

It's Elementary.

Anthony Element

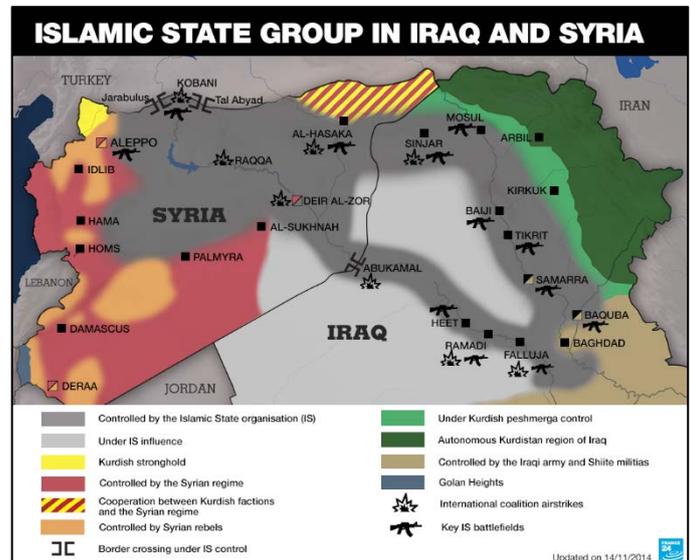
How to Make a Syrian Salad.

As I write this, the media is still wringing the last emotional dregs from the Paris terrorist attack story, the Turks have just shot down a Russian fighter and Syria is still Terrorism Central.

I've decided it's high time I took a close look at this whole Syrian salad. As with most such dishes, it's basically a case of getting all the ingredients together, mix well and throw in some dressing.

So, here's the basic ingredient list:

Syrian government,
Syrian people,
USA,
Russia,
France,
Turkey,
Kurds,
Australia,



UK,
Canada,
Saudi Arabia,
Iraq,
Iran,
ISIS,
AL Qaida,

and numerous other miscellaneous bands of crazy people with guns.

Moving away from the salad metaphor for a minute, the first thing we have to grasp to make sense of this situation is that nobody really trusts or gets along with anybody else, sorta like mixing vinegar and ice cream. (I don't know what it is with me and food today.)



The second key to getting it is that every player is saying one thing but believing another. The third thing is everybody knows that everybody is lying about their true agenda, but they all pretend that they're all telling the truth.

The technical term for this kind of international situation is it's a Colossal Clusterf***k.

Let me show you what I mean.

Assad and the Syrian government and ISIL are supposed to be mortal enemies. But just today, the US State Department announced sanctions against a Syrian businessman who's set up deals so that Assad can buy oil from ISIL; oil that comes from wells that used to belong to Assad.



That oil will be used to power Syria's army and Air Force which is fighting... ISIL. But ISIL needs money, so I guess a deal is a deal.

Well one thing we now know, ISIL's leaders have embraced good old Western Capitalism, as in – *“any customer with money is a good customer”*.

Next we come to Turkey's little turkey shoot. You'd have to think that splashing a Russian fighter right off the bat, just for - maybe - violating your airspace, is a tad over the top, as responses go. Like having your car crushed and recycled for parking in a Disabled Persons' spot. (Actually, that's not a bad idea...)

So why the overreaction.

Well... it turns out that wealthy Turkish businessmen have also been buying smuggled ISIL oil at rock bottom prices and on selling it for huge buckeroos. But the Russians, who are a bit less particular about civilian casualties than the Coalition, have been bombing the crap out of the smuggling routes and the, now ISIL owned and operated, oil wells.



So, a bit of pressure on the Turkish govt from Turkish business and bingo... message sent. Not terribly subtle, but then, neither Erdogan nor Putin do subtle so I'm sure they understand each other perfectly.



At least I hope they do.

Also the Turks don't like the Russians because the Russians support Armenian claims of Turkish genocide, which by the way did or did not happen, depending on your nationality, about a hundred years ago.

Are you still with me?

Now for the US.

Everything America does internationally is driven by two things:

First, US domestic politics. Basically, the Republicans just want to bomb everybody, while the Democrats, deep in their heart of hearts, sort of feel like they should be bombing somebody but just can't figure out who.

The second thing about US foreign policy is that for about the last century it's been based on that highly sophisticated principle - the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Now the problem for the Americans in Syria is that everybody there is the enemy of at least one of their friends and the friend of at least one of America's enemies. Which leaves Washington like a dog with fifteen tails and is trying to chase all of them at once.

Fun to watch, but good foreign policy? Mmm, not so much.

To further get the full taste of the salad, we have to delve into the complicated structure of Islam.

