Domiz refugee camp is located in the Kurdish province of Dohuk in northern Iraq. Each week, thousands of Syrian refugees arrive at the camp, which opened in 2012 and was designed to host about 2,000 families. A year on, however, almost 8,000 families live in Domiz, resulting in overcrowding and pressure on food, water and sanitation.

More than 160,000 Syrian refugees are seeking safety in Iraq, most of them in the Kurdish region. Domiz refugee camp, the only Iraqi camp for Syrian refugees, is severely overcrowded and about 90,000 refugees are scattered around nearby towns. With the number of people leaving Syria showing few signs of diminishing, securing food, water and adequate sanitation is an ever-increasing problem.
The Courage to be oneself

How can it be defined? Baruch Spinoza believes that courage is an essential act of everything that participates in being, namely self-affirmation. The endeavour, where everything endeavours to persist in its own being is nothing else but the actual essence of that thing, the striving towards something. This striving is not a contingent aspect of a thing nor is it an element in its being along with other elements; it is the *essentia actualis*. The striving makes a thing what it is. If the striving stops the thing disappears.

Spinoza calls this striving which is the essence of a thing also its power, and he says of the mind that it affirms its own power of action. So we have the identification of actual essence, power of being, and self-affirmation.

Fortitude is the strength of the soul, its power to be what it essentially is.

Courage is the desire whereby every man strives to preserve his own being in accordance with the dictates of reason. Courage is the power of life to affirm itself, while the negation of life because of its negativity is an expression of cowardice.

Courage has two aspects, the desire to join other people in friendship and the power of self-affirmation.

Eric Fromm agrees that self-affirmation and generosity to others are equally interdependent.

Self-affirmation logically implies the overcoming of something which threatens or denies the self.

Paul Tillich believes Nietzsche’s Will-to-Power is the self-affirmation of the will as ultimate reality.

Virtue for Nietzsche and Spinoza is self-affirmation.

Courage is self-affirmation “in-spite-of,” that is in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself.

Notes from “The Courage to be” by Paul Tillich

Survival

Man and animal alike face the problem of ensuring their survival in a potentially threatening world” but while the solutions available to the animal are entailed in its generic inheritance those of man must be formed and transmitted through intellectual processes and entailing conscious reflection, cultural creation and the appropriation of tradition.
Parties have yet to agree on a list of opposition groups who may attend, as both sides seek more assurances.

Talks meant to be held in Geneva next week between both sides of Syria's civil war - opposition groups and President Bashar al-Assad's government - are far from certain to take place.

Although the UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, briefed the Security Council in a closed meeting on Monday about these much-anticipated talks, there is still no consensus on who should be invited.

"Obviously we hope that the negotiations will take place but there are some questions which have to be dealt with," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said.

Last month, the Security Council issued a rare, unanimous show of support for negotiations to be held between the Assad government and opposition groups.

But UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is now urging countries supporting opposing sides in the conflict to redouble efforts to agree on a list of opposition groups to be invited to peace talks.

Compiling a list has not been an easy task, especially when regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia accuse each other of supporting "terrorists" in Syria.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also made it clear during talks with Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Moscow that he believes the list for the opposition delegation drawn up in Saudi Arabia should include more secular figures and Kurdish representatives.

But even opposition groups set to be invited have not committed to participating in the Geneva talks.

They accuse the Assad government of not genuinely seeking a political solution, citing previous Geneva talks as being deliberately obstructive and derailed by his representatives.

"It's thought this time around, the format to begin with will be days of proximity talks," Al Jazeera's Diplomatic Editor James Bays reported. "The two sides will be kept in separate rooms - with Mr De Mistura shuttling between them."

Source: James Bays, Aljazeera
The death of Syrian Islamist leader, Zahran Alloush on December 25 is a reminder that the Syrian regime is willing to risk the Vienna process in order to further its own more direct interests.

The peace plan and its constitutional milestones towards a better Syria are both ambitious and fragile: the plan has succeeded in crystallising parts of the Syrian opposition in Riyadh earlier in December and set in motion direct talks in the new year, making a rare optimism for 2016 to be the year in which the conflict goes in a better direction.

