مركز الحوار السوري

Syrian Dialogue Center

NATIONAL
CONSENSUS INDEX

Preface

The Syrian opposition has always been accused of the conflict of interests and diversity in opinions towards the events that affect the general Syrian context, whether they were about the political process or about the military and humanitarian issues, and even about the events related to international movements that some countries did and affected the Syrian issue.

This created a general impression that the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition forces rarely agree on any opinion or attitude, especially in the shade of their continuous failure to find any objective or structural authority to commit to.

Based on that, and in line with the Syrian Dialogue Center objective in achieving integration and coexistence and guiding the national decision, it reached to set a specific indicator to examine the degree of consensus between Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition forces through launching "the national consensus index" which is an indicator based on monitoring and analyzing the declared attitudes of the military, political groups and legal forces towards the political events and updates during half a year "semi-annual index".

The index aims to test the degree of consensus among the different political and military forces that have different intellectual orientations –and their declared specific attitudes- through tracking their opinions and attitudes towards many issues in the first half of 2018 (i.e. half a year). This will provide the analysts and researchers who are interested in the Syrian issue with a real and clear indicator about the orientations of the different forces. This report is considered as the first version of the "National Consensus Index" covering the first half of the year 2018, and we consider it a trial version.

We hope that this report will contribute in raising the level of political awareness among all segments of the Syrian people through introducing the forces that control the Syrian scene and their attitudes, the degree of their consensus and their general ideology. We also hope that it will be an impetus for the Syrian forces to dialogue and coordinate among themselves in order to increase their consensus about the events that are related to important issues

Syrian Dialogue Center
Programs Department

Introduction

The year 2018 witnessed major changes on the Syrian political and military level, from Riyadh conference 2, which paved the way for re-establishment of the Higher Negotiations committee under the name of "Syrian Negotiation Commission" through the abolishment of so-called " zones of de-escalation" in the eastern Ghouta, south of Damascus , countryside of Homs, Daraa and Kenitra, reaching to the activation of the political solution "according to the perspective of Sochi-Astana" and freezing the " the Geneva perspective." All this accompanies with the increased international intervention in the Syrian issue, and with the reducing of the Syrian forces' impact on the track of Syrian events.

The National Consensus Index monitors the attitudes of a group of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition forces towards (18) issues or events during the first half of 2018. The events were divided into four main groups:

1. Events related to the political process.
2. International events related to the Syrian issue.
3. Events related to internal affairs within the liberated areas.
4. Events related to military operations in "de-escalation zones".

The report consists of three main sections:

National Index methodology:

This section explains the methodology adopted in this work, such as the identification of the monitored entities and their attitudes, and the methodology of monitoring and classification their attitudes, and how to convert them into a measurable numerical format.

The percentage of Consensus/ compatibly

This section expresses the outcomes of the numerical analysis as percentages, and then converts them into "incompatible" or "compatible" attitudes, which makes the consensus between the Syrian components on the monitored issues more obvious.

Conclusions and findings:

This section handles the result of a simple analysis to determine the consensus ratio among the Syrian components and it provides a set of relevant recommendations

مؤشر التوافق الـوطـنـي
Syrian Dialogue Center

Chapter One

The methodology of National consensus Index

The index adopted the following methodology which consists of:
Entities identification, attitudes analysis and the numerical analysis.

Firstly: the methodology in identifying different entities.

The working team agreed on certain criteria that are supposed to exist in the monitored entity:
1 – It has to be "effective and influential" in the political scene, on the military level or in the public affairs
2 – It should generally belong to the Syrian revolutionary and the opposition forces
3. it should own official identification[1] n addition to practicing some political activity in one form or another[2] .

Based on these standards, the following entities were selected to be monitored[3]

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1 - We would like to refer here that the monitoring relies on official data issued by the monitored entities, therefore, the statements of its leaders and its members on the media were not considered because they may express a personal opinion especially that many politicians speak to the media as
political analysts or as persons without stating the entity they belong to. Although we recognize that many of these statements represent their entities to a relative degree, in addition to the technical challenges in monitoring attitudes and statements by informal speakers or different level officials in that party/entity.
2 - This measure represents a necessary condition to identify the attitude of the party. But positive declaring is not a condition for the attitude in order to be counted, rather we consider "silence" a political attitude. So, the formal identities of some monitored parties / entities, though participating in conference, are not functional.
3 - The actual number of forces is higher than the number of the monitored forces and parties, but we tried our best to monitor the many and different directions and ideologies in Syria.

Monitored entities/ parties

Political forces

Democratic People 's Party

Democratic Assyrian Organization

National Coalition of Syrian revolutionary and the opposition forces

Party of the Republic

Syrian Tomorrow Movement

Higher Negotiating committee

Appeal party

Citizenship party

Syrian National movement

National Action Movement for Syria

National Coordinating committee

Syrian National Democratic Conference

National Party for Justice and Constitution- Waad Party

Muslim Brotherhood

Syrian Turkmen Council

National Kurdish Council

Cairo platform

Legal entities

Syrian Islamic Council

Military armed groups

Syrian Liberation Front

Shami Front

Southern Front

Al Mu'tasim Brigade

Free Eastern Army

Jaish AlIslam

Hamzah band

Sham Corps

Movement of Ahrar Sham

Ahmed Al-Abboud Martyr's forces

Sultan Murad Brigade

The Corps of AlRahman

Secondly: the methodology of attitudes analysis

By that we mean the set of rules used to analyze the political attitudes by the previous mentioned entities. These include:

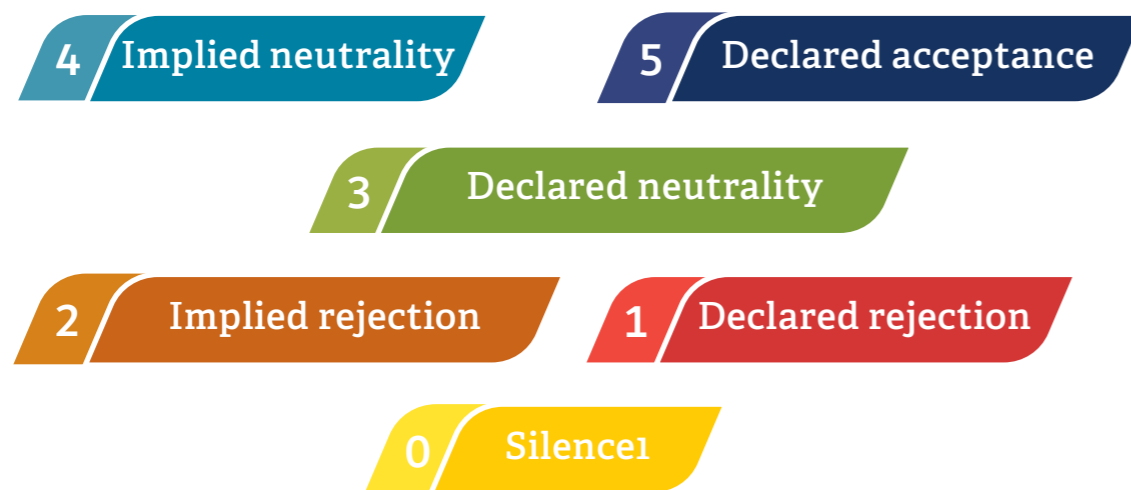1. The absence of a statement or declared attitude by the monitored entity is considered as "complete silence" and refraining from declaring. And this is quite different from issuing a clear statement or statement that declares neutrality.

