



American Foreign Policy

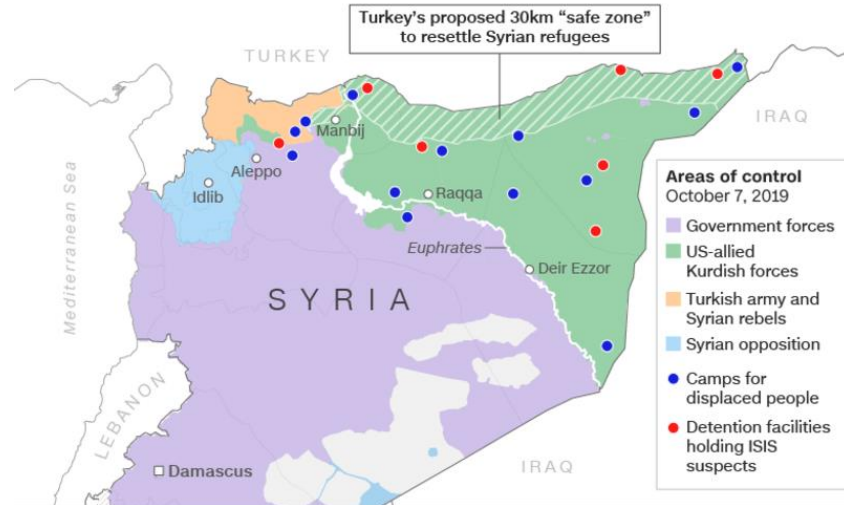
November 11, 2019 | Veterans Day



What's going on in Syria?



- Syria has been in a civil war since 2011, leaving 500,000 dead and 12 million displaced (Human Rights Watch)
 - Began as an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, grew more complicated when ISIS declared new state there in 2014



CNN Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, Institute for the Study of War
Graphic: Tamara Gblawi and Henrik Pettersson, CNN

A vintage-style world map with a color palette of greens, yellows, and reds, showing geographical features and place names in French. The map is partially obscured by a white text box with a blue border.

What's going on in Syria?



- The United States has been involved at different levels since 2011
 - In December 2018, Trump unilaterally ordered the withdrawal of our 2,500 ground troops over 90 days
 - In February 2019, the U.S. announced a contingency force of 400, to remain indefinitely
 - In October 2019, Trump ordered all U.S. forces to withdraw from Kurdish-administered northern Syria ahead of a Turkish incursion

What's going on in Syria?



- Why it matters
 - Pentagon says President Trump wanted to protect troops and keep them out of crossfire, DOES NOT endorse Turkish operation in northern Syria
 - Thousands of ISIS fighters are held in pop-up detention facilities that are being maintained by the Kurds
 - Turkey thinks the Kurds are aligned with a terrorist group (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
 - Turkey might not have capacity or will to oversee them
 - We're stuck in the middle: Turkey or Kurds?

Political Responses to the Syrian Mess



- Lindsey Graham

AXIOS

- "What President Trump has put in motion is dishonorable. You don't leave an ally who was there when no one else would be to fight ISIS. To abandon these people is a real shitshow, and I'm hoping President Trump will reconsider."
- "The president did a really good job destroying the caliphate, but he's about to make the biggest mistake of his presidency and I hope he adjusts."
- "It will certainly lead to the return of ISIS, and I told the president that if you think they're just going to Europe, that's crazy. They will come here if they can."

Political Responses to the Syrian Mess



- Tulsi and Pete





What's going on in North Korea?

- The U.S. and North Korea have been in negotiation of sorts since spring of 2018 when Trump visited Kim Jong Un face to face
 - South Korean President Moon and Japanese Prime Minister Abe agreed Trump deserved Nobel Peace Prize
- Three summits later (Singapore, Hanoi, and DMZ): little progress has been made
 - NK has mostly restrained from nuclear tests and released some U.S. prisoners, but refuses to end nuclear weapons program
- Feels like we're caught in an endless cycle

What's going on with Russia?



- A lot
 - But I want to focus on our secretive digital war
- DHS and the FBI report that Russia has inserted malware that could sabotage power plants, oil pipelines, and water supplies in any future conflict with the US
- The US has probes into Russia's electric grid control systems (placed in 2012)
 - Strategy is shifting more toward offense: "Defend forward"
- US Cyber Command overwhelmed computer systems at Russia's Internet Research Agency (at heart of hacking during 2016 election)
- Concern Russia might try selective power blackouts in key states in 2020 elections

SYRIA



- Do you think the United States made the right decision to almost completely leave northern Syria rather than attempt to stop Turkey's invasion?
 - Where should our loyalties lie: with our NATO ally Turkey, or with the Kurds, who helped us defeat ISIS?
 - If a Turkish invasion leads to ISIS' resurgence, do you think the United States has a new, higher obligation to take in refugees?
- Days after his initial comments, Graham changed his tune on Trump's decision, and said he's "impressed" with the White House's handling of the situation. Politically, how should hawkish Republicans navigate this situation? Do you agree with Graham's initial comments, or do you agree with his revision?
- Pete and Tulsi are both veterans, who seem to have opposing viewpoints on what to do in Syria, and the rest of the Middle-East. In what ways do you agree/disagree with both of them?

NORTH KOREA & RUSSIA



- Was it right for President Trump to have met with Kim Jong Un at all?
 - Could the first summit have been justified to at least try to make peace?
- If the North Koreans hypothetically launched a nuclear weapon at the United States, what type of response would be warranted?
 - Does it make a difference if they target a territory like Guam? What if they attack South Korea or Japan?
- Is a nation's power grid (or other critical infrastructure that keeps homes, factories, and hospitals running) a legitimate target for online attack?
- What should the United States do if Russia turns off power in key states? What are the consequences of this threat to our democracy?
- What's the end game with North Korea? With Russia? Will our problems with them outlive the rule of their dictators?