

ASSESSING THE FRENCH PERSPECTIVE ON AMERICAN
INVOLVEMENT IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR THROUGH
THE 2016 BOMBINGS IN ALEPPO AND FRENCH NEWS
MEDIA

by

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Through the 2016 Bombings in Aleppo and French News Media

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As two members of the United Nations' "Big Five" countries, it is clear that France and the United States of America are both influential global powers. Since America's independence, the two countries have shared a long and enduring political relationship, which has greatly shaped how each respective culture has influenced the other. Due to their shared history and interdependent power dynamics, current events play an important role in the maintenance of their relationship, which is also heavily present in their shared interests in the Syrian Civil War.

This work includes the translation and analysis of 12 articles from four influential French news media organizations to document and explore the French perception of the United States through their news media outlets, in relation to the 2016 attacks on Aleppo. Since both countries have been actively involved in the conflict since its inception, this compilation and analysis sheds light on French-American cooperation, their political connections, and their social relationships.

This project includes discussion of translation and intralingual communication as well as international relations in the face of conflict. In the political and commercial international landscapes, media is one of the most important and influential forms of communication, especially amongst world powers like France and the U.S. It spans borders, and, with human cooperation and technology, it can transcend linguistic and cultural barriers as well. International media helps us understand how countries perceive their allies and enemies, which, in turn, shapes international relations and the global political landscape. This is true of French Media's presentation of American actions during and preceding the 2016 bombings and attacks in Aleppo. Analyzing treatment of the United States in French news media demonstrates the international scope and interdependent nature of modern conflict and current events.

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List of Accompanying Materials

1. Le Monde Translations
 - a. Aleppo: The Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations accuses Russia, Iran, et Syria
 - b. For the United States, Omran is the “Real Face” of the War in Syria
 - c. Lessons from the Martyrdom in Aleppo
2. L’Humanité Translations
 - a. There were 6000 tonight at the University of Aleppo
 - b. Syria: Post-Aleppo, Russia dictates the diplomatic tempo
 - c. Syria: A Truce Respected Despite a Number of Raids
3. Le Figaro Translations
 - a. In Northern Syrian, Daesh Survives the Death of al-Baghdadi
 - b. In Qamishli, the Hope of a Syrian Kurdistan Collapsed Under the Turkish Bombs
 - c. Syria: Hundreds of People Flee Idlib in Anticipation of an Assault
4. Le Point Translations
 - a. American Engagement in Syria Since 2011
 - b. Syria's Largest Hospital in East Aleppo Bombed Again
 - c. Syria: why Putin will Destroy Aleppo

Introduction

Translation and research both require great attention to detail and review. Because of the possibility for translation loss,¹ translators must extensively research their texts' associated subjects and ensure they have an accurate understanding of the grammatical and lexical nuances of their source language² and target languages³ for their project. Researchers also need to take great care to ensure that their data and sources are reliable and analyzed in an effective and accurate manner.

To gain a baseline understanding of events from the conflict, I have built a timeline of the bombings from international news sources, relying primarily on the Associated Press, the BBC and other resources that are not headquartered in either the United States or France.

To gain and provide an accurate sampling of the typical French perception of American actions related to the 2016 bombings in Aleppo, Syria, I selected and translated a sample of 12 articles from their original French to English. The articles are centered on or include reference to American reactions and responses to the 2016 bombings of Aleppo during the Syrian Civil War. To gather an accurate sample, the articles were selected from reputable French news sources with various political affiliations and different parent organizations. *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* are both French Newspapers of Reputation, meaning they are regarded as reputable sources, but the two publications' political biases and alliances are in opposition. *L'Humanité* is a daily

¹ Translation loss - when the meaning of a word, sentence, or idea is not present in the target text due to translation errors, a lack of cultural context, or a lack of sufficient equivalencies in the target language (Baker, 2009).

² Source language - the language a text was originally written in (Sandor, 2018).

³ Target language - the language a text is being translated into (Sador, 2018).

publication with free content and communist ties, while *Le Point* is a weekly publication that examines events from a right-wing perspective.

To choose the exact articles to review, I performed a search on the news sources' online websites for "bombardements Alep États-Unis."⁴ Each search result was assigned a number and three samples were chosen from each publication with a random number generator.

Some of the media outlets used in this research have English editions and circulation⁵ of their work. The analyzed articles were translated from the original French edition of each publication into English. I tried to choose works that were exclusively available in French, and, to my knowledge on December 12, 2019, none of the selected works have been released in English. The purpose of this study is to look at French news media outlets' treatment of the dissemination of information surrounding the 2016 bombings in Aleppo. The direct translation serves as an important factor to help determine each outlet's use of language, illuminating both their treatment and perception of this historic event.

During the translation process, I focused solely on creating the most accurate and faithful translations possible. This required research on the grammatical and phraseological styles of French news media and a compiled knowledge set of French phrases and vocabulary related to war, conflict, and international relations.

Once translated, I looked at each article for its level of opinion or objectivity; the inclusion of references to people, organizations, or countries; its length; its

⁴ French for "Aleppo Bombings United States."

⁵ Circulation - the number of people a publication reaches through sustained membership, purchase, or sharing (Marshal, 1998).

placement on the website; its inclusion of details of conflict or violence; and the type and amount of background information or context provided. These elements were compiled into individual analyses and then compared to build a depiction of the general opinion of French news media about the United States of America's involvement in the bombing of Aleppo during the Syrian Civil War. This data was then separated into common themes among the publications, contributing to a collective understanding of the perspective French media commonly took in relation to the United States' involvement in the conflict.

Background

The modern conflict in Syria is multi-faceted, with many players and many sides. At the most basic level, the Syrian government, under the control of Bashar al-Assad,⁶ is fighting against rebel groups with varying interests, but all of which want to bring about change in the Syrian power structure (Carpenter, 2013). Most Syrian opposition is included in the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a coalition of rebel forces fighting against the Assad regime. Terrorist groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Al-Nusra Front, an al-Qaeda-affiliated⁷ Jihadist group⁸, are also involved in an attempt to gain more power and fight against western influence in the Middle East (Charity and Security, 2016). Because of the scope of the conflict, many international parties have become involved in the conflict as well. Major players with interests in the conflict and its outcome include Iran, Turkey, Russia, France and the United States (BBC News, 2019). Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which is backed by the U.S., as well as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) represent an alliance of Kurdish, Arab, Turkmen, Assyrian and Armenian militias mainly fighting against ISIS, Al-Nusra Front and other Jihadist groups (BBC News, 2019).

Opinions vary based on their source about western and outside interests in the Syrian conflict. Some forces and leaders argue that they are only interested in profiting off the conflict through arms and weapons sales, others argue that the wars are simply proxy wars fought in smaller countries between warring world superpowers

(Medzihorsky, 2017). Other political forces, as well as the western countries themselves

⁶ The Syrian President since 2000 (Hale, 2019).

⁷ Terrorist group founded by Osama Bin Laden in 1989. Known for declaring holy war against the United States (BBC, 2019).

⁸ Political and religious groups who see violent struggle as necessary to advance or defend the Muslim community. Often aligned with or related to al-Qaeda (Hale, 2019).

often argue that they are involved to create peace and avoid human rights catastrophes and crimes of war. Both France and the United States, along with much of the international community, assert that their involvement in the conflict is to fight terrorism and reach a political solution to the unrest (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2017).

Today, France is involved in the conflict through international relations, political organizations, and in some cases direct involvement with Syrian forces. They have conducted rescue missions, supplied non-lethal and lethal military aid to rebels in the FSA (Rubin, 2015). France has also authorized airstrikes in Syria, often coordinating with other international powers like the United States. These actions intensified following the November 13, 2015 terror attacks in Paris, claimed by ISIL as retaliation for their involvement in Syria (Sky News, 2015). The French government argues that the only way to end the conflict is to reach and agree upon negotiations for peace and a political solution (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2017). Outside of Syria, France has played an important role in determining the proper degree of foreign interference in the conflict, working closely with the UN to propose treaties and ceasefires (Medzihorsky, 2017).

The United States has also been directly involved in the conflict through weapons sales, financial backing of the FSA, airstrikes, lethal military aid, non-lethal military aid, and international negotiations (Hale, 2019). They have justified their involvement as an effort to fight against ISIL and the Assad regime (BBC, 2016). Their involvement, as well as Russia's, has led to international tensions. Criticism has been voiced against U.S. involvement in the war because of their violent airstrikes and

accusations of selling weapons to both sides of the conflict simply for profit. Others argue U.S. interference in Syria has been vital in preventing terrorism and further spread of war (Hale, 2019).

In Aleppo specifically, the US has been an important player working on an international scale, often in opposition of Russian support for the Assad regime. Both nations have strong ties to opposing forces, leading many to expand the Syrian Civil War to a proxy war between Russia and the US (Hale, 2019).

Civilians are also important players in the conflict. They are often caught in the middle of the violence, captured by military forces or used to send messages (BBC News, 2019). Civilians are frequently used as bargaining chips by powers looking to gain political credibility, like the recent ISIL terror attacks in villages along the the M20 highway between Palmyra and Deir ez-Zor (Lister, 2020). Those concerned for the innocents caught in conflict are seen as forgiving benefactors, while those who disregard the safety of civilians are viewed as threats to safety and power, often forcing international forces to intervene or take a stance on the conflict. This has often been the case for France and the United States' involvement in the Syrian conflict.

