SEVEN OTHER SPIRITS: THE CASE FOR ENDING AID   
TO SYRIAN REBELS

By Vance Trefethen

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The current situation in Syria reminds us of a parable Jesus gave, when he said: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."[[1]](#footnote-1)

Our current policy of aiding rebels to overthrow evil Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad might sound like we’re getting rid of the Devil himself. But the rebel groups that want to replace him will be seven others more wicked than Assad, and the final state of Syria will be worse than it is today. Please join us as weaffirm that The United States should significantly reform its policy toward one or more countries in the Middle East.

OBSERVATION 1.Our DEFINITIONS

**Significant**: “large enough to be noticed or have an effect” *(Merriam-Webster Online Dict. 2014* [*http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/significant*](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/significant)*)*

**Policy**: “a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body”*(Merriam-Webster Online Dict. 2014* [*http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy?show=0&t=1402599657*](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy?show=0&t=1402599657)*)*

OBSERVATION 2. INHERENCY: the politics of the Status Quo. 3 Key FACTS:

FACT 1. Syrian civil war. Syria is engulfed in a bloody civil war

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2014. CBC NEWS 3 Apr 2014 Syria’s civil war: key facts, important players <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/syria-dashboard/> (misplaced bracket was in original)

Syria's turmoil began with [protests against President Bashar al-Assad's regime](http://www.cbc.ca/news2/world/story/2011/03/25/syria-peaceful-protests.html) in March 2011. It crossed an important threshold a year and a half later, when the i]nternational Red Cross formally [declared it a civil war](http://www.cbc.ca/news2/world/story/2012/07/15/syria-denies-use-of-heavy-weapons-tremseh.html). The international community has also [stepped in](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/un-resolution-on-syria-weapons-deal-reached-1.1870285) after accusations of chemical weapons use. The human cost climbs as the fighting rages. The death toll now exceeds 100,000 and millions have fled their homes, seeking sanctuary either in neighbouring countries or elsewhere in their troubled country.

FACT 2. CIA Assistance. The CIA is running a growing assistance program for Syrian rebels

Tom Bowman and Alice Fordham 2014. (journalists) CIA Is Quietly Ramping Up Aid To Syrian Rebels, Sources Say 23 Apr 2014 NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/04/23/306233248/cia-is-quietly-ramping-up-aid-to-syrian-rebels-sources-say>

The U.S. is providing more arms and training to the moderate rebels in Syria, under a growing secret program run by the CIA in Jordan. Sources tell NPR that secret program could be supplemented by a more public effort in the coming months involving American military trainers. The change in strategy comes as the White House sees Syrian leader Bashar Assad growing in strength, and continuing to strike rebel strongholds.

FACT 3. New training program. Congress recently enacted a new program of training and support for Syrian rebels

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>

The Senate gave overwhelming approval on Thursday to the training and arming of Syrian rebels, then fled the Capitol with the House for the fall campaign, sidestepping the debate over the extent of American military action until the lame-duck session of Congress later this year. The training measure was pushed hard by President Obama, who will now sign it into law. It was tucked into a larger Senate bill to keep the government funded past Sept. 30, a maneuver that leaders of both parties favored to ensure as few defections as possible.

OBSERVATION 3. The PLAN, to be implemented by Congress and the President

1. Congress votes to cut off all assistance to all Syrian rebel movements  
2. Government employees not in compliance will be disciplined through normal means.  
3. Plan takes effect the day after an Affirmative ballot.  
4. Affirmative speeches may clarify the Plan as needed.  
And finally let’s see why this is the right policy in…

OBSERVATION 4. The JUSTIFICATIONS

JUSTIFICATION1. Horrific persecution.

The terrible behavior of rebels we support will, by itself, even if we win no other argument in this round, justify an Affirmative ballot. We see this in 2 sub-points:

A. The Link: Syrian rebels commit horrific acts of persecution against Christians

Elizabeth Dias 2014. (journalist) TIME magazine 30 Jan 3014 Syrian Christian Leaders Call On U.S. To End Support For Anti-Assad Rebels <http://swampland.time.com/2014/01/30/syrian-christian-leaders-call-on-us-to-end-support-for-anti-assad-rebels/>

The stories told by five top Syrian Christian leaders about the horrors their churches are experiencing at the hands of Islamist extremists are biblical in their brutality. Bishop Elias Toumeh, representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, tells of the funeral he led ten days ago for the headless body of one of his parishioners in Marmarita. Rev. Adeeb Awad, vice moderator of the National Evangelical Synod of [Syria](http://topics.time.com/syria/) and Lebanon, explains how the rebels blew up his church and then pointed the finger at the regime.

