



TWIST

BY CHINO ODIMBA

The Facts

Twist tells the story of Abdo: a young refugee buffeted between borders and bad company. Twist transforms Oliver's struggle for sanctuary into a modern tale framed by the global crisis fast defining the 21st century.

These facts and provocations will help extend understanding of the subject area – in addition to serving as stimuli for the students' own creative work and devising.

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1. Human Trafficking

Trafficking: The Basics

Many people have heard the term “human trafficking.” But many find it hard to explain precisely what it is.

- According to the main international anti-trafficking law, known as the Palermo Protocol, human trafficking is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”
- Human trafficking has three core components – the ‘act’, the ‘means’, and the ‘purpose’. The ‘act’ refers to the way in which the person is recruited or moved.
- The ‘means’ is the coercion used to carry out the recruitment or movement, such as the threats or the force used, and includes deception. This could be when someone decides to make a trip to take up a job, which doesn’t actually exist.
- Finally, the ‘purpose’ refers to the motivation of the trafficker, the way in which they are seeking to exploit the victim. This could be for their labour, for sexual exploitation, or even for their organs.
- All three of these components must be present in a case of human trafficking, a form of modern slavery. There is one exception.
- In the case of children, human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, and/or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation. Only the ‘act’ and the ‘purpose’ are included on account of children’s vulnerability.
- Human trafficking is different from “people smuggling”. Smugglers transport people so that they can reach a destination, usually illegally and for a fee. Sometimes a person pays to be smuggled but finds on arrival, that they have been trafficked into exploitation.
- Human trafficking is low risk, profitable crime. Out of the 196 countries in the world, 136 have criminalised human trafficking. However, there are few prosecutions, making it a crime with little deterrent.

Child Trafficking:

Child trafficking and modern slavery are child abuse. Children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- child sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- criminal activity such as pickpocketing, begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.

Many children are trafficked into the UK from abroad, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

How child trafficking and modern slavery happens

- Children are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes. Traffickers use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community.
- They may threaten families, but this isn't always the case – in fact, the use of violence and threats to recruit victims has decreased (Europol, 2011).
- Traffickers may promise children education or persuade parents their child can have a better future in another place.
- Sometimes families will be asked for payment towards the 'service' a trafficker is providing – for example sorting out the child's documentation prior to travel or organising transportation.
- Traffickers make a profit from the money a child earns through exploitation, forced labour or crime. Often this is explained as a way for a child to pay off a debt they or their family 'owe' to the traffickers.
- Although these are methods used by traffickers, coercion, violence or threats do not need to be proven in cases of child trafficking - a child cannot legally consent so child trafficking only requires evidence of movement and exploitation.

Lam's* Story

"I was 16 years old when I came to the UK. I'd left home the year before after my father died in a motorbike accident. My family were very poor and lived in a small rural town in central Vietnam. My father's death left my family with money problems and my mum started to borrow money from local loan sharks. She encouraged me to get a job so I left school and started working as a newspaper vendor, but my salary wasn't enough to support my family.

"Slowly our family got more and more into debt, and the loan sharks started to threaten my mum. We had heard that it was possible to earn lots of money overseas so me and mum decided that I should go overseas to work and send money back home. We told the loan sharks what we were planning and they put us in contact with agents who said they could arrange the journey for me to go the UK.

"They told me I wasn't allowed to contact my mum or speak to anyone else."

Lam*

"The agents arranged false travel documents for me and I left Vietnam with a group of other people going abroad to work. We flew to the Czech Republic and then hid in trucks from there to the UK. The journey was awful, I was threatened by the people in charge and saw other young people being assaulted and raped. They told me I wasn't allowed to contact my mum or speak to anyone else. There wasn't much food available and little access to toilets.

"When I got to the UK a man met me and told me he was going to help me find work. He took me to a house full of plants and told me that my job was to look after the plants. He told me I had to stay in the property at all times. Every day, someone would call to check up on me and sometimes visit to make sure I was doing a good job. I slept on the floor in a corridor and lived on food parcels. I remember asking the man who took me there if I could leave because I didn't like it but he threatened to beat me or starve me to death.

"The entire time was really scary and confusing."

Lam*

"After 5 weeks the police raided the house and arrested me. They told me that the plants I was looking after were cannabis and that I'd been helping to grow illegal drugs. The police charged me with drug offences and I was sentenced in court to 18 months custodial sentence in a Young Offenders Institute.