About 80 to 90% of the world's Muslims are Sunni and they believe that Prophet [Muhammad](#)'s first [Caliph](#) was his father-in-law [Abu Bakr](#). Shias, on the other hand, who make up the other 15%, hold that Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin [Ali ibn Abi Talib](#), not Abu Bakr, was his first caliph.

Now, given that this argument has been going on since the 7th Century AD, I think someone's in serious need of some negotiating skills. Personally, I wouldn't have thought it would make all that much difference after 1300 years, but then, I'm an atheist, so none of it makes any sense to me anyway.

By the way, did you know that Syria is officially a secular state? Now that's what I call irony.

Now, back when Syria actually had a population, about 74% were [Sunnis](#) (including [Sufis](#)), whereas 13% were [Shias](#) (including 8.0% [Alawites](#)).



But here's the thing. Assad and his cronies are pretty much all Alawites, so 8% of the population was controlling the rest - and looking after themselves fairly well – everybody else? Not so much.

You just knew that was going to end in tears, right?

The Saudis are also Sunni, so they are seriously not best friends with Assad. For a good part of the crisis, the Saudis officially stood on the side lines. Unofficially, they funded many of the rebel groups, including ISIL. But then ISIL ideology started to become a bit more popular in Saudi Arabia, which scared the Saudis, so they decided that ISIL were really baddies after all and joined the US led Coalition.

The Russians support Assad and claim to be defending everything from democracy to the price of sand. They're not bombing the crap out of anything that moves or doesn't move, out of self-interest, oh no, it's for the good of humanity.

Yeah, riiiggghhttt!

Except that Russia has for decades leased a naval base at the Syrian port city of Tartous. If the Russians lose that then they have virtually no presence in the region.

Which would never do.

The Turkish government has said it will never accept Assad as Syrian leader, because he's caused 350,000 deaths, which seems like a fair point, on the face of it.



So for years the Turks have been looking the other way as fighters crossed its borders with Syria, along with money and weapons, all heading for rebel factions, including ISIL. But Turkey is now supporting the Coalition against ISIL. See, ISIL is also battling the Kurds, who the Turkish government hate because the Kurds want their own homeland, including part of Turkey.

So ISIL is fighting Turkey's enemy, the Kurds, even though Turkey is nominally fighting ISIL.

Are we having fun yet?

Iran is especially interesting, because as a Shia country it's supporting Assad, (because the Alawites are a subset of Shia, remember?) Which puts both the US and Iran in a rather embarrassing situation, because both countries are the avowed enemy of ISIL, which puts them, more or less, on the same side.



But the US and Iran have been best enemies for decades. Oh well, needs must...

And then of course, there's ISIL.

Most of its management were officers back in Saddam Hussein's army and were all members of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party, which was a political party and not particularly religious. Go figure! Bush Mk2's advisors (genius's all), decided it was better to have these guys outside the tent peeing in, rather than inside peeing out, so they banished them right after the invasion of Iraq. Said officers did not take this at all well, so they set up much of the Iraqi post invasion insurgency. (Who could possibly have seen that coming?)

Now they run ISIL and have developed quite an effective business model.



Basically, they advertise all over the world to recruit foot soldiers. They target losers, drug dealers, night club bouncers and other miscellaneous dickheads who measure at least 7 out of 10 on International Scale of Psychopathy, and mostly have IQs somewhere at about room temperature. They then tell them that it's okay to live out their wildest fantasies of murder, rape and brutality as long as they do it all for ISIL. They then tell these crazies that it'll all work out okay in

the end 'cos they're also doing it for God. Of course, they didn't bother to check whether God was okay with any of this.

(Well, right away you can see the basic problem there.)

No doubt you'll note in the picture of ISIL Pea Brains (above), the cool sneakers and ingenious desert camouflage – no one will ever spot them.



Last off, the ISIL numero unos give their troops a drug called Captagon, which makes them feel like real men, an experience with which most of them aren't all that familiar.

And that's your basic ISIL business model. Which finally brings us to Australia's involvement, which is simple to explain.



We're there because we were told to be there.

Well, there's your Syrian Salad recipe done and dusted, so I'll finish with a couple of points.

First, if you can keep your head in the midst of all this confusion you don't understand the situation.

Second, and this is a question for our Gung Ho politicians who want to put Australian feet, in probably Chinese made boots, on the ground in Syria. Can anyone - Obama, Turnbull, Abbott, Cameron, absolutely anybody would do - describe to us all what a realistic outcome for Syria, that we'd describe as a success, would look like?

Didn't think so.

So if we don't have the first clue what success would look like, why are we all there? Because doing something similar in Iraq and Afghanistan just worked out so wonderfully well, didn't it. And it's worth remembering a few things from history.