Civilians are an especially important player the Syrian civil war, particularly related to the 2016 bombings in Aleppo. They have driven international intervention and raised awareness for human rights violations in the conflict.

Timeline

Civil War (2011 - present):

The Syrian Civil War officially began in 2011, with a series of pro-democracy protests scattered across the country (BBC News, 2016). On March 15, the protests turned violent in the city of Deraa after the arrest and torture of teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall (BBC News, 2019). Security forces subsequently opened fire on demonstrators, causing more protestors to head to the streets nationwide and demand President Assad's resignation. Opposition supporters eventually took up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas. Syria descended into civil war as rebel brigades were formed to battle government forces for control of cities, towns and the countryside. Fighting reached the capital Damascus and second city of Aleppo in 2012, pitching the country against itself and drawing in regional and world powers (Charity and Security, 2016).

The so-called Islamic State (IS or ISIL) has capitalized on the chaos and taken control of large swathes of Syria (as well as Iraq), where it proclaimed the creation of a caliphate⁹ in June 2014 (Chandler, 2014). The war's many foreign fighters are involved in a "war within a war" in Syria, battling rebels and rival jihadists from the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, as well as governments and western-backed Kurdish forces (BBC News, 2016). The UN has also accused ISIL of waging a campaign of terror: public executions and amputations; mass killings; and beheadings to spread fear and gain political power for their resistance (Medzihorsky, 2017).

⁹ Caliphate - the political-religious state comprising the Muslim community and the lands and peoples under its dominion. It's led by a caliph, whose political and religious power is absolute (Chandler, 2014).

The UN commission of inquiry¹⁰ has evidence that all parties to the conflict have committed war crimes, including murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances (Medzihorsky, 2017). They have also been accused of using civilian suffering, such as blocking access to food, water and health services through sieges, as a method of war. The UN Security Council demanded all parties end the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas, but civilians continued to die by the thousands due to Barrel Bombings from the Assad regime on rebel gatherings (Chandler, 2014).

Neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have struggled to cope with one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history, which has also reached well beyond the Middle East (BBC News, 2019).

Numerous ceasefires and negotiation attempts have been made in the nine years since the war's beginning, but they were seldom effective or even enforced. The US and Russia led efforts to get representatives of the government and the opposition to attend "proximity talks" in Geneva in January 2016 to discuss a Security Council-endorsed road map for peace, including a ceasefire and a transitional period ending with elections (Shaheen, 2016).

Aleppo Divided (2012 - 2016):

In 2012, conflict reached Aleppo, where the city was soon divided in half, the West under government control and the East held by rebel forces (Aleppo Project, 2017). The involved rebel parties included Syrian Democratic Forces, Syrian Free Army, and the YPG. From 2012 to early 2016, the borders of the conflict changed very

¹⁰ A branch of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Gathers information and conducts international investigations (OHCHR, n.d.).

little (BBC News, 2019). Both parties consistently fought over supply routes and control of surrounding areas. The regime started a campaign of targeted barrel bombs to drive civilians and rebel forces out of Eastern Aleppo. Both sides were simultaneously fighting to keep ISIL forces out of the city and conflict (Aleppo Project, 2017). During this time, Russia began working closely with the Assad regime and the Syrian Army to control western Aleppo, while US interests backed the Syrian Democratic Forces in the East (Shaheen, 2016). During this time, more than one million people left Aleppo and nearly half that remained displaced within the city itself (Aleppo Project, 2017).

Airstrikes and Attacks in Eastern Aleppo (February - December 2016):

The Assad regime began an intensified series of bombardments on Eastern Aleppo (Shaheen, 2016). The bombings were supposedly aimed at rebel forces, but many civilians were caught in the crossfire. Throughout 2016 150,000 residents were displaced across Aleppo (UNHCR, 2017).

This year of extreme, concentrated violence saw the negotiation, abandonment, and renegotiation of many ceasefires between the rebels and the regime or between intervening international forces. Many of the ceasefires were not properly withheld and Aleppo and its civilians remained in danger. Numerous offensives left east Aleppo without basic necessities, including the destruction of power sources that left the city without clear drinking water and price gouges that made food difficult to find (Aleppo Project, 2017). The United Nations declared a state of emergency due to the humanitarian crises in Aleppo (Medzihorsky, 2017).

One of the most prominent agreements was between the United States and Russia, who agreed in late April 2016 to halt intervention in Aleppo (BBC News, 2019). During this time, the Syrian regime enacted an offensive on eastern Aleppo with airstrikes, barrel bombs, and artillery strikes (BBC News, 2019). This led to retaliation from the rebel forces on Western Aleppo which resulted in even more civilian deaths. In just nine days, 236 residents were killed throughout Aleppo (Shaheen, 2016).

Per their negotiations, the United States and Russia refused to directly intervene in the conflict. The United States was asked to provide humanitarian support through force if necessary but did not do so in the name of the ceasefire (Shaheen, 2016).

The Fall of Aleppo (October - December 2016):

In December of 2016, the city of Aleppo fell to the Assad regime. After a series of intensified bombings and attacks, rebel forces were forced to negotiate with the Syrian regime and Russia to reach an agreement over control of Aleppo (Aleppo Project, 2017). Despite their earlier involvement in the ceasefire, peace, and aid negotiations, the United States stayed out of these talks, due to differences of opinion with Russian leadership. The negotiations led to civilian evictions as Western Aleppo was regained by the Assad regime (Shaheen, 2016).

The humanitarian effects of the conflict in Syria are numerous. It is estimated that more than 400 civilians were killed in early 2016 alone (Kullub, 2016). The Syrian regime has been accused of war crimes for use of chemical weapons and targeting civilians and community resources, such as hospitals and residential districts (Hale, 2019). Russian airstrikes and alliance with the Assad regime heighten international

tensions between Russia and western states like the United States and France, as many called upon them for intervention and humanitarian aid (BBC News, 2019).

The United States responded to the violence in Aleppo with a desire to defeat oppressive and terroristic forces in the name of human rights and liberty. Their solutions were mostly political and international aside from their continued support for the SFA (Aleppo Project, 2017). In the end, they were not directly involved in the liberation of Aleppo or its people, despite their previous efforts to enact ceasefires.

Translation Methods

The translation process is a complicated and time consuming one, which requires attention to detail and accuracy. For news articles and journalistic writing in particular, a text's focus on informing and accuracy make fidelity to the original work extremely important. Because of this necessity, gist translation¹¹ and literal translation¹² played important roles in the translation process for all four outlets (see glossary for "gist translation" and "literal translation"). Words were selected in English that most closely resembled their French origin. When sentences could be translated directly from the source language into the target text without a loss of comprehension, literal translation was employed to guard the work's integrity and original message.

The most common alteration throughout all of the articles was sentence structure alteration. In French, most adjectives follow a noun (Maitland, 2019). For example, without changes, "Ces dernières semaines, le retrait américain suivi de l'offensive militaire turque dans le nord de la Syrie n'ont fait qu'aggraver la vulnérabilité de cette région où les alliances à géométrie variable sont également propices à la survie de Daech" from article 3a reads "These last weeks, the retreat American followed by the offensive military Turkish in the north of Syria did not aggravate the vulnerability of this region where alliances of variable geometry are equally favorable to the survival of Daesh" when translated literally. This sentence structure does not make sense in the target language, so gist translation must also be employed to help with comprehension.

This alteration actually aids the target text's¹³ fidelity to the source text¹⁴ by guarding its

¹¹ A level of translation that guards the text's original structure and meaning but may include slight editing or alteration to help the writing make sense in the target language (Sandor, 2018).

¹² Translating the exact words of a text without any regard for comprehension or sense (Sandor, 2018).

¹³ The new text as a result of translative work (Sandor, 2018).

¹⁴ The original text that is being translated (Sandor, 2018).

original meaning, but also making it more comprehensible to the target text's readership. In this way, the text is just as easily understood in English as it originally was in French.

Another common alteration is the use of possessive pronouns. In English, "'s" can be added to any pronoun to make it possessive, but this is not the case in French. Instead, to show an object or idea's possession, one must follow the noun with "de" and a proper noun or pronoun (Orlando, 2016). When translated literally, this sentence from article 4b, "Alep est au centre d'un projet de résolution française que les cinq pays membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU ont commencé à examiner" would read "Aleppo is at the center of a French resolution that the five permanent members of the security council of the United Nations started to examine" (Le Point, 2016). While "the Security Council of the United Nations" does make sense in the target language, it is not a common form of speech, especially for journalistic writing. It is most common in elevated speech and would raise the article's writing beyond its original style (Sandor, 2018). In most cases for this work, the possessive "de" was changed to an "'s" to guard the texts' original communication level and style. Changing the article's sentence to read "the United Nations' Security Council" guards the original articles' style and meaning.

When possible, the physical layout and structure of each article was guarded as well. Translations were only applied to the articles' text, but the presence of other media types or additions was noted and analyzed as well.