2. Identifying a unified numerical indicator to reflect the declared attitudes in order to be considered one of the following:

4	Implied neutrality
5	Declared acceptance
3	Declared neutrality
2	Implied rejection
1	Declared rejection
0	Silence[1]

3. Classifying the declared attitudes in the categories: (silence, implied rejection, etc..) does not mean that there is a general rule that is applicable to all of attitudes, because each event or issue have their nature and attitudes, which are clear and easy to classify sometimes, and sometimes there is an ambiguity in the situation which requires some more analysis in order to be classified in one of the six ratings mentioned in the indicator.

For example: we interpreted the participation of members from some entities in the Al Riyadh conference[2] as implied acceptance to the conference, unless we see a statement of disapproval or confirmation from those entities that these individuals do not represent them in the conference.

This explanation must be made clear to the readers so they can be aware of how attitudes are being classified

Therefore, in order to achieve this, we have stated these declared and ambiguous attitudes in the margins in addition to our explanation to them, which makes the process clearer to the reader.

4. If the monitored entity belongs to a coalition body, the attitude of the coalition body is the one to be adopted unless the entity itself issues a statement, with considering the following: Ulusal Kürt Meclisi ile Suriye Türkmen Meclisi, Ulusal Devrim Güçleri ve Suriye muhalefeti .

• Both Kurdish National Council and the Syrian-Turkmen Council attitudes are considered part of the National Coalition for Revolutionary Forces and the Syrian opposition unless they issue their own statements

The Coordinating committee, the Cairo Platform and the factions that signed the Riyadh Declaration 2 (which are Southern Front, Jaish Al- Islam, the Levant Corps, Al Rahman Corps, the Sultan Murad Brigade) are part of the Negotiating committee, and it takes attitudes on behalf of them, unless they issue a statement of their own.

• As for Ahrar al-Sham movement, its attitudes had been monitored until the formation of the Syrian Liberation Front. The Front's attitudes were considered as a substitute body for the movement after its unifying with Nur al-Din Zanki movement[1] .

1- We can classify the "silence" attitudes adopted by entities and parties into two categories:

  1. visible silence: meaning that some party/ entity is either used to clarify its attitudes through high-level officials by their statements or twittering or media interviews, etc., which is excluded from monitoring for several reasons mentioned earlier, or that this entity does some acts that refer to a certain attitude without declaring that, or that it has a clear attitude, but it does not want to announce it for many reasons. Conclusion: that party could have an attitude, but it avoids declaring it for various reasons. This case, despite not being silence but we consider it as silence, because the party attitude is not so obvious, and because we do not want to analyze and monitor the real reason, with the possibility of some error in contributing some attitude to some entity.

  2. Real silence: means the lack of interest in the issue by the entity or the lack of any attitude.

1- We did not include these forces within the national committee for liberation because its affiliation happened in the period after the period that this index cover which is "the first half of 2018"

Third: the numerical positions analysis

After monitoring and classifying the attitudes, the outcomes were turned into either "compatible "attitudes or" incompatible" attitudes.

By compatible attitudes we mean any declared attitude that is agreed on explicitly or implicitly by the majority of the forces, whether that attitude is positive or negative. While any opposite attitude against the majority's opinion is considered an incompatible attitude, with the emphasis here that the reaction of the silent entities' "silence" does count, and the reason for this consideration is that the ratio of silent positions is very high, so such an inclusion will lead to ambiguity in the declared attitudes. However, we will state the rate of "silent" positions in the margins in order to show the difference between the two cases[1] .

> **The compatible attitudes: the majority of the forces.**

> **The incompatible attitudes: The minority of the forces.**

For example: upon analyzing the attitudes towards AlGouta military operation, the attitudes who reject the campaign were considered as compatible as they represent the majority opinion , where the attitudes who backed/supported it explicitly or implicitly were considered incompatible but in the case of the Constitutional Committee; the compatible attitudes were the ones who participated in the committee because they formed the majority's opinion, and the attitudes that rejected the participating explicitly or implicitly were considered incompatible.

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1 - The difference between counting" silence" attitude and not counting it is that we only count if in the declared attitudes, in case "silence" represent the majority's opinion, so it can't be counted as compatible attitude unlike we the other case.

To clarify: As for the forces' attitudes towards the international movement towards the Syrian issue, the proportion of consensus for declared attitudes that formed/27.01%/ was /22.99% /. And that in case of neutralizing the silence attitude but if we count the silence attitudes along with the declared attitudes considering it as the rest of the attitudes, the compatibility rate will be/ 72.99%/

Chapter Two

The percentage of consensus among the Syrian forces.

After introducing the index methodology, we will illustrate the rates and the compatible attitudes according to the methodology that was explained in the chapter above.

In order to facilitate reading the index, we will classify the 18 monitored events into four main topics:

1. The events that are related to the political process and they were four (Riyadh conference 2, Sochi conference, Astana Track and the Constitutional Committee).

2. Group of international events that were related to the Syrian issue and they include   events: (the formation of a Kurdish force by an American management, the Israeli launches against the regime and the Iranian militia in Syria, Olive branch operation, the American launch against Syria, the practices against Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the attitude towards the Iranian deal abolishment)

3. Events related to internal affairs in liberated areas: These include two events: the formation of Syrian Liberation Front and its battles with the HTS.

4. Events related to the military operations in "de-escalation zones" which include six events: The military operation in Al-Ghouta, Daraa, and south of Damascus, and the crime of involuntary displacement

Firstly, the ratio of consensus on the events related to political process:

They include the following events: Riyadh conference[1] Sochi Conference[2] Astana Meeting in May 3[3] the Constitutional Committee[4].