However, the killing of Alloush has already put a halt to the evacuation of opposition elements from the much beleaguered Yarmouk refugee camp and led other opposition leaders to question the regime's intentions towards the "peace" process.

Yet we should not forget that the Vienna process did not come about because of the desire of the regime. Indeed, the initial talks that set out the course ahead did not feature Syrian actors, but instead had patrons and allies from all sides around the table.

In contrast to the earlier Geneva process it appeared that in Vienna, global powers were serious enough about building a peace process that couldn't be hijacked by the main fighting protagonists themselves.

With the targeting of Alloush, it would appear likely that the Syrian regime is trying to restore its own agency in the shadow of a Vienna process by which it feels marginalised.

This is a period of huge danger and opportunity for the range of actors that make up the Syrian opposition. They face being labelled as "extremist" and excluded from the nascent peace process or being acknowledged as "moderate" legitimate players and then assassinated.

As Human Rights Watch's director Ken Roth tweeted, Alloush's killing "is part of Assad's strategy of trying to reduce [the] choice to him or ISIL".

The importance of this moment is matched by the need for leadership among the opposition to ensure not only the right agreements within the Vienna process, but also to bring about legitimate implementation of any deal. Leaders are important, and nowhere more so than in set peace conferences. Without these figures, we may be left with a shell of a process - all political theory but no actors left to carry it out.

Bearing this importance in mind, the tactics of "decapitation" or targeting of an enemy's leadership are not new or original.

In December last year opposition groups in East Ghouta accused the regime of waging a campaign of targeted assassination against its leaders. Throughout the conflict numerous car bombs have killed opposition leaders without clarity over who was directly behind the attacks.

The Assad regime famously has links to the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and other "anti-Syrian" politicians in the country. It may be nominally happy to "talk" to the opposition, but we should be under no illusions that they would happier see them dead.

More dangerous for the fragile, ambitious but desperately needed process is if the Russians are found to be involved in the killing either directly (they carried out the air strike) or indirectly (it was their intelligence that led to Alloush's killing).

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces has already accused the Russians of conducting these killings. It is one thing for the Syrians - the object of the Vienna process - to try to assert independence from the process, it's quite another for the Russians - co-creators of the Vienna process - to be seen to be taking out significant opposition leaders weeks before talks are scheduled to start.

The Russians may claim that until there is full agreement on who the "legitimate" opposition are, all anti-Assad groups remain potential targets. There is strong onus on the other key players in the Vienna process, particularly the United States and the European Union, to get clarity on what happened to Alloush, guarantees from the Russians about their intentions and guarantees towards the actors who will make up a key part of a process that they have co-designed.

Meanwhile, the more marginalised the regime feels, the more desperate its actions are likely to become, and nobody can be surprised by its simultaneously satisfying the diplomatic obligations expected of them by their Russian allies and doing their utmost to kill opposition leaders on the ground.

(James Denselow is a writer on Middle East politics and security issues and a research associate at the Foreign Policy Centre.)
A Syrian opposition council formed in Riyadh last month said on Wednesday it will not attend peace negotiations if a third party joins the talks, a reference to a Russian bid to include other groups in the process that was due to be launched next week, Reuters reported.

Riad Hijab, who heads the council, accused Russia of impeding negotiations, and also told a news conference in Riyadh that the opposition could not negotiate while Syrians were dying as a result of blockades and bombardment.

Sources told Zaman al-Wasl that Brigadier General Asaad al-Zoubi, Southern Front's representative, will lead in the negotiating team in Geneva talks.
Russian air strikes, which began in September 2015, have killed at least 1,000 people, including over 300 children, monitoring groups said.

"At least 1,505 people have been killed in Russian air strikes since they started in September 2015. We have documented their names and can say at least 346 of them were children and only at least 47 were fighters," Bassam al-Ahmad, Spokesperson for the Violations Documentation Centre in Syria (VDC), told Al Jazeera on Wednesday.

The VDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation that has been monitoring the conflict in Syria since April 2011.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights put the death toll at 1,015, adding that 238 of those killed are children. The Observatory also said that at least 1,141 fighters were killed, including fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group.

First Russian air strike targeted civilians

Khalid, a volunteer from the Syria Civil Defence, said civilians were the target on the first day Russia launched its air strike on September 30, 2015.

"Hearing Russian on the radio? We knew straight away that this was a different type of attack. The targets were 100 percent civilians. A whole neighbourhood was destroyed in Talbiseh, including 60 homes of civilians," Khaled said.

Known also as the White Helmets, the Syria Civil Defence is a group of volunteer rescuers formed in 2013 that now numbers more than 2,700 volunteers.

According to Russia’s official news agency, TASS, the air campaign consists of 69 warplanes and helicopters.

The Syrian conflict has killed at least 250,000 people, according to the UN, and more than half of Syria’s prewar population of 22.4 million has been internally displaced or have fled abroad.

British-based monitoring group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is now claiming that more than 1,000 civilians have lost their lives as a result of Russian bombs.
Freewill and Determinism in Psychology

The determinist approach proposes that all behavior is caused by preceding factors and is thus predictable. The causal laws of determinism form the basis of science.

Free will is the idea that we are able to have some choice in how we act and assumes that we are free to choose our behavior, in other words we are self determined.

For example, people can make a free choice as to whether to commit a crime or not (unless they are a child or they are insane). This does not mean that behavior is random, but we are free from the causal influences of past events. According to freewill a person is responsible for their own actions.

Determinism

Some approaches in psychology see the source of determinism as being outside the individual, a position known as environmental determinism. For example, Bandura (1961) showed that children with violent parents will in turn become violent parents through observation and imitation.

Others see it from coming inside i.e., in the form of unconscious motivation or genetic determinism – biological determinism. E.g., high IQ has been related to the IGF2R gene (Chorney et al., 1998).

Behaviorists are strong believers in determinism. Their most forthright and articulate spokesman has been B. F. Skinner. Concepts like “free will” and “motivation” are dismissed as illusions that disguise the real causes of human behavior.

For Skinner (1971) these causes lay in the environment – more specifically in physical and psychological reinforcers and punishments. It is only because we are not aware of the environmental causes of our own behavior or other people’s that we are tricked into believing in our ability to choose.

In Skinner’s scheme of things the person who commits a crime has no real choice. (S)he is propelled in this direction by environmental circumstances and a personal history, which makes breaking the law natural and inevitable. For the law-abiding an accumulation of reinforcers has the opposite effect. Having been rewarded for following rules in the past the individual does so in the future. There is no moral evaluation or even mental calculation involved. All behavior is under stimulus control.

The other main supporters of determinism are those who adopt a biological perspective. However for them it is internal, not external, forces that are the determining factor. According to socio-biology evolution governs the behavior of a species and genetic inheritance that of each individual within it. For example Bowlby (1969) states a child has an innate (i.e. inborn) need to attach to one main attachment figure (i.e. monotropy).

Personality traits like extraversion or neuroticism, and the behavior associated with them, are triggered by neurological and hormonal processes within the body. There is no need for the concept of an autonomous human being. Ultimately this view sees us as no more than biological machines and even consciousness itself is interpreted as a level of arousal in the nervous system.

However, a problem with determinism is that it is inconsistent with society’s ideas of responsibility and self control that form the basis of our moral and legal obligations.

An additional limitation concerns the facts that psychologists cannot predict a person’s behavior with 100% accuracy due to the complex interaction of variables which can influence behavior.

Freewill

One of the main assumptions of the humanistic approach is that humans have free will; not all behavior is determined. Personal agency is the humanistic term for the exercise of free will. Personal agency refers to the choices we make in life, the paths we go down and their consequences.

For humanistic psychologists such as Maslow (1943) and Rogers (1951) freedom is not only possible but also necessary if we are to become fully functional human beings. Both see self-actualisation as a unique human need and form of motivation setting us apart from all other species. There is thus a line to be drawn between the natural and the social sciences.