For Example, *Le Figaro* article 3a staggered quotations throughout their writing:

Les populations locales ont été témoin des décapitations, de la dérive extrémiste de Daech. Elles ont été victimes du racket imposé par le prélèvement de taxes. Aujourd’hui, les gens sont fatigués

- Le colonel Hassan Rajoub

Comme un sinistre jeu de dominos où les explosifs ont remplacé les cartes, le nord de la Syrie connaît une vague ininterrompue d’attaques depuis la mort du fondateur de l’EI. Dans la même journée de jeudi, une personne a été blessée à Sarmin, dans la province d’Idlib, par une bombe artisanale. À al-Rai, dans la région d’Alep, c’est une moto qui a explosé.

This formatting was guarded in the translations to guard the article’s continuity and context during the transition from French to English:

“Local populations have witnessed the beheadings, the extremist drift of Daesh. They were victims of the racketeering imposed by the levy of taxes. Today people are tired”

- Colonel Hassan Rajoub

Like a sinister domino game in which explosives have replaced cards, northern Syria has seen an endless wave of attacks since the death of the ISIL founder. On the same day, Thursday, a person was injured in Sarmin, in the province of Idlib, by a homemade bomb. In al-Rai, in the Aleppo region, a motorcycle exploded.

Like literal translation, this level of physical continuity keeps the text’s original meaning as intact and possible.

ARTICLE ANALYSIS

Among the translated articles, some common themes became evident between publications and their work. Each outlet had a specific element of the conflict that most interested them, and their writing styles and tones were all unique.

Le Monde:

Le Monde is a French daily news publication that has been in circulation since 1944 (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. - b). It covers national and international news in a variety of topics, including politics, economics, and culture (Le Monde, 2010 - a). It is commonly believed to have a left-wing slant, including social liberalism and social democracy. The publication does allow its writers to present their own perspectives in an attempt at objectivity. As a result, the organization does not have an official political affiliation or perspective (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. -b).

Their work tends to focus more on in-depth analysis of fewer topics, rather than short reports on many events. Because of their reputation, the organization has had to make greater effort to distinguish between fact and opinion. They are considered one of three newspapers of record in France (Martin, 1998).

As of 2018, they have a print circulation of 302,624 (Statista, 2019). Their reach has slowly been declining since 2002 but has reached a plateau in recent years. They are owned by Groupe Le Monde and have publications in 26 languages (Wilshner, 2010).

Le Monde has had an online presence since 1995. Their online circulation reaches 160,000 as of 2018 (Statista, 2019). LeMonde.fr, their online domain, is one of the 50 most visited French websites (Wilshner, 2010).

Articles:

Le monde released the most comprehensive articles of all the publications. Their works tended to be organized into smaller sections, sometimes creating listicles¹⁵ or separating their work by topic. Their length meant the articles brought in a great deal of background information and context.

The articles generally took on a professional, informative tone, with the exception of article 1b, which included first person, alluding to the author's perspective and presence in the writing. *Le Monde's* Jean-Pierre Filiu wrote in article 1c, "I will repeat for fear of boredom..." (Filiu, 2016) This sentence presents the author's apprehensive feelings about the article's subject. The mix of writing tones, demonstrates *Le Monde's* willingness to look at the Syrian conflict from personal and objective viewpoints.

Much of the writing detailed political alliances, groups, and actions, focusing more on acts of war or combat, rather than humanitarian efforts. All of the articles were accompanied by photographs, often depicting the subjects in their writing, or pictures of Aleppo.

¹⁵ A type of article in which the work's body is organized by themes or ideas. Each main point or theme is marked with a number and a title, then expanded upon in subsequent paragraphs (Wakabayashi, 2019).

Le Figaro:

Le Figaro is a daily French newspaper. It was founded in 1826 but began its daily circulation in 1866 (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. - a). It reports on national and international topics, including politics, culture, and economics. Like *le Monde*, it is also considered a newspaper of record¹⁶ (Martin, 1998).

It is widely considered a paper with a right-wing slant to its works. It has repeatedly supported the Union for a Popular Movement, à center-right political party (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. - a). The paper has a circulation of 321,116 and 84,000 digital subscribers (Statista, 2018). It is owned by Dassault Group, an arms producer (Groupe Dassault, n.d.). This ownership has led to some controversy about the publication's political interests and stances. In 2006, the paper was banned in Egypt and Tunisia for allegedly publishing articles that insulted Islam (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2006).

Articles:

Le Figaro released long articles with a great deal of context and detail. The style was often story-like, taking on certain people's perspectives or inserting emotion into the text. The topics were narrow, but the length of the articles allowed for extensive background information.

Two of the texts were accompanied by photographs of combatants and Aleppo itself, while the third only provided text. The two longer articles also included quotations pulled from the article to grab readers' attention.

¹⁶ A newspaper with a large circulation or following that is consequently considered an authority because of their reporting and information gathering. This is generally based on reputation, not official standing (Marshal, 1998).

L'Humanité:

L'Humanité is a daily French news publication. It originated in 1904 as a resource for the communist party and currently still holds ties to the political party, but also identifies as a leftist liberal publication (L'Humanité, 2014). Much of their work is available for free, but visitors are able to subscribe and donate to support the organization. The French Communist Party (PCF) owns 40 percent of the paper with the remaining shares held by staff, readers and "friends" of the paper (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

Their website, humanite.fr, receives 15 million visitors and 21 million webpage views per year (L'Humanité, 2014). The site aims to be a politically open and independent space that promotes community involvement. They look to their readers for feedback and support. Their publications and topics are written with their community and readership in mind.

Since the 1980s, the PCF has been in decline, mostly due to the rise of the Socialist Party, which took over large sections of PCF support, and circulation and economic viability of *L'Humanité* have declined as well (L'Humanité, 2014).

Articles:

L'Humanité released articles that were more compact and easier to digest. The texts tended to include multiple kinds of media, including videos, photographs, and social media references. In article 2a, the vast majority of the information came from a broadcast report on the war, while the online writing only served as introduction to the

video, supplementing its initial report and repackaging it for the digital audience. This demonstrates how *L'Humanité* mixes sources and attempts to present their ideas in multiple formats.

The articles' topics varied from civilian actions to details of combat. They all took on an international tone, looking at international relations and political changes or events related to the Syrian conflict and destruction in Aleppo.

The articles all included a photograph or two as supplements but focused mainly on the writing to share their perspective.

Le Point:

Le Point is a weekly publication that covers topics related to politics and current events. It was founded in 1972 by a group of journalists from *L'Express*, another weekly French news publication, who decided to open a publication catered specifically to readers' needs and interests (European Press Roundup, n.d.). The publication has a conservative and center-right slant, but no official political affiliation.

It is currently owned by Groupe Artémis, a holding company that also owns Christie's auction house and luxury fashion brands, such as Gucci and Saint Laurent (Groupe Artemis, n.d.).

As of 2017, the publication had a circulation of 359,000, while their online presence brings between 20 and 30 million visits (European Press Roundup, n.d.). Since their origin, the publication has become one of France's most recognized news outlets, competing with *L'Express* and other weekly publications.

Articles:

The articles from *Le Point* were detailed, but succinct. They were of medium length and often separated into multiple sections or topics. All featured pictures and article 2b and 2c also included links to outside resources that supplemented their information.

Le Point's articles were slightly more focused on Humanitarian effects of the war but maintained a political tone and focus. Discussion of terrorist acts, airstrikes, and ceasefires were present in all the articles, but civilian displacement and killings were discussed as well. Foreign powers were frequently mentioned to explain how the international community was involved in or reacting to the events in Syria.

Common Themes

Russia and the US

In the majority of the articles, the United States is mentioned in tandem with or in connection to Russia. Both parties have been heavily involved in the fight, but from opposing sides. With Russia's Support for the Assad regime and the United States' interest in the YPG and the FSA, the two powers become clear opposing global powers in the conflict. The United States' aligned interests with France, who also supports the FSA, makes it understandable that French media would be concerned with the United States' relationship with Russia.

As the main international parties involved in negotiations for ceasefires in Aleppo, the U.S. and Russia hold significant power over how involved other international parties and organizations need to be. Their ability or inability to cooperate on political negotiations, treaties, and combative action has lasting effects for the French public and the nation's involvement in the conflict as well.

Russia was mentioned in connection with the United States in eight of the 12 articles, with *Le Monde* the most interested in the Russian-American political dynamic in relation to Syria. It is clear from the relationship between the two nations and their presence in the articles that French news media, thus the French public and nation, is concerned with international interests and involvement in the conflict. Recognition of other nations' actions provides context for France's own actions and demonstrates the extent of the conflict beyond Syria itself.

The UN

The articles' focus on international response and responsibility also resulted in an overarching emphasis on the United Nations (UN) and the UN Security Council. Eight of the articles mentioned the United Nations in relation to Aleppo, Syria, and the United States.

They were most commonly referenced as an outside power that brought together international voices and players, attempting to create consensus about intervention and humanitarian aid. For example, article 1a states, "The atmosphere at the United Nations was extremely tense on Tuesday December 13th during a Security Council assembly about the situation in Aleppo" (Le Monde, 2016, 1). This article highlights the intensity with which many nations address the UN and, subsequently, establishes its international importance.