Events related to the political process in Syria received a clear interest and declared attitudes by the political Syrian entities, but they faced less attention by the military ones

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1 - The group resignation headed by Mr.Riyadh Hijab from the former higher committee for negotiation was considered a rejection for the participation

-The resignation of Mr.Goerge Sabra was considered as representation for his party (Syrian democratic people's party)

- The participation of individual members in the conference with informal status was considered an implied acceptance of the conference unless the party/entity issues a disapproval statement or confirmation that these individuals do not represent it.
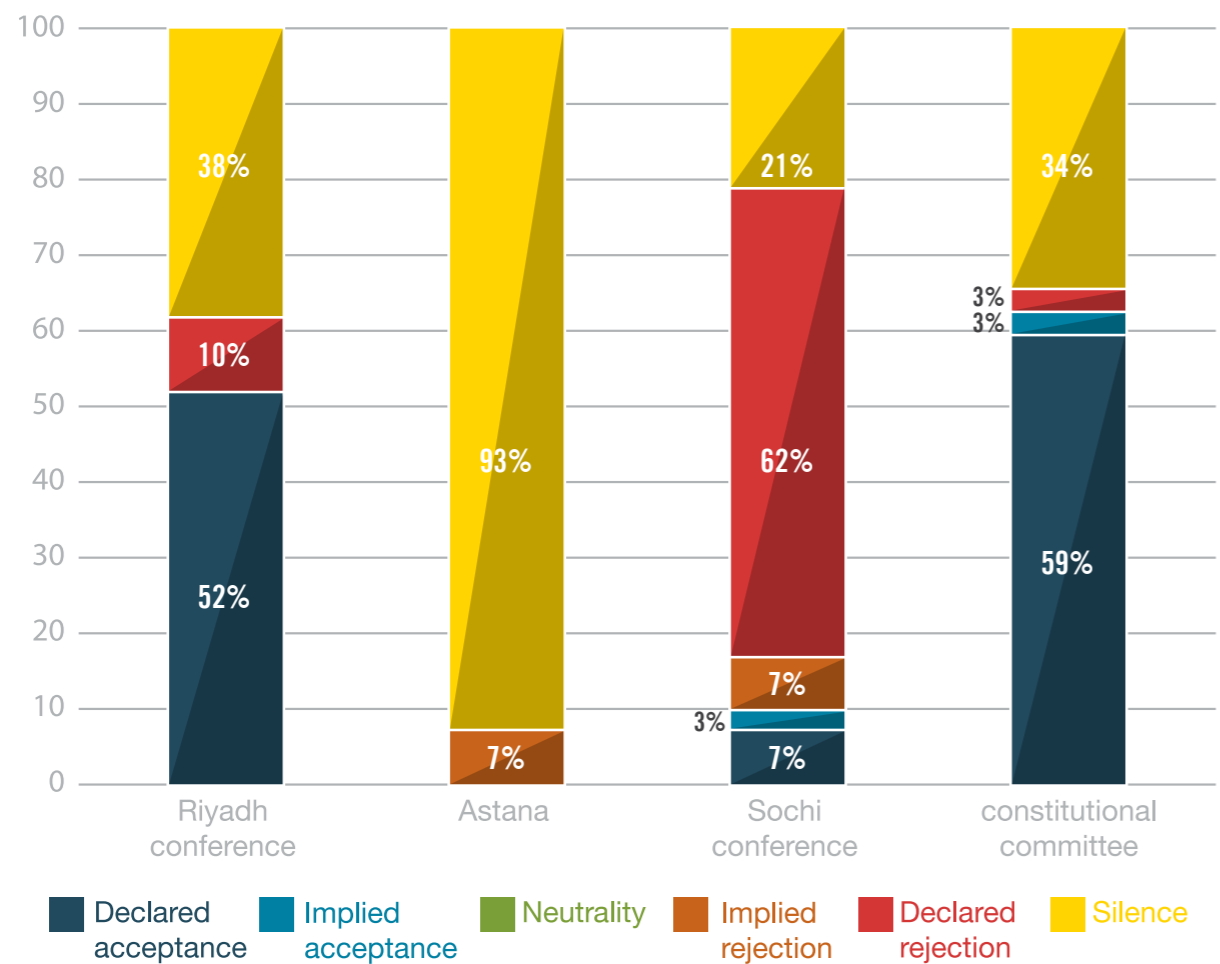
2 - implicitly rejected the position of those the parties who had a desire to attend, but committed to the attitude of the coalitions that they belong to –which refused attending or participating- was considered an implied rejection.

3 - The reducing/minimizing of the negotiation's importance was considered an implied rejection.

4 - The implied party's acceptance to participate in the constitutional committee without issuing a declared attitude was considered implied acceptance
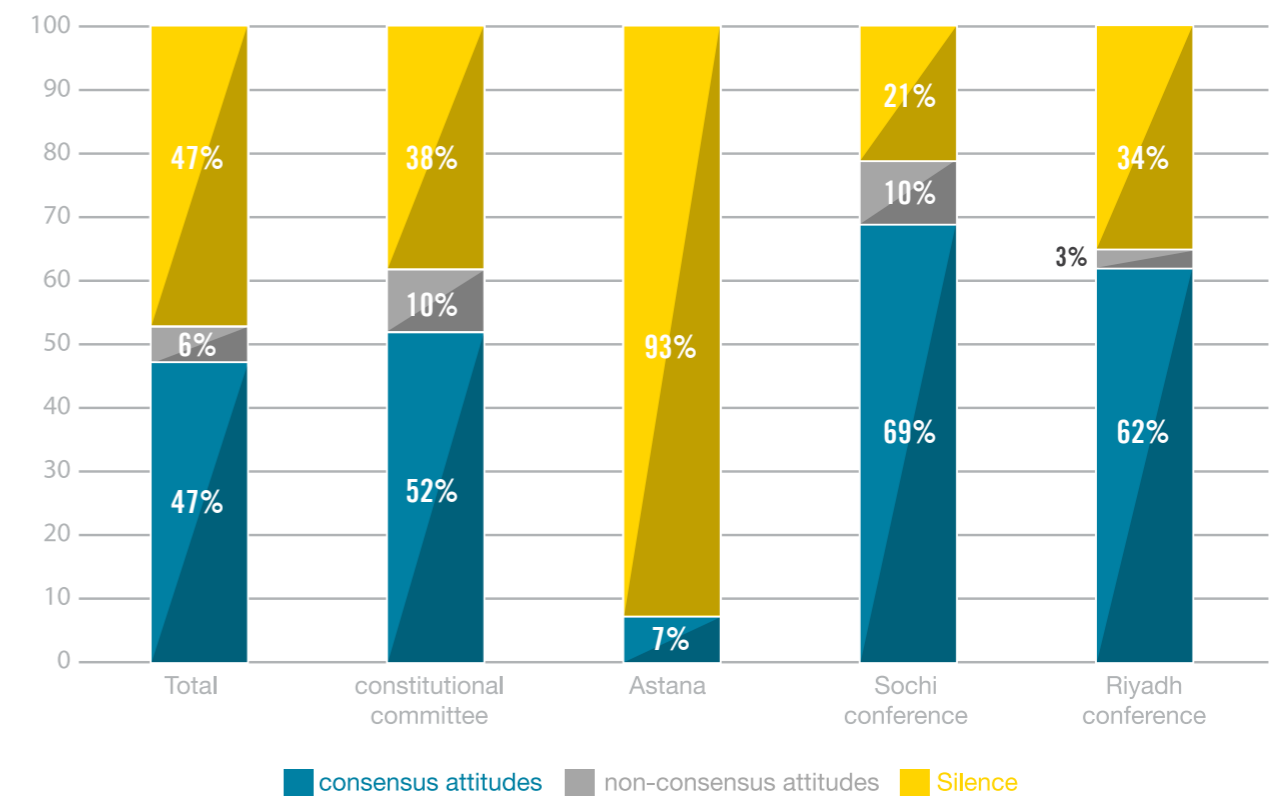
The analysis of the targeted attitudes indicates to the following percentages

attitudes related to political process

| | Declared acceptance | Implied acceptance | Neutrality | Implied rejection | Declared rejection | Silence |

