

Syria

*Bottom line – Syria should be included in at least several versions of the topics we write. Syria is timely – especially with the current media focus on Assad’s brutal crackdowns, and is likely to be relevant regardless of how the situation plays out either in terms of dealing with protests as they continue, or in assisting in dealing with the aftermath of the protests. There has also been significant debate over a period of time about whether military mechanisms or alternatives, like democracy assistance, are the best ways to deal with the regime in Syria.

The past weeks in Syria have seen increasingly brutal crackdowns against protestors seeking to increase access to democracy in the country and have generated a range of possible responses. A core issue of controversy in the literature surrounds whether the US response to President Assad’s actions should be of the variety that increase military intervention or other techniques like sanctions, or if the United States should seek other more peaceful and positive mechanism by which to influence the nature of Syrian governance.

The US has yet to do enough to provide democracy assistance to Syria – this evidence provides some “inherency” for those asking....

We’ve sent mixed signals, but haven’t committed fully to Syrian democracy

Badran 5/25/11 <http://mespectator.blogspot.com/2011/05/end-of-days-for-assad.html>

TONY BADRAN is a Research Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Assad’s transparent attempt in the Golan to strong-arm the United States forced the Obama administration to react. Before then, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had repeatedly expressed her belief that the regime intended to follow a reformist path. On May 17, however, she bowed to reality, declaring that Assad’s “heavy-handed brutal crackdown shows his true intentions.” For the first time, Clinton moved beyond the language of dialogue with the regime and began to call for “a process of credible and inclusive democratic change” -- terminology that is demonstrably more supportive of the Syrian opposition’s demands. On the following day, May 18, the administration took a further step in this direction by sanctioning Assad and a number of other high-ranking officials. Still, Assad’s tactic of preventing the emergence of potential opposition leaders has been effective and has fueled doubts in Washington about anyone else leading a transition, as well as about the staying power of the protestors. Assad, of course, has made a point of emphasizing that as bad as his regime might be, there is no credible alternative to it. And a day after his administration sanctioned Assad, U.S. President Barack Obama, in a speech about the Arab uprising, reiterated calls for Assad to either lead the transition or “get out of the way.” Then in a CBS interview on May 19, Clinton, though defensive, defended her belief in Assad as a reformer, arguing that he “has said a lot of things that you didn’t hear from other leaders in the region about the kind of changes he would like to see.” Washington has surely realized that the regime will not reform, but by refusing to call for him to step down outright, it has demonstrated that it has not found a viable solution. It is clear that although a major shift has taken place, the administration does not yet know how to craft an alternative to its policy of engagement.

The regime’s propaganda machine has been painting the uprising as close to over, arguing that Assad has the upper hand. But the protests have not died down. The latest testimony to the protestors’ determination came last Friday. Protestors dubbed it “Azadi/Freedom Friday,” and they marched in large numbers countrywide. Some in Latakia carried signs that read: “Syrian official media: ‘It’s over.’ The Syrian people’s media: ‘It’s just begun.’” Moreover, YouTube videos have emerged showing protestors in Hama and a suburb of Damascus standing up to armed security agents and even chasing them away with stones. And Assad’s divide-rule-policies appear to have failed: the latest wave of protests even included Assyrian Christians in the northeast city of Qamishli.

Now the Obama administration must come to terms with the fact that dealing with Assad is no longer an option, and begin crafting a coherent policy to lay the groundwork for a post-Assad future

Providing rhetorical support for rule of law and governance reforms, as well as material technology assistance will support the Syrian opposition

Dem Digest, June 8 Democracies must support ‘the most liberal and Western-friendly’ of Arab Spring uprisings June 8 2011 <http://www.demdigest.net/blog/2011/06/democracies-must-support-the-most-liberal-and-western-friendly-of-arab-spring-uprisings/>