B. The Advocacy: Bishop Armash Nalbandian, primate of the Armenian Church of Damascus, urges us to to stop supporting these groups

Elizabeth Dias 2014. (journalist) TIME magazine 30 Jan 3014 Syrian Christian Leaders Call On U.S. To End Support For Anti-Assad Rebels <http://swampland.time.com/2014/01/30/syrian-christian-leaders-call-on-us-to-end-support-for-anti-assad-rebels/>

The bishops’ stories are difficult to independently verify, and the war’s death toll goes far beyond just Christian communities in Syria–more than 130,000 people have been killed since the fighting began, and at least two million others have fled the country. But they are emerging as part of a concerted push by Syrian Christians to get the U.S. to stop its support for rebel groups fighting Syrian president Bashar al Assad. “The US must change its politics and must choose the way of diplomacy and dialogue, not supporting rebels and calling them freedom fighters,” says Nalbandian.

JUSTIFICATION 2. Slippery slope to chaos. If US policy succeeds at overthrowing Assad, the resulting chaos and massacres will be our fault

Alissa Tabirian 2013. (journalist) 16 Sept 2013 « Rep. Schiff: Obama’s Syria Strategy ‘Brilliant,’ But U.S. Will Be Blamed for Any 'Massacres'” <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/alissa-tabirian/rep-schiff-obama-s-syria-strategy-brilliant-us-will-be-blamed-any> (brackets added)

“Now, it’s been ugly getting here,” he admitted. Referring to recent reports that the CIA has already begun supplying Syrian rebels with light weapons, [Rep. Adam] Schiff [D-Calif.] warned about escalation of the conflict. “I don’t think we’re talking about a level of weaponry that’s likely to change the balance on the battlefield,” Schiff said, predicting that “we’re going to be called on to provide more weapons." The military aid would eventually include “even more sophisticated weapons," he said. “Pretty soon you are stuck in the middle of this war and taking ownership for it. And then if the regime falls too precipitously and there’s chaos, and Sunnis start massacring Alawhites, then it’s going to be our responsibility to fix this broken object,” Schiff said. “No one wants to take ownership of this.” The California Democrat added that arming the Syrian rebels could be a "slippery slope" for the U.S.

JUSTIFICATION 3. Assad fights ISIS.

Though we agree Syrian dictator Bashar Assad is a bad guy, he’s fighting some other folks who are even worse. We shouldn’t weaken him while he is attacking our enemies. We see this in 2 sub-points:

A. The Link: Assad bombs ISIS. ISIS is the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,” a rebel movement in Iraq.

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>

ISIS militants have stepped up attacks on government security forces in both countries while fighting pitched battles in Syria against other rebel groups.The Assad government Tuesday bombed ISIS fighters in Iraq, bolstering government security forces trying to repulse a two-week offensive that saw the militants capture key cities north of Baghdad and also gain footholds to the west and south of the capital.

B. The Impact: ISIS is horrific. They commit mass executions, beheadings and crucifixions. Even Al Qaeda thinks they’re too extreme!

BOSTON GLOBE 2014. (journalistThanassisCambanis) 29 June 2014 The surprising appeal of ISIS <http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/06/28/the-surprising-appeal-isis/l9YwC0GVPQ3i4eBXt1o0hI/story.html?p1=Article_InThisSection_Bottom>

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, smashed its way into the world’s consciousness earlier this month when it seized Mosul and the Beiji oil refinery in Iraq. Starting last fall, ISIS began imposing its theocratic rule over a wide swath of Syria, then quickly wrested control of the emblematic Iraqi cities of Fallujah and Ramadi. With the more recent attacks, it menaced the government in Baghdad; it also forced President Obama to reengage with a war from which he thought he had extricated the United States. In trying to explain ISIS’s rapid success, alarmed observers have pointed to the extreme tactics that drew condemnation even from Al Qaeda: mass executions, beheadings, and crucifixions.