Riyadh conference: 52%, 10%, 38%
Astana: 7%, 93%
Sochi conference: 7%, 3%, 7%, 62%, 21%
constitutional committee: 59%, 3%, 3%, 34%

so, the ratio of consensus and non-consensus towards these issues is[1] :

The percentage of consensus and non-consensus in attitudes related to political process

Total: 47%, 6%, 47%
constitutional committee: 52%, 10%, 38%
Astana: 7%, 93%
Sochi conference: 69%, 10%, 21%
Riyadh conference: 62%, 3%, 34%

consensus attitudes — non-consensus attitudes — Silence

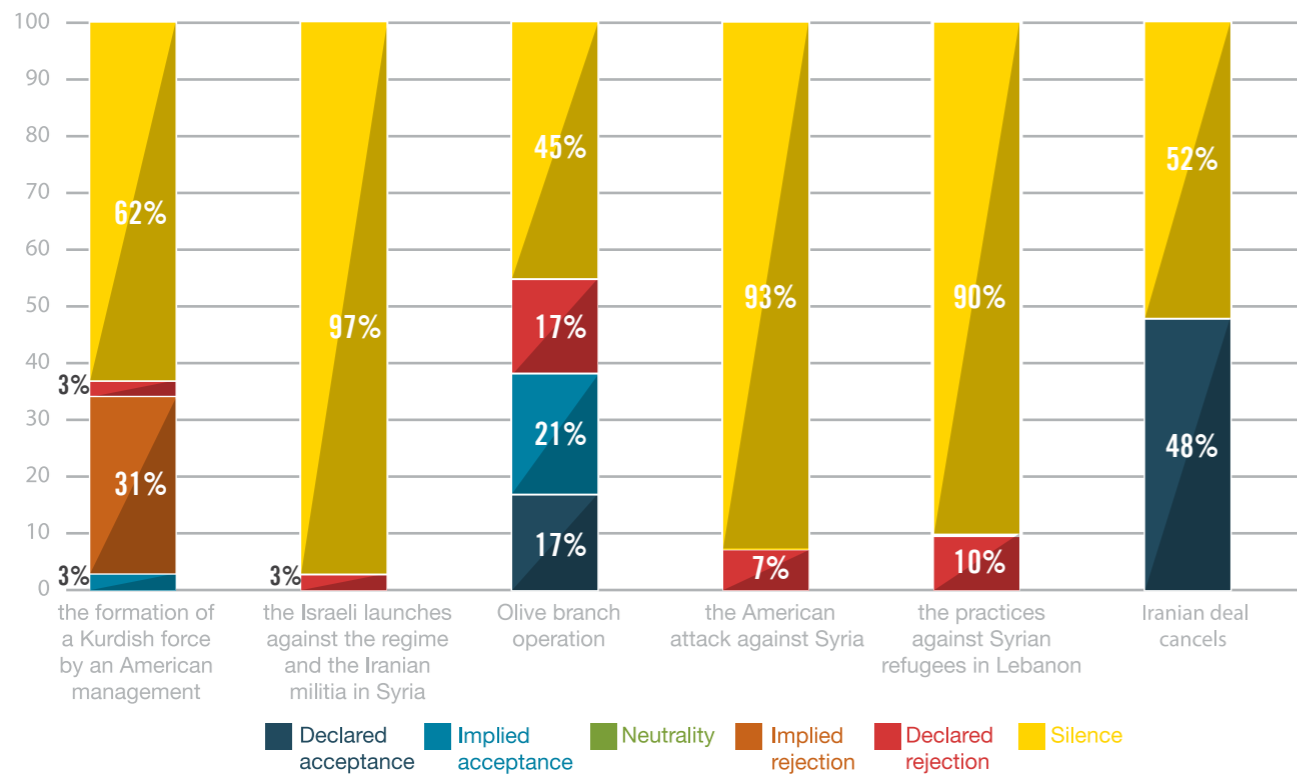1 - If we count the silence attitude, the percentage would be as the following

Attitude	Riyadh (acceptance)	Sochi conference(rejection)	Astana conference(silence)	The constitutional committee) acceptance)	Average
Rate	60.07%	68.97%	93.10%	51.72%	68.96%

We notice here that the consensus has increased by 20% and that "silence" was the dominating attitude towards Astana conference.

Secondly: the ration of consensus towards Group of international movement events that were related to the Syrian issue

They include: (the formation of a Kurdish force by an American management, the Israeli launches against the regime and the Iranian militia in Syria, Olive branch operation, the American attack against Syria, the practices against Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the attitude towards the Iranian deal cancel)
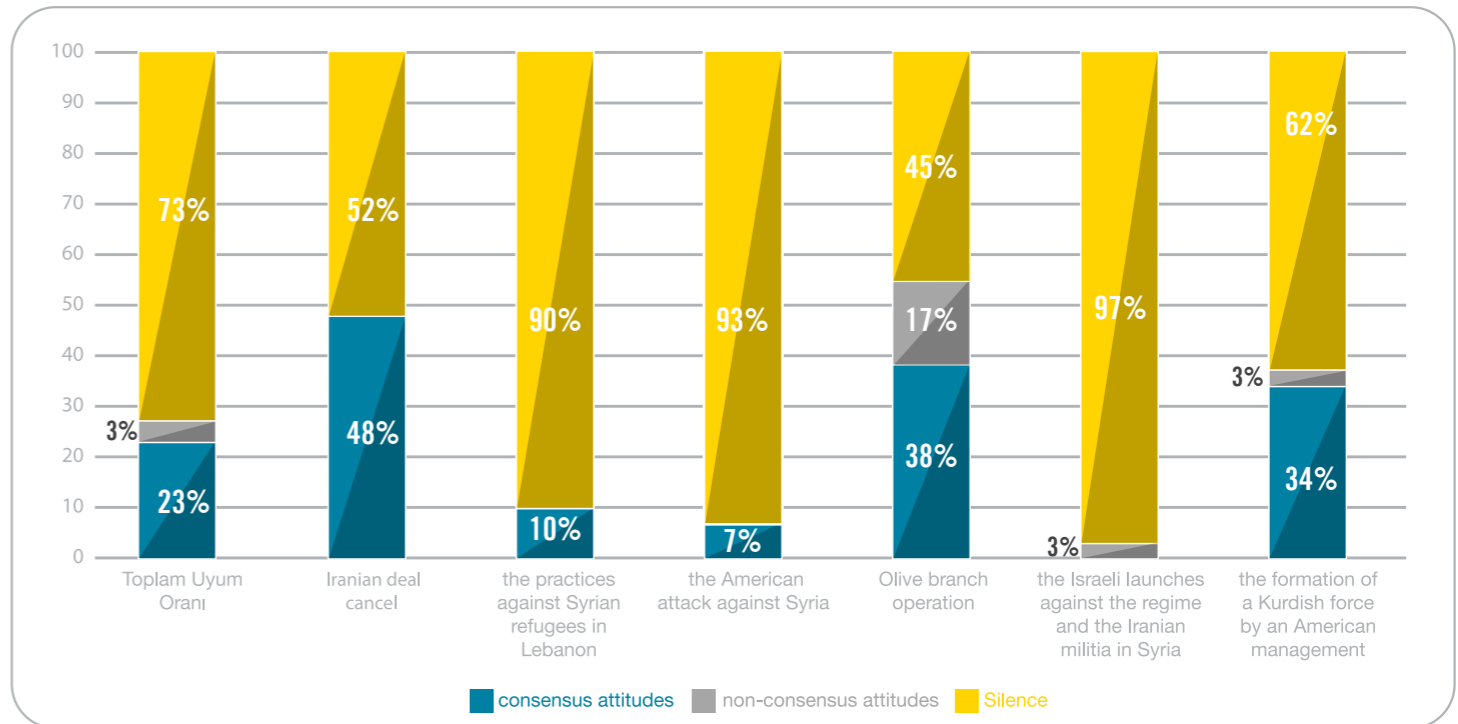

