

***SECTARIANISM, COMMUNALISM
AND JIHADISM IN
THE MIDDLE EAST***

February 2013

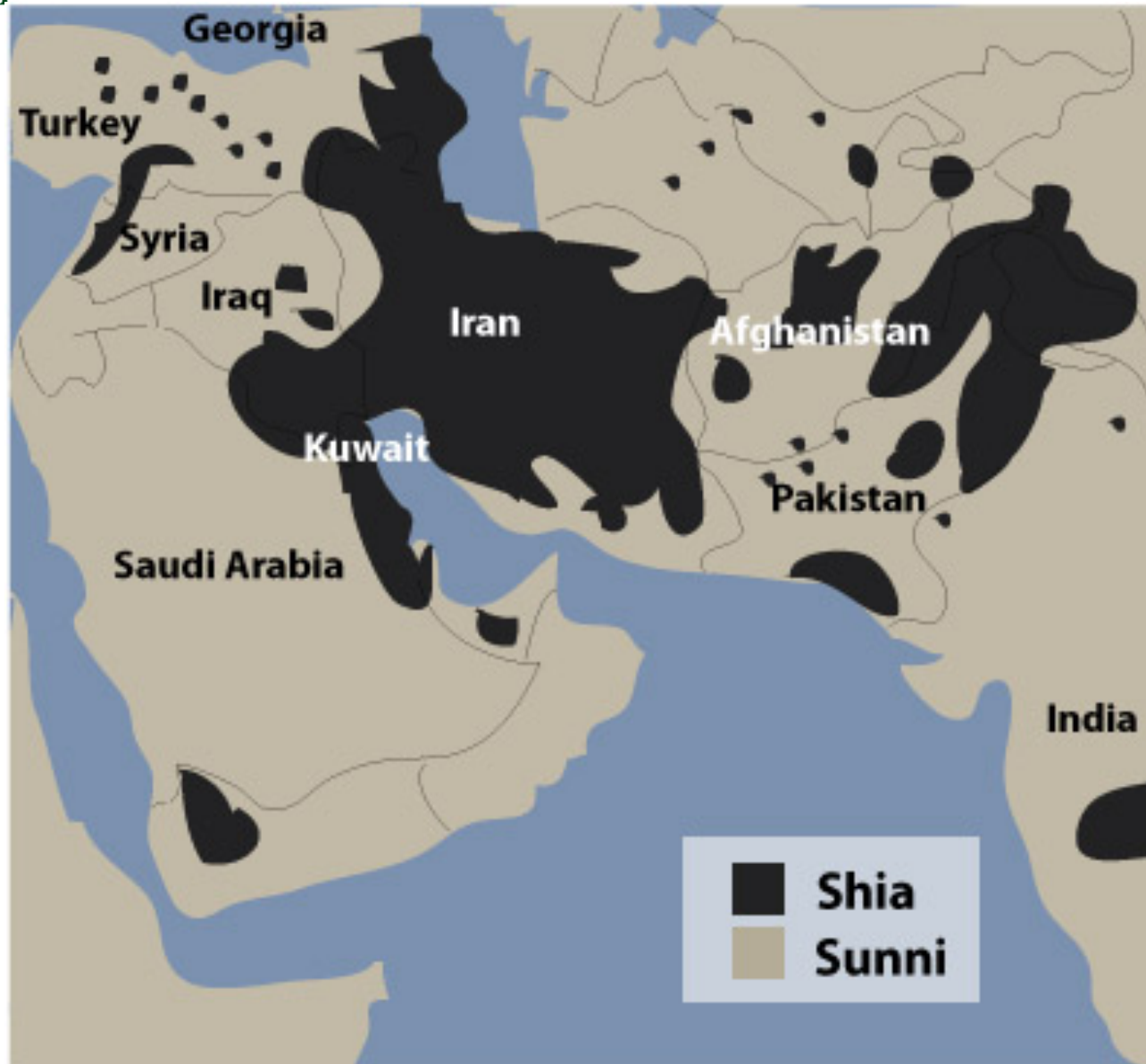
HUGH McLEOD, DIRECTOR STIRLING ASSYNT



AGENDA

- **Syrian civil war**
- **Scenarios**
- **Regional impact**
- **Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq**
- **...and more widely**