The democratic West has provided substantial assistance to support transitions in Tunisia and Egypt, intervened militarily in Libya and called for the ouster of Yemen’s President Saleh. So why have democracies been most reluctant to support “the most liberal and Western-friendly of the Arab Spring uprisings”? Demonstrators took to the streets in the Damascus suburb of Zamalka on Tuesday night (above) in the latest of a series of protests against the authoritarian Baathist regime. Reports that 120 members of the security forces were killed in the border town of Jisr al-Shughour indicates a mutiny within their ranks. The Syrian military is a strong institution, said exiled dissident Radwan Ziadeh, “but in the end, the army is from the people. The outrage over the killings is growing and the longer it goes on the more deserters we’re going to see.” President Bashar al-Assad’s father brutally suppressed an Islamist insurgency against his rule with the Hama massacre in 1982. But the regime’s reliance on violence cannot succeed because of four basic differences between then and now, Ziadeh argues: the scale of the protests, their peaceful nature, the transparency and publicity afforded by digital media, and the role of the international community. With the momentum of the protests showing no signs of diminishing, there is growing pressure on the Obama administration and other Western democracies to support Syria’s opposition. After several weeks researching Syrian opposition groups and talking to key activists in six major cities, it is clear that both the domestic and exiled opposition are strikingly moderate and democratic in their orientation, according to Michael Weiss and Hannah Stuart, analysts at The Henry Jackson Society, a London-based foreign-policy institute for democratic geopolitics. The demands of the “local coordinating committees” behind the protests include a free and transparent media, free and fair elections to both the national legislature and municipal councils, an independent judiciary and constitutional amendments to ensure a post-Baathist Syria becomes a “multi-national, multi-ethnic, and religiously tolerant society.” Similarly, the National Initiative for Change, has issued a manifesto, “Towards a Peaceful Transition to Democracy,” written by Ziadeh (right), founding director of the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, which draws on Eastern European, Latin American, and South African precedents to delineate measures to effect a transition “from a totalitarian dictatorship to a pluralist democracy.” Some 150 opposition figures inside Syria and in exile endorsed the statement, including the Muslim Brotherhood, which – albeit reluctantly – even accepted the manifesto’s commitment to a “secular democracy.” President Bashar al-Assad’s legitimacy has “nearly” run out, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on June 2. Her statement came a day after Human Rights Watch issued “We’ve Never Seen Such Horror,” a report documenting the regime’s methods of torture and repression, and at a time when the regime’s last shreds of popular legitimacy dissipated with the news of the security forces’ gruesome mutilation of 13-year-old Hamza al-Khatib. While it is demonstrably clear that Assad will not initiate reform, Syria’s opposition is not calling for Western intervention. But the White House could at least “provide unequivocal rhetorical support and material aid in the form of encrypted laptops, satellite phones, and SIM cards to evade Assad’s media blackouts.” Weiss writes. “Quite apart from a moral obligation to support the Syrian people, Washington has a rare opportunity to get behind the consultative council while it’s still broadly amenable to American interests,” he suggests: Let Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah make the mistake of shirked solidarity. Declaring common cause is all the more urgent because the Syrians aren’t asking for any form of Western military intervention—at least not yet. . . . One wonders what it will take to drain that legitimacy completely. Meanwhile, a viable alternative to Assad’s death-squad regime is beginning to get its act together and searching for friends who might someday become allies.

In addition to laptop encryption, the US could offer amnesty of defectors

Weiss 6/7/11

http://island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=27244

Michael Weiss is the director of communications at the Henry Jackson Society, a London-based think tank that promotes democratic geopolitics

The Syrian people “want to topple the regime” and they’re counting on a mutiny to bail them out. The United States should foster more division within Assad’s power base by offering amnesty for low- to mid-level defectors. Assad’s global assets should be frozen and a travel ban should be imposed on him and the rest of his pathetic family.

The tech-savvy revolutionaries should be given encrypted laptops and satellite phones that can withstand the communications blackout Assad has imposed on much of the country. (According to WikiLeaks, the US State Department has spent \$6 million since 2006 funding exiled Syrian opponents of Assad. They should get more.)

This evidence similarly discusses the technology and support of the demands of the local coordinating committees, but goes another step to say that this type of strategy is coherent and potentially successful and also talks in more detail about gathering defectors from the Syrian military

Michael Weiss Posted Tuesday, **June 7, 2011**, at 9:48 AM ET Meet the Syrian Opposition It's the most liberal and Western-friendly of the Arab Spring uprisings.

Syrian protesters There are plenty of geopolitical justifications on offer for the West's reluctance to confront Syrian dictator Bashar Assad, who has so far killed an estimated 1,100 people and detained and tortured 10,000 more. Assad may still prove to be a "reformer"—after he's done massacring his people. A London-trained ophthalmologist whose snipers shoot little girls through the eye is somehow still thought to be the sole peacemaker between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Besides, the country has an economy the size of Pittsburgh's.

