NEGATIVE BRIEF: Don’t Stop Aiding Syrian Rebels

By Vance Trefethen

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NEGATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad is evil

Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Bin Jabr al-Thani 2013. (former prime minister of Qatar) quoted by James Kitfield “Bashar al-Assad: A Tyrant in Full” NATIONAL JOURNAL 9 Sept 2013 <http://www.nationaljournal.com/daily/bashar-al-assad-a-tyrant-in-full-20130909> Sheik Al-Thani, the former prime minister of Qatar, said it best in 2013. QUOTE:

“Remember that what happened in Syria started out as not as a revolution but with peaceful protesters asking for a few reforms, and on the first day 160 of them were killed,” Thani said at a Brookings Institution conference earlier this year. “I went to see Assad, and we had a long conversation. He promised to give an important speech to his parliament, and instead he cracked jokes as if nothing was happening, while blood was running in the streets! He agreed to meet with the opposition, and we saw that, too, was a joke to him! Other promises were made and not kept. As chair of the Arab League, we took the matter up with our friends and tried to solve it by sending a monitoring team to Syria to try and talk to him. And, finally, we concluded that Bashar al-Assad was just buying time to execute his one true strategy, which is to kill, and kill, and kill until he wins.”

US regime change policy in Syria is key to restoring our credibility in the world

Michael Doran 2014. (senior fellow in the [Saban Center for Middle East Policy](http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/saban" \t "_blank), former deputy assistant secretary of defense and senior director at the National Security Council ) Pursue Regime Change in Syria 23 Jan 2014 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/regime-change-syria-doran>

I recommend that you return to a policy of [regime change in Syria](http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/01/the-road-beyond-damascus" \t "_blank). The United States currently appears fickle, risk-averse and unreliable to our allies and partners in the region—especially in comparison with Russia and Iran. This has serious knock-on effects to our standing not only in the region but around the world.

REVERSE ADVOCACY

Limited aid is not enough – we should increase our efforts to help the rebels overthrow Assad

David Brooks 2013. (Senior Fellow, National Security Affairs, Heritage Foundation; was a professional staff member with the House International Relations Committee. He also served with the CIA and the State Department at the United Nations; taught at the National Defense University) 3 March 2013 Still Punting on Syria <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2013/2/still-punting-on-syria>

The limited US package will be some help to desperate fighters and innocent Syrian civilians, but it’s unlikely to alter the balance of power militarily — or psychologically — in Syria, which is what we should be doing. The fact is that there are few —if any — good scenarios for the United States coming out of the Syrian civil war. By sitting on the sidelines for two years rather than helping the best of the opposition, we’ve reduced the likely outcome to a range from complete chaos to ongoing ethnic/sectarian violence to an Islamist state — even Assad hanging on. It’s well past time we try to pick a “winner” and amp up our efforts against the blood-soaked regime.

INHERENCY

US aid to Syrian rebels isn’t much: insufficient to turn the tide of war

WASHINGTON POST 2013. ( journalists Ernesto Londono and Greg Miller) 11 Sept 2013 “CIA begins weapons delivery to Syrian rebels” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html>

U.S. officials decided to expand nonlethal assistance to Syria’s armed rebels after they delivered more than 350,000 high-calorie U.S. military food packets through the Supreme Military Council in May. The distribution gave U.S. officials confidence that it was possible to limit aid to select rebel units in a battlefield where thousands of fighters share al-Qaeda’s ideology, U.S. officials said. Khaled Saleh, a spokesman for the Syrian Opposition Coalition, said Washington’s revamped efforts are welcome but insufficient to turn the tide of the civil war between rebels and forces loyal to Assad.“The Syrian Military Council is receiving so little support that any support we receive is a relief,” he said. “But if you compare what we are getting compared to the assistance Assad receives from Iran and Russia, we have a long battle ahead of us.”

