

SYRIA IN CRISIS



ANALYSIS

Breaking down, making connections

Overview

The goal of this task is to **analyze** the crisis in Syria. You will break the conflict down by **identifying** its causes and effects, **inferring** goals and connections between groups of people, and **evaluating** possible courses of action by the US government (establishing the pros and cons of each).

Follow the directions given on each slide.

Complete your requirements on a separate sheet of paper.

TASK #1: Watch this [video summary](#) about the Syrian crisis.
Copy and answer/respond to these items:

1. The government of Syria is controlled by Alawites, which is a small religious group within Shi'ite Islam. Most Syrians, however, practice _____ Islam.
2. Why did Syrians start protesting against the Assad government in 2011 (what events in Tunisia and Egypt inspired them to do so)?
3. How did Assad respond to the peaceful protests of the Syrians? So what?
4. How did the states of Saudi Arabia and Iran respond to the start of the Syrian civil war? Why did each state respond as it did (hint: question #1)?
5. How did the Islamic State respond after the civil war began?
6. The involvement of the Russians and Americans is complicated. How so?
7. Which neighboring countries is the Syrian civil war affecting the most? How?

TASK #2: Watch this [video summary](#) about ISIS (the Islamic State).
Re-write these *events* (not just the #) in correct sequential order.

1. The USA invades Iraq and overthrows its Sunni leader, Saddam Hussein.
2. An Al-Qaeda group known as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) sets up a terrorist branch, called Jabhat al-Nusra, in Syria to fight with the rebels against Assad.
3. A civil war between Sunni rebels and US-backed Shia forces rips apart Iraq.
4. Assad does little to stop ISIS. His enemies struggle: *Focus on ISIS or Assad?*
5. Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, Al-Qaeda, attacks the USA on 9/11/2001.
6. ISIS is slowed by Kurdish forces and by a series of US military strikes.
7. ISI grows, becomes ISIS, and declares its control over Iraq and Syria. Al-Qaeda and its Jabhat al-Nusra group in Syria reject ISIS.
8. Civil war begins in Syria after the success of the 2010-2011 Arab Spring.

TASK #3: Watch this *second* [video summary](#) about Syria (*and* ISIS).
Copy the following prompts, and write responses.

1. Identify the 4 *main* sides of the Syrian conflict, AND list each group's allies.
2. Why does Assad support the arrival of extremists who want to defeat him?
3. Iran supports the Lebanese extremist group _____ to fight with/for Assad. Meanwhile, the Gulf States (i.e. Saudi Arabia) support the rebels against Assad. The conflict is now more than a civil war between the Syrian government and its people; it is also a _____ war between Iran and Arabia. [hint: 1:35]
4. Why did the USA not bomb Assad's forces after the chemical attacks in 2013?
5. The USA is allied with the Kurds against ISIS and with Turkey against Assad. What's the problem???
6. Russia's actions in 2015 are very suspicious. Why???

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Enrich your understanding

The relationship between the USA and Russia has been tense since the early 1900s. The peak of tension was a decades-long rivalry known as the Cold War.