Shifting from delusion to realpolitik, another reason for the reluctance to confront Assad's barbarism is ignorance about the people opposed to him. Now that the brooms of Tahrir Square in Egypt have been replaced with burned churches and destroyed Sufi shrines, Washington is understandably wary of demanding that another Middle Eastern tyrant step aside before verifying who stands to take his place. What are the politics of the Syrian opposition? Are they secular or Islamist? Do they have a plan of action, assuming we offered to help? The Henry Jackson Society, the London-based foreign-policy think tank where I work, has spent the last several weeks investigating the Syrian opposition and talking to key figures in six major cities in upheaval. The evidence suggests that this revolution is the most liberal and Western-friendly of any of the Arab Spring uprisings. That it's also the least supported by the West is a tragedy. The Syrian protests began March 15, when about 40 people, galvanized by the revolts in Tunisia and Egypt, gathered in Damascus' old city and chanted, "God, Syria, Freedom—that's enough." Initially, the protesters just wanted reforms. But Assad responded to the first spontaneous civic demonstration in 30 years by unleashing hell. (He predictably blamed everyone from Israel's Mossad to "Salafists" for engineering the rebellion and, like all rattled tyrants, he has offered meaningless "reforms"). The demonstrations then swelled to tens of thousands in major cities such as Deraa, Homs, Baniyas, and Lattakia. The agents of repression were, and are, the mukhabarat and a ragtag militia of regime loyalists known as shabbiha who have conducted the kind of house-to-house raids that Libya's Muammar Qaddafi only threatened. Advertisement Ambulances carrying wounded civilians have been stopped on their way to hospitals, patients have been dragged from stretchers and further tortured and then locked up. On June 1, Human Rights Watch released a new report titled "We've Never Seen Such Horror." It documents the Grand Guignol nature of Baathist repression: "prolonged beatings with sticks, twisted wires, and other devices; electric shocks administered with tasers and electric batons; use of improvised metal and wooden 'racks,' " as well as male rape with a baton. Last week, a new and powerful symbol emerged for the revolution in the "child martyr" Hamza al-Khatib, a 13-year-old boy who was abducted on April 29 at a demonstration in Jiza, a village near Deraa. He had been burned, skinned, shot, and his penis was cut off. Hamza's corpse was returned to his parents on the condition that they keep quiet about what had happened to him. They didn't. Hamza's father was subsequently arrested after he went public with a gruesome post-mortem video of his boy, but the popular outcry has been so fierce, it's even gotten Assad nervous. Protesters have had to operate without Internet or phone access for the last several weeks, thanks to a state-implemented ban on communications. Nonetheless, there is a remarkable level of coordination and shared sense of purpose among the protesters. "If I give you names of who the West can back," a Damascus-based oppositionist told us in late May, "then I have to give you all the Syrian people's names, because this is a people's revolution." It also remains relatively spontaneous; a spokesman in Douma said that the only centralized decision is who will be responsible for filming and uploading video of demonstrations. "We have people who also work for the biggest IT companies who also provide us with ideas and solutions on how to bypass security measures by the regime." "Such grass-roots efforts are fast evolving into a coherent platform. The first signs of this became visible after the "Great Friday" massacre of April 22, when 112 people were killed in the space of a few hours. So-called "local coordinating committees" formed in major cities and towns and released a statement of demands following the crackdown. These demands were: An end to torture, violence, and extrajudicial killings. A free and transparent media to replace the state-controlled system State assumption of responsibility for violence The

release of all political prisonersFree and fair elections to both national parliament (the People's Assembly) and municipal councilsAn independent judiciary Compensation for political exilesAmendments to the Syrian constitution that would refashion the country into a "multi-national, multi-ethnic, and religiously tolerant society" The six oppositionists we spoke to in Syria all regarded the revolution as a confessionally and tribally unified endeavor. The sectarianism, they said, was wholly on Assad's side. Even Kurds have marched under the Syrian flag, something unthinkable in years past. Indeed, May 27 was nicknamed "Azadi Friday" for a Kurdish word meaning freedom, underscoring the solidarity that exists between Syrian Arabs and a long-oppressed tribal minority. The oppositionist in Hama, Syria's fourth-largest city, assured us that Christians had joined in Friday prayers at the Great Mosque in that city. "Druze, Sunni, Alawite and Kurd—we will never stop," echoed our source in Homs, in western Syria. A week after the coordinating committees' statement was issued, an umbrella group known as the National Initiative for Change was founded by three Syrian exiles: Radwan Ziadeh, founding director of the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, based in Washington, D.C.; Ausama Monajed, head of PR at the Movement for Justice and Development, based in London; and Najib Ghabbian, a political science professor at the University of Arkansas. The NIC statement, "Towards a Peaceful Transition to Democracy," was written by Ziadeh, who sent me a copy of the English translation. Signed by 150 oppositionists both inside Syria and in exile, the statement echoes the demands of the coordinating committees but also addresses how to transition Syria from a totalitarian dictatorship to a pluralist democracy. It's explicitly based on the Eastern European, Latin American, and South African models. The first order of business is to convince the Syrian army to defect to the opposition and then form an interim or caretaker government. Many Syrian soldiers have attempted defection after refusing to obey orders to fire on unarmed civilians—a mass grave was recently dug up allegedly containing such soldiers. Others have fled to Lebanon, but they've been repatriated to Syria to face torture, detention, and execution. The NIC places special emphasis on two key figures in the Syrian army: Defense Secretary Ali Habib, who commanded the Syrian contingent in the international military coalition in the First Gulf War, and Chief of Staff Gen. Dawud Rajha. However, Habib was on a list of top Syrian officials recently sanctioned by the White House for his involvement in the regime's repression, so his viability as a transitional figure may now be impossible. But the Syrian army is a good place to seek out independents—most of the officer class is Sunni, rather than Alawite like Assad and his cabal. One oppositionist in Deraa told us that the army is popularly seen as more a cat's-paw of the regime rather than an ideological extension of it: The army has no clue what is going on. They think we are armed people, and they are working under the guidance of shabbiha and the security forces. We have started to notice and hear of splits, and the longer we drag this out, the more apparent it becomes. because you can't be at war with Salafists in every city in your country and not have contact with your family or the outside world for several months. There will be a point that someone [from the army] will say, "That is it, enough! This has to stop." According to the NIC roadmap, whoever mans the caretaker government will oversee the drafting of an interim constitution, monitor presidential and parliamentary elections, and professionalize the state security and intelligence services by "changing its purpose to protect the population not the regime." The four existing units of these services will be consolidated into two in order to eliminate interagency competitiveness and also to signal that the days of an omnipresent police state are over. Also, there will be trials for any security-force officials involved in torture or extrajudicial killings. The Baath Party, which possesses sole "revolutionary" power under the old constitution, will be disbanded under the NIC plan, and all party property and funds drawn from the public purse will be returned to state coffers. There may not be much left if and when Assad falls, as many Baathists have already resigned in protest of the regime's brutality and are now being persecuted as ordinary protesters. For instance, the head of the Deraa Baath Party has been arrested and tortured. The Islamist quotient in the opposition is by all accounts small. Ammar Abdulhamid, a Maryland-based opposition spokesman, told me, "We all know about politics and bedfellows. One thing Western leaders should understand: Islamists can neither be excluded from, nor can they dominate, the political scene in Syria." Remember, the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria was largely destroyed by Hafez Assad in his scorched-earth campaign in Hama in 1982, which killed at least 10,000 people. Also, the Brotherhood has been outlawed for decades, making membership unofficial and recondite. All the oppositionists on the ground that we spoke with affirmed that Islamists are not directing the protests, nor are they waiting in the wings. Notably, one slogan heard as early as the second week of protests was: "No to Iran, No to Hezbollah. We want Muslims that fear Allah." Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps has been accused both by the White House and the Syrian people of helping to orchestrate Assad's repressive tactics. Two IRGC commanders have been sanctioned by the United States for their role in Syria. Unsurprisingly, Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon, has publicly supported Assad, his longtime patron, thereby further alienating the Party of God from the Syrian people. Most of the NIC recommendations were affirmed at the Syria Conference for Change, a meeting of about 300 oppositionists that took place in the resort town of Antalya, Turkey, between May 31 and June 3. Thirty-one delegates were elected to an executive committee of a "consultative council" to represent the Syrian people as a whole. Perhaps recognizing Ali