Their effectiveness was sometimes brought into question like in article 1c where the author states, "The previous tragedies have seen the UN attempt to compensate its inability to weigh diplomatically and militarily with humanitarian overactivity" (Filiu, 2016, 5). This question of the UN's viability demonstrates the news media's ability to either highlight and question the effectiveness of other entities' actions.

Overall the United Nations is presented as a sounding board for international relations and political planning. They are referenced as the common ground between Russia and the United States, as well as other foreign parties involved in the Syrian conflict, including France.

French news media's concern with the United Nations role in the Syrian Civil War and its relation to American actions demonstrates the nation's commitment to

international cooperation. The connection between the United Nations and America shows that France is concerned with using the international coalition as a platform for negotiations and planning surrounding the conflict. Journalistic upkeep on the status of UN negotiations and decisions keeps the public informed about possibilities for the conflict's future, not just its current status. This demonstrates a belief from French Media that the United States has power over the outcome of the conflict in Syria through the actions in the international political sphere.

Necessity for background information:

Despite the articles' emphasis on the 2016 bombings in Aleppo, every single article from every publication provided context about the origin of the conflict in Syria. Context was also often provided for the conflicts' many players and sides.

This demonstrates the complexity of the conflict in Syria and international aspects. To understand France' perception of the United States' actions and stances, it is important to understand what they are involved in and reacting to.

The most common background information was for the multitude of terrorist and rebel groups involved in the conflict. Explanations for their origins, their affiliations, and their locations or actions were present in every article from every publication with the exception of *Le Monde* article 1a and *Le Figaro* article 3a.

Understanding all of the parties involved in the conflict and their motives provides context for the United States' actions throughout the conflict. Because of their shared interests and reasons for intervention, this clarification helps analyze whether the United States' actions are truly aligned with or in opposition of French interests.

Negotiations and Ceasefires:

Throughout all articles and publications, the most commonly mentioned portion of American influence over the bombings was the negotiation of a ceasefire. This came about because of the bombings. The ceasefire's purpose was humanitarian in nature, negotiating time for residents and civilians to leave the conflict zones and find shelter; however, most articles focused more on the negotiation aspect, rather than the actual evacuations. This focus demonstrates the French concern for American political actions related to the conflict. As one of the main international powers involved in the Syrian conflict, the decisions and actions associated with a ceasefire also directly affected French involvement. Depending on the United States' efforts to mitigate the human toll of the Aleppo bombings and attacks, France might be called upon as a third party to intervene if the ceasefire efforts failed. This focus demonstrates how France and the United States shared interests tie their actions together on an international scale. One nation's action directly affects the other's as well.

Types of weapons or assaults:

The types of weapons used, or assaults waged during the bombings were extremely important details for all of the articles. Based on France's involvement in the conflict, understanding the extent of violence in the conflict helps readers understand where their government's political effort and physical aid is going. This information is

imperative for understanding the true nature of the conflict, providing context for international reactions like the United States' negotiations and actions.

Le Figaro article 3b states, "The Turks have tanks, cannons, planes. We managed to destroy a tank with heavy machine guns and rocket launchers. But there is nothing we can do against the Turkish air force. We are simply asking the United States to ban the Turkish F-16s from attacking us. We take care of the rest," continues Delil. This concern about the type of weapons used and how they are employed is echoed in 10 of the 12 articles. French news media is responsible for communicating information to the public about the details of conflict in Syria, especially because of their nation's involvement. Its shared interests with the United States explain why the US use of weapons and force in Syria is often discussed in the articles. Much like their attempts to negotiate a ceasefire, their attempts at direct action also determine if France may or may not be called upon to use force as well.

Political Focus:

Overall, with just two exceptions, the articles' references to American action took on a militaristic tone regarding the events in Aleppo. Mentions of humanitarian problems were present in articles 1a, 3c, 4b, and 4c, but the majority of the information in even these articles focused on details of attacks and political reactions from international parties.

This shared militaristic and political perspective demonstrates how French media views American influence in Syria. They are brought up in correlation with

violence, politics, and military force. One can see that French media felt readers were interested in how western countries were contributing to or mitigating force. Since France and the United States are both western countries, it makes sense that articles discussing the bombings would be concerned with western efforts and influence.

Conclusion

Overall, this project demonstrates the importance of detailed examination of media as a source of political and social understanding and information. News media disseminates information, which its readership then takes in and uses to build opinions. These opinions are then compared and contrasted with others until a general consensus for the media's principal audience and society comes into being. As an important foundation of freedom, analysis of news media can help understand foreign opinions, standpoints, and consequently, international relations. The French news media informs the public, which then, ideally, influences the French government and politics. An examination of this source can help understand the foundation of the French perspective on their relations with the United States and the importance of their actions in their shared conflict.

The analysis of various French publications through a sampling of their work demonstrates which aspects of the conflict were important for French media and their followers. As a distant party that is indirectly involved in the Syrian conflict, it makes sense that French media would be concerned about the international ramifications of the 2016 bombings in Aleppo, Syria. Their involvement has ramifications for their military presence and political standing.

How news outlets choose to share information speaks greatly about what they feel is important and relevant to their audience. Their job is to share information, but also to make their information interesting to their public. This reality demonstrates the nature of what is newsworthy and important to the publications, their publics, and, through inference, their nations.

As an ally and global superpower, the French perspective can prove a valuable assessment of American actions in relation to the 2016 bombings in Aleppo. Authors' and publications' stances and opinions demonstrate viewpoints circulating in French society and politics. Bringing the United States up in tandem with other international forces, such as the UN and Russia demonstrates France's concern for the international effects of the conflict and bombings in Syria. Looking at the details of the 2016 attacks and their political ramifications shows that those are the areas that France was most concerned with disseminating among the public. It's what the outlets feel their readership will be interested in.

Looking at how French Media reacted to past events in Aleppo and Syria can be used as an example of the importance of looking at modern events from multiple perspectives. Much like the conflict in Syria and consequent bombings in Aleppo, most modern conflicts or events are international in scope. Especially when multiple nations or parties are originally involved in that event, but also when they are indirectly involved, looking at how global powers share information about the event can give insight about their motives and context for their actions.

In the political and commercial international landscapes, media is one of the most important and influential forms of communication, especially amongst world powers like France and the U.S. It spans borders, and, with human cooperation and technology, it can transcend linguistic and cultural barriers as well. International media helps us understand how countries perceive their allies and enemies, which, in turn, shapes international relations and the global political landscape.

Accompanying Materials

Le Monde:

1a. **Aleppo: The Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations Accuses Russia, Iran, et Syria**

The atmosphere at the United Nations was extremely tense on Tuesday December 13th during a Security Council assembly about the situation in Aleppo. The Secretary General of the United Nations drew attention to the dozens of civilians killed in the bombings or executed by the Syrian military. Samantha Power, the American ambassador to the United Nations, pointed out the roles of Russia, Syria, and Iran. “Three state members of the United Nations who help tighten the nose around civilians,” she deplored. Vitali Tchourkine, the Russian ambassador to the United Nations, claimed that the fighting stopped after the beginning of the evacuation of rebel combatants and civilians. Ambassador Power called for “impartial international observers” to supervise the evacuation of civilians.

1b. **For the United States, Omran is the “Real Face” of the War in Syria**

Thursday, Washington D.C joined the global turmoil prompted by photos that circulated on social media of a wounded baby from the bombings in Aleppo.

In September 2015, the photo of Aylan Kurdi’s body, 3- or 4 years-old, washed up on a Turkish beach helped to raise public awareness about the refugee crisis. In August 2016, it was time for Omran, not much older than Kurdi, to become the face of another disaster: the war in Syria.

The images of this little boy, wounded by the bombings in Aleppo, in the North East of the country, generated uproar on social media on Thursday, August 18. The hashtag #Syrianboy was one of the most shared on Twitter in the United States and the United Kingdom.

At the same moment, the thuds of air raids resonate in the field.

(Also read: Syria: In Aleppo “an atmosphere of chaos and despair”)

Taken the night before, after a bombing in the rebel quarter of Katerji, the photographs show the child sitting alone in an ambulance, his face covered in dust and blood, stunned by the explosion’s blast.

The independent photographer, Mohammed Raslan Abu Sheikh, who was located in Aleppo and witnessed the scene, recalled that the rescuers rejoiced when they managed to release Omran from the rubble alive after several hours, alongside the five other members of his family.

“He was shocked, He didn’t even cry, he made us cry, he was silent, he looked at us. Had never known a single day in his life without war.”

During their daily press conference on Thursday, the spokesperson for the American Department of State, John Kirby, stated that Omran represented the “real face” of this conflict which has caused more than 290,000 deaths since March 2011.

“This little boy has never known a single day in his life without war, death, destruction, poverty in his own country.”

Mr. Kirby, whose boss, Secretary of State John Kerry, has tried for months to negotiate with Russia to find a diplomatic way out of the war, reaffirmed how imperative it is that the international community “come together in an attempt to find a better result.”

The American roadmap for an end to the conflict in Syria includes a national ceasefire, a complete opening of humanitarian aid, and resumption of political negotiations between the Syrian regime and opposition in Geneva.

“We must not be able to see other images like that of this young boy today in Aleppo.”

Thousands of inhabitants of the great Syrian city are trapped by relentless combat between the rebels and the pro-governmental forces.

