



## **UN Chief, China and Germany, Prioritize Syrian Stability to Resolve Refugee Crisis**

**Dr Christina Lin**

**November 2015**

### **Abstract**

---

Germany and EU are currently facing a refugee crisis that is overwhelming the population and threatening to destabilize Europe. In order to stem the migration flow, the great powers need to come together and work towards an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Syria, to eventually pave way for a political solution to end the war. Moreover, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar – backed by US CIA – need to stop holding EU, the Syrian population and regional countries hostage to their agenda of intensifying the war in order to remove Assad.

### **About ISPSW**

---

The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is objective and task oriented, and impartial to party politics.

In an ever more complex international environment of globalized economic processes and worldwide political, ecological, social and cultural change, that bring major opportunities but also risks, decision makers in enterprises and politics depend more than ever before on the advice of highly qualified experts.

ISPSW offers a range of services, including strategic analyses, security consultancy, executive coaching and intercultural competency. ISPSW publications examine a wide range of topics relating to politics, economy, international relations, and security/defence. ISPSW network experts have operated in executive positions, in some cases for decades, and command wide-ranging experience in their respective areas of specialization.

### **About the Author of this Issue**

---

Dr Christina Lin is a Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at SAIS-Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of "The New Silk Road: China's Energy Strategy in the Greater Middle East" (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy), and a former director for China policy at the U.S. Department of Defense.



*Christina Lin*

## Analysis

In 2003 Germany opposed US invasion of Iraq, and again in 2011 when US bombed the Gaddafi regime that tragically transformed Libya from a relatively stable country to a failed state.<sup>1</sup>

Now Germany is on the receiving end of nearly one million refugees as a result of western penchant for regime change in the greater Middle East.

The Iraq War cost an estimated 100,000 lives from the population and nearly 5,000 US troops, with more than 30,000 troops wounded whose lives and those of their families are changed forever. Now Iraq is a failing state overrun by ISIS, with UNHCR estimating there are currently 370,000 refugees from Iraq, 4 million from Syria, and between 600,000 and one million Libyans are living precariously in neighboring Tunisia.<sup>2</sup>

Angela Merkel, currently under intense pressure because of the refugee crisis, visited Beijing on October 29 to seek a political solution for the Syrian conflict. For Berlin, stability and peace in Syria are more important now than regime change or punishing Assad.



Merkel meets with Xi on October 29, 2015

Writing in *Deutsche Welle*, China watcher Frank Sieren observed Beijing and Berlin's views are surprisingly similar regarding Syria, on allowing Syrians to decide about their own future and whether Assad stays or goes, as well as maintaining unity and territorial integrity of the country.<sup>3</sup>

UN chief Ban Ki-moon reinforces this view.<sup>4</sup> Exasperated by great powers' parochial interests in preserving or punishing Assad and prolonging the conflict and suffering of the Syrian people, Ban exhorted all powers to put aside their differences for a ceasefire in face of the large scale humanitarian disaster.

However, Obama submitted once again to Turkey and Saudi demands to inflame the conflict and increase arms supply to the jihadi opposition groups, thereby ushering more bloodbath for the Syrians, and driving additional refugees towards Europe and especially Germany.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Iraq War Seen as 'Strategic Failure by Many', *Spiegel Online*, 20 March 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/german-press-criticizes-us-on-10-year-anniversary-of-iraq-war-a-889962.html>; "France and Germany unite against Iraq War", *The Guardian*, 22 January 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jan/22/germany.france>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, "The World at War", *UNHCR Global Trends—Forced Displacement in 2014*, [http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#\\_ga=1.120039752.1140273933.1441369136](http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#_ga=1.120039752.1140273933.1441369136); Philip Giraldi, "A Refugee Crisis Made in America—Philip Geiraldi", *Veterans Now*, 18 September 2015, <http://www.veteransnewsnow.com/2015/09/18/521704a-refugee-crisis-made-in-america-philip-geiraldi/>

<sup>3</sup> "Sieren's China: No fast peace in Syria", *Deutsche Welle*, 4 November 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/sierens-china-no-fast-peace-in-syria/a-18829095>

<sup>4</sup> "UN chief calls for Syria solution with future of Assad 'decided by the Syrian people'", *Deutsche Welle*, 31 October 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/un-chief-calls-for-syria-solution-with-future-of-assad-decided-by-the-syrian-people/a-18819312>



Meanwhile, as various world powers bicker over the fate of one Syrian man, ISIS continues to expand.

