witnessed first hand the UN relief effort in Syria. Despite the billions spent to date, the humanitarian response within Syria is beyond broken.

The United Nations and other aid agencies working out of Damascus cowered under the Syrian regime and have allowed their relief efforts to be sabotaged. As a consequence, aid, largely under the control of the regime, is now a vital component of its repression and control tactics.

There was a series of events in early 2011 that set the trajectory for the severely compromised aid programme we have in place in Syria today.

### **Extreme brutality**

The Syrian uprising was a few weeks old, and already the extreme brutality the Syrian regime deployed to suppress innocent demonstrators was becoming clearer by the day.

Daraa, the restive southern city that spawned the first demonstrations, was under lockdown by security forces.

At the time, as I was the director of the UN agency responsible for half a million Palestine refugees living in Syria, this was of enormous concern to me given the large number of staff and refugees caught up in the security closure.

Looking back, the lockdown was mild compared with the sieges now in place that affect, at times to the point of starvation, nearly a million people across Syria

As the first significant challenge posed by the uprising, the heads of the various UN agencies were faced with a clear choice; to band together as one United Nations and demand access to the area or to allow ourselves to be divided by the regime.

An operation was prepared to provide essential medicines to patients with chronic conditions and other critical services.

Crucially, with only a couple of exceptions, the vast majority of UN agencies kept their heads down, allowing the regime to silence any critique of its outrageous behaviour.

The heads of agencies allowed the regime to block the distribution of aid and stood by while those agencies that dared challenge them were punished with the threat of expulsion or other tactics of intimidation.

### **Silencing of the UN**

As the months rolled on, the silencing of the UN intensified. Another moment in August 2011 - after failing to secure permission for a human rights delegation to Syria, a delegation of OCHA representatives was assembled along with the heads of UN agencies to tour the country.

The basis of the delegation was perverse given that Syria was in the midst of a human rights crisis rather than a significant humanitarian situation which would come later.

Not aware of the nuances of the UN system, the local population came out in their thousands to demand action from the delegation on a range of issues including disappearances and torture of family members and more general calls for democracy.

In Homs, some locals greeting the delegation were shot dead just after the UN vehicles drove past. This incident was one of the thousands captured on YouTube footage.

While acknowledging the consequences of the deadlock in the Security Council, the UN agencies were too quick to play along with this charade.

As with later delegations, nothing was achieved by this roadshow except allowing the good offices of the UN to be sidetracked and ultimately compromised by the Syrian regime.

The consequence of these early moments of weakness has contributed to the systematic failure of the UN-led response. Rather than basing its response on need, it has developed into a billion-dollar response programme that is largely controlled by the regime and its proxies.

Simplistic view

Why has this been able to happen? A consistent argument in defence of the silence has been that the work would be jeopardised or potentially closed down if a more robust position was enforced.

Again UN agencies banding together with a clear policy of "one for all and all for one" would provide a compelling presence. Would the regime really be willing to see a multibillion-dollar operation close down?

Instead we now have a UN system that is at the mercy of a discredited regime, with little or no control over what aid goes where and to whom.

After leaving the UN I was involved in the development of a multi-million-dollar cross-border response for Save the Children out of Turkey and other surrounding countries.

For years these operations were seen almost as a direct competition by the Damascus-centred response, despite the Security Council resolutions that called for the UN to provide aid across the country.

We are left with a fragmented and disjointed collection of interventions. A fair share of the chaos that we see across the humanitarian community can be traced to our early failures in 2011.

For those outside the UN system, there is a simplistic view that the UN operates as a single powerful entity during conflict and disasters. In fact, in a situation such as Syria there are often 10 or more UN agencies operating with different mandates (sadly often in competition with one another) all with a different director. Under this system global leadership is absent. Security Council recommendations can be ignored or undermined by different agencies.

At the country level, leadership in the UN system has been a systematic failure for decades.

This situation is deplorable. There needs to be a United Nations that can develop and implement immediate and critical decisions that focus on saving lives, not careers or the competing interests of different UN agencies.

*Roger Hearn is the former head of UNRWA in Syria.*

## 20. Arab League

**Syria crisis: Arab League fails to stem conflict**, BBC News, Beirut, 24 January 2012

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16694743>

In the regional domain, the Arab League's latest proposals have been rejected out of hand by Damascus, and dubbed "unachievable" by opposition activists. The new league formula for ending the crisis is likely to become the standard adopted by Syria's international critics, which will generally increase the outside pressure on Damascus and its allies but is unlikely to produce practical results in the near future.