To take a simple example, when two chemicals react there is no sense in imagining that they could behave in any other way than the way they do. However when two people come together they
could agree, fall out, come to a compromise, start a fight and so on. The permutations are endless and in order to understand their behavior we would need to understand what each party to the relationship chooses to do.

Cognitive psychologists are also inclined to attribute importance to free will, and adopt a soft determinism view. However whereas humanists are especially interested in our choice of ends (how each of us sees the road to self actualization) cognitive psychologists are more inclined to focus on the choice of means. In other words for them it is the rational processing of information which goes into the making of a decision which is their main interest.

Conscious reflection on our own behavior is seen as the best way of achieving goals and learning from mistakes. Calculation, strategy, organization etc are interpreted as key elements – not only in governing the choices that we make but also in helping us make the “right” choices in particular situations.

Mental illnesses appear to undermine the concept of freewill. For example, individuals with OCD lose control of their thoughts and actions and people with depression lose control over their emotions.

Ranged against the deterministic psychologies of those who believe that what “is” is inevitable are therefore those who believe that human beings have the ability to control their own destinies. However there is also an intermediate position that goes back to the psychoanalytic psychology of Sigmund Freud.

At first sight Freud seems to be a supporter of determinism in that he argued that our actions and our thoughts are controlled by the unconscious. However the very goal of therapy was to help the patient overcome that force. Indeed without the belief that people can change therapy itself makes no sense.

This insight has been taken up by several neo-Freudians. One of the most influential has been Erich Fromm (1941). In “Fear of Freedom” he argues that all of us have the potential to control our own lives but that many of us are too afraid to do so.

As a result we give up our freedom and allow our lives to be governed by possessions, circumstance, other people, political ideology or irrational feelings. However determinism is not inevitable and in the very choice we all have to do good or evil Fromm sees the essence of human freedom.

Summary

Psychologists who take the free will view suggest that determinism removes freedom and dignity, and de-values human behavior. By creating general laws of behavior, deterministic psychology underestimates the uniqueness of human beings and their freedom to choose their own destiny.

There are important implications for taking either side in this debate. Deterministic explanations for behavior reduce individual responsibility. A person arrested for a violent attack for example might plead that they were not responsible for their behavior – it was due to their upbringing, a bang on the head they received earlier in life, recent relationship stresses, or a psychiatric problem. In other words, their behavior was determined.

The deterministic approach also has important implications for psychology as a science. Scientists are interested in discovering laws which can then be used to predict events. This is very easy to see in physics, chemistry and biology. As a science, psychology attempts the same thing – to develop laws, but this time to predict behavior If we argue against determinism, we are in effect rejecting the scientific approach to explaining behavior

Clearly, a pure deterministic or free will approach does not seem appropriate when studying human behavior. Most psychologists use the concept of free will to express the idea that behavior is not a passive reaction to forces, but that individuals actively respond to internal and external forces. The term soft determinism is often used to describe this position, whereby people do have a choice, but their behavior is always subject to some form of biological or environmental pressure.

References


A public inquiry into the killing of former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko has concluded that President Putin probably approved his assassination. But who was he and why did his death cause such controversy?

Former spy Alexander Litvinenko was killed in November 2006, leading to a clouding of relations between London and Moscow.

The 43-year-old had been an officer with the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor to the KGB, but he fled to Britain where he became a fierce critic of the Kremlin. In his final years he also became a British citizen.

After he was killed by radioactive polonium-210, believed to have been administered in a cup of tea, it emerged the father-of-one was being paid by the British secret service MI6.

'Serious poisoning'

It is alleged Mr Litvinenko was investigating Spanish links to the Russian mafia and had planned to fly to Spain with former agent Andrei Lugovoi - the main suspect over his murder.

At a central London hotel on 1 November 2006, he took tea with Mr Lugovoi and Dmitri Kovtun, who was also a former Russian agent.

Mr Litvinenko fell ill soon afterwards and spent the night vomiting.