### **ISIS Wahhabism, not Assad, is main threat**

Nathalie Tocci, special advisor to the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, in November 2014 criticized that Turkey's Syrian policy is inherently contradictory. In pursuing the three goals of (1) removing Assad; (2) warring against PKK; and (3) defeating ISIS, they are incompatible in the short term.<sup>6</sup>

She argued that absent western boots on the ground, the only way to defeat ISIS militarily is via the Kurds and the Syrian regime "as unpalatable as this may be for Ankara." Given ISIS cannot be defeated by Kurds alone, Tocci noted, "the hard truth is that the Assad regime and Hizbollah in Syria (and Lebanon) and Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq are essential ingredients of the fight."

She encouraged Turkey to prioritize countering ISIS and pursuing Kurdish peace, and set aside regime change given Ankara has coexisted with Syria and Iran for centuries, while ISIS's Wahhabism poses an existential threat to Turkey.

Tocci added: "an anti-ISIS coalition worthy of the name would have ideally brought together in a necessary marriage of convenience regional and international adversaries spanning from Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East to the United States and Russia at the broader global level, mandated by a UN Security Council resolution."

However, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have turned the anti-ISIS coalition into an anti-Assad/Iran grouping, and continue to back al Qaeda affiliates that try to "degrade and destroy" the Kurds and Syrian army that are the most effective ground forces to fight ISIS.

In face of the recent Vienna talks stalemate and growing refugee crisis for Germany, Sieren said that Germans are now hoping China will play a constructive role as it did in the nuclear negotiations with Iran. The Germans felt that China ended up "being an important mediator between Tehran and Washington, for which it has received repeated praise in German government circles, albeit quietly so as not to upset the US."<sup>7</sup>

He also noted that Berlin's interests are "more in line with those of Russia and China than those of the US," echoing what German political scientist Matthias Küntzel in 2009 referred as the emergence of a "new constellation" of powers with USA/UK/France on one side and Russia/China/Germany on the other.<sup>8</sup>

With the recent upgrade of Sino-British relationship to "comprehensive strategic partnership" and EU members clamoring to join China's AIB and 'One Belt One Road' initiatives earlier this year, the Beijing-Moscow-Berlin based constellation may actually be expanding.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Adam Entous, "U.S., Allies to Boost Aid to Syria Rebels", *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 November 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-allies-to-boost-aid-to-syria-rebels-1446682624>

<sup>6</sup> "Opinion: Turkey's misguided Syria policy", *Deutsche Welle*, 4 November 2014, <http://www.dw.com/en/opinion-turkeys-misguided-syria-policy/a-18036779>; Nathali Tocci, "Making (Non) Sense of Turkey's Policy on Kobane", *Global Turkey in Europe, Commentary 16*, 4 November 2014, Instituto affari internazionali, <http://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/making-nonsense-turkeys-policy-kobane>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/sierens-china-no-fast-peace-in-syria/a-18829095>

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Herf, 'Berlin Ghosts', *New Republic*, 24 March 2011, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/world/85702/germany-libya-intervention-qaddafi-merkel>

<sup>9</sup> George Parker, "Osborne hails 'golden decade' in Sino-British relations", *Financial Times*, 20 September 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6d107dc4-5fae-11e5-a28b-50226830d644.html#axzz3rBQAKd2u>; Michael Clauss, "China, Germany Can Contribute to a New Cycle for Global Economy", *Caixin Online*, 6 November 2015,

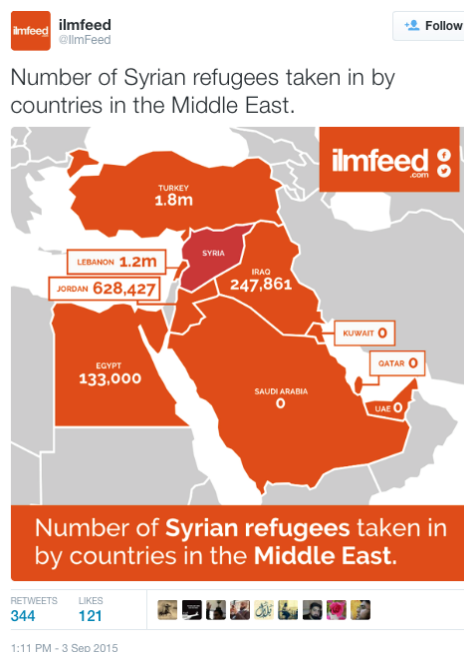
As world powers prepare to meet again for Vienna II talks on November 12, they should recalibrate the goal to one of humanitarian ceasefire to stabilize Syria and help control the refugee crisis.