The new Arab plan was modelled on the template fashioned for Yemen by the Gulf states, under which the embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh left his country on Monday having devolved power to his deputy. The league suggested President Bashar al-Assad should do the same in Syria. Its plan called for a dialogue between regime and opposition, formation of a national unity government, election of a constituent assembly, a new constitution, a referendum, and free elections.

It was immediately dismissed by the Syrian authorities as part of the "ongoing conspiracy" against the country, and a "blatant interference" in its affairs.

President Assad has long since launched what he calls a "comprehensive reform process" himself, involving the drafting of a new constitution and the holding of "free" multi-party elections in the coming months. While his plans have no credibility with the opposition or its external supporters, there was no way he was going to abandon them and accept outside diktats.

The Arab plan also called for the regime and its opponents to begin a dialogue under League auspices within two weeks. That seems unlikely to happen. Neither side wants it. The regime is averse to holding talks other than under

its own umbrella. Most activists reject talking to a regime which they say has spilled too much blood for reconciliation to be possible.

The only part of the Arab League initiative that seems to have survived so far is the observer mission on the ground in Syria, whose mandate was renewed by the Arab foreign ministers for a second month on Sunday.

The monitors' report has not been made public, though their commander, Sudanese General Mohammad al-Dabi, spoke about it at length at a news conference in which he attributed violence to both sides.

He argued that the mission had helped bring down the level of bloodshed, although activists say more than 800 people have been killed by security forces since the observers began deploying in late December 2011 (until this article was written in January 2012).

The credibility of the mission - and the unity of purpose of the League effort - have already been diminished, certainly in the eyes of the Syrian regime, by Saudi Arabia's withdrawal from the observer team.

The mission could be terminally jeopardised if the League were to refer the whole affair to the UN Security Council, a step which now seems likely.

The man leading the League campaign to end the Syrian crisis, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, said that if Syria failed to adopt the new peace prescription, the League would hand the matter over to the Security Council.

In such a situation, Damascus would clearly be tempted to retaliate by asking the observer teams to leave, since the initiative on which their presence was based would have ended.

**\*This article was originally written at the beginning of January 2012. By the end of January 2012 the Arab League observer mission was suspended due to an escalation in bloodshed.\***

## 21. European Union (EU)

### Dealing with Refugee Crisis

The European Union struggled to develop an effective and principled response to the 1 million asylum seekers and migrants who reached Europe by sea during 2015.

EU governments reached agreement to increase resettlement of refugees from outside the Union and to relocate 160,000 asylum seekers who had reached Greece and Italy. However, only 272 asylum seekers had been relocated as of January 8, 2016, including a mere 82 of those in Greece, the external frontier state with the largest influx.

The European Commission brought enforcement action against 23 member states over their failure to respect the standards of the EU common asylum system, including Hungary, which responded to large numbers of arrivals by erecting fences and detaining and criminalizing asylum seekers crossing its border without permission.

The EU governments repeatedly sought to shift responsibility onto countries outside the EU, including through a problematic migration deal in November with Turkey, the main transit country into the EU for asylum seekers and migrants, which already hosts more than 2 million Syrians.

### Aid and the Situation in Syria

 **Refugee crisis: Medical charity MSF rejects funding from UK and other EU nations over 'shameful' response,** Friday 17 June 2016

One of the largest charities helping migrants across Europe has announced that it will no longer accept funds from the European Union and its member states in protest against the “shameful response” to the refugee crisis. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has long called for the creation of safe routes into the continent and joined countless other humanitarian organisations condemning the deal made with Turkey to detain and deport asylum seekers in Greece.

Jerome Oberreit, the charity's International Secretary General, said: “For months MSF has spoken out about a shameful European response focused on deterrence rather than providing people with the assistance and protection they need.

“The EU-Turkey deal goes one step further and has placed the very concept of “refugee” and the protection it offers in danger.”

An estimated 8,000 people, including hundreds of unaccompanied children, are currently trapped on Greek islands under the terms of the EU-Turkey deal, which will see them deported if their asylum applications fail, without legal aid.

MSF said their plight shows the “human cost” of the controversial agreement made in March, which is seeing migrants held for several months in overcrowded camps, where fights, fires and violent protests have broken out. The number of people crossing the Aegean Sea in smugglers’ boats has steeply declined since the new rules came into force but asylum seekers, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, continue to arrive. Most of the almost 3,000 deaths recorded this year have been in a succession of disasters on the Central Mediterranean route between Libya and Italy. Proponents of the EU-Turkey deal, which the European Commission is considering replicating across more than 16 countries in Africa and the Middle East, argued that it aimed to reduce drownings at sea.