The United Nations estimates that between 250,000 and 275,000 residents remain in the eastern quarter, held by the rebellion, and more than one million and a half in the governmental area.

(Also read: Aleppo, capital of the Syrian rebellion, encircled)

Russia proposed the imposition of a humanitarian truce for 24 hours each week to allow for the delivery of aid to the population of Aleppo. Moscow's proposition was hailed by the UN who expressed its willingness to mobilize. In a statement, the spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Defense, Igor Konachenkov, clarified:

“We are ready to establish this 24-hour humanitarian pause as soon as next week. The exact date and time will be determined after having received information from the United Nations concerning the preparedness of their convoys and a guarantee from our American counterparts that they will be transported safely.”

1c. Lessons from the Martyrdom in Aleppo

ISIS, though absent from the battle in Aleppo, still seems like the principal victor and resumes the offensive in Palmyra.

There will be a before and an after Aleppo, in Syria and beyond, but the forces who will reap the largest profit from this tragedy are not necessarily on the front lines of a battle like this one. Do not forget that, while you read these lines, the residents of Aleppo, civilian or military, are constantly chased and hunted in order to be disposed of.

1. ISIS is the Clear Winner, Well Beyond Assad

Is it the organization of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who appears to be the main victor of the battle of Aleppo? We will never recall enough that ISIS had been expelled from the second largest city in Syria, in January 2014, by the same revolutionary forces against which the Syrian dictatorship has been relentless. I will repeat that at the risk of boredom: It is against a city already liberated from ISIS for nearly 3 years that the Assad regime, Russia and Iran lead the deadliest campaign of the Syrian conflict.

While Putin and protection pounded Aleppo without mercy, it is a western drone that was able to eliminate ISIS' highest ranking francophone from Raqqa, Boubaker al-Hakim (I announced this on this blog, a long time before the confirmation of this disappearance). ISIS was then freed from the revolutionary threat in Aleppo by Assad and spared from the Russian strikes, which already permitted them to resume the initiative in Palmyra. Regarding Jihadist propaganda, like the chemical bombings in Damascus in August 2013, it could expose an international conspiracy against Syrian Muslims and intensify as a result recruitment around the world.

2. Iran Gains a Foothold in the North of Syria

It is necessary to go back fourteen centuries in history, well before the invent of Islam, to find a precedent of Persian intervention in Aleppo: the Sassanid empire, in war with the Byzantines, had ravaged the city. It is said that the current invasion of the Guardians of the Revolution of

Iran represents a major shift, in particular since it accompanies massive participation of pro-Iranian, Lebanese, Iraqi, and even Kurdish militia (YPG). The Aleppian sanctuary, where a stone is revered to have collected a drop of Hussein's blood (an iconic martyr of the Shia in 680) which could serve as an anchor to sustainable settlement. This process was already underway not far from Damascus, around the mausoleum of Zaynab, sister of Hussein, with progressive expulsion of local populations.

3.The reconquest of fields of depopulated ruins

The Assad regime appears incapable of reconquering territories that are not fields of ruins, empty of their residents. This was the case in Homs, whose urban center, occupied in May 2014, resides in the state of a ghost-town 2 years later. The same goes for the different suburbs in Damascus which ceded to a relentless siege, with dozens of deaths from starvation, similar to Darayya in August 2016. Each time, the population accompanies the departure of insurgent fighters, even in extreme conditions. The despot cannot boast of any significant rallying, at best it garners surrenders, imposed in blood and fire.

4.Putin does not have any confidence in Trump

The Russian president is leading what I might call a "one-way Cold War" in Syria, as Barack Obama gave him free rein. Putin quickly understood that negotiations with Washington would never result, but they allowed advantageous cover for his military escalation on the ground. The election of Donald Trump offered him the opportunity for a convergence of the highest level in the name of a supposedly shared fight against "terrorism." But the ruler of the Kremlin prefers to impose new power balances more than negotiating terms with his future American counterpart. Obama pulled out of Syria, but Trump likely will be expelled and he has hardly taken office.

5.The UN no longer provides even the humanitarian minimum

The previous tragedies have seen the UN attempt to compensate its inability to weigh diplomatically and militarily with humanitarian overactivity. A certain alibi is no longer even needed in Syria: the bombings of a UN convoy destined for Aleppo on September 19, 2016 remained unanswered, despite the reunion of the Security Council, at the level of the ministers of Foreign Affairs, who followed with little; a special UN envoy for Syria never ventured to Aleppo, more comfortable in the antechambers of Damascus; the Russian and Syrian bombers continued the condemnations without action from the UN. Aleppo has certainly already become "the tomb of the UN."

6.China, and not only Russia, on the security council

We could have believed that China, after 4 vetoes in unison with Russia, was in the process of amending their support of the Assad regime at the UN Security Council. Beijing had abstained October 8, 2016, on a resolution calling for the end of arias bombings on Aleppo, which was blocked by the Russian veto. However, on December 5th, China used its veto, much like Russia, on a resolution for a seven-day truce in Aleppo, text proposed by Spain, Egypt, and New Zealand. Beijing is legitimately preoccupied with the presence of Uighur combatants of the Islamic party of Turkestan. However, it is Putin's sovereigntist statement, with his unconditional support to the regimes against the people, who clearly seduced China. Once again, Syria reveals a world vision as well as a political one.

7. And after: Raqqa or Idlib?

The Assad Regime, Russia, and Iran look to the evidence on relatively fast search operations in East Aleppo. The question then arises of the continuation/tracking/action of the offense, either towards the east and the last insurgent stronghold in the Idlib province or towards the west and Raqqa, the birthplace and the capital of ISIS in Syria. Everything would lead Putin and his protégés to turn towards Idlib, in order to secure the junction between Aleppo and their base in Latakia. The unknown is based on the tacit or explicit agreement that exists at this phase between Moscow and Angora. Turkey has effectively remained ostensibly passive during the final phase of the battle of Aleppo and has already profited from a Russian black check to mobilize their Syrian allies against ISIS. They could, as a result of a pro-Assad assault against Idlib, push their advantage South towards Raqqa.

8. Already the time of the French mandate

The fall of East Aleppo in 2016 might be analyzed through the lens of the pacification of Damascus and its suburb in 1926. France exercised a mandate of the Society of Nations over Syria and, after a year, faced a nationalist uprising, referred to in Arabic as a revolution. They had played Aleppo as the submissive against Damascus the rebel, just like Russia and Assad are playing submissive Damascus against revolutionary Aleppo today. Blind bombings have struck the capital, despite, previous international condemnations, who had not prevented either the bloody sweep of the Damascus suburbs. We can note that the French strikes were less destructive in 1925-26 than the Russian bombings in 2015-16. Paris had restored with brutal force their authority Syria, but the colonial affair from Russia and France is possibly just getting started.

L'Humanité

2a. **There were 6000 tonight at the University of Aleppo**

The second largest city in Syria, who had remained calm thus far, lit up last night. Thousands of demonstrators rallied outside the University of Aleppo, in support of the revolution and the twenty victims of the bloody suppression in Daraa and Homs. The assembly was charged by the police and the pro-Bacharach al-Assad militias. Here is a short video of the rally, filmed last evening in Aleppo.

2b. Syria: Post-Aleppo, Russia Dictates the Diplomatic Tempo

By Vadim Kamenka

After the assassination of the Russian embassy d'or to Ankara in Turkey, Monday evening, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan hurried to remove Doubts about their future relationship. Yesterday, Moscow, during a trilateral summit with Turkey and Iran, emphasized their solution to the Syrian crisis.

Monday evening in Ankara, a 22-year-old police officer killed the Russian ambassador to Turkey, Andreï Karlov, with several shots. This assassination took place during the inauguration of a Russian-Turkish photography exposition in the capital and was captured by cameras.

The offender, originally from Aydin, a city in western Turkey, said he wanted to avenge the Syrian city of Aleppo. The goal was clear: target one of the major actors in the Syrian conflict. Andreï Karlov played a key role in the appeasement of the relations between his own country, Turkey, after the plane shot down in November 2015 on the Turkish-Syrian frontier. "He also heavily participated in the reconciliation of the two powers on the Syrian issue, despite some differences and led to the opening of negotiations to reach an end in Aleppo," confirmed a Russian diplomat.

Andreï Karlov's importance in the Syrian issue pushed the state leaders, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erodogan to immediately eliminate doubts about the future of Turkish-Russian relations and about the fate of the UN resolution on December 19 (evacuations and supervision of the operations by the United Nations). The Russian president described the assassination as a provocation destined to hinder lines between the two counties and the efforts to resolve the conflict. The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declared that he agreed with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, and the pursuit of cooperation.

The Three Protagonists Announced a Ceasefire

The trilateral meeting between the diplomatic heads of Russia, Turkey, and Iran, which was held yesterday in Moscow, demonstrates a desire to find a political solution. “Post-Aleppo is an essential question. It is outside the central theme of today’s discussions (Tuesday) in Moscow between Iran, Turkey, and Russia. The lines are about to move. The Russian and Iranian leaders are debating their objectives and considering new approaches to implement an intervention in Syria. This settlement in Aleppo comes a few weeks before the new US administration takes office,” asserted Igor Delanoë, the adjunct director of Franco-Russian Observatory.