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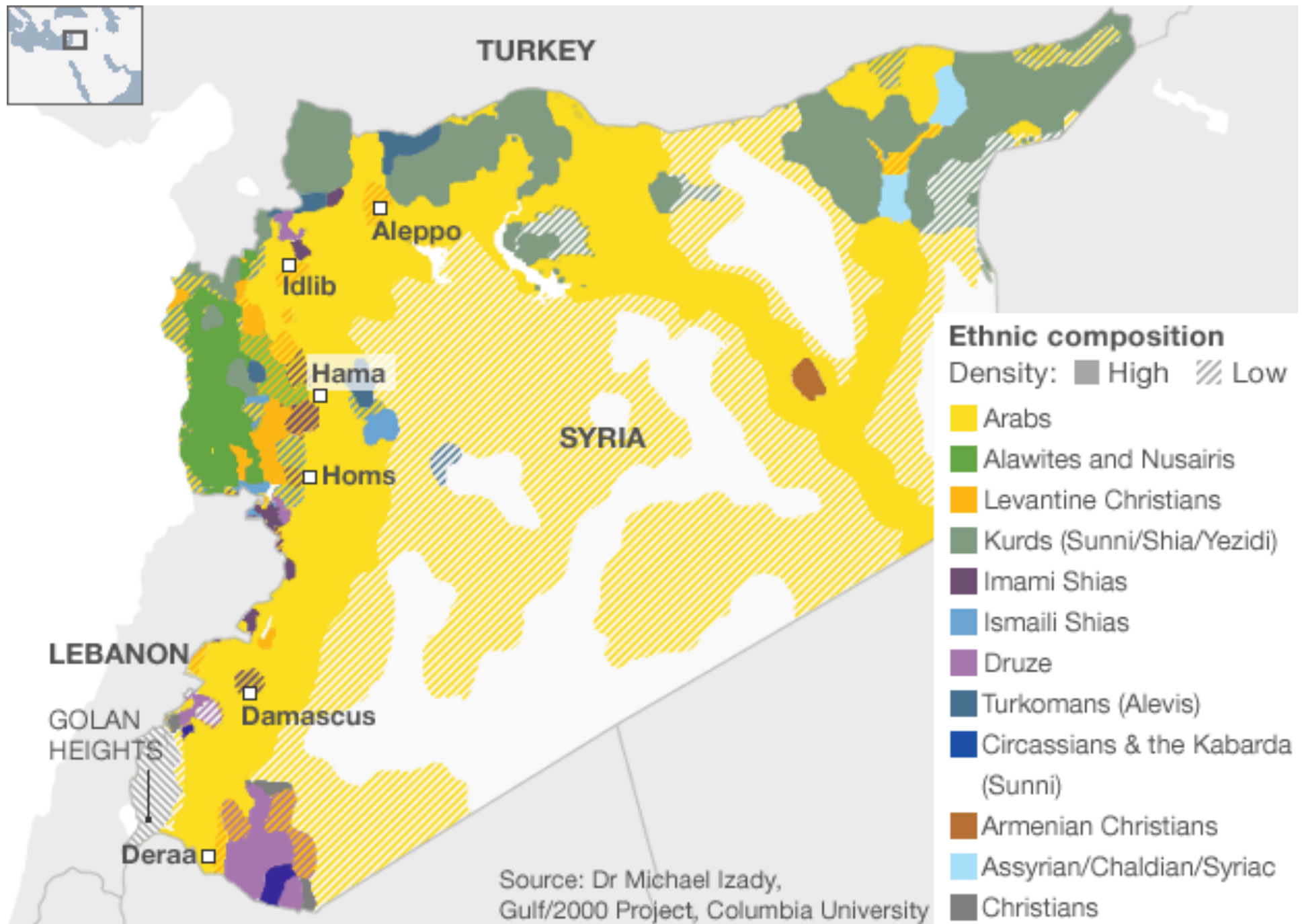
PLAYERS