Three days later he was admitted to Barnet General Hospital in north London, where his condition gradually became a cause for concern.

On 11 November he was interviewed by the BBC Russian Service and said he was in "very bad shape" after a "serious poisoning".

During that same interview, Mr Litvinenko - a critic of the Putin regime - said he had been looking into the assassination of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who had received death threats before being shot at her Moscow apartment block the previous month.

On 17 November he was transferred to University College Hospital in London after his condition worsened.

He died six days later, with his wife Marina, father Walter, and son Anatoli at his bedside.

His widow has said he blamed the Kremlin as he...
lay dying in hospital, saying Russian President Vladimir Putin was responsible for "everything that happened to him". Russia denies any involvement.

October before he died, at an earlier meeting with the suspects at a private security firm in Mayfair, central London.

Alexander Litvinenko Born August 1962, Died 23 November 2006, (aged 44)

Assassination plot claims

Born in the city of Voronezh in 1962, Mr Litvinenko joined a military unit of the Soviet Union’s interior ministry in 1980 and reportedly joined the KGB eight years later.

He rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel when the KGB became the FSB in the 1990s.

Mr Putin was his ultimate boss at the FSB but they reportedly fell out over corruption within the FSB. In 1998, Mr Litvinenko was arrested on charges of abusing his office after exposing an alleged plot to assassinate Boris Berezovsky, the Russian tycoon who was found dead at his Ascot home in March 2013.

He spent nine months in a remand centre before being acquitted.

After leaving the service Mr Litvinenko wrote a book, Blowing up Russia: Terror from Within, in which he claimed FSB agents had been responsible for the bombing of apartment blocks in Moscow and two other cities in 1999.

The bombings were blamed on Chechen separatists and his book claimed they were used as a pretext for the second Russian invasion of Chechnya.

Mr Litvinenko fled to the UK in 2000, claiming persecution, and was granted asylum. He is understood to have taken British citizenship in 2006.

After his death, suspicion fell on Mr Lugovoi and Mr Kovtun, the two Russians he had met for tea at the Millennium Hotel in Grosvenor Square, London, U.K.

The inquiry into Mr Litvinenko's death heard that he may have also been poisoned with polonium in the

The Litvinenko case

23 Nov 2006 - Litvinenko dies three weeks after having tea with former agents Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitri Kovtun in Grosvenor Square, London
24 Nov 2006 - His death is attributed to polonium-210

22 May 2007 - Britain's director of public prosecutions decides Mr Lugovoi should be charged with the murder of Mr Litvinenko
31 May 2007 - Mr Lugovoi denies any involvement in his death but says Mr Litvinenko was a British spy
5 Jul 2007 - Russia officially refuses to extradite Mr Lugovoi, saying its constitution does not allow it
May-June 2013 - Inquest into Mr Litvinenko’s death delayed as coroner decides a public inquiry would be preferable, as it would be able to hear some evidence in secret
July 2013 - Ministers rule out public inquiry
Jan 2014 - Marina Litvinenko in High Court fight to force a public inquiry
11 Feb 2014 - High Court says the Home Office had been wrong to rule out an inquiry before the outcome of an inquest
July 2014 - Public inquiry announced by Home Office
January 2015 - Public inquiry begins

Home Office forensic pathologist Dr Nathaniel Cary said the post-mortem examination carried out on Mr Litvinenko’s body had been correctly described as the "most dangerous... ever undertaken in the Western world". He and his colleagues had to wear white suits, protective gloves and specialised hoods with air pumped into them through a filter during the process.

Results of that examination suggested Mr Litvinen-
Russian Andrey Lugovoy, a former KGB agent, allegedly spiked the cup of tea of Alexander Litvinenko with highly radioactive polonium 210 at the Pine Bar of the Millennium Hotel in Mayfair London U.K.

ko had died after being poisoned with the radioactive substance polonium-210.

A frantic police investigation led to a number of premises being briefly sealed off while forensic scientists tested for traces of the radioactive material.