Habib's nonviability, the council named Syrian Vice President Farouk al-Sharaa as a new favorite transitional steward. But of particular interest was how the Muslim Brothers and Islamists in attendance were cowed into accepting the idea of a "secular democracy." According to Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma, "they resisted this most of the day but ultimately conceded at the eleventh hour. We do not have the statement or wording on this 'secular' statement. But the [Muslim Brothers] accepted to not contest the separation of state and religion in the conference statement." This seems significant. It doesn't mean that Syrian Islamists pose no threat to the opposition or to whatever government might emerge if and when Assad is ousted. But it demonstrates their political weakness relative to their brethren in Egypt and Tunisia. Assurances from non-Islamists as to the makeup of the opposition might be mistaken for special pleading; but clear victories in their wrangles for representative power are more definitive. Where does all this leave the United States? Quite apart from a moral obligation to support the Syrian people, Washington has a rare opportunity to get behind the consultative council while it's still broadly amenable to American interests. Let Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah make the mistake of shirked solidarity. Declaring common cause is all the more urgent because the Syrians aren't asking for any form of Western military intervention—at least not yet. The White House need only provide unequivocal rhetorical support and material aid in the form of encrypted laptops, satellite phones, and SIM cards to evade Assad's media blackouts. Hillary Clinton said on June 2 that Assad's legitimacy has "nearly" run out. One wonders what it will take to drain that legitimacy completely. Meanwhile, a viable alternative to Assad's death-squad regime is beginning to get its act together and searching for friends who might someday become allies.

Another solvency direction could be assistance in rule of law training and civil society organizing

Andrew J. **Tabler** and Mara **Karlin** write for the Washington Institute **May 31 2011** Obama's Push-Pull Strategy: How Washington Should Plan for a Post-Assad Syria

<http://www.thecuttingedgenews.com/index.php?article=52111&pageid=16&pagename=Opinion>