New (Sept 2014) Free Syrian Army aid plan expires Dec 11, 2014

NEW YORK TIMES 2014. (journalists Jonathan Weisman and Jeremy Peters) 18 Sept 2014 Congress Gives Final Approval to Aid Rebels in Fight With ISIS <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/19/world/middleeast/senate-approves-isis-bill-avoiding-bigger-war-debate.html?_r=0>

“I’m not sending your son, your daughter, over to the middle of that chaos,” said Senator Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, whose libertarian views have propelled him into contention for his party’s 2016 nomination. “The people who live there need to stand up and fight.” After days of often-heated debate, lawmakers approved the ultimate punt for a Congress that has avoided difficult tasks for years. The new authorization to train the moderate Free Syrian Army expires Dec. 11.

HARMS

Aiding the rebels would improve governance of Syria after Assad is gone.

Prof. Daniel Byman 2013. (*Senior Fellow and Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy;* professor at Georgetown University's Security Studies Program) 14 June 2013 Syria, the U.S., and Arming the Rebels: Assad’s Use of Chemical Weapons and Obama’s Red Line <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/06/14-syria-us-arming-rebels-assad-use-chemical-weapons-and-obamas-red-line>

If nothings else at this point, the U.S. needs to arm and train the Syrian rebels in order to create a stable post-Assad Syria. After Assad falls, there may be a fight among the opposition forces, and I would think the Obama administration would want someone who is not Jabhat al-Nusra to take power. “It may be too little, too late in terms of really affecting the military balance or, for that matter, scoring points with the Syrian people who will wonder why it took 90,000 dead for the United States to become more involved in the conflict. And as in Libya, the administration seemed to have waited until the forces it is backing are losing before becoming directly involved. But only by becoming involved can the U.S. help manage spillover of the conflict in the wider region and enable the U.S. to deal with a post-Assad Syria.”

US Ambassador to Syria says: Assad is “evil” - He shoots unarmed civilians and tortures people to death

Jamie Weinstein 2011. (journalist) 21 Sept 2011 American ambassador to Syria: Bashar al-Assad is evil <http://dailycaller.com/2011/09/21/american-ambassador-to-syria-bashar-al-assad-is-evil/#ixzz3AItxcC00>

The American Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford called Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad evil in an extensive interview with The Daily Caller Wednesday from his mission in the Middle Eastern country. “Yes, actually I do because what’s happening under his authority in terms of people being tortured to death, people being shot who are unarmed and no one being held accountable for it,” Ford responded following a pause after being asked by TheDC if he thought Assad was  “evil.”

Assad’s agents commit mass murder

WALL STREET JOURNAL 2014. (journalists Adam Entous & Dion Nissenbaum) updated 25 July 2014 “10,000 Bodies: Inside Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's Crackdown <http://online.wsj.com/articles/10-000-bodies-inside-syrian-president-bashar-al-assads-crackdown-1406315472>

Last year, the Syrian military-police photographer defected to the West. Investigators later gave him the code name Caesar to disguise his identity. He turned over to U.S. law-enforcement agencies earlier this year a vast trove of postmortem photographs from Hospital 601 that he and other military photographers took over the two-year period, which he helped smuggle out of the country on digital thumb drives.Over the ensuing months, U.S. investigators pored over the photos, which depicted the deaths and the elaborate counting system, and started to debrief Caesar and other activists involved in his defection. U.S. and European investigators have since concluded not only that the images were genuine, but that they offered the best evidence to date of an industrial-scale campaign by the government of Bashar al-Assad against its political opponents. U.S. Ambassador-at-large Stephen Rapp, head of the State Department's Office of Global Criminal Justice, has compared the pattern to some of the most notorious acts of mass murder of the past century.