"I had two solicitors to help me, one was trying to get me out of prison, and the other one was trying to help me stay in the UK. I wanted to go back home, but I knew that the money I owed to the agents and the loan sharks meant that my life was in danger. I was worried about my mum, but couldn't contact or help her from prison. The entire time was really scary and confusing.

"A lot of professional people visited me in prison, including Fiona* from the NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC). She asked me lots of questions about my life and said she was writing a report to try and help me.

"I was invited by CTAC to join a group to meet other young people who had been trafficked out of their countries."

Lam

"I left the Young Offenders Institute after 12 months. A social worker helped me to live with a foster carer, who I stayed with until I was 18. I was told that because I had been trafficked into the UK I could stay for 3 years, but after that I would have to ask the UK government if I could stay longer. With help from people at CTAC and other agencies I began to understand what had happened to me.

"I was invited by CTAC to join a group to meet other young people who had been trafficked out of their countries. I now understand what trafficking is and I use my time to help the NSPCC support more children who have been abused like me.

"I know of other people who have been trafficked into the country but who have returned to work for traffickers after their arrest. They work despite the risk, out of fear that their families will be harmed if they do not work to pay off their debts. I'm not in contact with these gangs anymore, but I'm still scared of them."

**Names have been changed to protect identity*

Information on Human Trafficking taken from:

<https://www.freedomunited.org/freedom-university/human-trafficking>

Information on Child Trafficking taken from:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-trafficking/>

2. Migration and the UK

There have always been episodes of migration to Britain but, those episodes were small and demographically insignificant until the Second World War. After the Second World War, it increased slowly, growing by less than two million in the forty years between 1951 and 1991. In the late 1990s the pace and scale of migration increased to a level without historical precedent. The foreign born population of England and Wales more than doubled, increasing by nearly four million in the twenty years between the 1991 and 2011 censuses. It has now reached 13.4% of our population. This massive increase dwarfs the scale of any previous inflow in our history.

- **Measuring historic immigration**

The Census began to record people's country of birth from 1851. Estimating the size of the foreign born population before that is much more difficult, but historical records give us some idea as to the scale of immigration before the mid-19th century. It was not until 1964 that the international passenger survey was established; it provides a broad picture of those entering and leaving the country on an annual basis.

- **Immigration before the first census**

It has been asserted that 'the basic human stock of England has been settled and relatively homogenous since time immemorial' but there have always been some movements of people to (and from) Britain:

- **The Roman period**

It is widely accepted that, during the Roman occupation, the population of Britain was estimated 4-5 million. During the occupation, there is considerable evidence to suggest that 'the population of Roman Britain remained overwhelmingly indigenous. Whilst the Roman invasion force consisted of '45,000 men' the garrison that was left in its place fell from a peak of about 55,000 in the first century to a low of about 10,000-20,000 in the fourth century. The administration of the country was left largely to the British. Including the Army's dependants, there were probably 125,000 migrants in the British Isles out of a population of 4 million, about 3%.

- **Anglo Saxons ,Vikings and Normans**

The population of Britain declined markedly after the end of the Roman occupation, falling to as low as one and quarter million. In the period of upheaval that followed the end of the Roman Empire, England experienced invasions and settlement by Germanic tribes such as the Jutes, Angles and Saxons. The size and scale of the migrations that followed is a matter of historical debate. It is widely accepted that inflows from the subsequent Viking and

Norman invasions were much smaller and less demographically significant. It has been estimated that the inflows from Viking invasions may have made up as much as 4-8% of the total population. Despite the huge significance of the Norman conquest of 1066, the numbers of Normans that followed William the Conqueror to England are accepted by most historians as being small. Indeed, one historian states that 'only ten thousand or so Frenchmen followed in William's footsteps-less than one percent of the population. Regardless of the size of their migration, the Normans made a tremendous impact on England; quickly becoming the country's governing elite and biggest landowners

- **The Middle Ages**

One of the next examples of migration to the British Isles was the 'very small minority' of Jewish people that lived in England in the Middle Ages and who were subsequently expelled in 1290. Quite sizable numbers of Flemings also came to England in the middle ages, bringing with them knowledge of industries and crafts not present in the country at the time.