As the United States works to push Assad from power, it should also be looking to pull in new political forces to replace him. Above all else, Syrians themselves must be at the forefront of any regime change in Damascus. Washington should, therefore, begin an active dialogue with the members of the National Initiative for Change, a declaration signed in April by nearly 200 prominent figures in the Syrian diaspora. Syria's opposition groups have historically been divided by ideology, ethnicity, and egos; the NIC, by contrast, is an inclusive body whose diverse constituencies make it better able to deliver real change. Focusing attention on the NIC would also allow Washington to distance itself from organizations with anti-Western sentiments, such as various anti-imperial leftist parties and the Muslim Brotherhood. To further assist the Syrian opposition, Washington should, at a minimum, find a way to offer courses in political organizing and rule-of-law training, perhaps conducted by the National Democratic Institute or the International Republican Institute. Although the Syrian regime will surely oppose such training, conducting courses outside of Syria or over the Internet are realistic alternatives. The pervasive use of the Internet in Syria, and the proxy servers that Syrians regularly use to get around the regime's Internet firewall, would make it possible to carry out these operations on the ground, as is clear from the deluge of protest footage secretly sent out of the country over the Web each day. Washington should also encourage the Syrian opposition to assemble a conference in the region in which a clear, multiconfessional leadership structure is elected (preferably a team of three or so individuals who are empowered to make decisions on the opposition's behalf) and the initial outlines of priorities for transition are established. The upcoming Syrian opposition conference to be held in Antalya, Turkey, on May 31 could serve as an appropriate venue for these decisions. If the conference elects a respected, diverse leadership and adopts principles broadly consonant with U.S. values, including respecting minority rights and secularism, then Washington should quickly arrange meetings with the newly elected leadership. This element of the policy requires Obama's personal investment: In calling for new leadership in Syria, the White House must think about what that leadership should look like by setting clear parameters for cooperation and not simply picking favorites. Any new, post-Assad leadership in Syria should be transparent, respect human rights, and reflect an accurate representation of the country's sectarian makeup (in other words, not the current minority system) This is why the U.S. government's list of priorities regarding Syria needs to be switched from an emphasis on the peace process to one centered on domestic Syrian affairs. Until a few weeks ago, Washington based its Syria strategy almost wholly on the conclusion of a Syria-Israel peace treaty that would require Assad to break off relations with Iran and Hezbollah. Now, Washington should focus on bringing about a government led by the country's Sunni majority, which would naturally create considerable tension with or a break in Syria's alliance with Shiite-dominated Iran. Given the current standoff between the Assad regime and Syria's

protestors, the fall of the Assad regime will be much bloodier – and take much longer – than the collapse of the dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia. But it will fall eventually. In the meantime, a push-and-pull strategy will provide Washington with multiple tools to bring about an orderly end to one of the United States' most problematic regional adversaries.

This evidence broadens the scope of technology assistance that the US could provide to protestors by including social networking, etc and also calls for vocal US symbolism in favor of democracy

Slater **Bakhtavar** is a journalist, foreign policy analyst and political commentator. He has appeared as a guest on numerous nationally syndicated talk shows <http://www.conservativecrusader.com/articles/obama-administration-must-support-the-people-of-syria-and-iran> published: **06 07, 2011** Obama Administration must support the people of Syria and Iran

Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president, sees the Islamic Republic of Iran as its closest ally in the region. While Al-Assad has pledged to help find a peaceful solution to the nuclear dispute between the West and Iran, he continues to support Hamas and Hezbollah. Meanwhile it has been revealed that Syria had obtained a sophisticated radar system and other military equipment, which were shared with Hezbollah, Iran and Syria's Shiite radical client with a vehemently anti-American ideological agenda. The Obama Administration has cautiously reached out to Syria advocating open negotiations and better relations. Believing that Syria is a key regional player that cannot be ignored it sent, George Mitchell, the US special envoy to the Middle East to meet with the Syrian president. Yet these negotiations have fallen on deaf ears as Al-Assad publicly humiliated the United States. The Administration uses a two-fold approach to address the pro-democracy protests in the Middle East and North Africa. One the one hand it pushes one tyrant to go, and on the other it calls Al-Assad a "reformer". The Administration has advocated a muted message on Syria. Similar to mass protests in Iran calling for end of the tyrannical Iranian government the people have been ignored. Ironically the Administration has been vocal in other nations where neutral to pro-American regimes have suppressed demonstrators. Contrary to Obama's foreign policy neither the Iranian nor Syrian regime are stable. For instance, Syria saw demonstrations begin in March 2011, after people had seen the regime change which protests in Egypt and Tunisia had brought about. In Iran, a young, educated and pro-American populace has demonstrated since 2009 for freedom, democracy and human rights against one of the most anti-American governments in the world. Surprisingly the President's message has been hollow. The anti-American nature of these governments means that negotiations instigated by the US Administration would be impossible. Similarly, despite the recent military intervention in Libya, President Obama would be extremely reluctant to go to war with any additional countries in the Middle East. The third option, and the one which time has proven to be the most effective, is to use twenty-first century technology to communicate directly with the people of these countries. Recent developments in Middle Eastern and North African territories have shown that the people have been utilising online services such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with others in the West. This provides the perfect opportunity for the US government to be able to support demonstrators in their actions against their oppressive leaders. Despite these governments' attempts to restrict access to the internet, technology has advanced to such an extent that communication will always be possible. The use of technology to assist and communicate with protestors is certainly a preferably option to starting wars, which are not only prohibitively expensive, but also result in horrendous losses of life. This would be a counter-productive course of action by the US Administration, as it would result in a previously pro-American population uniting and rising up against their attackers. As technology advances, however, it will allow people to educate themselves and unite to bring about democracy in their countries. It is undeniable that the unprecedented numbers of protests in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 have occurred as a result of advances in technology. The people have been able to mobilize themselves due to better means of communication. They have also been able to broadcast their protests to the rest of the world. In addition to the protests in Iran and Syria, the West has witnessed demonstrations in such countries as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. In many countries the demonstrations continue, meaning that there is an opportunity for the US Administration to use technology to help the people in their struggles.