JUSTIFICATION 4. Prolongs the war. Military aid gives its recipients an incentive to keep the war going

Speaking specifically in the context of US aid for Syrian rebels, Dr Paul Pillar said in June 2014:

Dr. Paul Pillar 2014. (PhD;  28-year veteran of the [Central Intelligence Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) ; now a non-resident senior fellow at [Georgetown Univ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgetown_University). Center for Security Studies; nonresident senior fellow in the [Brookings Institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brookings_Institution)'s Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence; former visiting professor at Georgetown Univ) Aid to Syrian Rebels: How Does It End? 29 June 2014 NATIONAL INTEREST <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/aid-syrian-rebels-how-does-it-end-10777>

We also should be wary of a dynamic we observed with some of our client groups in Afghanistan. When a group realizes that it is being aided only because of its role in an ongoing war, it has an incentive to keep the war ongoing. And that means it is more likely to oppose negotiations, at least under any terms that are reasonable and feasible, than to support them.

END QUOTE. The summary of our case today is this: If Status Quo policy succeeds, and the rebels grow strong enough to overthrow Assad, that will merely help America’s enemies and increase persecution of Syrian religious minorities. If Status Quo policy fails to overthrow Assad, we will have invested our taxpayer money and the blood of Armenian Christian and Greek Orthodox martyrs… for nothing. Whether the Status Quo succeeds or fails, we lose. Please take us down a different path with an Affirmative ballot in today’s debate.

2A Evidence: Stop Helping Syrian Rebels

OPENING QUOTES

Assad is bad, but he could be replaced by 7 others more wicked than himself

Sen. Ted Cruz 2013.  (R-Texas) Annual Helms Lecture: The Vital Role of the Senate in Foreign Policy, 11 Sept 2013 <http://fr.scribd.com/doc/167489438/Transcript-of-Sen-Ted-Cruz-s-Remarks-at-the-Heritage-Foundation>

But not only was the proposed military intervention not, I believe, in defense of U.S. national security; it posed a grave risk of undermining U.S. national security. Why is that? Because even though Assad is a brutal, murderous thug, that doesn’t mean his opponents are any better. As of June, of the nine major rebel groups, up to seven of them appear to have had significant ties with al-Qaeda. And if the president’s unbelievably tiny, and yet somehow not-a-pinprick, attack were actually successful in undermining and weakening the Assad regime, the predictable effect of that could well be enabling the al-Qaeda, the al-Nusra, the Islamic radicals to seize control of that government and, even more worrisome, to seize control of that vast cache of chemical weapons.

INHERENCY

CIA weapons deliveries are being sent to Syrian rebels: Major escalation of the US role in Syria’s civil war

WASHINGTON POST 2013. (journalists ERNESTO LONDOÑO AND [GREG MILLER](http://www.washingtonpost.com/greg-miller/2011/03/02/ABDOymP_page.html) ) 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>

The CIA has begun delivering weapons to rebels in Syria, ending months of delay in lethal aid that had been promised by the Obama administration, according to U.S. officials and Syrian figures. The shipments began streaming into the country over the past two weeks, along with separate deliveries by the State Department of vehicles and other gear — a flow of material that marks a major escalation of the U.S. role in Syria’s civil war.

CIA is expanding weapons aid to Syrian rebels

HariSreenivasan 2013. (journalist) Public Broadcasting Service, PBS NEWS HOUR 25 Mar 2013 News Wrap: CIA Secretly Aiding Syrian Rebels <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world-jan-june13-othernews_03-25/>

The CIA is secretly helping expand military aid shipments to Syrian rebel fighters. The New York Times reported today that the agency has assisted Turkey and several Arab states, increasing an airlift of weapons and equipment. The report said American agents are helping procure the weapons and helping to vet the various rebel factions to decide which ones should receive the help.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

Syrian rebels target innocent civilians

The Economist 2013. (respected British news journal) 13 Oct 2013 Rebel atrocities <http://www.economist.com/node/21587959>

Early in the morning bands of opposition fighters overran a government checkpoint and pushed into an area of ten villages, carrying out killings that Human Rights Watch, a New York-based pressure group, [says](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/10/10/you-can-still-see-their-blood" \t "_blank) may amount to crimes against humanity. Local residents reported indiscriminate gunfire and murder. Home to Syrians of all creeds, the area is also the heartland of the Alawites, the esoteric Shia offshoot to which the ruling Assad family belongs and whose adherents the jihadists consider heretics. Over the course of the operation, Human Rights Watch says the fighters killed 190 civilians. Residents and hospital staff in Latakia, the nearest city, spoke of burned bodies, beheaded corpses and graves being dug in backyards. Two hundred people from the area remain hostage.