- **The Sixteenth Century onwards**

It is arguable that the first wave of migrants to the contemporary British Isles arrived in the sixteenth century as England became a trading power. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, England was still largely homogenous. Even London was not particularly diverse. In 1610, it was estimated that about 10,000 of the 300,000 people living in London were born abroad. A London doctor in the late eighteenth century decided to record the birthplace of his patients and found that just one in sixty was born abroad

- **African Migration**

As the nation became increasingly involved in the slave trade from the sixteenth century onwards, one of the by-products was the importation of a small number of, unwilling, Africans and by the beginning of the seventeenth century there was an established African community in England. From the 1650s the numbers of Africans brought to the British Isles began to increase markedly and by the late eighteenth century there is documented evidence that tens of thousands of people of African descent lived in Britain. Most estimates range between 10,000 and 20,000 with some outlying estimates of 30,000. Some have estimated 14,000-20,000 for London alone in the late eighteenth century out of a population of about 675,000. These larger estimates are contentious with the historian Folarin Shyllon stating that the number never exceeded 10,000 nationally. After 1807 it was illegal to import slaves into Britain, which meant the almost total cessation of African migration and the rapid decline of the African population thereafter.

- **Jewish Migration**

Although Jews were expelled from England in 1290, Jewish immigration resumed centuries later and by 1734 it was estimated that there were around 6,000 Jews in England. In 1800, it was estimated that there were around 15,000-20,000 Jewish people living in Britain. In the 19th Century Jewish people from Eastern Europe immigrated to the UK in fairly sizable numbers. This number had been fuelled by Jewish migrants fleeing unrest in Russia and Eastern Europe. There was so much concern among the public and government about the level of Jewish immigration that in 1905 the Aliens Act was introduced designed to curb it. Despite migrants from a variety of backgrounds coming to Britain from the sixteenth century onwards, only Jews really ever settled in appreciable numbers. By the 1940s, the Jewish population of Britain was about 400,000 and had come mostly in four major waves. The first of those waves broadly consisted of merchants from Portugal, Amsterdam and other Western European Commercial Cities in the sixteenth century, which was followed by the arrival of poor Jews from other parts of Europe in the 18th Century. At the end of the 19th century, a larger wave came from Tsarist Russia and Eastern Europe. Another wave from Nazi Germany came in the 1930s- with perhaps as many as 100,000 coming.

- **European Migration**

French Protestants, or Huguenots first arrived in numbers from France after the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris in 1572. After political unrest in France in the late 17th, Huguenots again migrated to Britain in their thousands, with some sources claiming that 50,000 eventually came from the combined episodes of migration. In 1709 German refugees known as 'Poor Palatines', fleeing French invasion, began to move to England with perhaps as many as 13,000 arriving. There is also a long standing history of migration from Eastern Europe to the UK. Polish merchants began arriving in England in the sixteenth century, and in the eighteenth century, a number of Polish Protestants immigrated to England. After the failed uprising against the Russian Empire in the 1831, several thousand Polish insurgents moved to London. By the 1901 Census there were 82,844 Eastern Europeans living in Britain. During the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of Poles were stationed in Britain and the Polish resettlement Act of 1947 offered citizenship to 200,000 Polish soldiers who did not wish to return to a Soviet dominated Poland. The 1951 Census subsequently recorded 162,339 Poles living in Britain. After the Second World War quite large numbers of other Eastern Europeans were allowed to settle in Britain - many of whom were actively recruited to work in Britain as part of an overseas workers scheme- one of the very few episodes of a 'guest workers' scheme in British history.

- **Asian and American Migration**

People also came to Britain from the Indian Sub-Continent from the 18th Century onwards, with the importation of domestic workers from India becoming more popular in the 19th century. However, the numbers were small; one estimate puts the number of Indians in Britain at the start of the 19th Century as a 'few hundred' while another source claims that in 1814, 2,500 Indians came to Britain.¹ There is evidence that African and Chinese sailors established small communities' in the port cities of the British Isles in the latter part of the 19th century. Very small numbers of Chinese people came to Britain from 1860 onwards, with census records showing that they were a tiny community. In 1901, there were just 387 Chinese nationals in Britain and in 1911, just 1,219. There were also fairly large number of Americans in Britain in the 19th Century; 18,496 at the census of 1881 and 16,860 in 1891. Some Historians estimate that the number of Chinese and African born migrants was so small that it was only about a tenth of the number of Americans resident at those two censuses.

- **Commonwealth Migration**

Small numbers of people born in the colonies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa also migrated to Britain. These people were often themselves the descendants of British emigrants.