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so, the ration of consensus and non-consensus towards these issues is[1]:

1 - If we count the silence attitude, the rates would be the following:

Attitude	Kurdish force formation (silence)	The Israeli attack (silence)	Olive branch (silence)	The American attack on Syria (silence)	The practices against Syrian Lebanon (silence)	The Iranian deal abolishment (silence)	average
Ratio	60.07%	96.55%	44.83%	93.10%	89.66%	51.72%	72.98%

We notice here that the consensus ratio has increased significantly by about 50%, due to the dominating of "silence" attitude taken by the forces, due to the high sensitivity of these attitudes in the shade of international interference in the Syrian issue.
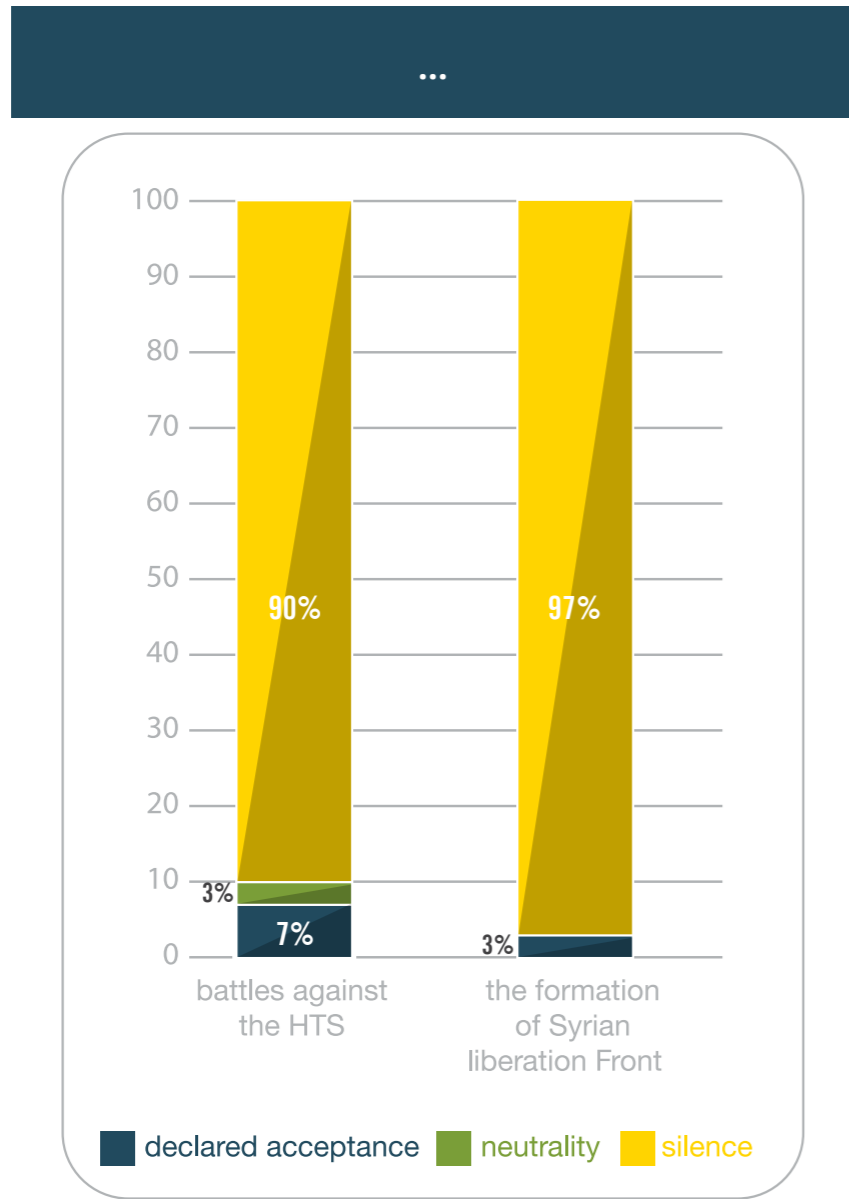
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it is considerable that most of the political and military forces refrain from issuing an attitude, and they were "silent" towards the events related to Syria sovereignty, especially events related to the military operations led by external parties, due to regional and internal considerations.

Thirdly: the consensus ratio on Events related to internal affairs in liberated areas:

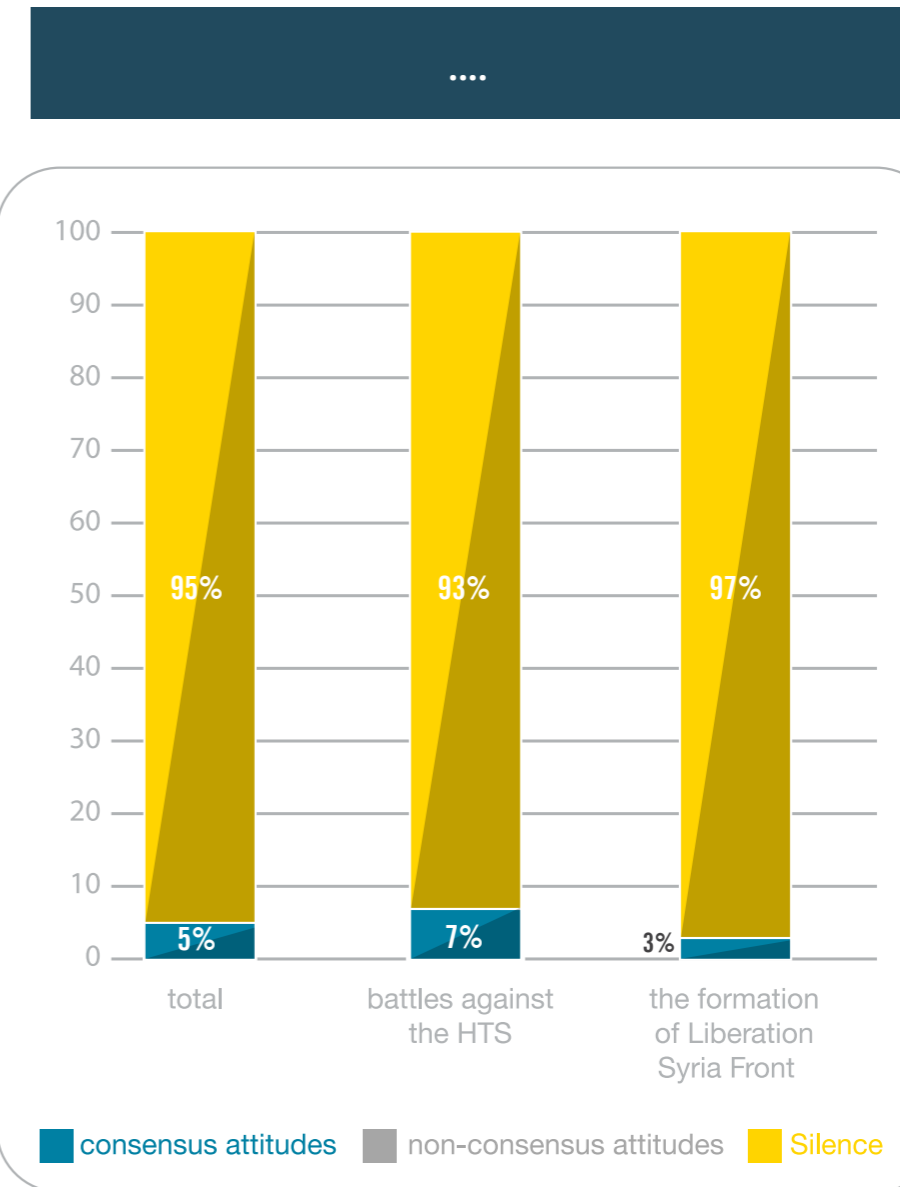These include two events which are: the formation of Syrian liberation Front and its battles against the HTS

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90% 97%
3%
7% 3%

battles against the HTS | the formation of Syrian liberation Front

■ declared acceptance ■ neutrality ■ silence

So, the percentage of consensus and non-consensus towards these issues is[1] :

1 -   If we count the attitude "silence", the rates would be as the following:

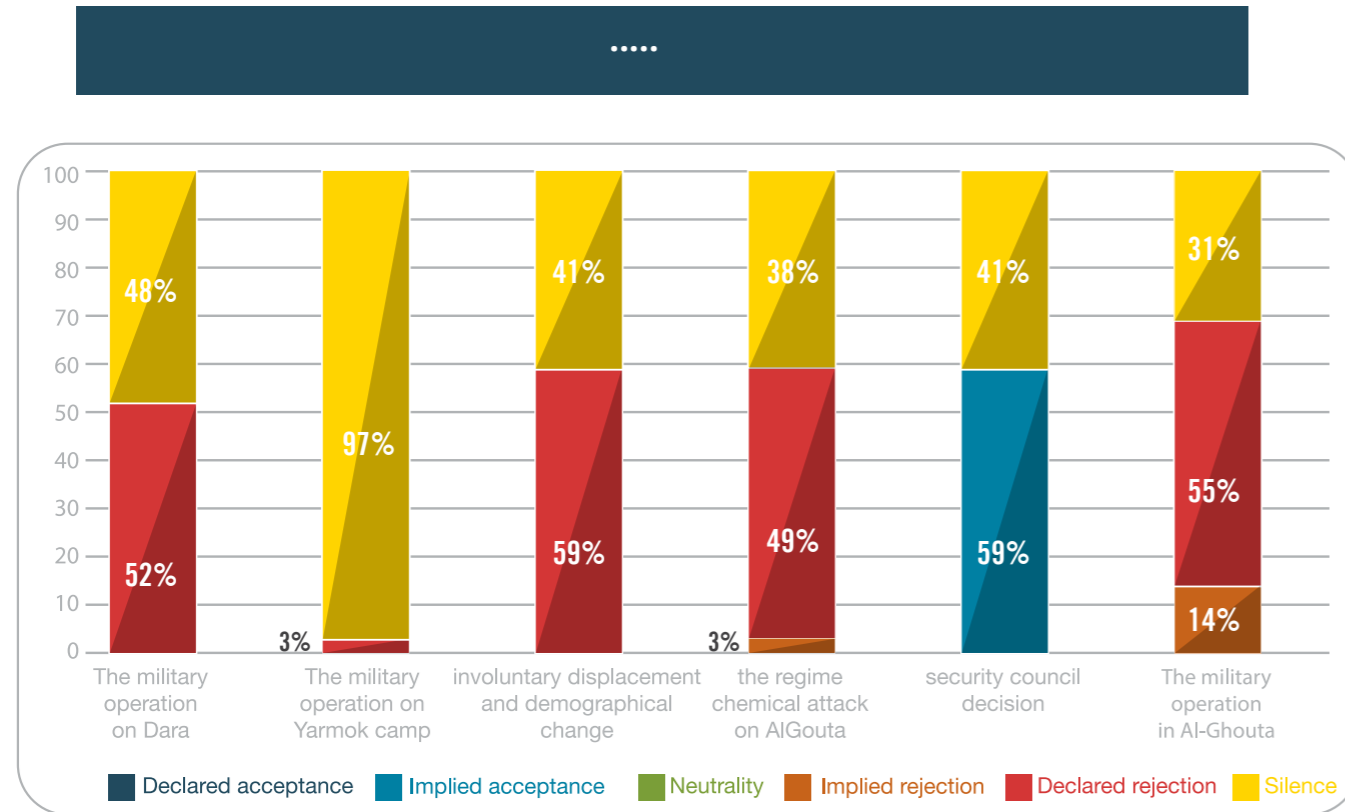| Attitude	Syria Liberation Front	The battles between HTS and Syria Liberation Front	Average
Rate	96.55%	93.10%	94.83%

We notice here that the consensus rates greatly increased because the total result of attitudes towards these issues was silence, due to the lack of interest in the military situation by the monitored forces.

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95% 93% 97%
5% 7% 3%

total | battles against the HTS | the formation of Liberation Syria Front

■ consensus attitudes ■ non-consensus attitudes ■ Silence

All political forces refrained from declaring their attitudes about military situation, also many military forces refrained from declaring their attitudes towards these events although these forces were related to these events' outcomes directly.

Forth: Events related to the military operations in "de-escalation zones"

Those include six events: (The military operation in Al-Ghouta[1], security council decision 2401 towards the cease of fire in AlGouta, the regime chemical attack on AlGouta[2] the regime military operation in Daraa, and south of Damascus[3] and the crime of involuntary displacement and demographical change[4] .

