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## Syria's Hard Landing

POLICY BRIEF



By Marc Lynch

The conflict in Syria has transformed over the last year, and American policy must change with it. Syria's peaceful uprising has been almost completely overtaken by a brutal civil war, causing great human suffering and strategic instability at the heart of the Levant. Since the collapse of U.N. Special Envoy Kofi Annan's mission over the summer, international diplomacy has largely stalled. Arms have flooded into a disorganized and fragmented opposition, while radical Islamist factions have risen in influence and the political opposition remains divided and ineffectual. Meanwhile, a massive humanitarian crisis unfolds with inadequate international response.<sup>1</sup> The conflict in Syria is not only wreaking unfathomable horrors upon its people; it also threatens to undermine the stability of its neighbors. Syria has already become an arena for regional proxy war and a resurgence of jihadist mobilization.

The international response to these developments has been manifestly inadequate. The debate over Syria must shift to reflect these new realities. The U.N. push for negotiations towards a transition was the correct policy last year, but such negotiations today seem exceedingly unlikely. The implications of arming rebels in the midst of a fully militarized civil war fueled by outside funding are very different from the implications back when peaceful protests flourished and a political transition appeared possible. The utility of taking action to ground Syrian aircraft must be calculated differently when the regime begins systematically using them to massacre civilians in rebel-held territory.

The United States should continue to resist direct intervention or directly arming rebels, but that does not mean standing on the sidelines. There are almost no conditions under which a direct American military intervention in Syria would be wise. But much more should be done to integrate humanitarian assistance and financial support for the emergent Syrian opposition coalition into a coherent political strategy. American policy should find ways to concretely and significantly help the political opposition to establish legitimate authority among Syrians in order to prepare for the political transition after Syrian President Bashar al-Asad falls from power. Washington should push for a

new U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing cross-border humanitarian aid. Significantly increased humanitarian assistance inside and outside of Syria should be combined with robust multilateral efforts to rationalize the flows of both military and non-military aid into Syria. This should be integrated with a political strategy aimed at strengthening opposition forces against both Asad and against their Islamist rivals, while continuing diplomatic efforts to lay the foundations for meaningful international support for an inclusive and representative post-Asad government.

There should be no illusions that any of these policies will rapidly end a conflict that has gone too far to imagine the sort of smooth transition that once guided policy. The Asad regime is too fully implicated in massive atrocities to be included in any political transition, and there is no going back to the conditions before the full-scale descent into war. The brutality of the war and the destruction of the country will not soon be forgotten or repaired. But more aggressive options offer no more guarantees of such a rapid resolution. The United States should remain focused on the ultimate objective of replacing the Asad regime through a political transition that avoids state collapse and the all-out warfare that looms ever more threateningly.

### **The Lost “Soft Landing”**

One year ago, I recommended a set of measures designed to pressure the Asad regime to support a negotiated political transition while avoiding limited military intervention.<sup>2</sup> I urged a “sustained, intense and targeted campaign of pressure against the Asad regime” along with steps to strengthen the Syrian opposition in order to compel diplomatic agreement on a political transition. This was motivated by real fears of a “hard landing”: a failed state riven by ethnic and sectarian slaughter, what Lakhdar al-Brahimi warned in late December could mean the “Somalization” of Syria.<sup>3</sup>

This political strategy focused on finding a political solution that could achieve a “soft landing,” or at least a “bumpy landing,” for Syria after Asad. This meant efforts to preserve the institutions of the state in order to avoid a dangerous anarchic post-conflict environment and a managed transition process that included regime supporters who were not actively implicated in war crimes. Pursuing such an outcome involved tactical steps such as pursuing consensus at the U.N., avoiding the militarization of the conflict, supporting peaceful protests, trying to introduce international observers to restrain the killing and offering non-lethal aid to opposition forces. It prioritized efforts to win support for a transition among undecided Syrians, including members of communities generally loyal to the regime, who would only rally to the side of political change if they felt reassured of their place in the new Syria and safe from revenge killings.

