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From: Anne-Marie Slaughter [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2012 5:00 PM
To: H
Cc: Abedin, Huma; Jacob J Sullivan (SullivanJJ@state.gov); Cheryl Mills
Subject: My latest thinking on Syria in the FT

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This will be published in the paper tomorrow; it's up on the website now. Why not try a little 21st century statecraft? Hard to see that it could make matters worse. AM

Three ideas to end the stalemate in Syria

By Anne-Marie Slaughter

Syria is an ugly, violent and dangerous stalemate. All sides scan for portents like seers in ancient Athens. A report comes in of businessmen in Damascus and Aleppo complaining of shortages, so proponents of the Friends of Syria sanctions strategy say wait a little longer. Violence drops a bit and proponents of Kofi Annan's plan for a politically negotiated solution say wait until all 300 UN monitors are in place. Bashar al-Assad drives the opposition out of yet another city and his backers say wait a little longer until he forces the opposition to the bargaining table. Experienced observers of civil war, such as the Lebanese, say that the status quo is likely to continue. All the while real terrorists are moving into Syria the way they moved into Afghanistan and then Iraq. And young protesters who believed that they could march in the streets for free elections and freedom from fear continue to be shot, arrested and disappear.

The possible solutions are canvassed and rejected over and over again. A buffer zone on the Turkish border? Turkey is not willing to send its troops into Syria. Arming the opposition? Some arms are trickling in but Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who have been the most vocal advocates of this approach, seem either unable or unwilling to provide nearly enough weapons and material to make a difference. Pressure Russia to pressure Mr Assad to stop the killing and come to the negotiating table? The Russian strategy appears to be to let the Annan plan limp onward, pocketing the international prestige that comes from apparent leverage with Mr Assad without ever having to exercise it (and show its limits).

Against this backdrop, it is time to experiment with adding new weapons to the diplomatic arsenal. First, as strongly as I support the cause of the peaceful Syrian protesters who began this conflict more than a year ago, the central issue in Syria today should be framed not as the opposition versus the government but as non-violence versus violence. The violence itself must be delegitimised, wherever it comes from. This has been a Russian position, insisting on tarring young Syrian men who have taken up arms to protect their families and comrades against Syrian army snipers and mortars with the same brush as a government willing to shoot into unarmed crowds and shell civilian homes. But most of the violence is still coming from the government and a focus on ending it without regard to its

sources will help the cause of both peace and protest. The issue before the UN should no longer be about condemning one side or the other, but about stopping the guns.

If violence itself is the enemy, then the second step is to crowd-source monitors for peace. Every citizen with a cell phone, in every city, of every creed, ethnicity and political disposition should be deployed as a UN monitor, charged with photographing every incidence of violence they witness and uploading their pictures to a central UN site. They should photograph faces as well as weapons. If the Security Council truly supports the Annan plan, then it should authorise the UN to provide such a site and publicise it throughout Syria on cable television, the internet and in print media. Women's groups and citizen activists everywhere should support their Syrian counterparts in a movement for peace.

Finally, governments around the world, acting through the UN General Assembly, should interpret the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) doctrine as a mandate to wield the power not of arms but of diplomatic recognition. R2P requires governments to protect their own citizens from genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing, or else forfeit their legitimacy. Thus governments cannot only withdraw recognition from the Syrian government itself, they can also grant at least conditional recognition to the governments of cities and provinces that are able to stop the killing by all sides within their boundaries. Local, municipal and provincial councils that are willing to pledge themselves to peace and public safety for all could receive official UN recognition and support.

These ideas will seem fanciful to many. But stalemate is no solution. Given the wasteland of death and violence that Syria is becoming, why not try to build a platform for peace?

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