At the end of the discussions, the three protagonists announced a proposal for a ceasefire throughout Syria. The text, which is called “the Declaration of Moscow” aims to open “peace negotiations” between the Syrian regime and the opposition, according to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergueï Lavrov. The three countries (Russia, Turkey, Iran) presented themselves as guarantors of the “declaration,” adopted at the level of the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs.

This is a turning point in the Syrian conflict. After the recovery of Aleppo, the second largest city in Syria, and Monday’s UN resolution, the diplomatic tempo continues to accelerate, and Russia looks like the conductor. “The Russian administration plays with their diplomatic timing and the transfer of power to the United States in a matter of weeks. Barack Obama wishes to maintain stability in Syria before passing power to Donald Trump. Russia took advantage of this. They are now looking to give diplomacy one more chance to bring about an agreement that confirms a balance of power on the ground. Because they currently favor the Syrian regime over the opposition held by the west, Turkey, and the Gulf States,” notes Igor Delanoë.

Waiting for the European and American chancelleries’ reactions, Russia continues to play with the score. Since the decision for military intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, Russia has become an essential actor in the Syrian dossier. They entered into the “global restoration policy for Russian Power outside of the old soviet space, of rebalancing international relations to the detriment of the United States in a region of the world where they wish to withdraw,” noted Middle Eastern specialist Fabrice Balanche, in a September 16 interview in Figaro. This clear determination for Russia’s return to the international scene is largely accentuated during Vladimir Putin’s third mandate, which ended in 2018. A strategy that aims to domestically/internally face the unprecedented social and economic crises since 2014.

2c. Syria: A Truce Respected Despite a Number of Raids

The ceasefire held between Russia and the United States, and in application since Saturday, has been relatively respected. Sunday, some raids - likely Syrian or Russian - targeted seven villages in the Hama and Aleppo provinces, but the Syrian Human Rights Observatory, based in London, was not able to determine if these communities were an integral part of the agreement. One of the villages, Kafar Hamra, is controlled by the al-Nursa Jihadist group, excluded from the truce following the example of the "Islamic State." Moscow also reported bombings from the Turkish territory. The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, saluted the truce for better denouncing the "Iranian aggression against Israel" since Syria and supplying arms to Hezbollah. "All this represents the red lines drawn by the Israeli State and they will remain," he explained in a new warmongering declaration.

Le Figaro

3a. In Northern Syrian, Daesh Survives the Death of al-Baghdadi

The Islamic State, who has a new leader, increased attacks in recent days.

By Delphine Minoui

Published November 1, 2019, Updated November 2019 at 1:26

Special Envoy for Gaziantep

He took a deep breath before speaking. "Fear! Fear! I cannot live any longer with fear," unleashed Mohammed, via WhatsApp, still struck by the attack that hit his city. This Thursday morning, it is around 5:30 am when Afrin (northwestern Syria) wakes up with a start to the sound of a huge explosion.

The images immediately flood the young Syrian civil servant's cell phone: disfigured bodies, overturned crates of apples, shredded shoes stranded in a pool of blood. A truck loaded with explosives detonated in the middle of a market, killing at least ten people. The attack, which was unusual in this locality under tight control of the Syrian deputies of the Turkish army, was not claimed. But all eyes are on the organization of the Islamic State. "If Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is over, the threat from Daesh is still very much alive," said Mohammed.

"Local populations have witnessed the beheadings, the extremist drift of Daesh. They were victims of the racketeering imposed by the levy of taxes. Today people are tired"

Colonel Hassan Rajoub

Like a sinister domino game in which explosives have replaced cards, northern Syria has seen an endless wave of attacks since the death of the ISIL founder. On the same day, Thursday, a person was injured in Sarmin, in the province of Idlib, by a handmade bomb. In al-Rai, in the Aleppo region, a motorcycle exploded.

If the jihadist movement is symbolically affected by the disappearance of its master, whose replacement, Abou Hamza al-Qourachi, was just appointed, "it still has the means to encourage its supporters for revenge," observes Lina Khatib, Middle East specialist within the Chatham House think-tank.

(Read also: Death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: what impact for Daesh?)

Gone are the days when the organization, created in 2014, dreamed of establishing a caliphate spanning Syria and Iraq. Gone are also the days when the control of certain petroleum installations enabled him to pay his combatants handsomely. "It's strongholds, that is to say the two "capitals"- Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria - have been reconquered by the coalition under the protection of the United States with the active support of the Kurdish militias," observes, in a note, Didier Billion, deputy director of Iris.

Daesh, which has lost many fighters in various offensives, is also struggling to attract new recruits from the civilian population. "Local people have seen his true face. They witnessed the beheadings, the extremist drift. They were victims of the racketeering imposed by the levy of taxes. People are tired today," said Colonel Hassan Rajoub, who was contacted by phone in the opposition-controlled part of Aleppo province.

Don't Underestimate Sleeper Cells

At the head of Division 23, one of the brigades of the Syrian National Army (coalition of groups from the Free Syrian Army, anti-Assad), he (?) has been in all battles against Daesh, "a weakened organization, says it, but whose nuisance capacity is still required. " For him, sleeper cells should not be underestimated.

"We remain on high alert. Many jihadists have gone underground after fleeing areas that have been taken from them. We have strengthened controls at the entrance to Idlib province, where many of the displaced have arrived. ISIS operatives may be hiding among civilians," he warns.

(Read also: Daesh confirms the death of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and designates his successor)

Last weekend's elimination of Baghdadi in an Idlib village is a glaring illustration of this. "Who could have imagined that he would land in a small border village in Turkey? This is proof that no one is able to monitor the comings and goings in this porous region with multiple actors, "

observes, from the city of Jarjnaz, the Syrian lawyer Mohammed Salameh, accusing Damascus of "tacit complicity" with Daesh. "Remember," he continues, "these 400 Islamic State fighters transferred a year ago by soldiers from the regime in the Deir ez-Zor province to Idlib province. Some have been arrested, others are still in the wild."

In recent weeks, the American withdrawal and the consequent Turkish military offensive in the north of Syria have only aggravated the vulnerability of this region, where the alliances vary based on circumstance, are also favorable to the survival of Daesh.

The group Hurras al-Dine, born out of separation from the organization Hayat Tahrir al-Cham (ex al-Qaeda) and Daesh's main competitor in the area, has thus openly displayed its new inclination by providing logistical support to Baghdadi during his run. "After eight years of war, political instability continues to fuel the terrorist. To get rid of Daesh, it is not enough to get rid of Baghdadi. We must attack the source of the problem: Bashar al-Assad," warns Syrian opponent Zakari Malahafji.

3b. In Qamishli, the Hope of a Syrian Kurdistan Collapsed Under the Turkish Bombs

BIG REPORT - Our special envoy lived in this city for the few days that saw the Kurdish dream of an autonomous region take flight.

By Samuel Forey

Published on October 14, 2019 at 12:16, updated October 15, 2019 at 00:02

Special envoy to Qamishli

It arrived in the afternoon, he does not know exactly when, everything is confusing after this strike that injured him at 6 am this Sunday morning. The trickle of voice coming out of his throat, his tight features, his faraway eyes, his dry skin - on his stretcher, Delil Hassakeh's whole body shows the hard battles he just escaped. He leaves Ras al-Ain. The small town, right against the border, is one of the entry points for the Turkish offensive in Syria.

"We've been fighting in the factory since 3 am. I was with a friend. Suddenly, a missile hits us. My friend died. I was hurt. I ended up being evacuated. In five days of fighting, I haven't seen the face of an enemy," said Delil Hassakeh - his nom de guerre. His features are stretched. Each movement pains him. He received shards in the right leg and in the back. It must be examined, but it is not possible, in this clinic in Tall Tamer, 40 kilometers from Ras al-Ain. He is waiting for his transfer.

On a bed to the side, lying across it lies a young man who looks like the sleeper in the valley. He has his right arm in a sling. A nurse tries to wake him up. "Comrade. Comrade. Wake up. Comrade. Comrade. What is your name?" The sleeper does not react. He is red with a baby face.

Quite the opposite of Delil, tanned, brown, bearded. He is an Arab from Hassakeh - the largest city in northeastern Syria, from which he takes his war name. He joined the SDF, Syrian Democratic Forces, led by the Kurds, in their fight against the Islamic State, during the battle of Raqqa in 2017. Now, he is fighting against the Turks, who support many Arab groups. Instead of falling into the perpetual change of alliances in the Syrian civil war, Delil chose his side: "I decided to join my Kurdish brothers because they are right. They have always fought against jihadists. And if Turkey wins, Daesh will come back." Next to him, the nurse continues in a firm voice: "Comrade, comrade. Wake up. Your name? Your name?" The sleeper does not move.

"There is nothing we can do against the Turkish air force. We are simply asking the United States to ban the Turkish F-16s from attacking us. We are taking care of the rest."

Delil Hassakeh, fighter in the SDF, led by the Kurds

"The Turks have tanks, cannons, planes. We managed to destroy a tank with heavy machine guns and rocket launchers. But there is nothing we can do against the Turkish air force. We are simply asking the United States to ban the Turkish F-16s from attacking us. We take care of the rest," continues Delil. Since President Donald Trump decided to withdraw support for the Kurds, they have lost their main strategic advantage in the Syrian civil war: air and logistical support from the United States. They find themselves alone against Turkey, a nebula of militias, including an Islamic State more threatening than ever, and a regime in ambush, ready to regain control of a region at the slightest failure.