Locations which tested positive included the Millennium Hotel, Grosvenor Square, the Abracadabra lap-dancing club and the Emirates football stadium, where Mr Lugovoi had watched Arsenal play CSKA Moscow.

It also emerged he had met Italian academic Mario Scaramella at an Itsu sushi restaurant in central London, where he is said to have received documents about the death of Mrs Politkovskaya, a long-term critic of the FSB.

Traces were also found on two planes at Heathrow Airport, at the British embassy in Moscow and at a flat in Hamburg, Germany, linked to Mr Kovtun.

Around 700 people had to be tested for radioactive poisoning but none of them was seriously ill.

Extradition denied

After a two-month investigation, Scotland Yard detectives handed over a file to the then director of public prosecutions, Sir Ken Macdonald, who announced in May 2007 that he was recommending Mr Lugovoi be charged with murder.

Mr Lugovoi and Mr Kovtun both denied any responsibility for the death.

At a news conference in Moscow, Mr Lugovoi repeatedly stressed his innocence and claimed Mr Litvinenko was a British spy who might have been killed by the British security services.

The office of the prosecutor general in Moscow was quick to declare that Mr Lugovoi could not and would not be extradited because the constitution prevented the extradition of Russian citizens.

In July 2007, British-Russian tensions turned into an ugly spat with four Russian and four British diplomats expelled from their respective embassies.

The UK broke off links with the Russian security services - although there was limited contact during the Sochi Winter Olympics.

After a hard-fought legal battle by Mrs Litvinenko, a public inquiry took place.

The British government had originally rejected the idea of an inquiry, suggested by the coroner in charge of the case, Sir Robert Owen.

He had argued this was the only way of considering secret material that the government had demanded be kept out of the inquest. The material can be considered in closed session during an inquiry but not during an inquest - this includes material pointing to a possible role of the Russian state in the killing.

The inquiry, set up by the government, opened at the Royal Courts of Justice in London in January 2015, led by Sir Robert.

A year later, on 21 January, it reported its conclusion that Mr Litvinenko's murder was "probably" approved by President Putin.

Mrs Litvinenko said: "The words my husband spoke on his deathbed when he accused Mr Putin have been proved by an English court."

But the Russian government said the case had been "politicised" and had "overshadowed" relations between Russia and the UK.
“WE KURDS ALREADY FELT LIKE REFUGEES IN OUR OWN COUNTRY, WHERE WE WERE FACING DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT…”

HABIB
38 YEARS OLD

“WHEN I WAS A LITTLE BOY I USED TO LOVE DRAWING. I WAS THE BEST DRAFTSMAN IN MY CLASS. I WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD WHEN MY ART TEACHER ENOURCED ME TO TAKE PART IN A DRAWING COMPETITION ORGANIZED BY THE BOLOGNA CHILDREN’S BOOK FAIR IN ITALY. I TOOK PART AND MY ENTRY GOT CHOSEN BY THE JURY. I WAS SO EXCITED TO RECEIVE AN INVITATION TO GO TO BOLOGNA! BUT WHEN THE HEAD OF SCHOOL ASKED ME TO BRING IN MY PASSPORT, MY FATHER COULD ONLY PROVIDE ME WITH A PAPER THAT STATED THAT I WAS REGISTERED AS AN ‘ALIEN.’ WHEN I PRESENTED IT TO THE HEAD, HE SLAPPED IT IN MY FACE AND TOLD ME: ‘YOU ARE NOT A SYRIAN, GET LOST!’”

I NEVER EVER DREW AGAIN.

WHEN THE WAR STARTED I DIDN’T SEE ANY FUTURE FOR MY FAMILY IN OUR COUNTRY. WE DECIDED TO GO TO EUROPE. I PAID A TRAFFICER TO TAKE US TO TURKEY AND FROM THERE TO GREECE… IT TURNED OUT THAT THE GUY WAS AFRAID. WITH NO SAVINGS LEFT, WE HAD TO SELL MY WIFE’S JEWELLERY IN ORDER TO FLEE TO KURDISTAN.”

IRAQI