Diplomatic efforts led by Kofi Annan struggled to find international consensus and the terms of such a political transition. A U.N. monitoring mission achieved some initial success in restraining and documenting the violence, while intense diplomatic efforts in the Security Council sought a path forward. At the end of June, Annan brokered the Geneva Agreement among the members of the Action Group for Syria (including Russia) on the immediate cessation of violence and a six-point plan for a “genuinely democratic” political transition.<sup>4</sup>

But the Geneva Agreement and diplomatic strategy writ large failed to deliver real change on the ground. The Security Council deadlocked and ultimately Annan resigned. Violence surged as Asad’s forces unleashed greater devastation, the opposition more fully and systematically took up arms, and the conflict transformed into a fully militarized civil war. Radical Islamist groups have grown in power amidst the opposition ranks, the regime has

abandoned any restraint in its targeting of civilians and massive numbers of Syrians have been killed or fled their homes. The soft landing that was once envisioned now feels like a cruel joke.

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The blame for this dire situation, to be clear, lies primarily with the Asad regime, which chose to kill its way through the crisis rather than seek a safe exit or offer meaningful political changes. Asad's decision to pursue military victory has almost certainly doomed his regime in the long term, but has helped to keep him in power far longer than most expected. Asad extended his political life by transforming a political battle where he had lost most of his cards into a military one where he retained considerable capabilities. The inexorable shift from a primarily peaceful protest strategy to an armed insurgency strategy in the face of Asad's recalcitrance unleashed a predictable, deadly dynamic of militarization and radicalization.<sup>5</sup>

U.S. policy should now change to reflect these developments. Arguments which carried weight one year ago, such as the urgent need to prevent militarization or the benefits of achieving a diplomatic resolution,

are far less compelling today. Predictions of Asad's imminent demise have proven consistently premature, and the sheer scale of Syrian suffering should impart even greater urgency to policymaking. This does not, however, compel the United States to abandon its prudent approach to Syria thus far in favor of military involvement. Although arming the rebels or conducting limited military action would cause less harm than they would have one year ago, the prospects for success have not improved. Instead, the United States should pursue a number of more direct and strategically integrated non-military policies which could strengthen the Syrian opposition and accelerate a political transition.

### **The Limited Prospects of Military Options**

Rebel groups have made significant military progress in recent months, particularly in the northern areas of the country, but they have been unable to dislodge the regime in Damascus. Meanwhile, the regime's forces have inflicted massive human suffering, but have not been able to restore order or authority over the country. It is possible that the opposition will break through in Damascus, and that the regime might rapidly and unexpectedly crumble as happened in Libya. But for now the most likely forecast remains a protracted stalemate, with shifting front lines and surges on one side or the other but no decisive resolution.

Limited military intervention is unlikely to change this status quo. Decisions about both arming the rebels and incapacitating Syrian air power involve similar calculations. The costs associated with both actions have declined over the last eight months, as the prospects for a political transition have faded and full militarization has taken hold. But the benefits of such actions have not increased in parallel. Neither arming the rebels nor air strikes is likely to produce a rapid victory for the Syrian opposition or to transform the underlying political and strategic realities. Both would open the door to the dreaded

slippery slope of inexorable escalation that the administration correctly wishes to avoid.

The Obama administration was wise to reject the proposals to impose a no-fly zone or safe areas inside Syria or to arm Syrian rebels that began to gather steam in early 2012. There is little appetite in America for another military adventure in the Arab world. In December 2012, 63 percent of Americans said that the United States did not have a responsibility to act in Syria, and only 24 percent supported arming Syrian rebels (65 percent were opposed).<sup>6</sup> But public opinion is not the primary reason for the Obama administration's refusal to intervene. It rejected military options because it understood that limited measures would not likely have brought the conflict to an early resolution and would have instead embroiled the United States directly in another Middle Eastern quagmire.

Critics of the Obama administration's approach, such as Senator John McCain (R-AZ), argue that all the things opponents of intervention then warned of – militarization, tens of thousands of dead and inroads by al Qaeda affiliates – have now come to pass.<sup>7</sup> This is only partially true. The U.S. military is not bogged down in another Iraq-style quagmire, steadily slipping down the slope of intervention as each limited move fails to end the conflict. There is no Pottery Barn rule dictating that Americans must prepare for a thankless and violent occupation and reconstruction. Avoiding American entrapment in another Middle Eastern civil war is in and of itself a significant achievement.