(Also Read: Syria: a new map of the conflict favorable to Bashar al-Assad)

Delil's voice is getting weaker and weaker. She passed out in the room open to the Syrian autumn, ochre and warm like dry herbs: "We cannot lose Ras al-Ain. Even if the Turks attack us with all their might, we will hold out. Because this is our land. The Americans will come back. I'm not giving up hope." Ras al-Ain is a symbol. It was the baptism of fire of the YPG, the Syrian Kurdish forces, at the start of their autonomy. After long months of fighting against Jihadist al-Nusra, affiliated with al-Qaida, and other militias including the Free Syrian Army, they managed to take the city in July 2013 - which they rename his Kurdish name, Serekanye.

"Comrade, comrade," said the nurse, shaking the sleeper. He finally wakes up, half stands up, then walks, drowsy, supported by the caregiver. He will be transferred to Hassakeh hospital, where serious cases are treated. Delil is also taken away. His jaw clenched, he seems to cling to

life with the same movement, like a lost hope. Opponents simply do not fight on equal terms. On the one hand, a force summarily equipped, deprived of its distant protector. On the other, the second NATO army, supported by groups who dream of taking revenge against the Kurds.

(Read: Trump suspends trade talks with Turkey)

The ambulance leaves in silence. Around them, firm and worried faces, mourning a seven-year political experiment. Rojava, the Kurdish name for north-eastern Syria, has been de facto autonomous since 2012, when the army and the intelligence services of the Bashar al-Assad regime left the territory to send their forces elsewhere, in a revolution that turned into civil war.

The Syrian branch of the PKK, the PYD (Party of the Democratic Union), then took control of the region. It implements, while waging war against multiple armed groups and neutralizing its political opponents, the project of Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdish separatist leader. The regions are abandoning the ideology of the Baath party for that of democratic confederalism, which aims to go beyond the framework of the nation state. Gridded by formidable security services, the autonomous region is also learning to adapt to areas that are less favorable to the Kurds, choosing stability over ideology, negotiation over confrontation.

This building is collapsing at full speed. Tall Tamer is the privileged witness. The city closest to the fighting in Ras al-Ain, it has seen some of the 100,000 displaced, according to the United Nations.

“Winter is coming. I can't live here, it's too cold. I keep hope. Americans will come back.”

Imane Hajj Mamo, mother

This is the third exodus that Imane Hajj Mamo is experiencing. This 40-year-old mother, round in her floral dress, was born in Kobane. She moved in her childhood to the Kurdish district of Sheikh Maqsoud in Aleppo. She fled for the first time when the battle began in 2012 to take refuge in Kobane. In 2014, ISIS attacked this Kurdish stronghold. His father, brother, and cousins went into battle. She took refuge in Ras al-Ain. A five-year peace break begins. “We felt at home. Who doesn't like to live on his land!” She exclaimed. But last week, the Turks attacked. While her husband is fighting, she lives on the cement floor of an abandoned school, without medication for her epileptic daughter, who is exhausted by the crises. “Winter is coming. I can't live here, it's too cold. I keep hope. The Americans will come back.”

At least Imane is alive. Dozens of families staying at the Tall Tamer school joined a convoy organized by the Kurdish authorities on Sunday and formed a convoy to go to Ras al-Ain. They hope for a miracle but risk a massacre. Las (?) - the front of the convoy was hit by a Turkish air strike at the entrance to the city. A dozen people were killed in an operation that did not even slow the Ankara offensive.

Every day that passes confirms the Americans' departure. The Turkish army is progressing methodically over the two incursion areas, Tall Abyad and Ras al-Ain. It harasses the YPG all along the five hundred kilometers of border. Shaken by the battering, the dreaded Kurdish security services also face a helping hand carried out in the heart of Rojava. Friday, a car bomb attack shakes the "capital" of the autonomous region, Qamishli. Another car exploded outside a jihadist prison on Saturday without causing any damage. On the same day, Turkish-backed Arab militiamen ambushed the highway that links Kurdistan from east to west. They staged an execution that recalls the worst moments of the Syrian civil war. Rumors of mutiny are spreading in camps where ISIS supporters are staying.

Under the pale light of a full moon night, Rojava seems to disappear little by little, and returns to the Syrian Arab Republic

Sunday evening is sinking into uncertainty. How to hold? Some worrying signs - the cellular network is showing signs of weakness. A temporary breakdown or a terminal attacked by Turkey? No - the Syrian network has been cut. The Internet no longer works. A stroke of the regime? An offensive on both fronts, Ankara to the north, Damascus to the south? The scarce information is replaced by crazy rumors. Night is falling. Rojava empties. Ghosts seem to prowl behind the closed curtains and the empty streets of Qamishli, once sparkling with life.

In the evening, the news falls like a knife. An agreement has been made with the regime. Overwhelmed by the Turkish offensive, harassed by attacks inside its territory, the Kurdish authorities no longer had much choice: to negotiate with the supervisory authority, the Syrian regime, which they sometimes fought and often avoided, but with which they never freed themselves.

The agreement provides that the Syrians will deploy along the Turkish border to protect it. The administration and internal security will remain with the self-government. Prison camps, including those housing the jihadists, will continue to be monitored by Kurdish forces.

But at night, reality seems to turn to the advantage of the regime. An isolated checkpoint on the road between Qamishli and Hassakeh is discreetly abandoned by the YPG. "The Syrian army must arrive," blows a Kurdish fighter, before fainting in the dark. In Qamishli, supporters of the regime test the defenses of the self-government. In Hassakeh, shared between the two authorities, the checkpoints pass by the army. Under the pale light of a full moon night, Rojava seems to disappear little by little and returns to the Syrian Arab Republic.

The next day only confirms the trend. Damascus progresses, nibbles on the eastern and southern flanks of Kurdistan. Manbij, Raqqa, and even the small town of Tall Tamer, see the forces from Damascus arrive. The BBC says that two divisions of the Syrian army will be deployed in the provinces of Hassakeh and Deir ez-Zor. Thus ends, in less than a week, an unprecedented seven-year political adventure.

3c. Syria: Hundreds of People Flee Idlib in Anticipation of an Assault

Hundreds of civilians fled the province of Idlib, the last great insurgent stronghold in Syria, to find refuge in territories further north for fear of an assault by the regime of Bashar al-Assad, ...

By Le Figaro.fr with AFP

Published on September 6, 2018 at 00:17, updated on September 6, 2018 at 00:22

Hundreds of civilians have fled the province of Idlib, the last great insurgent stronghold in Syria, to seek refuge in territories further north for fear of an assault by the Bashar al-Assad regime, an NGO reported today.

(Read: The challenges of the battle of Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria)

For several weeks, the regime has been massing reinforcements on the outskirts of the province of Idlib (northwest), bordering Turkey and dominated by the jihadists of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) but where there are also rebels. Between yesterday evening and this early morning, residents fled villages in the southeast of Idlib for territories further north in the neighboring province of Aleppo, reported the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (OSDH).

"They are heading towards the west of the province of Aleppo and towards the region of Afrin, very close to the Turkish border" the director of the OSDH, Rami Abdel Rahmane, told AFP. He said, "almost 180 families, or about a thousand people." These departures come as the southeast of Idlib was targeted this morning by regime artillery strikes, which left six wounded according to the OSDH.

In the event of an offensive, the UN and the international community fear a humanitarian disaster of unprecedented scale in Idlib, even on the scale of a country ravaged since 2011 by a war that has killed more than 350,000 people. The UN fears in particular the displacement of up to 800,000 people. The UN special envoy, Staffan de Mistura, called for the avoidance of "a bloodbath" when he said the assault could be given "around September 10."

Some three million people live in Idlib province and adjacent rebel pockets, half of whom are displaced, according to the UN. "These people would flee to Turkey in the event of a disaster," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned on Wednesday. Erdogan, whose country supports the Syrian rebels, is due to meet his Iranian and Russian counterparts, the regime's steadfast allies, in Tehran on Friday for a summit that could seal the fate of Idlib.

Faced with the urgency of the situation, the United States also convened a meeting of the UN Security Council for tomorrow.

Le Point:

4a. **American Engagement in Syria Since 2011**

Posted on 07/10/2019 at 11:58 | AFP

Reminder of the stages of the engagement in the Syrian conflict of the United States, whose troops began Monday to withdraw from the vicinity of the Turkish border.

Assad's departure call

On April 29, 2011, a month after the first peaceful demonstrations were violently repressed by the regime, Washington imposed economic sanctions against several Syrian officials, then against President Bashar al-Assad in May.

The American ambassador Robert Ford defied the regime at the beginning of July by going to Hama (center), which is besieged by the army and the scene of a large demonstration.

On August 18, President Barack Obama and his Western allies called Assad to leave for the first time.

In October, the American ambassador left Syria for "security reasons". Damascus recalls its ambassador to Washington.

Obama Stops Strikes

In the summer of 2013, the regime was accused of carrying out a chemical attack near Damascus, which left more than 1,400 dead, according to Washington.