Sunni:

- Muslim Brotherhood
- Salafists
- Al-Qaeda

Shia:

- Iran
- Hizballah

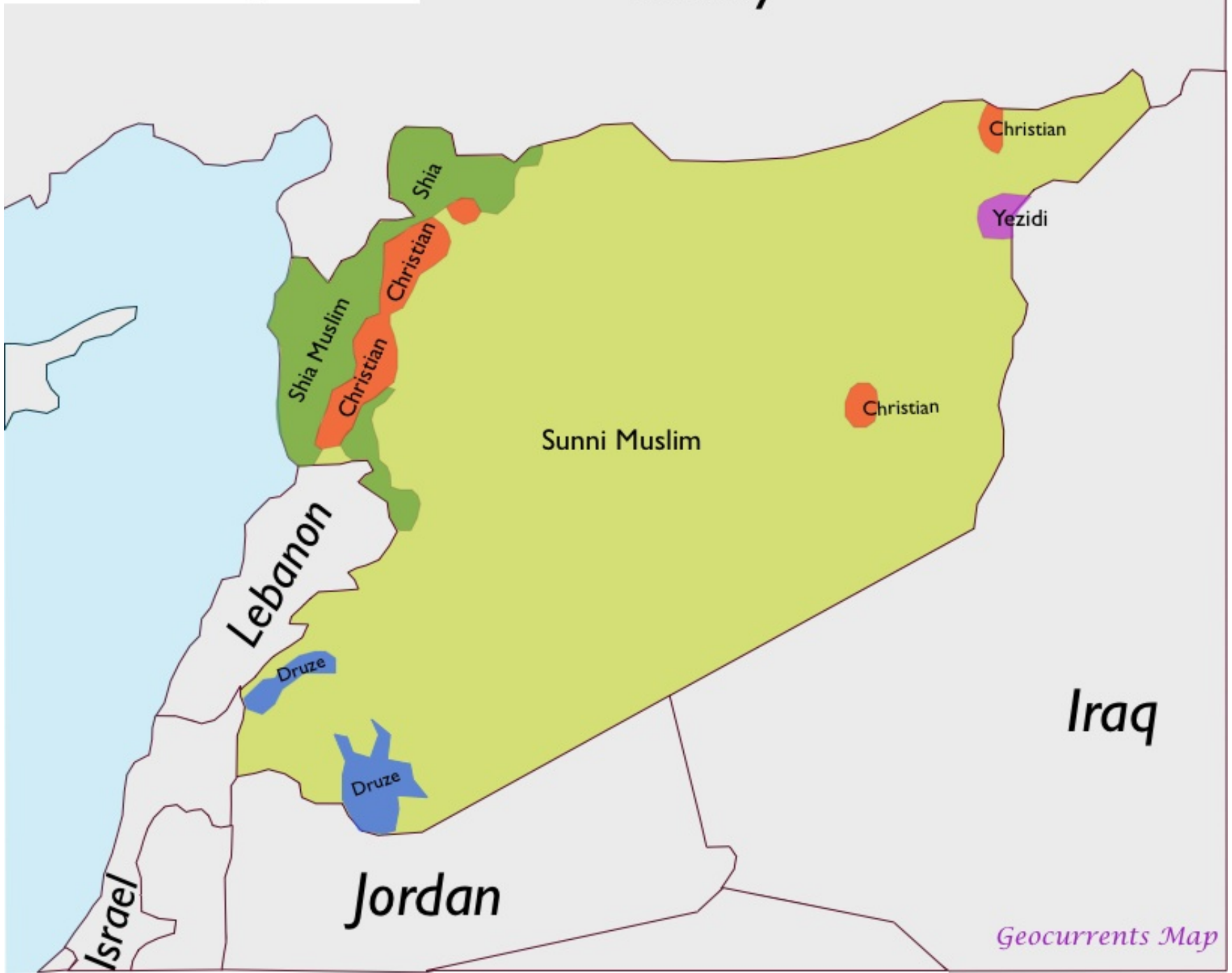


Is it ethnically or religiously divided?