The White House was also correct to reject internal proposals to arm the Syrian rebels which were reportedly developed and discussed last August.<sup>8</sup> The months following the failure of Annan's initiative were an appropriate time for such an internal debate, particularly as death and destruction rapidly surged to new levels. Many of the key reasons for avoiding arming the rebels outlined in my earlier policy brief

no longer apply, since the conflict is now fully militarized. Arms have flooded in, most of the country has been consumed by fighting and massive numbers of people have been killed or displaced. Many of the undecided Syrian constituencies who might once have been persuaded have retreated back into the embrace of the regime, and a new political economy of insurgency has taken root.

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Ultimately, those who advocated arming the rebels did not offer a convincing case that these arms would tip the balance of the conflict, however, and serious questions remain about the capacity of the opposition and about the role of jihadists in the rebel ranks. The argument that arming the rebels would provide considerable benefits has not grown significantly more compelling. While the United States might provide unique assets, such as intelligence capabilities or advanced technology, most of the weapons which it might plausibly offer would not be enough to defeat the Syrian military. There are few reasons to doubt the applicability of the academic consensus that “civil wars with outside involvement typically last longer, cause more fatalities, and are more difficult to resolve through negotiations” – and the worst results typically involve multiple external actors with conflicting objectives, as is the case in Syria.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond the fact that arming the rebels is unlikely to produce rapid victory, other claimed benefits of the strategy also seem implausible. An American flow of arms would probably not lead to enduring influence,

since the relationships gained through providing those arms are likely to fade quickly when interests diverge. Local actors have their own interests that may only temporarily align with U.S. interests and can easily manipulate American assistance to further their local aims. While the administration has been working diligently to identify potential partners in the Syrian opposition, the United States does not have a great track record of identifying or working effectively with local proxies and still lacks a great deal of visibility into internal trends inside Syria. The jihadists would not likely abandon the field simply because of the American presence and might actually be strengthened by the overt presence of the United States among its rivals. Nor would the United States likely crowd out competitors in the market for proxies simply by showing up. It would undoubtedly impose limitations on the use of its arms, including human rights observance and political constraints, that would not be attractive to rebel groups who can, after all, access arms without such restrictions. Israel and Turkey, in particular, strongly oppose providing anti-aircraft shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles to the rebels due to the potential vulnerability of their own aircraft. In short, there is little to be gained by arming the rebels – which is why the U.S. government and the European Union continue to reject it.<sup>10</sup>

What about military operations to ground the Syrian air force? A year ago, the case for a no-fly zone or bombing campaigns against regime targets was extremely weak. The Syrian regime was not using airpower in any significant way against civilians or rebels, minimizing the benefits of grounding them. Meanwhile, imposing a no-fly zone in Syria would have been a far more daunting task than in Libya.<sup>11</sup> It would have required extensive bombing to take out Syria's anti-aircraft capability, and would have had only a marginal effect on the urban battles unfolding on the ground. It also would have had to proceed without international legitimacy or legality.

Today, the situation is somewhat different. The Syrian military's extensive use of aircraft to attack not only rebel positions but also civilian areas in rebel-controlled territory is now well-documented. Rebel control over significant portions of northern Syria creates a territorial area that could be protected from Syria's conventional ground forces, as was Libya's eastern half. Such military operations would require acting without authorization from the Security Council, given Russian objections, and would instead involve a Kosovo-style coalition. To avoid an extensive campaign of dubious legitimacy, some suggest instead using missiles or a very brief bombing campaign to destroy Syrian runways and incapacitate its aircraft on the ground. Many argue that the successful Israeli raid on Syrian territory last month shows that a short-term, focused air strike could be executed without the need for an extended bombing campaign to neutralize air defenses.

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Few would complain too loudly if one morning the world woke up to find that such an operation had removed Syria's air power from the equation. But there should be no illusions that this would be a magic bullet. The risks of such a unilateral action remain high: it could paralyze international diplomacy, end cooperation on humanitarian relief and escalate Russian intervention in the conflict. It would be an act of war, and would directly enmesh American military forces with little clear prospect for tipping the balance or rapidly ending the conflict.

Despite the changed strategic situation, the Obama administration should continue to definitively reject any military intervention in Syria. Intervention would not be likely to significantly improve the situation or rapidly end the conflict. Instead, U.S. policy should focus on strengthening the opposition inside of Syria and encouraging the development of its political structures, while continuing to push for a political transition which excludes the top leaders of the Asad regime.