- **Commonwealth Immigration after World War Two**

Britain has always experienced migrations but, before the mid twentieth century, most inflows were very small in scale and the more substantial ones were short-lived. For the most part, their impact was not so much demographic as economic and cultural - and often beneficial.

In 1948, however, The British Nationality Act granted the subjects of the British Empire the right to live and work in the UK. Commonwealth citizens were not, therefore, subject to immigration control but the Home Office estimate is that the net intake from January 1955 to June 1962 was about 472,000. From 1962 onwards, successively tighter immigration controls were placed on immigration from the Commonwealth. In the 1960s New Commonwealth citizens were admitted at the rate of about 75,000 per year. In practice the new immigration controls resulted in only a modest reduction in Commonwealth immigration. The average number of acceptances for settlement in the 1970s was 72,000 per year; in the 1980s and early 1990s it was about 54,000 per year. From 1998 onwards, numbers began to increase very substantially. In 1998, net Commonwealth migration leapt to 82,000 and continued to grow before peaking at 156,000 in 2004 before beginning to decline. Some historians argue that the majority of early "New Commonwealth migrants" were, in fact,

British settlers and colonial officials and their descendants returning from Britain's former colonies.

All information taken from:

<https://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/48>

3. Contemporary Britain: A Picture of Migration

What do we know about immigration to Britain?

For the past few years there has been a growing political and public clamour over migration which reached a height at the 2005 general election.

But throughout all of this time, there has been a great deal of dispute about what has actually been happening in Britain - and whether or not it is something to really worry about.

With the publication of the BBC's Born Abroad project, we can try to answer far more of these difficult questions than ever before - although we make no claims that we are revealing all the answers.

Born Abroad is drawn on data processed by an expert team at Sheffield University for the Institute for Public Policy Research, a think tank.

The BBC news website has taken all of this data and turned it into a website for the public to see what was happening locally in their area at the time of the 2001 Census.

Naturally the world moves on and there have been significant changes since then. Asylum numbers have rapidly changed (up and then down again), new workers from Eastern Europe are arriving thanks to EU enlargement, there are controversies over illegal immigrants and also moves by government to restructure economic migration from top to bottom.

But putting these issues aside, the data reveals some important points about what makes up modern Britain.

New immigration

Of the total foreign-born population of Britain - some 4.3m people - recent immigrants today make up just over half of the total. This shows beyond a doubt that the UK is one of the principal industrialised nations in a complex picture of international economic movements.

With new immigrants tending to be younger and from a more diverse background, the figures show how migration has increasingly been on economic grounds alone. This marks a change from past decades when migration tended to be on family grounds - the arrival of a spouse, for instance.

Immigration is overwhelmingly the story of London's development - four out of 10 people born abroad have their home in the capital.

They make up about a quarter of London's population: An almost uncountable range of peoples has arrived in the capital over the years, making up a remarkably broad patchwork of nationalities, ethnicities, languages, communities and identities.

All of this cements London's international reputation as a leading "world city" - a place that seems to become home to anyone from anywhere.

But while immigration is predominantly a London story, migration is now affecting almost every area of the country in ways that have not been seen before.

Take the North East for example. It has the lowest number of people born abroad living there - but has experienced the second fastest rate of change. Taken together with north-west England, the two regions would have experienced significant population declines without the current rate of immigration.

It is this rate of change, some of it quite sudden in some areas, that raises important questions about how Britain as a nation has been able to handle this change.

Have people been prepared for it? Are those who arrive helped to integrate and play a full part in society?

New diversity

Historically, immigrants have been largely taken to mean people born in Ireland, India, Pakistan, the Caribbean and so on. But this is no longer the case.

The new economic migration, couple with the now declining numbers of asylum seekers, has brought with it a far wider range of nationalities than those typically part of popular memory.

Some from each of these groups - people from Brazil or parts of Africa outside the Commonwealth for instance - will certainly spend the rest of their lives in Britain.

So while the debate over integration has for years generally focused on a few ethnicities and their needs, the reality is far more complex.

The local detail

Where Born Abroad differs from every other attempt to understand migration is the level of local detail that the BBC has been able to provide people.

For the first time, people will be able to find out easily how migration has played a role in their neighborhood.

In many respects - and for many people who come to these pages - it may be a case of stating the obvious.

So people in Grimsby will not be surprised to see the town includes people born in Norway and Denmark - former fishermen who came to the town when it was an important port and stayed on through love and marriage.