When the Allies eventually occupied Germany to end WW2, when did they leave? Answer: they haven't; 37,000 US troops are still there. Likewise when American led forces invaded Japan for the same reason, when did the allied soldiers leave? Answer: They haven't either. They're also still there. And, after fourteen years, Coalition Forces haven't completely left Iraq or Afghanistan.

Maybe, there's a message there.

Are you confused yet? I know I am.

But I hope you enjoy eating salad, because this baby, munchy and crunchy, is going to be around for a long time.

And if you couldn't understand that, see [THIS](#).

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, 'Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly.' The other man said, 'What is the name of the restaurant?' The first man thought and thought and finally said, 'What's the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know, the one that's red and has thorns.' 'Do you mean a rose?' 'Yes, that's the one,' replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, 'Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?'



Army chaplains.

On the 20th November, the Sydney Daily Telegraph screamed the following headline:

“Army chaplains to remove ‘conquer’ from 102-year-old motto because it is offensive to Muslims”.

It went on to say: *“The Australian Army is removing the motto “In this sign conquer” from the 102-year-old hat badges of army chaplains because it is offensive to Muslims.*

The move comes after an imam approved by the Grand Mufti was appointed to join the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services in June.



Australian Army chaplains have had the motto on their hat badges since 1913.”

We recently received the following from the Director General Chaplaincy – Army (DGCHAP-A) who asked that we distribute the following Statement:

“The Army is aware of recent reporting regarding a change to the Australian Army’s Chaplaincy badge, which is officially known as the Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department badge. This reporting is misleading. A change to the Australian Army Chaplaincy badge is not a matter the Chief of Army is currently considering.

Some Chaplains raised the idea to contemporise the corps badge when looking into the current and future needs of chaplaincy in the Army and broader Defence. For their open mindedness they are commended.

In all cases, where changes to the Australian Army’s corps and regimental badges are considered, the Chief of Army is the final decision authority.

The Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department has two cap badges: one for its Christian chaplains and another for its Jewish chaplains. The current badge worn by Christian Chaplains of the Australian Army is the second iteration of their corps badge and is modelled after the British Army. The in-service version was issued in 1955 and includes a stylised Maltese Cross, a half wattle and half laurel and the motto in this sign conquer. The motto was inherited from the British Army’s Chaplain insignia and the words are believed to originate in the 4th century Roman Empire.



Over time, the Australian Army has amended the design of several emblems to reflect contemporary events, with changes relating to wording, design or a new monarch. There have been seven versions of the Rising Sun Badge. The corps badges for infantry, signals, artillery, medical, ordnance, intelligence and armoured are all examples of emblems that have had minor and significant changes throughout our Army's 114 year history.

The Army is committed to creating an inclusive environment that ensures all serving members who wish to practice their faith are respected and appreciated, regardless of their religious denomination or affiliation. Army's Chaplains of all faiths do outstanding service in ministry to our people.

Should a proposed change to the Australian Army Chaplaincy badge be raised, it will be considered by the Chief of Army in the normal course of his duties.

Kindest Regards,

*Mark Peet
SO DGCHAP-A
Director General Chaplaincy – Army"*

It seems the Daily Telegraph relies on the old adage: "Why let the truth interfere with a good story"

Today, there are just over 80,000 full time permanent personnel in the ADF of which 102 self-identify as Muslim. How selfish are those 79,898 who won't change to suit the 102. – tb.

W.A.A.A.F'S GOOD SERVICE.

During 1944, members of the WAAAF were for the first time among those who received "Good Service" cards, awarded to selected Air Force personnel who, while they have no opportunity of earning operational awards, have rendered exceptionally valuable services which merit some recognition.

The first twenty one airwomen to be so honoured were:

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A/Cpl TM Backshall
(Stewardess)

Cpl AC Carroll (Clerk G)
Sgt JM Cummings (Clerk)
Cpl EJ Harrison (Cook)

Cpl ME Martin (Cook's
assistant)
Sgt T O'Connor (Clerk G)

A/Sgt AM Spring (Clerk G)

A/Sgt SM Blakeley (Clerk)

Sgt LM Comley (Clerk G)
ACW M Deal (Armourer)
Cpl JV Humphries Armament
assistant)

ACW HA May (Equipment
assistant)

F/Sgt HDF Parker (Clerk G)

Sgt EM Walker (Clerk G)

Sgt AM Cantwell (Clerk G)

Sgt M Crowe (Cook)
Sgt EM Fraser (Cook)
Cpl KE Keig (Clerk G)

ACW NJ Oliver (Stewardess)

Sgt AA Quinn (Equipment
assistant)

F'Sgt D White (Clerk stores)



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