### EU refugee crisis inflamed by Saudi/Gulf jihad

Currently Syria's neighbors host the bulk of the refugees – Turkey (1.8 million), Lebanon (1.2 million), Jordan (628,427) and Iraqi Kurdistan (247,861), with Europe expected to receive over 1 million refugees in 2015 and up to 3 million by 2017.

Germany took in almost 800,000 asylum seekers this year and accepted nearly half of Syrian asylum applicants.<sup>10</sup> However, this sudden wave of Muslim migrants is overwhelming the German population and provoking a backlash, sparking the rise of neo-Nazism and increasing violence against refugee camps and supportive politicians that are threatening to destabilize the country.<sup>11</sup>

And while Europe is scrambling to deal with the flood of refugees, Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Gulf states that are generating new refugees with their bombing campaign in Yemen and proxy jihad in Syria are taking in zero.<sup>12</sup>



<http://english.caixin.com/2015-11-06/100871087.html>; Swminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar, "Why US Allies Are Happy to Join China's AIIB", *The Diplomat*, 30 June 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/why-us-allies-are-happy-to-join-chinas-aiib/>

<sup>10</sup> Alberto Nardelli, "Germany receives nearly half of all Syrian asylum applicants", *The Guardian*, 5 November 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/05/asylum-applications-to-germany-see-160-rise>; Danny Kemp, "EU sees three million migrants arriving by 2017", *Agence-France Press*, 5 November 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/three-million-migrant-arrivals-expected-europe-2017-eu-110347882.html>

<sup>11</sup> Nick Gutteridge, "Germany: Fears as EU migrant fuels biggest rise in Nazism since Adolf Hitler", *Sunday Express*, 5 November 2015, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/617220/EU-migrant-crisis-Merkel-Germany-rise-neo-Nazism-refugees>; Anton Troianovski and Andrea Thomas, "Germany Cites Anti-Refugee Motive for the Stabbing of Politician", *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 October 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/germany-cites-anti-refugee-motive-for-stabbing-of-politician-1445271847>

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed Zeineldine, "Arab Governments not Doing Enough For Syrian Refugees", *The Inquisitr*, 8 September 2015, <http://www.inquisitr.com/2402881/arab-governments-syrian-refugees/>



Unless Riyadh and its Gulf allies are willing to accept new refugees generated by their Syrian jihad rather than sending them towards EU, China, Russia, and EU3 in the P5+1 mix should be firm with the US in demanding its Gulf client states – along with the CIA – to stand down in their sectarian military campaign.

On October 31 *Reuters* reported that CIA, in collaboration with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, expanded the number of jihadi groups to which it is clandestinely delivering weapons including TOW anti-tank missiles that are weakening Syrian government forces.<sup>13</sup>

Given Pentagon ended its \$500 million Syrian train and equip program due to lack of moderate rebels – only five at the time the program terminated – CIA is now providing more advanced weaponry to radical Islamic groups that have also asked for supply of anti-aircraft MANPADS.

As Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) in the House Armed Services Committee argued on *CNN*, “the US and the CIA should stop this illegal and counterproductive war to overthrow the Syrian government of Assad and stay focused on fighting against who our enemy is, the Islamic extremist groups.”<sup>14</sup>

She rebuked Obama’s war is illegal since there has been no Congressional vote to authorize the use of force to overthrow a sovereign government, and the American people have not had a choice to speak their views. It is also counterproductive because the arms supply is flowing to the very same Al Qaeda groups that attacked America on 9-11, and that US troops continue to fight against in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile waves of Syrian refugees fleeing jihad continue to overwhelm Germany and the EU. As the great powers meet again this week, it is all the more pressing that they come together and work towards a humanitarian ceasefire to pave way for eventual political settlement, and finally put an end to the Syrian war and large-scale human suffering that UN has called “the great tragedy of this century.”

\*\*\*

**Remarks:** Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

This article was firstly published in *Asia Times* on 9 November 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Phil Stewart and Mark Hosenball, “With Syria escalation, Obama may win leverage on the battlefield”, *Reuters*, 31 October 2015, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/10/31/mideast-crisis-usa-escalation-idINKCN0SP05720151031>

<sup>14</sup> Tulsi Gabbard, “CIA Must Stop Illegal, Counterproductive War to Overthrow Assad”, 21 October 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7Q8X60KQ9Q>