Rebels kill unarmed civilians, women and children

Human Rights Watch 2013. (internationally recognized human rights advocacy group) Oct 2013 “You Can Still See Their Blood” Executions, Unlawful Killings, and Hostage Taking by Opposition Forces in Latakia Countryside <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/syria1013_ForUpload.pdf>

Human Rights Watch has collected the names of 190 civilians who were killed by opposition forces in their offensive on the villages, including 57 women and at least 18 children and 14 elderly men (see Annex 1 for list of victims). The evidence collected strongly suggests they were killed on the first day of the operation, August 4. We identified these individuals as civilians through interviews, video and photographic evidence, or a review of hospital records. Given that many residents remain missing, and opposition fighters buried many bodies in mass graves, the total number of dead is likely higher. Human Rights Watch has documented that opposition forces executed or unlawfully killed at least 67 of these 190 civilians even though they were unarmed and trying to flee.

Massive persecution of Christians by Muslim extremists during the Syrian civil war

Elizabeth Dias 2014. (journalist) TIME magazine 30 Jan 3014 Syrian Christian Leaders Call On U.S. To End Support For Anti-Assad Rebels <http://swampland.time.com/2014/01/30/syrian-christian-leaders-call-on-us-to-end-support-for-anti-assad-rebels/> (brackets added)

“Most Americans do not realize that Christians across the Middle East are in grave danger and have often been forced to leave their home countries due to persecution and threats from radicalized Muslims,” he [Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL)] says. “If we want a true democracy to emerge from this region, Christians and other religious minority voices must share in the decision-making process, and certainly not be persecuted and fear for their lives due to extremist elements that are pouring in to Syria.” The bishops’ stories are similar to other grim instances of violence against Christians during the war. Christian schools in Damascus were shelled in November. The next month, a dozen Greek Orthodox nuns were taken from Mar Takla Monastery in Maaloula. Rebel groups abducted two bishops near Aleppo last April. Jesuit priest [Paolo Dall’Oglio, whom TIME wrote about in 2012](http://swampland.time.com/2012/07/30/u-s-evangelicals-see-political-religious-cause-in-syria-conflict/)when he visited the United States on a similar lobbying trip, has been missing and feared dead since July.

Not just a few rogues: Rebel attack on innocent civilians was carefully planned

Human Rights Watch 2013. (internationally recognized human rights advocacy group) Oct 2013 “You Can Still See Their Blood” Executions, Unlawful Killings, and Hostage Taking by Opposition Forces in Latakia Countryside <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/syria1013_ForUpload.pdf>

The evidence collected by Human Rights Watch strongly suggests that the serious abuses carried out by the opposition groups on August 4 were not the actions of a group of rogue fighters. The coordinated nature of the overall operation in which at least 20 distinct groups participated and the number of villages affected, in combination with the organized manner in which they carried out the crimes on August 4—the simultaneous arrival of fighters that surrounded the villages, the systematic killing of entire families or killing of adult male relatives and holding women and children as hostages, and the statements from fighters and others who are holding these civilians hostage regarding their intentions to exchange them for detainees held by the government—suggests that the crimes were premeditated and organized.

ISIS puts Americans at risk of terrorism

James Phillips 2014.(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 ) 28 June 2014 Q&A: How the Crisis in Iraq Puts Americans at Risk of Terrorism <http://dailysignal.com/2014/06/28/qa-crisis-iraq-puts-americans-risk-terrorism/>

 Iraq is located in the heart of the Middle East. If it falls to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria ([ISIS](http://dailysignal.com/2014/06/14/qa-need-know-isis-iraq/)), it will offer a well-positioned base for exporting revolution and terrorism to its neighbors, including U.S. allies Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.  If ISIS expands farther west in Syria it will also increasingly threaten Israel and Lebanon. Iraq also would be a much more dangerous base for launching terrorist attacks against the United States than Afghanistan, which gave sanctuary to al-Qaeda terrorists before the 9/11 attacks.  ISIS, an al-Qaeda offshoot, is a predominantly Arab organization that is better positioned to recruit Arabs and other Muslims from the Middle East and Europe than al-Qaeda was in distant Afghanistan.  ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi [threatened](http://dailysignal.com/2012/07/26/a-resurgent-al-qaeda-in-iraq-threatens-u-s-attack/) to attack the U.S. homeland in July 2012 and will be in a much better position to carry out this threat if he is able to consolidate control over Iraq.