### **Towards a Strategic Vision for Syria**

Advising against military options does not mean that the United States should do nothing more or different in Syria. Indeed, the United States and its allies can and should do considerably more to strengthen the Syrian opposition and to help overcome some of its persistent pathologies. The United States should develop creative options for achieving the core objective of facilitating a transition from Asad to a stable, functional and representative Syria. It should strengthen the opposition as the core of a post-Asad transitional government and support efforts to rebuild areas under opposition control.<sup>12</sup> And it should refocus international diplomacy in support of a new system for humanitarian relief in support of broader strategic objectives.

The United States should pursue four key initiatives to help achieve this goal: coordinate military and civilian aid flows; push the U.N. to provide direct humanitarian aid to rebel-controlled areas; prepare to avoid state collapse; and support investigations of war crimes. It must then effectively communicate to Syrians and to international partners how these interlocking efforts contribute to a compelling strategic vision for bringing the conflict to an acceptable end.

### **COORDINATE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN AID FLOWS**

Short of military intervention, the best way for the United States to affect the course of the conflict is *not* to arm the rebels. Instead, it is to more forcefully

coordinate the military and civilian aid that Syria is already receiving. Currently, military aid to the rebels flows through Gulf and regional governments and private citizens directly to local commanders and fighting forces, while humanitarian aid is channeled primarily through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating with the consent of the Syrian government. This generates a distinctive political economy of war which has unmistakably pernicious effects: encouraging the fragmentation of the opposition, deepening geographic and political divides, discouraging a coherent political strategy and creating rent-seeking incentives for ongoing warfare. The uncoordinated, often competitive, financing of favored proxies by outside players has actively contributed to emergent warlordism, intra-rebellion clashes and the absence of a coherent political strategy.

Since the conflict has already been militarized, a coordinated flow of arms is better than an uncoordinated flow of arms. Critics of American policy consistently argue that the United States cannot accomplish this goal because it does not have any “skin in the game”—it is not providing arms to the rebels and so cannot presume to dictate to others who are.<sup>13</sup> This is likely exaggerated. The real obstacle to coordination is that players in Syria do not particularly want to be coordinated, since they have their own priorities, their own networks and their own strategic visions. Some countries do not exert centralized control over the aid flowing from their territory: Saudi Arabia, for example, has long been notorious for the uncoordinated private funds lavished on Islamist groups across the region. Many of the external backers view their putative partners in the operation as rivals and the funding of local proxies as competitive rather than cumulating into a common strategy.

American diplomats already urge their allies to coordinate aid on a regular basis, with little success. The “skin in the game” argument underestimates

the centrality of these political considerations. Simply adding American arms to the bazaar would only exacerbate the problems in the absence of a prior political strategy. Instead, the United States needs to *convincingly lay out a workable political strategy* for accelerating a transition in Syria in ways that would benefit the players involved. Offering a coherent alternative would communicate the self-defeating effects of the uncoordinated funding more effectively. Currently, these external backers have little confidence that the United States has a workable strategy which would justify surrendering any control over the aid flows to their own proxies. But this could change if the United States laid out a more compelling policy. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have repeatedly signaled that their provision of aid would benefit from “Western political backing, coordination, equipment and advice.”<sup>14</sup> Establishing a rationalized framework for channeling all aid flows through the Syrian Opposition Coalition will only be possible once the United States lays out a plausible case that such coordination will have positive effects.<sup>15</sup>

Plans must be formulated in advance to distribute meaningful aid through these channels immediately after they are created. Last year, the Obama administration made some efforts to organize a mechanism for directing aid through a centralized opposition political-military framework. But those efforts, by most accounts, have withered on the vine.<sup>16</sup> Opposition figures complain about unfulfilled promises of financial or military support, while regional players have shown little interest in changing their current approach. For instance, one member of the Supreme Military Council, organized in December to coordinate rebel groups, recently complained that “we were promised that if we unified our ranks that we would be given legitimacy as well as salaries and heavy weapons, but from that day we have gotten nothing.”<sup>17</sup> The failure to deliver on such promises badly damaged U.S. credibility and made it less likely

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that others would continue to cooperate. The administration should not repeat this mistake. The push to coordinate aid flows must be accompanied by immediate, sizable and strategically relevant material payoffs to demonstrate that the plan can work and is worth pursuing.