So, the percentage of consensus and non-consensus towards these issues is[5] :

1 - The participation of this entity in "anger for Ghouta" campaign was considered an implicit rejection even though it did not issue a statement. The subsection in the regime's violations and his allies was considered as implied acceptance.
2 - The acceptance of security council decision with making the escalation military the responsibility of rebels was considered an implied acceptance of the decision.
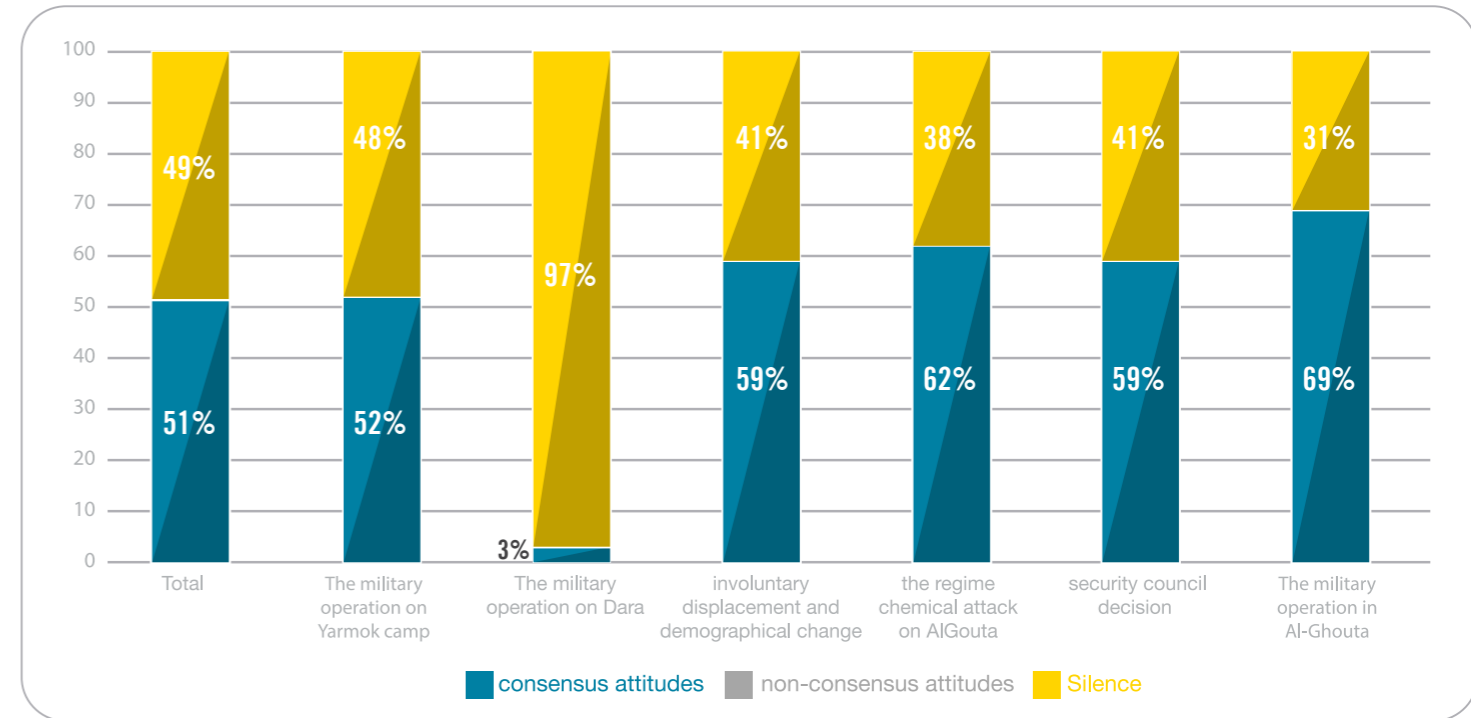3 - The entity that denied the military intervention without referring to the subject was considered an implied rejection.
4 - The attitude of rejection for the involuntary displacement in specific area as a primary attitude towards this crime is applied on all involuntary displacement crimes in the opposition and revolution regions .
5 - If we count the "silence" attitude, the percentage will be as the following:

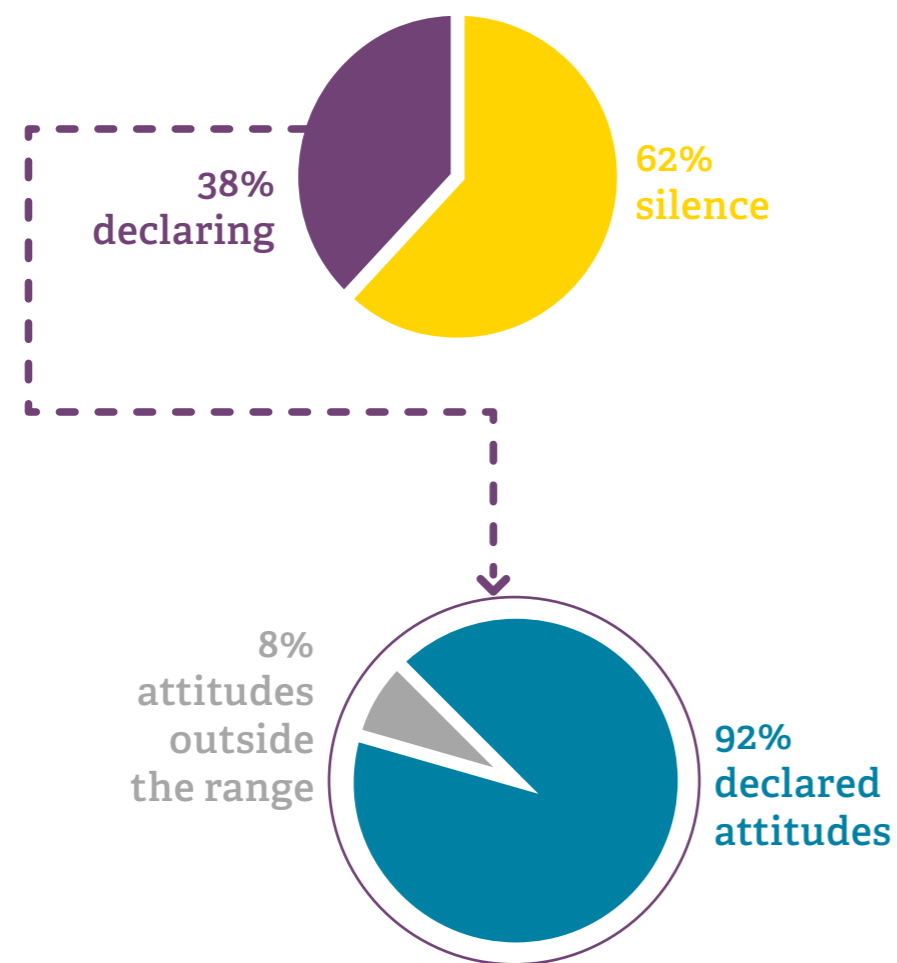| Attitude	The military operations of AlGouta "rejection"	The cease in AlGouta "acceptance"	Chemical attack on AlGouta "rejection"	Involuntary displacement and demographical change "rejection"	The military operation on Yarmook camp "silence"	Military operation on Dara "rejection"	average
Ratio	68.97%	58.62%	62.07%	58.62%	96.55%	51.55%	66.09%

We note that the compatibility rate increased significantly comparing to other issues, as most of the forces took declared attitudes towards the regime attacks on de-escalation zones.