Despite a red line that he himself drew, Barack Obama at the last-minute renounces revenge bombings against the regime's infrastructure. In September he concluded an agreement with Moscow on the dismantling of the Syrian chemical arsenal.

Anti-Jihadist strikes

In 2014, the jihadists seized large swathes of territory north and west of Baghdad as well as the north and the east of Syria, where they took advantage of the chaos caused by the civil war.

In early September, Barack Obama promised to defeat the Islamic State (IS) group with "a vast international coalition" and, on the 23rd, Washington, helped by its allies, launched its first strikes in Syria, after Iraq.

The largest contributor to the coalition, Washington will deploy 2,000 soldiers in Syria, mainly special forces, and mobilize significant air and naval resources.

In October 2015, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), made up of 25,000 Kurds and 5,000 Arabs, all Syrian, were created. Dominated by the main Kurdish militia in Syria, the People's Protection Units (YPG), they will receive substantial aid from the United States, in armaments and in air support.

The SDF has since driven IS from northeastern Syria, notably from Raqqa and much of the province of Deir Ezzor, and reconquered last March its last Syrian stronghold, Baghouz.

Trump orders strikes

On April 14, 2018, the United States, with the support of France and the United Kingdom, launched targeted strikes against the Syrian regime, which they accused of a chemical attack (40 dead) in the city of Duma, near Damascus, then in the hands of the rebels.

Already, in April 2017, Donald Trump had ordered strikes against an air base after a sarin gas attack attributed to the Assad regime, in Khan Sheikhoun, in the province of Idlib (more than 80 dead).

US-Turkish agreement

On December 19, 2018, Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the American soldiers stationed in Syria, a controversial decision which pushed his Minister of Defense Jim Mattis to resign. Trump said a few months later that about 400 of these soldiers will remain on the ground "for a while".

On January 16, 2019, 19 people, including four Americans, were killed in a suicide bombing attack on the coalition in Manbij (north). The IS claimed attack is the deadliest against U.S. forces in Syria since 2014.

On August 7, Ankara and Washington decided to establish a "joint operations center" to coordinate the creation of a "security zone", a buffer zone between the Turkish border and the Syrian zones controlled by the YPG.

Beginning of the American withdrawal

On October 6, Washington announced that Turkey would "soon" carry out a long-planned "military incursion" into northern Syria "and that American troops would leave the area."

The next day, American forces began to withdraw from the vicinity of the Turkish border. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says a Turkish offensive can be launched at any time.

4b. Syria's Largest Hospital in East Aleppo Bombed Again

This hospital is the largest in the rebel part of the city. It was previously bombed along with another medical facility on Wednesday. AFP source

Modified on 10/01/2016 at 5:29 pm - Published on 10/01/2016 at 11:18 | Le Point.fr

The largest hospital in rebel-held Aleppo, which was bombed on Wednesday, was hit by at least two barrels of explosives on Saturday, the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) reported. "Two barrels of explosives hit the M10 hospital and there is information about the use of a cluster bomb," according to Adham Sahloul, of SAMS, the US-based NGO that manages this hospital. This hospital, as well as another, had already been targeted by bombing on Wednesday. At least two patients were killed, and two healthcare workers injured in the attacks, according to Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

Syria is the most dangerous country for healthcare workers

The two hospitals had been forced to suspend their activities and only six establishments are still operating in the eastern districts of Aleppo, controlled by the rebels, according to SAMS. After the bombing, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon denounced "war crimes." The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (OSDH) also reported an airstrike on Saturday against a field hospital in the rebel district of Sakhour. "One person has been killed and the hospital is out of service," said Rami Abdel

Rahmane, director of the OSDH, without being able to immediately say whether the victim was one of the patients or the medical staff. According to SAMS, the two hospitals hit by the bombings were forced to suspend their activities and only six hospital structures are still operating in the Aleppo districts controlled by the insurgents.

These bombings come in the midst of an offensive by troops loyal to the Bashar al-Assad regime who seek to take over the whole of Aleppo, the country's second city divided since 2012 and which has become the main front of the war in Syria. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Syria is the most dangerous country for healthcare workers with 135 attacks on medical centers in 2015. The Syrian conflict has killed more than 300,000 people in 5 years and caused the greatest humanitarian crisis since World War II. About 250,000 people, including 100,000 children, live in insurgent-held neighborhoods and suffer, according to the UN, "the most serious humanitarian disaster ever seen in Syria". According to the World Health Organization, Syria has become the most dangerous country in the world for healthcare workers.

Rebels and regime still fighting over Aleppo

On Friday night, the correspondent of Agence France-Presse in the rebel part of Aleppo heard fighting and bombing in the districts of Suleiman al-Halabi, in the city center, and Boustane al-Bacha, just north. According to the OSDH, the regime has gained ground in Souleimane al-Halabi, a district located on the dividing line, and is approaching that of Boustane al-Bacha.

The Britain-based organization, which has a vast network of sources across Syria, also reported air raids on insurgent areas on Saturday, but was unable to immediately report the casualties. The rebels have recently lost positions in northeast Aleppo, which now allows pro-regime forces to threaten the rebel neighborhoods of Hellok and Haydariyé. Since the start, on September 22, of their large-scale military offensive on East Aleppo, the bombing of Russian aircraft, barrels of explosives dropped by Syrian helicopters and artillery fire have killed at least 220 people, according to the report.

Russia risks "becoming an outcast"

Doctors Without Borders has called on Syria and Russia to end "the bloodbath." The latter are accused by the West of using weapons against civilian areas in Aleppo normally intended for military targets, such as anti-bunker, incendiary and cluster bombs. Moscow has brushed aside their charges of "war crimes" and has assured that it will continue its military campaign in support of the Bashar al-Assad regime, which began a year ago. British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson warned Russia on Friday that it risks "becoming an outcast". In this tense diplomatic context with Russia, the

Americans judged that the relations between the two powers were "in intensive care, but that the EKG (was) not yet flat".

Aleppo is at the center of a French draft resolution that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council have started to examine. The text calls for the restoration of the cease-fire initiated in September by an American-Russian agreement, which lasted only one week, but diplomatic efforts to re-establish a new one in Syria seem completely bogged down. Despite everything, the United States, which supports the opposition to the regime, assured on Friday that their discussions with Russia, an ally of Damascus, were not yet dead.

4c. Syria: Why Putin will Destroy Aleppo

The country's second city, a commercial and cultural crossroad, with 2,000 years of history, died under bombing, with embarrassed silence from the West.

By Michel Colomès

Posted on 08/06/2016 at 11:42 | Le Point.fr

Aleppo has been besieged for four years by Assad's army without results, but the next President in the United States is pushing the Syrians and their Russian allies to end it. Without considering the 300,000 civilians, including 90,000 children, who, in appalling conditions of famine, epidemics and, above all, almost incessant bombardment, had so far managed to hold out.

Since July 17, the last crossing point connecting survivors and Turkey with rare supply convoys has been taken by Assad's soldiers. Humanitarian agencies have made the calculation: with the meager stocks accumulated, there is barely enough to feed - poorly and for a few days - 150,000 people. In besieged Aleppo, Civilians double that number.

Steamroller

The United Nations has requested a truce to evacuate civilians. The Syrians and the Russians replied that they were ready to set up humanitarian corridors and even save the lives of those rebel fighters who would borrow them. The problem is that an identical promise was made before government forces took Homs. Upon arrival, 160 people were missing.

(READ also Syria - Aleppo: to die of hunger or to die while trying to flee?)

This is why for the past four days, the rebels, who only hold the eastern districts of the city, where a majority of civilians have gathered, have launched a desperate offensive to break the blockade with some success like the tunnel under the front lines of soldiers of the regular army which they stuffed with dynamite and detonated.

But the Russian steamroller ensures that the vice does not loosen and that the army of Assad continues to asphyxiate the city already reduced to a field of ruins, its souks and gardens were classified as heritage of UNESCO. The city whose population swarmed with scholars, renowned doctors. It, a tragic paradox, which was described not so long ago as the gastronomic capital of Syria.

Powerlessness

And what is the American cavalry doing in front of this announced disaster? Nothing. What does Europe say to Mr. Putin, who is so quick to hold certain leaders to account for their breaches of human rights? Nothing.

It must be said that thanks to Barack Obama's perpetual waltz of hesitation with Syria, as with Iraq, we have made sure that all moderate opponents of Assad disappear into the oblivion of the rebellion. Them and those of the armed combatants who tried to follow them. As a result, they were replaced by jihadists, often linked to Al-Qaeda. Like the al-Nusra Front, recently renamed by its leader, Abou Mohamed Al Jolani, "Front for the conquest of Syria". We could not be clearer: for him it is a question of taking advantage of the setbacks of Daesh to establish themselves in Syria and to take advantage of the possible fall of Assad to create another Islamic State. A threat even closer geographically to Israel and Europe.

In the midst of a terrorist psychosis, in Europe as in the United States, it is therefore very delicate - even if France risks it - to sort out the wheat from the chaff, to help the moderates - if and to fight those who dream of a Syria under the Sharia rule. This is why Vladimir Putin will continue to keep his hands free to seize Aleppo, comfort Bashar al-Assad and establish Russian influence in the Middle East a little more. It is with this unprecedented humiliation that Barack Obama will end his presidency.

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