The United States could also use soft power – pressure to pressure Assad to negotiate more completely over a transition

Jack **Goldstone May 3, 2011** at 5:35 pm <http://blogs.cfr.org/abrams/2011/05/03/syria-will-violence-beget-violence/>

Abrams is correct — allowing Assad to stay in power by force simply perpetuates an unstable situation, which will likely turn out worse the longer it festers. The US and its allies should be using all their soft power to pressure Assad to start Saleh-like negotiations over a transition. Syria's choice is between a managed transition or a disorderly transition; the status quo has been wholly delegitimized and cannot be maintained indefinitely by the Alawite mafia over the majority. Syria is not Bahrain, where a third of the country is religiously tied to, and fully supportive of, the minority regime, including all of the business and bureaucratic elites, and have huge external Sunni support. The Alawites are less than 10% of Syria's population, dominate only the army and security force officer corps (not the rank-and-file), do not dominate the business sector and civil service, and have no larger country run by their co-religionists.

As earlier stated, this literature base is important to the Syria debate as it may be the only way to make changes in the country

Democracy assistance is CRUCIAL – sanctions or military intervention destroy the transition and can't work

Bronning 5/26/11

<http://mespectator.blogspot.com/2011/05/end-of-days-for-assad.html>

MICHAEL BRÖNING is Director of the East Jerusalem office of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a German political foundation affiliated with Germany's Social Democratic Party. He is the author of *The Politics of Change in Palestine: State-Building and Non-Violent Resistance*.

Enthusiastic calls to "cheer as Syria's people shake the House That Assad Built," as Jeff Jacoby argued in *The Boston Globe* on March 30, in reference to my *ForeignAffairs.com* article, are certainly understandable. But the need to support the courage of protesters must be balanced against the remaining -- yet increasingly unlikely -- hope that reforms could work and against plausible reasons to fear a violent collapse of authority in an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous society such as Syria. After all, given Syria's lack of a unified opposition, the regime's collapse might result in an explosion of sectarian conflict. Jordan and Turkey's attempts at the end of April to push Assad toward a radical, last-minute change of course were not coincidental. Ankara and Amman are increasingly skeptical about the regime's readiness to reform, but they understand what the Assad regime's implosion would mean regionally.

Beyond a fear of the unknown, stretched Western military capacity and the nature of the Syrian uprising put hard limits on what Western powers could do to bolster the opposition. The sanctions that Europe and the United States imposed this week on Syrian leaders are important symbolic steps but do not provide protesters with tangible support. Likewise, imposing a no-fly zone was crucial to stop Qaddafi's air attacks on Libyan rebels, but would be ineffective against Assad's favored tactic: mass arrests of activists, as was carried out in Damascus, Homs, and Latakia. As unsatisfactory as it may sound, change in Syria cannot be attained with a quick-fix military intervention. The House of Assad must continue to be shaken from the ground.

Depending on what mechanisms end up being topical – there is also literature that argues that different mechanisms of international denunciation of Syria or recalling the American ambassador may be effective at curtailing Assad’s power to overwhelm the protestors.

Elliott **Abrams**, Published: **March 25** Ridding Syria of a despot

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ridding-syria-of-a-despot/2011/03/25/AFSRRVYB_story.html The writer, a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, was a deputy national security adviser to President George W. Bush.

Since the wave of Mideast revolts has spread to Syria, Assad is responding the only way he knows: by killing.

What should be our response? First, the strongest and most frequent denunciations, preferably not only from the White House but also from people such as Sen. John Kerry, who has repeatedly visited Assad and spoken of improving relations with his regime. All those who were taken in by Assad should be loudest in denouncing his bloody repression.

Second, we should prosecute Syria in every available multilateral forum, including the U.N. Security Council and the Human Rights Council. Others should refer Assad to the International Criminal Court.

With blood flowing, there should be no delays; this is the moment to call for special sessions and action to prevent more killing. Even if these bodies do not act, the attention should give heart to Syrian demonstrators. Third, we

should ask the new governments in Egypt and Tunisia to immediately call Arab League sessions to debate the violence in Syria. Libya was expelled; let’s demand that Syria be, too. Fourth, press the Europeans to speak and act against Syria’s regime. U.S. sanctions against Syria are strong and probably cannot be increased effectively now, but the European Union has far more trade and investment. The French have spoken out and may be willing to take the lead again. None of these steps will bring down Assad’s regime; only the courage of young Syrians can do that. But we must not repeat the wavering and delays that characterized the U.S. response in Egypt. We must be

clear that we view Syria’s despicable regime as unsalvageable, which suggests a fifth step: recalling the American ambassador from Syria. The Obama administration erred badly by sending an envoy — in a recess appointment — for this move was understood in the region as a reduction of U.S. pressure on Syria despite its increasingly dominant role in Lebanon. We should pull our ambassador, as we did in Libya, and unveil a hard-hitting political and human rights campaign against a bloody regime whose people want it gone. Our principles alone should lead us to this position, but the memory of thousands of American soldiers killed in Iraq with the help of the Assad regime demands that we do all we can to help the Syrian people free themselves of that evil dictatorship.

non-DA solvency mechanisms: diplomacy

Stronger US declarations

Karlin and Tabelr 5/27/11

<http://www.yalibnan.com/2011/05/27/editorial-washington-should-plan-for-a-post-assad-syria/>

Mara E. Karlin was Levant Director at the Pentagon in 2006-7 and Special Assistant to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy in 2007-9. Andrew J. Tabler is Next Generation Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the author of the forthcoming book *In the Lion's Den: An Eyewitness Account of Washington's Battle With Syria*.