“Radical groups are worse than Assad” – Response: Their existence is the fault of Assad and lack of aid from the West

Nicholas Blanford 2014. (journalist) 5 Jan 2014 CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, Why President Bashar al-Assad's rule may endure <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0105/Why-President-Bashar-al-Assad-s-rule-may-endure>

"It is the very presence of the Assad regime and the very tactics it has employed that account for the presence of Islamist extremists in Syria. The regime has set the country alight and now presents itself as the fire brigade," says Frederic Hof, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East.Mr. Hof, who previously served as the Obama administration's liaison with the Syrian opposition, added that the Assad regime's efforts to radicalize the opposition were inadvertently aided by the West, "which failed miserably to support the regime's real opponents."

“Should use diplomacy” – Response: Won’t work. Assad will never negotiate his own departure

Michael Doran 2014. (senior fellow in the [Saban Center for Middle East Policy](http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/saban" \t "_blank), former deputy assistant secretary of defense and senior director at the National Security Council ) Pursue Regime Change in Syria 23 Jan 2014 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/regime-change-syria-doran>

The United Nations will likely soon hold the so-called Geneva II conference, which is designed to negotiate a political solution to the conflict and the transition to a new government. The conference, though well intended, has little chance of success because [Assad is growing stronger](http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/01/21/syria-peace-talks-assad-us-obama-weapons-column/4720299/" \t "_blank) and will never negotiate the terms of his own departure.

“Won’t be able to overthrow Assad” / “Would end up helping extremists” – Responses: US aid will create a moderate alternative to extremists. And even if Assad isn’t overthrown, it will give the US influence in the outcome

Michael Doran 2014. (senior fellow in the [Saban Center for Middle East Policy](http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/saban" \t "_blank), former deputy assistant secretary of defense and senior director at the National Security Council ) Pursue Regime Change in Syria 23 Jan 2014 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/regime-change-syria-doran>

Far from weakening al Qaeda, the conflict is giving the organization a new lease on life. That poses a huge threat to U.S. regional and global interests. At the same time, the perspective ignores the fact that Iran has exploited the Syria conflict to expand its influence throughout the region. The Quds Force, the elite arm of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, is recruiting Iraqi Shiite militiamen, training them in Iran, and then sending them to Syria to fight. Even while Iran suffers from unprecedented economic sanctions, its regional influence is on the rise. Before long, the United States could find itself confronting Hezbollah-like clones in both Syria and Iraq. The goal of your policy should be to build up a third force in Syria—an alternative to both Iran and al Qaeda. Even if Assad remains in power, the U.S.-sponsored opposition can function as a valuable ally on the ground. It will ensure the United States the dominant voice in all Syria discussions.

Aid to Syrian rebels would help topple Assad, stabilize Syria, fight terrorism, defeat ISIS, and aid a negotiated settlement

JAMES ROSEN, JONATHAN S. LANDAY AND ANITA KUMAR 2014. (journalists with McClatchy news service) 26 June 2014 Obama seeks military aid for Syrian rebels <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/06/26/231684/obama-seeks-military-aid-for-syrian.html#storylink=cpy>

An Obama national security aide said the $500 million should be used to help Syrian rebels topple Assad, while at the same time defeating militants who call themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS.“As we have said many times before, Assad has lost all legitimacy to rule Syria and must go,” Bernadette Meehan, a National Security Council spokeswoman, told McClatchy. “The request to Congress reflects our assessment of the time needed to launch such a program and our view that building the capacity of Syrians for stabilization and counterterrorism operations will be necessary both during the (current) conflict and after a negotiated settlement.”

“Blocks diplomacy” – Response: Military force helps diplomacy

 Shadi Hamid 2013. (director of research for the Brookings Doha Center and a former State Department program specialist) 19 June 2013 To Arm, Or Not To Arm The Syrian Rebels? NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=193495486>

And I should also note that I think one of the unfortunate aspects of this whole debate we've been having in the U.S. is that we talk about military intervention and diplomacy as two exclusive things. But actually, the only way Assad is going to make concessions or negotiate in even somewhat good faith is if there's a credible threat of military force. So I would actually argue that the threat of military intervention could actually help diplomacy succeed and not the other way around. If Assad doesn't feel he can lose, he's not going to give ground to the opposition.