But understanding how these local stories fit into a national picture - and assessing the face of modern Britain - has never been possible before now.

The issues raised by the data in Born Abroad are a key part of British public life - not least the wide and contradictory nature of how well people actually do.

Without a doubt, the conclusions each of us personally form on immigration will play a crucial role in how Britain will look and behave in the years to come.

All information taken from:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4220002.stm>

4. Conflict in Syria

More than 250,000 Syrians have lost their lives in four-and-a-half years of armed conflict, which began with anti-government protests before escalating into a full-scale civil war. More than 11 million others have been forced from their homes as forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and those opposed to his rule battle each other - as well as jihadist militants from so-called Islamic State. This is the story of the civil war so far, in eight short chapters.

- **Uprising turns violent**

Pro-democracy protests erupted in March 2011 in the southern city of Deraa after the arrest and torture of some teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall. After security forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing several, more took to the streets.

The unrest triggered nationwide protests demanding President Assad's resignation. The government's use of force to crush the dissent merely hardened the protesters' resolve. By July 2011, hundreds of thousands were taking to the streets across the country.

Opposition supporters eventually began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas.

- **Descent into civil war**

Violence escalated and the country 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.

By June 2013, the UN said 90,000 people had been killed in the conflict. By August 2015, that figure had climbed to 250,000, according to activists and the UN.

The conflict is now more than just a battle between those for or against Mr Assad. It has acquired sectarian overtones, pitching the country's Sunni majority against the president's Shia Alawite sect, and drawn in regional and world powers. The rise of the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) has added a further dimension.

- **War crimes**

A UN commission of inquiry has evidence that all parties to the conflict have committed war crimes - including murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances. 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 has demanded all parties end the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas, but civilians continue to die in their thousands. Many have been killed by barrel bombs dropped by government aircraft on gatherings in rebel-held areas - attacks which the UN says may constitute massacres.

IS has also been accused by the UN of waging a campaign of terror. It has inflicted severe punishments on those who transgress or refuse to accept its rules, including hundreds of public executions and amputations. Its fighters have also carried out mass killings of rival

armed groups, members of the security forces and religious minorities, and beheaded hostages, including several Westerners.

We're just living on the edge of life. We're always nervous, we're always afraid

Mother-of-nine Mariam Akash, whose husband was killed by a sniper

- **Chemical weapons**

Hundreds of people were killed in August 2013 after rockets filled with the nerve agent sarin were fired at several suburbs of Damascus. Western powers said it could only have been carried out by Syria's government, but the government blamed rebel forces.

Facing the prospect of US military intervention, President Assad agreed to the complete removal and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.

The operation was completed the following year, but the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has continued to document the use of toxic chemicals in the conflict. Investigators found chlorine was used "systematically and repeatedly" in deadly attacks on rebel-held areas between April and July 2014.

IS has also been accused of using homemade chemical weapons, including sulphur mustard. The OPCW said the blister agent was used in an attack on the northern town of Marea in August 2015 that killed a baby.

- **Humanitarian crisis**

More than 4.5 million people have fled Syria since the start of the conflict, most of them women and children. Neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have struggled to cope with one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history. About 10% of Syrian refugees have sought safety in Europe, sowing political divisions as countries argue over sharing the burden.

A further 6.5 million people are internally displaced inside Syria, 1.2 million were driven from their homes in 2015 alone.

The UN says it will need \$3.2bn to help the 13.5 million people, including 6 million children, who will require some form of humanitarian assistance inside Syria in 2016. About 70% of the population is without access to adequate drinking water, one in three people are unable to meet their basic food needs, and more than 2 million children are out of school, and four out of five people live in poverty.

The warring parties have compounded the problems by refusing humanitarian agencies access to civilians in need. Up to 4.5 million people in Syria live in hard-to-reach areas, including nearly 400,000 people in 15 besieged locations who do not have access to life-saving aid.

The armed rebellion has evolved significantly since its inception. Secular moderates are now outnumbered by Islamists and jihadists, whose brutal tactics have caused global outrage.

So-called Islamic State has capitalised on the chaos and taken control of large swathes of Syria and Iraq, where it proclaimed the creation of a "caliphate" in June 2014. Its 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 government and Kurdish forces.

In September 2014, a US-led coalition launched air strikes inside Syria in an effort to "degrade and ultimately destroy" IS. But the coalition has avoided attacks that might benefit Mr Assad's forces. Russia began an air campaign targeting "terrorists" in Syria a year later, but opposition activists say its strikes have mostly killed Western-backed rebels and civilians.