Now, to follow through on his bold declaration last week, Obama and his advisers must plan for a Syria without the Assad regime as it currently exists. To do so, **Washington should try to push Assad from power** while pulling in a new leadership.

As a start of this "push" strategy, **Obama must go even further than he did in his speech last week and publicly state that Assad must go. Such a move would signal that the United States will no longer deal with Assad.** Put bluntly, high-level U.S. officials would no longer plead for Assad's support on questions of U.S. interest in the region, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon.

Unequivocal condemnation

Jacoby 5/15/11

<http://www.jeffjacoby.com/9608/obama-inexcusable-indecision-on-syria>

Jeff Jacoby's column has been published on the op-ed page of the Boston Globe since 1994, when he was hired as a counterweight to the paper's liberal columnists[citation needed]. From 1987 to 1994, he was chief editorial writer for the Boston Herald. In 1999, he became the first recipient of the Breindel Prize, a \$10,000 award (since increased to \$20,000) for excellence in opinion journalism awarded by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. In 2004, he received the Thomas Paine Award of the libertarian law firm the Institute for Justice, an award presented to journalists "who dedicate their work to the preservation and championing of individual liberty." [1] In December 2009, he was presented by the Zionist Organization of America with its Ben Hecht Award for Outstanding Journalism on the Middle East, an award previously won by, among others, the Jerusalem Post's Caroline Glick, syndicated columnist Cal Thomas, the late A.M. Rosenthal of the New York Times, and Daniel Pipes, founder of the Middle East Forum and publisher of Middle East Quarterly. [2] Before becoming a columnist, Jacoby worked briefly as an attorney with the firm Baker & Hostetler, and as deputy manager of Raymond Shamie's senatorial campaign in 1984

If ever a government deserved America's contempt and condemnation, the Syrian government does. If ever a popular uprising deserved American encouragement, the Syrian uprising does. Yet **the Obama administration**, which (eventually) pressed Egypt's Hosni Mubarak to resign and (belatedly) condemned Moammar Qaddafi's onslaught against protesters in Libya, **remains indecisive and incoherent on the ferocious Assad crackdown in Syria.**

Instead of seizing a historic opportunity to stand with Syria's people, the White House makes excuses for Syria's rulers. Assad and his clique "have an opportunity still to bring about a reform agenda," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told an Italian interviewer on May 6. "People do believe there is a possible path forward with Syria." Does Clinton expect anyone to believe that? Can she possibly believe it herself?

So far the United States has responded to the killings and mass arrests by freezing the assets of a few Syrian officials -- not including Bashar al-Assad. "This sharpens the choice for Syrian leaders who are involved in the decisions," an administration official told reporters. "Assad could be next."

But **Assad knows he has little reason to worry. The Obama administration has not recalled its ambassador from Damascus, or expelled the Syrian ambassador from Washington.** The president has yet to denounce the atrocities in Syria with anything like the forceful outrage of his statements on Libya. **No wonder Assad's spokeswoman brushes aside the administration's views on Syria as "not too bad," and shrugs off the milquetoast sanctions** as nothing to worry about.

For week, throngs of Syrian protesters have been chanting, "Al-sha'ab yoreed isqat al nizam" -- "The people want to overthrow the regime." They are publicly proclaiming the illegitimacy of their cruel government, and risking their lives each time they do so. They are not asking for outside military intervention. But surely they are entitled to the vigorous, vocal support of the president of the United States. He is called the leader of the free world for a reason. Does he understand what that that reason is? If so, this is the hour to show it.

non-DA solvency mechanisms: sanctions

GRAB BAG CP: Comprehensive sanctions strategy including SALSA Karlin and Tabelr 5/27/11

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Sanctions are another way to weaken Assad's already loosening grip on power. Obama has issued an executive order levying sanctions on Syrian officials responsible for human rights abuses during the current crackdown. Last Wednesday, Washington added Assad himself to the order.

Although Assad and other Syrian officials have few assets in the United States, multinational banks and financial firms, which risk losing their U.S. business if they associate with individuals under U.S. sanction, have now been forced to cut ties. This effect has been compounded by recent European Union sanctions against Assad and 22 other regime officials involved in putting down the protests.

The United States could also exploit the vulnerability of Syria's oil sector, a key node of power for the Assad regime. Washington should press EU member states to join in the United States' ban (passed as part of the U.S.A. Patriot Act) on transactions with the Commercial Bank of Syria, the country's largest state-owned bank and the chief vehicle for recycling Syrian oil receipts.