“Weapons will fall into wrong hands” – Response: Not likely to happen, worth the risk

David Brooks 2013. (Senior Fellow, National Security Affairs, Heritage Foundation; was a professional staff member with the House International Relations Committee. He also served with the CIA and the State Department at the United Nations; taught at the National Defense University) 3 March 2013 Still Punting on Syria <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2013/2/still-punting-on-syria>

We could also move toward arming appropriate pro-US rebel groups with small arms, ammunition and rocket-propelled grenades. (The rebels want surface-to-air missiles, too, but that transfer would be too risky.) Yes, we should worry about weapons falling into the wrong hands, but the volatile situation in Syria (which will stay rough even after Assad) guarantees that those who get weapons won’t part with them willingly. We’ve squandered lots of time and countless opportunities for ending the Assad regime and gaining important influence with its successor(s).

“Replacing Assad will be worse” – Response: The longer Assad stays in power, the more it helps Al Qaida

Stephen Hadley 2012. (former national security advisor) 9 May 2012 U.S.-Turkey Relations: A New Partnership <http://www.cfr.org/turkey/us-turkey-relations-new-partnership/p28212>

Well, the task force goes so far as to say that Syria is an issue where Turkey and the United States have to cooperate. It's important to each of us, but neither of us can point the way towards a solution on our own. And that's what the task force report says. The secretary and I had a running conversation over the last couple days about what that means operationally, and this is sort of what we've come to, and she can speak for herself.But the two of us have though, well, what does that probably mean? And we would sketch it out this way: It means Assad has to go, sooner rather than later. The longer he stays, the more militarized the conflict, the more opening it provides for al-Qaida.

“Aid leaks to extremists, helps bad guys” – Response: We can make sure it gets only to moderate leaders

WASHINGTON POST 2013. ( journalists Ernesto Londono and Greg Miller) 11 Sept 2013 “CIA begins weapons delivery to Syrian rebels” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html>

Ward’s team — working primarily out of hotel lobbies — has spent the past few months studying the demographics and dynamics of communities where extremists are making inroads. Targeted U.S. aid, he said, can be used to empower emerging local leaders who are moderate and to jump-start basic services while dimming the appeal of extremists. “We feel we’re able to get these local councils off to a good start,” said[Ward, a veteran U.S. Agency for International Development official](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/bureau/194564.htm)who has worked in Libya, Afghanistan and Pakistan. “We vet individuals who are getting our assistance to make sure they are not affiliated with terror organizations.”

“Extremists will be enabled” – Response: Non-unique. Not getting involved is enabling the extremists

James Phillips 2013. (Master's Degree and a M.A.L.D. in International Security Studies from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts Univ; senior research fellow for Middle Eastern affairs at Heritage Foundation ) 1 May 2013 Syria's Chemical Weapons: U.S. Should Engage Syria's Opposition to Defuse Threat <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/05/syria-s-chemical-weapons-us-should-engage-syria-s-opposition-to-defuse-threat>

While it is sifting through the evidence and contemplating options for enforcing its red line on chemical weapons use, the Obama Administration should reconsider its broader policy on Syria, which has been a strategic and moral failure. Al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups have been the principal beneficiaries of Obama’s passive “hands off” approach to the worsening Syria crisis. While the U.S. and its Western allies have stayed on the sidelines, Islamist militants have become increasingly influential within the disjointed Syrian opposition due to strong support from Islamist networks outside Syria as well as military and financial support from Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

“Enables extremists” – Response: We can coordinate with allies to ensure that extremists are not aided

Michael Doran 2014. (senior fellow in the [Saban Center for Middle East Policy](http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/saban" \t "_blank), former deputy assistant secretary of defense and senior director at the National Security Council ) Pursue Regime Change in Syria 23 Jan 2014 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/regime-change-syria-doran>