“Deterrence policies sold to the public as humanitarian solutions have only exacerbated the suffering of people in need,” Mr Oberreit said.

“There is nothing remotely humanitarian about these policies. It cannot become the norm and must be challenged. “MSF will not receive funding from institutions and governments whose policies do so much harm. We are calling on European governments to shift priorities - rather than maximizing the number of people they can push back, they must maximize the number they welcome and protect.” A spokesperson for MSF said its refusal of European state funding would take immediate effect and apply to its projects worldwide, condemning the unacceptable “instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid”.

The charity accused the EU of setting a dangerous precedent attempting to force people to stay in the countries they are desperate to flee, sparking border closures leading back to Isis territory near Azaz in Syria, where 100,000 civilians are trapped between the closed Turkish border and front lines.

“Europe’s attempt to outsource migration control is having a domino effect, with closed borders stretching all the way back to Syria,” Mr Oberreit said. “People increasingly have nowhere to turn.” The organisation has treated an estimated 200,000 people in Europe and in boats on the Mediterranean Sea over the past 18 months and is working with refugees across the continent, as well as in the Middle East and Africa. As well as running clinics at borders and in refugee camps, it operates three search and rescue ships in the Mediterranean that picked up more than 1,300 in just 36 hours last week. It said its rejection of EU funding would not affect patients, and that its activities are already 92 per cent privately-funded. MSF received €19 million from EU institutions in 2015 and another €37 million from member states, as well as working in partnership with the UK and nine other countries.

## SECTION 7: SAMPLE ESSAYS

The *World Issues* can be worth 20 marks in the final exam.

You can also choose an issue from this unit to focus on in your Assignment if you like. Your teacher will look at ideas for possible titles with you.

You will also need to prove “minimum competency” to the SQA by passing Unit Assessment outcomes relating to World Issues throughout the year.

The World Issues questions in your exam will look like the examples below. Remember that you must clearly state at the start **what** your World Issue is.

A 12-mark extended response question (mini-essay).  
You must answer 1 question out of a choice of 2.

**OR**

A 20-mark essay question. You must answer  
1 of these questions from a choice of 2.

### Sample 12-mark questions.

With reference to a world issue you have studied...

1. Analyse the role of international organisations in attempting to resolve this issue. (SQA 2015)
2. Analyse the different factors which have caused this issue. (SQA 2015)
3. Analyse the factors which have caused this issue. (SQA EQP)
4. Analyse the ways in which international organisations have responded to the issue (SQA EQP)
5. Analyse the actions taken by international organisations to resolve the issue. (Hodder Gibson model paper 2)
6. Analyse the consequences of the issue on those affected. (Hodder Gibson model paper 2).
7. *“International organisations attempt to resolve world issues.”* Evaluate the success of international organisations in resolving a world issue you have studied. (Hodder Gibson model paper 3).
8. *“World issues are caused by a mixture of political and/or socio-economic problems.”* Evaluate the extent to which a world issue you have studied has been caused by only political problems. (Hodder Gibson model paper 3).
9. Evaluate the impact of the issue on the individuals and groups affected. (SQA 2016)
10. Evaluate the effectiveness of international organisations in addressing this issue. (SQA 2016)
11. Analyse the difficulties faced by those trying to resolve the issue. (SQA 2017)
12. Analyse the effects of the world issue on countries and their Governments. (SQA 2017)

### Sample 20-mark questions

13. *“International organisations have been successful in resolving a significant world issue.”* Discuss with reference to a world issue you have studied. (SQA SQP)
14. To what extent has a world issue you have studied had an impact in different countries? (SQA SQP)
15. *“International organisations must reform to be more effective when dealing with the contemporary world.”* Discuss, with reference to the world issue you have studied. (SQA 2011 QC12, adapted)
16. *“An international issue can be caused by a range of political, social and economic factors.”* Discuss, with reference to a world issue you have studied. (Hodder Gibson model paper 1)
17. To what extent has a world issue you have studied been solved by international organisations? (Hodder Gibson model paper 1).
18. To what extent are some factors which cause this issue more important than others? SQA 2018

19. Attempts to resolve this issue have been successful. SQA 2018  
Discuss.

20. To what extent does the issue have an effect on the wider international community? SQA 2019

21. To what extent has the response by individual countries to this issue been effective? SQA 2019