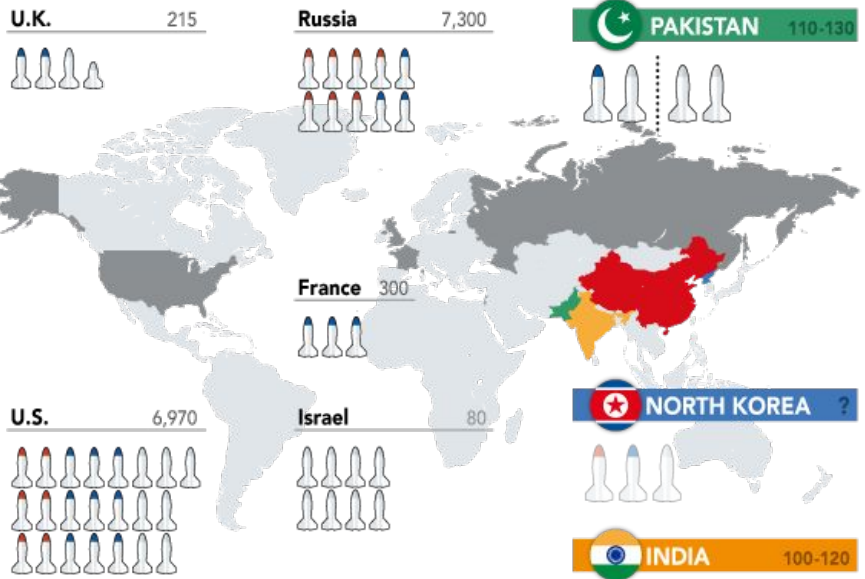


The Cold War Essential Summary

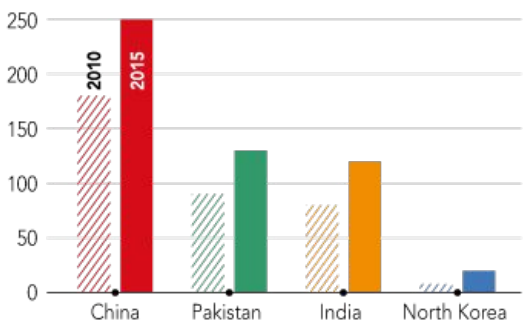
The Cold War was the rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union which included no actual fighting. The U.S. was democratic and believed in capitalism, a free market system. The Soviet Union was a dictatorship that supported communism, in which the government controlled all production and distribution. These conflicting beliefs led to competition in weapons, technology, and world power. As communism spread, the United States tried to stop it through a policy of containment. American people reacted to spreading communism and the threat of nuclear war with preparedness, and at times paranoia. Due to cooperation and diplomacy, this rivalry never led to outright war.

How did the Cold War impact nuclear development?

World nuclear weapon status in 2016*



Asian nations' rising warhead tallies



*Estimate
Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Federation of American Scientists

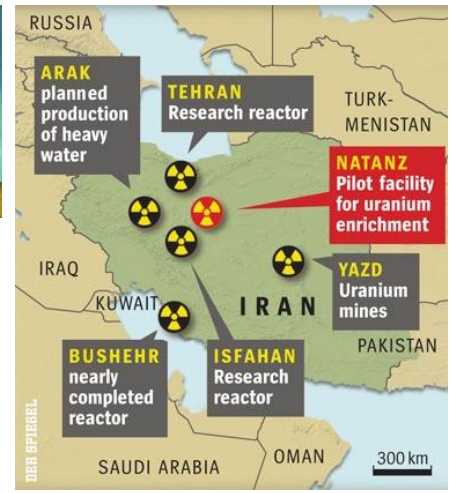


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Enrich your understanding



What's the point?



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1. Watch the opening scene of the film *ARGO* about the 1979-1980 US hostage crisis in Iran. Summarize: Why is the US-Iran relationship so tense?
2. The states of Iran and Saudi Arabia are the major powers of the Middle East. They are not friends. What are some sources of tension between the two? And what might happen if the two powers fought?!?!?
3. Perhaps with the exception of Israel, Saudi Arabia's is the United States' most significant ally in the Middle East. Why?

To what extent should the USA intervene in the Syrian crisis?

- **No intervention: ISOLATIONISM**
 - Incentives costs of non-interventionism? Costs?
- **Limited interventionism: HUMANITARIAN RELIEF**
 - What kind of aid? Aid to whom? Policy re. refugees? Costs?
- **Significant interventionism: INDIRECT MILITARY ASSISTANCE**
 - To whom should arms, training, & intelligence go? Mission? Costs?
- **Full-scale interventionism: DIRECT MILITARY ENGAGEMENT**
 - What should be the primary (only?) mission? Costs?