Syria is now much more than just a civil war. It is the central battle in the conflict over the new order in the Middle East. By committing the United States to regime change, you would demonstrate solidarity with America’s traditional allies in the region. Our standing aside will not convince them to abandon their efforts to topple Assad. On the contrary, the war will continue, in one form or another, and our allies will take positions that are both inimical to our interests and impervious to our influence. For example, even the Turkish government, a staunch NATO ally, has from time to time turned a blind eye to the flow of al Qaeda fighters into Syria. A regime-change strategy is not just a means of solving the problem of Syria or countering Iran. It is also a tool for directing the efforts of our allies toward common ends throughout the region. The United States alone has the military, diplomatic and political resources to assign roles and missions to its allies that will safeguard their interests while simultaneously preventing them from undermining our own.

“US drawn into quagmire” – Response: A regime change aid policy will succeed because US leadership is key to success, not our troops

Michael Doran 2014. (senior fellow in the [Saban Center for Middle East Policy](http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/saban" \t "_blank), former deputy assistant secretary of defense and senior director at the National Security Council ) Pursue Regime Change in Syria 23 Jan 2014 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/regime-change-syria-doran>

This recommendation raises an obvious objection. Any effort to topple Assad, it is frequently claimed, will draw the United States into a quagmire. After all, the Syrian opposition remains deeply fractured, and the radical Islamic element in it is growing ever stronger by the day. A regime-change policy, however, need not require that you send American soldiers into harm’s way. All it requires is a commitment to help American allies in the region muster sufficient force to change the balance of power on the ground in Syria. This policy would certainly include arming and training elements of the opposition. It would also mean providing strategic guidance, intelligence support and diplomatic backing. But the single most important dimension of the policy is simply the political commitment itself—the assertion of American leadership to remove a ruthless autocrat and replace him with a regime that is more representative of the Syrian population as a whole.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Massacres by Bashar Al Assad (evil dictator of Syria)

Link: Either we help the rebels, or Assad retains power on a vast pile of skulls

Michael Gerson 2013. ( Fellow at the J. Dennis Hastert Center for Economics, Government, and Public Policy at Wheaton College in Illinois. ; former aide to President George W. Bush as Assistant to the President for Policy and Strategic Planning) 2 May 2013 Michael Gerson: The stakes of being too late <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-the-stakes-of-being-too-late/2013/05/02/06102ea6-b355-11e2-bbf2-a6f9e9d79e19_story.html>

The United States should not accept the refounding of the Assad regime on a vast pile of skulls. And the United States should not accept the disintegration of Syria into enclaves, some of them sheltering al-Qaeda affiliates. So Obama has little choice but to help the rebels to win, while helping the right rebels to win out in a post-Assad power struggle.

Link: A robust aid policy can topple Assad

Reuel M. Gerecht 2012. (*former CIA case officer, is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies) 11 July 2012* To Topple Assad, Unleash the CIA, WALL STREET JOURNAL <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303567704577518402270940124>

Tempers in Ankara are rising against the Assad regime, but Turkish civilian and military leaders still don't want to send tanks to establish Syrian "safe havens" for rebels and refugees whom Turkey is supporting on its side of the border. Yet there is an alternative that could crack the Assad regime: a muscular CIA operation launched from Turkey, Jordan and even Iraqi Kurdistan. The trick for Washington is to go in big, deploying enough case officers and delivering paralyzing weaponry to the rebels as rapidly as possible. Press reports already suggest that a rudimentary, small-scale CIA covert action is under way against Assad. But these reports, probably produced by officially sanctioned White House leaks, reveal an administration trying not to commit itself. According to Syrian rebels I've heard from, the much-mentioned Saudi and Qatari military aid—reportedly chaperoned by the CIA—hasn't arrived in any meaningful quantity.