Many political forces interacted with the military operations launched by the regime on de-escalation zones, in which the civilians were the most prominent victim, especially in the eastern Ghouta, where most of the political forces announced their attitudes clearly and explicitly, especially that those operations were accompanied with intensive media interest by the global media, but this interaction was decreased with similar events later and they did not receive any international attention or media interest, as in the case of the military operations against Yarmouk camp and Daraa.

Conclusions and findings/outcomes[1]

- The outcomes of the index indicate that 62% of the monitored events were received by the attitude "silence" and not declaring any positive or negative attitude by different forces, maybe due to the sensitivity of the issue on the internal or regional level in most cases, where "declaring" towards events was at the rate of 38%. The percentage of the consensus in the declared attitudes was at the rate of 92%, while the rate of attitudes outside the range of the consensus was 8%[2] .

38% declaring

62% silence

8% attitudes outside the range

92% declared attitudes

The obvious outcome shown in the previous ratio was that " silence" rate is a very frequent attitude taken by revolution and opposition forces, because the average of this rate was /62% / and it is considered a very high rate[1]. The reason may be the general desperation that the forces went in as a result of the on-ground decline, in addition to a general feeling that things went out of the Syrians' control, so it is useless to declare any attitude.

Among the four main topics mentioned above, the highest rate of "silence" was towards internal affairs in the liberated areas, where the average of this rate was 95%, and this strongly refers to the case of carelessness towards the military situation.

The highest "silence" rate was on these three following events:
The Israeli attack against the Syrian regime, the formation of Syrian Liberation Front, the regime campaign in Yarmouk camp where the silence rate was almost 92%
The reasons for that differs for each event. As for Israeli attack we can say that: the reason is that this event was associated with two parties that are against the revolution and opposition forces "Israel and Syrian regime" so backing/supporting that attack could be explained as supporting for the other side, the thing that revolution forces avoid falling in.
The same applies for regime campaign on Yarmouk camp, where both parties were "regime and ISIS". As for the attitude towards Syria Liberation Front, the reason may be the increased neutrality among military groups in general, and due to the ideological military groups in specific, especially that one of the combination parties was Al zanki faction was part of HTS which is on terrorism list.

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1 - If we count the "silence" attitude inside the Consensus and non-consensus attitudes, we will see that the consensus attitudes number was 10 out of 18 i.e. more than half.

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1 - There are some rules related to results and outcomes:
*   Declared statements: we mean the forces declaration towards the attitude whether they were rejection, acceptance or neutrality.
*   Silence: by it we mean the non-declaration about the attitude.
2 - This rate is out of /38%/ that formed the total of declared attitudes.

on regime, Syria liberation formation, regime campaign in Yarmouk camp 97%.

The highest rate of silence attitudes was towards internal affairs in Liberated areas.95% the highest silence attitudes were towards the Israeli attack

Silence
with the rate of 62%

The highest percentage of declared attitudes for the four topics mentioned in the second section of this index was towards events related to the political process, averaging about 54%.
This percentage gives a clear indication to the revolutionary forces interest in the political solution after retreating the military solution.

Sochi Conference received the highest rate of declared attitudes, and it was (80%). The main reason for this result is the forces' interest in the "political solution" which Sochi Conference was supposed to be one of its tools, Also, the momentum about the conference pushed the majority of the forces to clarify a positive or negative attitude towards it.
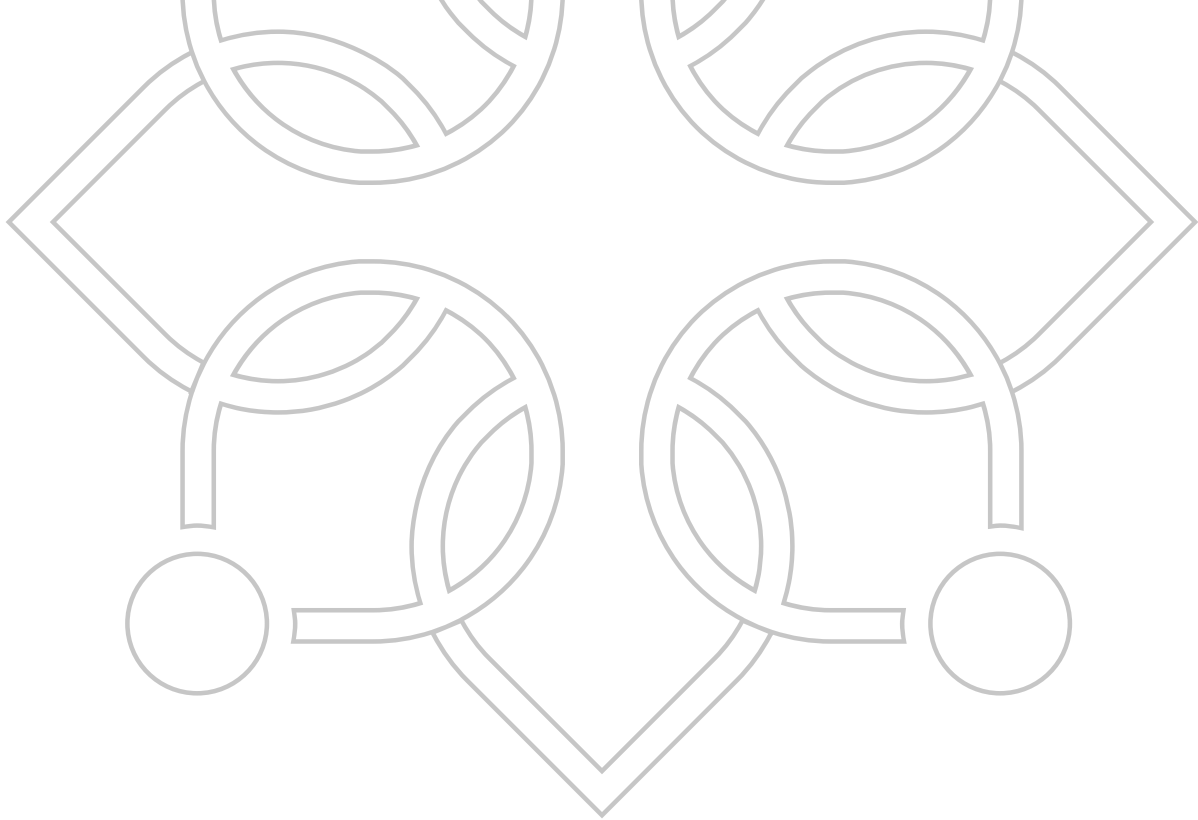
the highest rate for declaration on "event" was On Sochi confernce79%

The highest rate of declared attitudes was the attitudes towards the political Process and it was 54%

Declared attitudes