In the political arena, opposition groups are also deeply divided, with rival alliances battling for supremacy. The most prominent is the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, backed by several Western and Gulf Arab states. However, the exile group has little influence on the ground in Syria and its primacy is rejected by many opponents of Mr Assad.

- **Peace efforts**

With neither side able to inflict a decisive defeat on the other, the international community long ago concluded that only a political solution could end the conflict in Syria. The UN Security Council has called for the implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communique, which envisages a transitional governing body with full executive powers "formed on the basis of mutual consent".

Talks in early 2014, known as Geneva II, broke down after only two rounds, with then-UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi blaming the Syrian government's refusal to discuss opposition demands.

Mr Brahimi's successor, Staffan de Mistura, focused on establishing a series of local ceasefires. His plan for a "freeze zone" in Aleppo was rejected, but a three-year siege of the Homs suburb of al-Wair was successfully brought to an end in December 2015.

At the same time, the conflict with IS lent fresh impetus to the search for a political solution in Syria. 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.

- **Proxy war**

What began as another Arab Spring uprising against an autocratic ruler has mushroomed into a brutal proxy war that has drawn in regional and world powers.

Iran and Russia have propped up the Alawite-led government of President Assad and gradually increased their support. Tehran is believed to be spending billions of dollars a year to bolster Mr Assad, providing military advisers and subsidised weapons, as well as lines of credit and oil transfers. Russia has meanwhile launched an air campaign against Mr Assad's opponents.

The Syrian government has also enjoyed the support of Lebanon's Shia Islamist Hezbollah movement, whose fighters have provided important battlefield support since 2013.

The Sunni-dominated opposition has, meanwhile, attracted varying degrees of support from its international backers - Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, along with the US, UK and France.

Until late 2015, rebel appeals for anti-aircraft weapons to stop devastating government air strikes were rejected by the US and its allies, amid concern that they might end up in the hands of jihadist militants. A US programme to train and arm 5,000 rebels to take the fight to IS on the ground also suffered a series of setbacks before being abandoned.

All information taken from:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26116868>

5. Attitudes Towards Refugees

- Two in five (**41%**) of the 2,204 people interviewed say Britain should accept fewer refugees from Syria and Libya. The figure was **31%** in September 2015.
- However, more than half of those surveyed (**56%**) supported refugees being placed in their local area once they are brought to the UK.
- The poll indicated the number of people who say Britain is not doing enough has dropped since September, when photographs were published of two-year-old Syrian Alan Kurdi, who drowned off the coast of Turkey.
- Of those questioned, **24%** said Britain should allow more refugees, compared with **40%** in September.
- More people say Britain should take fewer refugees from Syria and Libya
 - **41%** said fewer refugees should be accepted in January 2016
 - **31%** said the same in September 2015
 - **51%** in the West Midlands said fewer should be resettled
 - **31%** of Londoners surveyed said the same
 - **31%** in the South East said more should be brought to Britain
 - **15%** of those in the North East said more should be able to come
- The survey found a decrease of **10** percentage points, down from **39%** to **29%**, since September in the proportion of Britons who say that Britain is not doing enough to take its fair share of responsibility for people coming to Europe from countries such as Syria.
- Younger Britons, aged **18 to 24** and **25 to 34**, were "significantly more likely" than those aged **65** and over to say Britain should take more refugees, the poll suggested. About one third of younger people believed this compared with **14%** of over-65s.
- Three in five adults from London (**60%**) surveyed said they supported the UK accepting more refugees from Syria and Libya compared with a third of adults in north-east England (**33%**) and two in five in the West Midlands (**38%**).
- While **56%** of those surveyed supported the idea of refugees from Syria and Libya being placed in their local area, there were differences from region to region.
- Two thirds of Londoners (**66%**) surveyed said they supported refugees from Syria and Libya being placed nearby, while **44%** of adults from the North East and **50%** of those from the West Midlands said the same.
- Three in five British adults surveyed (**61%**) said accepting refugees from countries such as Syria and Libya puts Britain's security at risk, and more than half (**56%**) thought that Britain's economy cannot afford to accept any more refugees.
- However, just more than half of those surveyed (**52%**) did not believe that people would be "far more welcoming" if it was only children and not adult refugees brought to the UK.

All information taken from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35470723>