Multiple advocates say: We need robust action to stop Assad from inflicting more casualties

Michael Gerson 2013 ( Fellow at the J. Dennis Hastert Center for Economics, Government, and Public Policy at Wheaton College in Illinois. ; former aide to President George W. Bush as Assistant to the President for Policy and Strategic Planning) 2 May 2013 Michael Gerson: The stakes of being too late<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-the-stakes-of-being-too-late/2013/05/02/06102ea6-b355-11e2-bbf2-a6f9e9d79e19_story.html>

On Syria, President Obama has sometimes seemed isolated within his own administration. As the [atrocities have escalated](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/03/world/middleeast/syria.html) — from the shelling of neighborhoods to airstrikes on bread lines to the use of Scud missiles against civilians to the likely incremental introduction of chemical weapons — the Assad regime’s strategy has become alarmingly clear. Unable to retake rebel-held areas, it seeks to depopulate them, producing mass casualties, [refugee flows](http://syrianrefugees.eu/) and [sectarian conflict](http://articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/18/world/la-fg-wn-un-panel-syria-20130218). During the past two years, it has been reported that many of Obama’s top foreign policy advisers, including David Petraeus, Hillary Clinton, Leon Panetta and Ben Rhodes, have urged more robust action to arrest Syria’s downward spiral.

Impact: Assad in power is the worst possible outcome. More terrorism, WMD, chemical weapons, and bloodbaths

David Brooks 2013. (Senior Fellow, National Security Affairs, Heritage Foundation; was a professional staff member with the House International Relations Committee. He also served with the CIA and the State Department at the United Nations; taught at the National Defense University) 3 March 2013 Still Punting on Syria <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2013/2/still-punting-on-syria>

The fact is that there are few —if any — good scenarios for the United States coming out of the Syrian civil war. By sitting on the sidelines for two years rather than helping the best of the opposition, we’ve reduced the likely outcome to a range from complete chaos to ongoing ethnic/sectarian violence to an Islamist state — even Assad hanging on. It’s well past time we try to pick a “winner” and amp up our efforts against the blood-soaked regime. The worst outcome is the Assad regime’s survival: That means more Iranian influence, more support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, more terrorism, more building of weapons of mass destruction (recall, the Israelis took out a Syrian nuclear facility in 2007, not to mention worries about Assad’s chemical weapons) and more bloodbaths.

Impact: Helping rebels remove Assad is key to saving lives

Shadi Hamid 2013. (director of research for the Brookings Doha Center and a former State Department program specialist) 19 June 2013 To Arm, Or Not To Arm The Syrian Rebels? NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=193495486>

So no one is going to be truly safe in Syria until this regime is pushed back or defeated. As long as the Syrian regime is alive, and as long as Assad is the president of Syria, there is going to be more and more killing. There is no way to get around that. So we can address the humanitarian side as much as we want and that's important, but if there isn't a real process through which the rebels are able to gain the military advantage against the Syrian regime, then, you know, theroot of the problem isn't being addressed.

Impact: Aid to rebels would help end the Syrian civil war and stop Assad from killing thousands of civilians

Dr. Alon Ben-Meir 2014. (professor of international relations at the Center for Global Affairs at NYU. He teaches courses on international negotiation and Middle Eastern studies) [ISIS: Creating A Common Enemy](http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2014/07/03/isis-creating-common-enemy), 3 July 2014 <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2014/07/03/isis-creating-common-enemy>

Counterintuitively, the current conflict in Iraq and the changing geopolitical dynamics could accelerate the process of ending the civil war in Syria. To that end, the U.S. must seize upon this opening and spearhead the delivery of weapons to the rebels to stop Assad from continuing his indiscriminate bombing of rebel hideouts while killing thousands of civilians in the process.

3. Syrian Civil War Expansion.

“Not” getting involved will lead to expansion of the Syrian civil war and a bloodbath – minimum 200,000 deaths

Reuel M. Gerecht 2012. (*former CIA case officer, is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies) 11 July 2012* To Topple Assad, Unleash the CIA, WALL STREET JOURNAL <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303567704577518402270940124> (Note: in this context, “Langley” is a reference to the CIA, whose headquarters is in Langley, Virginia.)