“We’re only arming the ‘moderate’ rebels” – Response: US aid leaks to radicals. Jihadis control supply distribution

Lisa Lundquist 2014. (Editor of *The Long War Journal*; Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Yale and a Juris Doctor degree from UCLA. She has lived abroad, taught at an international school, and written and edited various publications in the field of law) US shifts in the wind, again, on arming Syrian rebels 26 June 2014 LONG WAR JOURNAL [http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/06/us\_shifts\_in\_the\_wind\_on\_ar.php?utm\_source=feedburner&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=Feed%3A+LongWarJournalSiteWide+%28The+Long+War+Journal+%28Site-Wide%29%29##ixzz36o6T6Ers](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/06/us_shifts_in_the_wind_on_ar.php?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LongWarJournalSiteWide+%28The+Long+War+Journal+%28Site-Wide%29%29#ixzz36o6T6Ers) (brackets in original)

As The Long War Journal has documented over the past year at least, in numerous instances previous US efforts to equip 'moderate' Syrian rebels have been compromised by the frequent partnering of 'moderate' and Islamist forces, as well as by the sheer power of the Islamist forces themselves. [See Threat Matrix report, [Arming the 'moderate' rebels in the Syrian south](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/syrian_infowars_continued_more.php).] It is difficult to see how throwing another $500 million into the Syrian morass will effect a positive outcome. Jihadist forces currently control virtually all of the border crossings into Syria from Turkey and Jordan (not to mention Iraq) through which Western aid would flow. It is a well-known fact that these jihadists determine the distribution of such supplies once they come into Syria.

Difficult to find “moderates” to help: Al Qaeda and other Islamist groups dominate the fighting on all fronts

Lisa Lundquist 2014. (Editor of The Long War Journal; Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Yale and a Juris Doctor degree from UCLA. She has lived abroad, taught at an international school, and written and edited various publications in the field of law) 12 Apr 2014 Arming the 'moderate' rebels in the Syrian south  
<http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/04/syrian_infowars_continued_more.php##ixzz36o8oRKzF> (brackets in original)

It should also be noted that the New York Times article's claim that "[i]In the south, the Nusra Front, Al Qaeda's main affiliate in Syria, is not a leading power" may be delusory. Over the past two months, Al Nusrahhas not only led most of the rebel offensives in the north, but has also been heavily involved in fighting in the southern province of Damascus, as well as in more central Homs. In addition, Al Nusrah [targeted regime buses](https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/posts/491005861007757?stream_ref=10) in the southern province of Deraa on Feb. 18, and [launched a joint offensive](https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/posts/493069300801413?stream_ref=10) with the Islamic Front's Ahrar al Sham in Deraa on Feb. 23. The problem facing the US and other backers of the 'moderate opposition' is that the Islamists are dominating the fighting on all major rebel fronts in Syria. On a purely logistical level, it is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to find truly 'moderate' groups to arm.

“Aiding ‘moderate’ rebels” – Response: How can we figure out who are the moderates?

Dr. Paul Pillar 2014. (PhD;  28-year veteran of the [Central Intelligence Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) ; now a non-resident senior fellow at [Georgetown Univ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgetown_University). Center for Security Studies; nonresident senior fellow in the [Brookings Institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brookings_Institution)'s Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence; former visiting professor at Georgetown Univ) Aid to Syrian Rebels: How Does It End? 29 June 2014 NATIONAL INTEREST <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/aid-syrian-rebels-how-does-it-end-10777>

The Obama administration's proposal to spend $500 million on training and equipping “appropriately vetted elements of the moderate Syrian armed opposition” leaves unanswered some of the same questions that always have surrounded proposals to give lethal aid to Syrian rebels. Some of those questions involve the challenges in determining who qualifies as a “moderate.” “Vetting” sounds so much easier to do than it actually is to do. It is very difficult to do with anything that is even half as jumbled, confused, and extremist-ridden as is the current armed opposition to the Syrian regime. It is interesting how many of those in Washington who are quick to lambaste the national security bureaucracy for supposedly being unable to perceive and predict accurately who is doing what in the Middle East seem to have ample confidence in the ability of that same bureaucracy to “vet” Syrian rebels.