Note: Alawites mapped as Shia

Turkey



SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

- **80% Sunni, Alawite regime**
- **Regime controls capital, ports, routes**
- **Increasingly jihadist uprising despite FSA, NCSRO**
- **14 jihadist groups reject High Military Council; declare Islamic Emirate in Aleppo**
- **Movement of foreign jihadists to Syria; growing prominence of Jerusalem in group's rhetoric, attacks on Christians**

SYRIAN CIVIL WAR (cont.)

- **Fighting between FSA and pro-Assad Kurds; PYD on Turkish border; PKK threats**
- **Clashes between pro- & anti-Assad Palestinians**
- **Tension exiles-FSA; controversial NCSRO suggestion of talks**
- **Sectarianism, communalism & jihadism will characterise post-Assad Syria**

SYRIAN SCENARIO 1

REBEL VICTORY, UNITARY STATE REMAINS

- **Ethnic divisions rather than tribes or regions (Alawites now just one of several)**
- **Kurdish autonomy (but Islamists, Turkey oppose)**
- **Radical Islamist militias remain**
- **Muslim Brotherhood will dominate**
- **...but how would this scenario come about?**

SYRIAN SCENARIO 2

FEDERAL STATE

- **Alawites in Latakia/Tartus; and the rest**
- **...or up to 4 regions: Druze/Alawite/Kurd/Sunni Arab (+Iraqis) – questionable mini-states**
- **Sunni and Shia Islamist militias remain**
- **Perpetual conflict, and Damascus would have to fall first**

SYRIAN SCENARIO 3

PROLONGED CIVIL WAR

- **Damascus not ready to fall, rebel gains insecure**
- **Intensifying factionalism - regions of influence from neighbours**
- **We fear a rebel victory because of jihadists (consequent inaction by West)**
- **Reasons for Assad to step down?**
- **Increasing danger of regional escalation/ mistakes**

IMPACT OF SYRIA

- **Concept of jihad seen as acceptable by regional powers; boost for al-Qaeda**
- **Sectarianism throughout region; tweets of hate**
- **Refugee movements across borders**
- **Kurdish rebel presence on Turkish border**
- **Last-ditch chemical attack on Israel?**
- **Jihadist, Palestinian targeting of Israel**

LEBANON

- **Increased sectarian tensions, every element of Syria reflected here**
- **Assad's terrorism**
- **Dysfunctional government**
- **Grave peril**
- **...but key actors committed to avoiding civil war**

TURKEY

- **Damascus sponsors left-wing groups inside Turkey, Feb attack**
- **Kurdish insurgency in south-east intensified, truce will be difficult**
- **Possible Turkish cross-border action**
- **Article 5 of North Atlantic Treaty**

IRAQ

- **Inflexible Shia govt shuns Sunni, polarised**
- **Militants of both sects in Syria; AQI-JaN**
- **Perceived as part of Iran-led axis**
- **Instability in NW (Kurdish tensions etc)**
- **...but violence of 2005-2007 unlikely to return**
- **Consequences of disenfranchised Sunni**
- **Iraqi Shia support for Assad will increase as his regime comes under more pressure**

OTHERS

- **Israel, Jordan less affected in near term, but Israel always on jihadists' agenda**
- **Damascus unlikely to use missiles on Israel**
- **Jordan will pursue balanced relations**
- **Heightened tensions between Gulf and Iran (but other issues will define relations – Shia discontent)**
- **Muslim Brotherhood strengthened**
- **Al-Qaeda recruits and raise funds – home states affected (reap whirlwind)**

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