If the administration doesn't let Langley loose, we will likely be looking at a protracted bloodbath in Syria rivaling the destruction that occurred in Lebanon during its all-consuming civil war from 1975 to 2000. A low figure could be 200,000 dead. The extirpation of the Alawites and their Christian allies, who together number roughly 4.5 million, is imaginable. The Obama administration lives in fear of an illusion. Numerous times the CIA practiced the dark arts during the Cold War, and not once did America slide into war. The CIA certainly didn't have an unblemished record of triumph, but it often made our enemies bleed. Syria offers a more promising battlefield than Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, and certainly a better post-conflict chance of success. Odds are that Mr. Obama (or his successor) and Mr. Erdogan will be dragged into this war eventually, but too late. For all concerned, it would be better to pre-empt that fate.

4. Increased Islamist extremism.

Link: Arming moderate opposition groups helps reduce the risk of Islamic extremists dominating post-Assad Syria.

Impact: Net benefits. The risk of arming moderate rebels is less than the risk of allowing radical rebels to dominate

James Phillips 2013.(Master's Degree and a M.A.L.D. in International Security Studies from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts Univ; senior research fellow for Middle Eastern affairs at Heritage Foundation ) 1 May 2013 Syria's Chemical Weapons: U.S. Should Engage Syria's Opposition to Defuse Threat <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/05/syria-s-chemical-weapons-us-should-engage-syria-s-opposition-to-defuse-threat>

Like it or not, providing arms and ammunition is now the coin of the realm in cultivating ties with Syrian opposition groups. If Washington expects cooperation in recovering and neutralizing Assad’s chemical weapons stockpiles, then it needs to forge a cooperative relationship with Syrian opposition groups that are threatened by the rising influence of al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremists. Providing arms to suitable opposition factions may entail taking a calculated risk, but remaining passive on the sidelines would ultimately bring much more risks by enabling Islamist extremists to dominate post-Assad Syria. After two years of fighting, U.S. intelligence agencies have had more than enough time to vet opposition groups and work with regional allies to do the due diligence required to ensure that it is arming the right factions.

5. Spread of ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; also known as ISIL)

Link: Syrian rebel aid would intensify the fight against ISIS

JAMES ROSEN, JONATHAN S. LANDAY AND ANITA KUMAR 2014. (journalists with McClatchy news service) 26 June 2014 Obama seeks military aid for Syrian rebels <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/06/26/231684/obama-seeks-military-aid-for-syrian.html#storylink=cpy>

If approved, the $500 million could be used to train and equip moderate Syrian rebels in Jordan, building on a modest CIA-run program that already has helped small numbers of anti-Assad fighters in the Free Syrian Army. At least 11 moderate groups in Syria in recent months have begun using U.S.-made TOW portable anti-tank missiles, weapons they likely could not have received without at least tacit U.S. approval. Jeffrey White, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst, said moderate Syrian rebels also could be trained and equipped in Turkey, which some rebels fighting in northern Syria already use as a sanctuary. “For $500 million, you should be able to get a pretty decent training program and buy a lot of weapons,” White told McClatchy. “What you are going to see is an intensified fight against the regime. The war in Syria would step up a level. We should see an intensified fight against ISIS as well.”

Impact: ISIS are savage murderers and a threat to the US homeland

Steve Bucci 2014. (served three decades as an Army Special Forces officer and top Pentagon official; director of the Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at Heritage Foundation ) What Obama Got Right—and Wrong—in His ISIS Speech 10 Sept 2014 <http://dailysignal.com/2014/09/10/obama-got-right-wrong-isis-speech/>

On Wednesday, President Obama addressed the nation concerning an uptick of action against the Islamic State, otherwise known as ISIS or ISIL. It was a short address that also was short on surprises. Obama began with an apt description of ISIS and the threat it poses. In this phase of his remarks, he got it right. ISIS is a horrendous group of murderers whose savagery knows no bounds. Action must be taken. He also emphasized there is a real threat to the homeland—not an immediate one perhaps but one that requires action.