No way to know who the “moderate” rebels are

Dr. Paul Pillar 2014. (PhD;  28-year veteran of the [Central Intelligence Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) ; now a non-resident senior fellow at [Georgetown Univ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgetown_University). Center for Security Studies; nonresident senior fellow in the [Brookings Institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brookings_Institution)'s Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence; former visiting professor at Georgetown Univ) Aid to Syrian Rebels: How Does It End? 29 June 2014 NATIONAL INTEREST <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/aid-syrian-rebels-how-does-it-end-10777>

“Moderate” presumably refers to long-term political objectives rather than to current methods, given that anyone who is engaging in armed rebellion is by definition using non-moderate methods. The principal difficulty in identifying those political objectives stems not from faulty information or analysis today but rather from the impossibility of predicting the directions that groups or leaders, facing changed circumstances, will take in the future. History is replete with examples of leaders whose trajectories once in power could not have been extrapolated from what they did or said while they were still rebels.

“Helping the ‘moderates’ will marginalize the ‘extremists’ “ – Response: Rebels move from group to group – their loyalty is easily bought

Dr. Paul Pillar 2014. (PhD;  28-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency ; now a non-resident senior fellow at Georgetown Univ. Center for Security Studies; nonresident senior fellow in the Brookings Institution's Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence; former visiting professor at Georgetown Univ) Aid to Syrian Rebels: How Does It End? 29 June 2014 NATIONAL INTEREST <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/aid-syrian-rebels-how-does-it-end-10777>

Another complication is that fighters and the arms they carry have a way of moving from group to group. There already has been some of this movement in the Syrian civil war. One hears the argument that the presence of many nasty and immoderate people in the Syrian opposition is all the more reason to aid moderate groups, so that fighters will gravitate toward the moderate groups rather than the extreme ones. But if allegiance and political inclination can be transferred or bought this easily, this calls into question the validity of any “vetting.”

Aid to Syrian rebels could lead to massive destabilization of Lebanon

Dr. FareedZakaria 2013. (PhD in government from Harvard; contributing editor to Time magazine)With or Without Us, TIME magazine, 13 May 2013 <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2142505-2,00.html>

Would U.S. intervention--no-fly zones, arms, aid to the opposition forces--make things better? It depends on what one means by better. It would certainly intensify the civil war. It would also make the regime of Bashar Assad more desperate. Perhaps Assad has already used chemical weapons; with his back against the wall, he might use them on a larger scale. As for external instability, Landis points out that if U.S. intervention tipped the balance against the Alawites, they might flee Syria into Lebanon, destabilizing that country for decades. Again, this pattern is not unprecedented. Large numbers on the losing side have fled wars in the Middle East, from Palestinians in 1948 to Iraq's Sunnis in the past decade.

Arming the insurgents will only prolong the war and postpone a negotiated settlement

Dr. Daniel Larison 2014 (PhD in history from the University of Chicago) 30 June 2014 The Folly of Arming the Syrian Opposition, THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-folly-of-arming-the-syrian-opposition-5/>

All of the calls to arm the opposition in Syria are based on the false belief that the U.S. has the ability to manipulate and direct the course of a foreign civil war, and that it is only because Washington has “failed” to insert itself aggressively enough that the war has turned out the way it has. Obama’s decision has the distinction of being guaranteed not to “work” on its own terms while also being harmful. Adding in a few more weapons into the Syrian civil war isn’t going to achieve anything except to help prolong the war and put off the day when a negotiated settlement can be reached.

US does not win influence by arming the rebels – but we’re responsible for what they do with the weapons

Dr. Daniel Larison 2014 (PhD in history from the University of Chicago) 30 June 2014 The Folly of Arming the Syrian Opposition, THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-folly-of-arming-the-syrian-opposition-5/>

The more support that the U.S. and other outside governments provide to the opposition, the less inclined they will be to negotiate. Arming insurgents doesn’t give the U.S. much in the way of control or influence over them, but it does implicate the U.S. in whatever they do with the weapons and training provided to them.