#### **PUSH THE U.N. TO PROVIDE DIRECT HUMANITARIAN AID TO REBEL-CONTROLLED AREAS**

The humanitarian situation inside and outside of Syria is truly catastrophic. Efforts are well underway to secure additional international support for humanitarian relief, most notably the \$1.5 billion pledged at the January 30, 2013 Kuwait Donors Conference.<sup>18</sup> The United States has committed \$385 million, making it the single largest donor to humanitarian relief efforts.<sup>19</sup> But this aid has primarily been coordinated with recognized NGOs and the Syrian government, and only a small portion has reached rebel-controlled areas where the humanitarian situation is particularly dire.<sup>20</sup> American humanitarian assistance has achieved remarkably little in terms of advancing its strategic goals or gaining influence within Syria.

U.S. humanitarian assistance to Syrians should be redesigned as part of a coherent political strategy to strengthen opposition institutions and to craft a narrative of progress towards a managed political transition by demonstrating improving conditions in rebel-controlled areas. I agree with some humanitarian relief organizations, and with a bipartisan group of senators, who have recently advocated direct aid to rebel-controlled areas.<sup>21</sup> Humanitarian efforts could be more effectively

integrated with a political strategy to support political opposition institutions, helping Syrians in the liberated zones and giving the opposition something to demonstrate its relevance.<sup>22</sup> Delivering humanitarian assistance into rebel-controlled areas of Syria through local organizations within the Syrian opposition framework would not only help a large number of people in desperate need, but would also give the Syrian Opposition Coalition something tangible to deliver to constituents who are currently more impressed with the food and services provided by the armed groups and jihadists. It would also help to stabilize rebel-controlled areas and facilitate the consolidation of transitional governance. Tentative movement in this direction has reportedly begun. According to U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos, the U.N. has begun working with local organizations on the ground in rebel-controlled territory, but thus far little seems to have materialized, and approval from Assad's regime has reportedly not been forthcoming.<sup>23</sup> EU foreign ministers have recently opened the door to such direct aid.<sup>24</sup> The United States should follow suit.

The objections to this approach are clear and strong, and should not be lightly dismissed. Such arrangements would take place in an uncomfortable legal grey zone. If pursued without U.N. authorization, this approach could easily open the door to military intervention and undermine long-standing international legal norms governing humanitarian neutrality. Humanitarian organizations object to the politicization of relief, which threatens to undermine the humanitarian imperative guiding their work. They worry that the Syrian opposition currently lacks the capacity to handle or effectively deliver the aid and would do so less efficiently than would established organizations. Groups currently working quietly on the ground fear that a public push for such aid could threaten existing channels. Aid could be captured

by local warlords and used as an instrument for intra-opposition political battles. It could make humanitarians a military target. And it could rupture existing aid networks and end Syrian government cooperation with humanitarian relief operations.

Nonetheless, and unlike the military options discussed above, the benefits here seem to outweigh the costs – particularly if the direct provision of aid can be integrated into a coherent political strategy. The aid currently allowed in by the Syrian government disproportionately helps people in government-controlled territory, leaving the vast numbers of Syrians in rebel-controlled areas in desperate need. This has the pernicious effect of strengthening Assad's control of his territory while undermining the emergent opposition leadership. It is simply not clear that the current system of small-scale, quiet relief efforts is worth preserving. Direct humanitarian aid to local organizations, channeled through Syrian opposition institutions, would not only alleviate immediate suffering but would also be a major step towards the development of meaningful and effective alternative governance.

This push for direct cross-border humanitarian aid should begin at the U.N., with a focused effort to obtain authorization through a new Security Council resolution. The narrow focus on humanitarian relief could be more difficult for Russia to block than some of the other more expansive proposals which have foundered in the Council, given Moscow's recent admission of the urgency of the humanitarian situation and overtures to the Syrian opposition. Such a resolution could also gain traction from the consistent, urgent appeals and reports from U.N. institutions documenting the appalling magnitude of Syrian suffering. The implicit threat to carry out such relief efforts without the U.N., perhaps justified by an argument that Syria has lost effective sovereign control over these territories, would be more credible than threats of military action. But this should not

be cast as a back door path to military intervention: a multilateral, legitimate humanitarian operation would be far preferable both politically and operationally to unilateral actions.