The bank is known to keep a portion of its approximately \$20 billion in hard currency reserves in short-term accounts at European banks. Freezing those funds would threaten the regime's economic viability and undermine its support from the Syrian business elite. (Assad's much-maligned cousin, Rami Makhlouf – who himself was designated in a 2008 executive order and whose businesses were further designated under last week's executive order – would particularly suffer, given his substantial investments in Syrian oil production.)

Furthermore, the United States could invoke some combination of the remaining tenets of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. (The act was first enacted by Congress in 2003 to sanction Syria for its pernicious meddling in Iraq and Lebanon, support for terror groups, and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.) Those tenets include a ban on U.S. investment in Syria, a ban on the travel of Syrian diplomats beyond a 25-mile radius of Washington and New York, and a downgrading of diplomatic relations.

These bilateral moves would capitalize on the growing European and Turkish consensus that the status quo in Syria must change. Such a united front would show Arab allies, most notably Saudi Arabia and Egypt (both of which have no love for Assad), that Washington is serious about its "push" strategy and could entice them to actively join the anti-Assad bandwagon.

Also, a concerted, multilateral effort against the Assad regime would help strip away Russian and Chinese objections to a UN Security Council resolution condemning the violence, which, in turn, could spur UN action to bring Assad before the International Criminal Court. Continued pressure against the regime for its attempted nuclear program and its violations of UN Security Council resolutions targeting Damascus' support for nonstate actors in Lebanon (including Hezbollah, other militias, and al Qaeda affiliates) would further isolate its few supporters, given the Assad regime's increasingly bloody crackdown and unwillingness to reform.

Within Syria, such moves would send clear signals about Washington's intentions, which, until last week's executive order directed at Assad and other top officials, were seen with some disappointment by Syrian oppositionists.

Most important, such strong U.S. action would encourage Syria's central players to place their bets on a future without Assad. In particular, the merchant classes in Damascus and Aleppo, whose economic patronage has

historically buoyed the Assad regime and given it a veneer of Sunni legitimacy, could be convinced that Assad is no longer the safest or most dependable protector of their commercial interests.

They could be further distanced from Assad by additional sanctions on a wider net of Syrian businessmen under Obama's executive order. Similarly, Syrian military officers (some of whom are Sunni) as well as the army's enlisted rank and file (which is largely Sunni) could be convinced to question seriously Assad's ability to survive. This would help raise the possibility of Sunni members of the Syrian military stepping in to save the country by ousting the ruling family.

un condemnation fails

UN condemnation fails

Bandler 6/10/11

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2011/06/10/its-time-to-bring-assads-regime-in-syria-to-end/>

Director of Communications at American Jewish Committee

The protestors are energized and getting more organized. Turkey's decision to host a gathering of Syrian exiles, and the decision by some who daringly crossed the border from Syria to participate, reflects a growing impatience with the regime's obstinacy. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who until recently had been an intimate friend of Assad's, also has appealed to the Syrian leader to urgently implement reforms.

But the ability to influence the deaf Assad regime is frustratingly limited. **A possible U.N. Security Council resolution to condemn the Syrian crackdown**, proposed by France and Britain after weeks of delay because of Chinese and Russian opposition, would be another important statement of international concern. As a practical matter, though, **it will likely have as little impact on Syria as the U.N. Human Rights Council condemnation of a few weeks ago.**

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2011/06/10/its-time-to-bring-assads-regime-in-syria-to-end/#ixzz1P03Ovw4P>

disad: syrian lashout

Assad deliberately stirs up trouble in the Golan Heights to prevent US involvement

Badran 5/25/11

<http://mespectator.blogspot.com/2011/05/end-of-days-for-assad.html>

TONY BADRAN is a Research Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

With controlled ferocity having failed to end the uprising, the regime had no choice but to escalate the violence in late April and early May. It laid siege to centers of protest such as Deraa, Baniyas, and Homs, ringing the towns with tanks, shelling them, and cutting off all communication, food, water, and medical aid. The security forces then went on door-to-door raids searching for activists. Residents of Deraa have since uncovered at least one mass grave there containing 13 mutilated bodies. Close to 1,100 civilian deaths were verified by reputable human rights organizations, but many thousands more were either detained or are simply missing.

The regime's violent escalation has had an impact -- many leading activists and organizers have been arrested and tortured, and sieges have quieted protests in some cities -- but it has failed to snuff out the opposition, which returns as soon as security forces pull back. The stalemate has permanently damaged the regime, removing much of the doubt about Assad's true intentions. To emphasize the point, on May 11, Rami Makhlouf, Assad's cousin and the second-most powerful man in the country, explicitly told The New York Times that the regime will "fight until the end." The message was clear: There will be no dialogue with the regime's opponents, and there will be no political reform. If the pressure persists, Makhlouf said, the stability of Syria's neighbors -- namely, Israel -- might be threatened. Less than a week after Makhlouf's warning, the regime made good on his promise: On May 16, it orchestrated a march of Palestinian refugees to Syria's border with the Israel-controlled Golan Heights, where they attempted to breach the border fence and cross into Israel, forcing the Israeli army to fire at them, killing two and wounding several others.