SOLVENCY / ADVOCACY

Rev. AdeebAwad: Atrocities committed by Syrian rebels justify ending US aid

Elizabeth Dias 2014. (journalist) TIME magazine 30 Jan 3014 Syrian Christian Leaders Call On U.S. To End Support For Anti-Assad Rebels <http://swampland.time.com/2014/01/30/syrian-christian-leaders-call-on-us-to-end-support-for-anti-assad-rebels/> (“Awad” is Rev. Adeeb Awad, vice moderator of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon)

Given the United States’ increased support for non-terrorist rebel groups in the wake of the Assad regime’s use of chemical weapons, the religious leaders’ mission is a long shot. The bishops are asking the United States to exert pressure on countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey to stop supporting and sending terrorist fighters to Syria. “The real problem is that the strong military opposition on the ground is a foreign opposition,” Awad explains, arguing that US support of opposition groups means support for foreign terrorist fighters. “They are the ones killing and attacking churches and clergy and nuns and burning houses and eating human livers and hearts and cutting heads,” Awad says.

Arming the rebels is a bad policy: 1) weapons will leak to extremists; 2) no benefit to America

Dr. Daniel Larison 2014 (PhD in history from the University of Chicago) 30 June 2014 The Folly of Arming the Syrian Opposition, THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-folly-of-arming-the-syrian-opposition-5/>

The problem is not only that “moderate” and Islamist groups will sometimes work together, but that we already [know](http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/putting-an-end-to-the-idea-of-arming-the-syrian-opposition/) that U.S.-supplied weapons cannot be kept secure from other armed groups that wish to seize control of them. We have seen this in Syria, and we have more recently seen it in Iraq on a much larger scale. The developments of the last six months ought to have put an end to the idea of arming the Syrian opposition once and for all, but the administration has outdone itself in finding a Syria policy option that makes no sense, satisfies no one, and slowly pulls the U.S. into a conflict where Americans still have little or nothing at stake.

DISADVANTAGE RESPONSES

“Rebels could topple Assad” – Response: Fantasy. Even if toppling Assad were a good thing, Obama admits his policy of aiding rebels won’t work.

BBC News 2014. “Obama: US arms could help defeat Assad is 'fantasy'” 21 June 2014 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-27953343>

President Obama has dismissed the idea that supplying US arms to Syrian rebels would have toppled President Assad, calling it a "fantasy". His comments came in a CBS interview when he was asked if a power vacuum had been created in the Middle East which was fuelling violence in Iraq. He said there was no "ready-made moderate Syrian force that was able to defeat Assad".

“Bloodbath without US intervention” – Response: Bloodbath with US intervention, look at Iraq

Dr. Fareed Zakaria 2013. (PhD in government from Harvard; contributing editor to Time magazine)With or Without Us, TIME magazine, 13 May 2013 <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2142505-2,00.html>

All the features of Syria's civil war that are supposedly the result of U.S. nonintervention also appeared in Iraq despite America's massive intervention there. In Iraq under U.S. occupation, many Sunni groups banded together with jihadi forces from the outside; some even broke bread with al-Qaeda. Shi'ite militias got support from Iran. Both sides employed tactics that were brutal beyond belief--putting electric drills through people's heads, burning others alive and dumping still breathing victims into mass graves.

“US engagement prevents atrocities” – Response: Failed in Iraq. US was as engaged as possible, but hundreds of thousands died

Dr. FareedZakaria 2013. (PhD in government from Harvard; contributing editor to Time magazine)With or Without Us, TIME magazine, 13 May 2013 <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2142505-2,00.html>

In fact, we have seen atrocities much worse than those in Syria very recently, in Iraq under U.S. occupation only few years ago. From 2003 to 2012, despite there being as many as 180,000 American and allied troops in Iraq, somewhere between 150,000 and 300,000 Iraqi civilians died and about 1.5 million fled the country. Jihadi groups flourished in Iraq, and al-Qaeda had a huge presence there. The U.S. was about as actively engaged in Iraq as is possible, and yet more terrible things happened there than in Syria.

“Assad stays in power” – Response: Even if he stays in power, he won’t control much and he will be isolated

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>

Meanwhile, the de facto partition of Syria appears to be solidifying. That may leave Assad nominally in control of Damascus and the areas outlined above, but still heavily dependent on his Russian and Iranian allies for survival. On his hands will be an economy and infrastructure in tatters, an Alawite community fearful for its future, and almost total diplomatic and financial isolation because of sanctions against the regime.

1. Matthew 12:43-45 New King James Version. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)