#### PREPARE TO AVOID STATE COLLAPSE

It is far too late to avoid a hard landing in Syria, but every effort must be made to ensure the rapid establishment of authority and order following Asad's fall. Syria cannot afford the years of drift which have bedeviled almost every other transitional Arab country. The moment of transition will be critical: If Asad falls without measures in place to produce a reasonably smooth transition, fighting will likely continue for years. Efforts to build a representative and inclusive Syrian Opposition Coalition with some degree of authority over armed groups and legitimate authority on the ground will pay dividends during a transition. Planning efforts, such as those developed by The Day After project,<sup>25</sup> should also be supported politically and materially.

This would also revitalize the otherwise moribund diplomatic track. Since the failure of the Annan Plan, diplomacy has been at a standstill. But this dismal vista is misleading. There are real opportunities for the Security Council to take up a resolution endorsing cross-border humanitarian relief. If such a resolution can command international consensus, this could galvanize further momentum for such diplomatic engagement.

The offer to negotiate by Syrian Opposition Coalition leader Moaz al-Khatib is only the most public of the growing signs that parts of the opposition and parts of the Syrian regime are finally reaching the point where they could contemplate a deal. Since a full military victory by either side seems highly unlikely, a diplomatic channel will almost certainly be necessary at some point.

Nobody has any illusions about what diplomacy can achieve in the short term. But this is not a

reason to give up. Few would bet on a rapid breakthrough after years of frustration, but preparations must be made for the moment an endgame arrives. The Libya experience suggests that the stalemate could break suddenly and unpredictably, whether through a military operation, the flight of the regime's top leadership or an unexpected diplomatic breakthrough. The diplomatic track is a very important element of a more credible political strategy for accelerating and managing the endgame. Diplomats should conduct escalating and intense consultations to this end, including a combination of private Track Two meetings and ongoing shuttle diplomacy (whether by U.N. envoy Lakhdar al-Brahimi or by other potential mediators).

#### SUPPORT INVESTIGATIONS OF WAR CRIMES

In my earlier policy brief, I called for Syrian regime officials to be presented with a stark choice between defection and prosecution for war crimes before an international tribunal. The time for such an offer has passed. The evidence of war crimes is so overwhelming, and the collective trauma to Syrian society so great, that Syria will not be able to move forward without some reckoning. Navi Pillay, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, is correct to call for the immediate involvement of the International Criminal Court in Syria. There should be no trade-off between expediency and justice here, since the diplomatic path proposed above does not depend on or anticipate the agreement of top regime officials.

At the same time, mechanisms for transitional justice inside of Syria will be needed after Asad falls to provide accountability and promote reconciliation in a shattered country. The focus should be on laying the foundations for cooperation across a deep, raw divide between the opposition and pro-regime constituencies following a transition. Steps need to be taken now to avoid retribution killings, looting, long-lasting disruptions of essential services and other pathologies which could quickly derail

the transition. Arab transitional countries have consistently paid a steep price for setting aside such questions, a mistake Syria cannot afford to repeat.

### Conclusion

The overarching strategic imperative for the United States is to present a compelling political narrative for accelerating towards the best possible remaining endgame in Syria. All of the recommendations above contribute to this strategy. Pushing the U.N. to adopt a humanitarian plan could galvanize political momentum and change conditions on the ground. Coordinating the flow of aid and directly sending it to local organizations in rebel-controlled areas through the auspices of the Syrian Opposition Coalition could help to strengthen its political leadership and could encourage rebuilding life in rebel-controlled areas and the emergence of legitimate alternative governance. Demonstrating success in these efforts could hasten the collapse of support for the regime and encourage those forces in the opposition and in the regime willing to consider a deal.

None of these recommendations will quickly or neatly end the Syrian conflict. But neither do military options promise such easy answers, either for Syrians or for the United States. The response to the Syrian catastrophe requires slow, patient actions to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis while building the foundations for a post-Asad future. Now is the time for the Obama administration to not simply defend its decision against military intervention, but to lay out clearly its positive vision for Syria. This is the kind of leadership that Syria needs and that America can and must provide.

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## ENDNOTES

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Syrians stand in rubble of the damaged university building caused by an explosion in Aleppo, Syria, January 15. Two explosions struck the main university in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, causing an unknown number of casualties, state media and anti-government activists said.

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