

Same Revolution, Different Outcome: Why Did the Syrian Regime Survive the Arab Spring?

Adam Alrowaiti, MS,^{1,2}; Colin Flint, PhD,¹

¹ Utah State University, Department of Political Science, Logan, UT, USA.

² King Abdulaziz University, Department of Political Science, Jeddah, KSA.



Background:

The Arab world witnessed an unusual phenomenon in 2011, “The Arab Spring.” Waves of massive demonstrations occurred in many Arab capitals and major cities with the public demanding freedom, justice, and equality. The protests began in late December 2010 in Tunisia and inspired equally large demonstrations in Arab countries such as Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria, as well as smaller scale demonstrations in other Arab countries. By early 2012 many regimes in the Arab world had been changed by the people. Many dictatorships were forced to give up their authority as the result of the public demands. However, not all of these Arab uprisings ended well; unfortunately for some of them, Syria in particular, the aftermath of the protests turned into chaos and civil war.

Keywords:

Syrian War, Arab Spring, Syrian revolution

CONTACT

<Adam Alrowaiti>
 <Utah state University, The Department of Political Science>
 Email: adam.m.r@Hotmail.com
 Phone: 4355121672

Objectives

The Syrian revolution became an ongoing disaster. After five years since the beginning of the Syrian uprising against the Al-Assad’s regime, the revolution has yet to accomplish its goals. The Syrian regime maintains its authority and the revolution has become a massive civil war that is far bloodier than the one suffered by Libya. The variation in the outcome between the Syrian case and the other cases of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya (especially the Libyan case) is the main puzzle of this research.

Variables

The variable	Syria	Libya
Sunni-Shia conflict	yes	no
Dictatorship regime	yes	yes
Military stood with the regime	yes	no
Regime allied with major powers	yes	no
Lawful foreign intervention	no	yes
Foreign intervention is in favor of the rebels	no	yes
President’s character differs from the social majority	yes	no
Civil war occurred	yes	yes
Islamic fundamentalist groups have a direct role	yes	no

Analysis

The Character of the Dictator:

1- Bashar Al-Assad inherited power over Syria via his father Hafez Al-Assad. 2- Al-Assad has installed many people of his family in important positions within the governmental structure. 3-The Al-Assad family belongs to the Alawite minority, while the majority of the Syrian population belongs to the main stream Sunni. 4- In comparison to the other Arab presidents, Bashar is the youngest, and he is considered as one of the second generation of Arab leaders since the end of the colonization era after the World War II.

The Role of the Military:

1- The Syrian army remains loyal to the regime, and the matter of disobedience is not an issue to the Syrian regime. 2- The Syrian army has acted in a far more ruthless manner against rebels than in any of the other Arab countries in the period since the Arab Spring. 3- The factor that Al-Assad’s regime is anti-Sunni also helped the regime to gain more control of the military.

The Structure of Syrian Society:

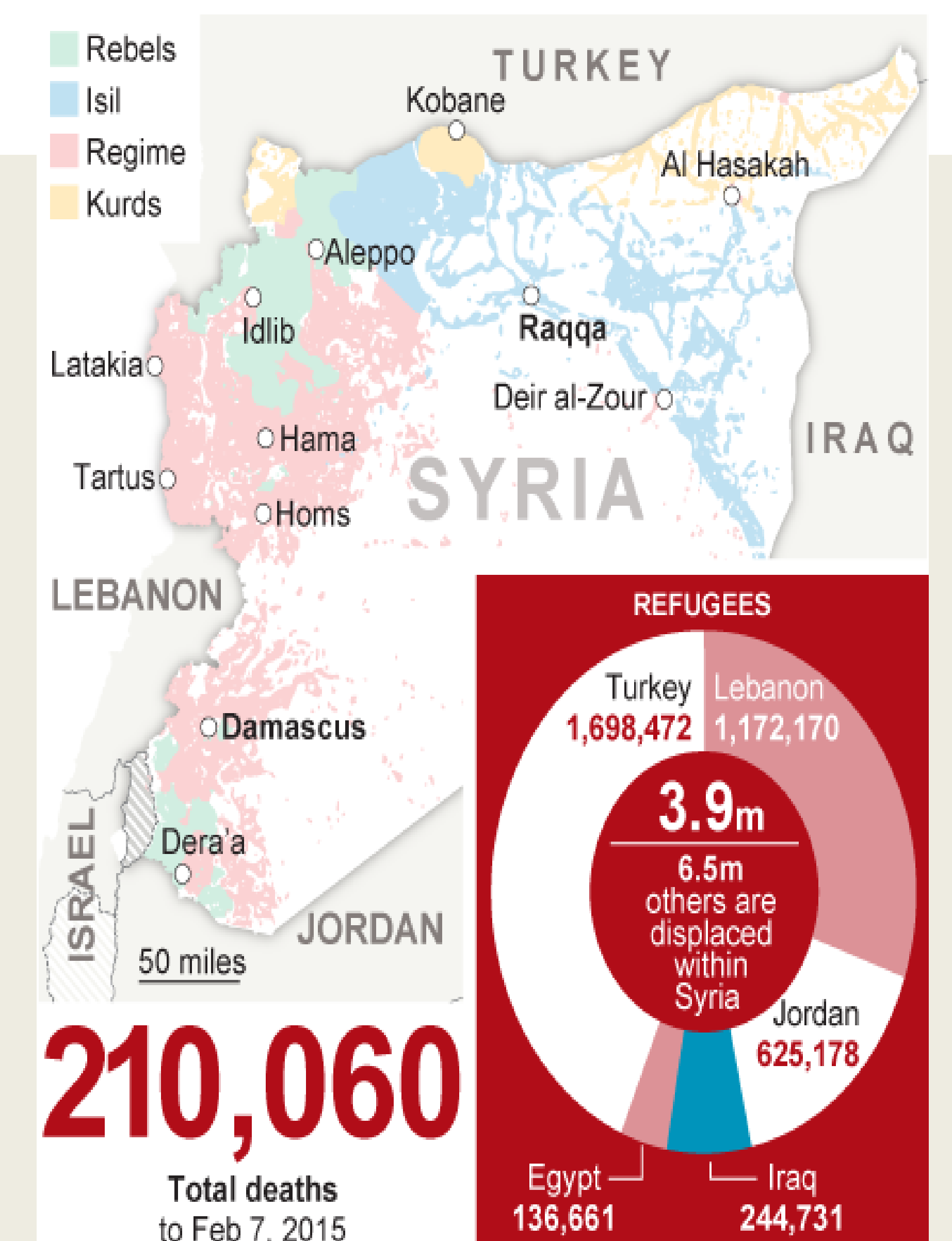
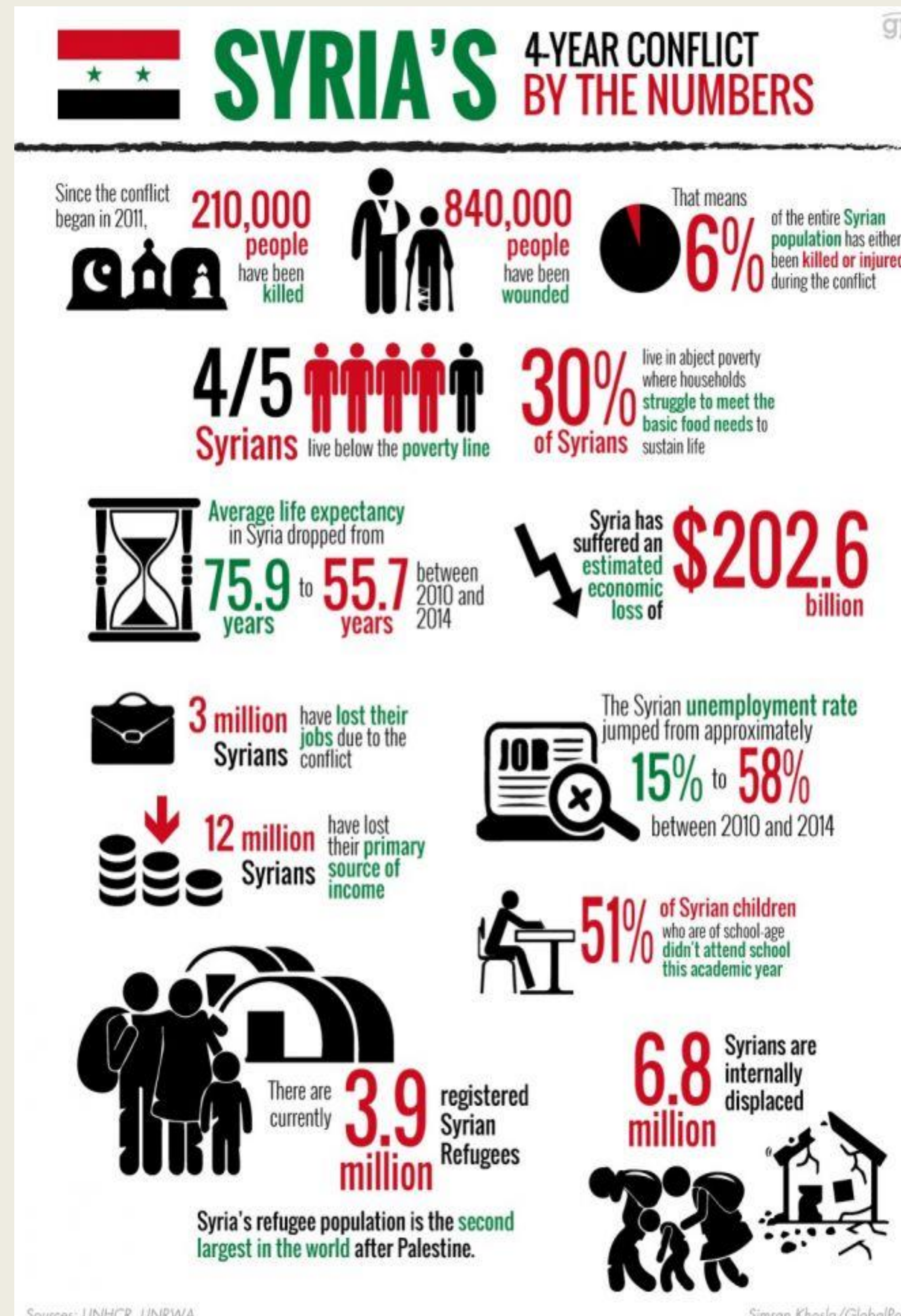
1- Three cleavages are evident in Syrian society; Unfortunately for Syria, the revolution has been converted into a field for ideological and sectarian struggle between the rebels themselves. 2- Beside the doctrinal divergence, the structure of the Syrian society has suffered from an ethnic conflict between the Arab majority and the Kurds minority.

Foreign Intervention:

1- The Syrian regime received strong support politically and, most importantly, on the ground in actual fighting, from two alliances: Iran represented the regional power, and Russia represented the international power. 2- Foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict has altered the balance of power amongst the belligerents.

Conclusion

The uprising of Syria has converted into a massive war, the regime is still in power, the rebels are divided, and the country has torn apart. Unlike the other Arab States which faced the Arab spring movement, Syria struggles of disastrous consequences of the revolution, and the main goal of the movement seems to be far to reach. Al-Assad has survived the revolution for roughly five years and has led his country towards destruction. Instead of accomplishing freedom, justice, and equality the Syrians are suffering from the destruction of the country as the outcome of an uprising that lost its way.



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