

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Anne-Marie Slaughter [redacted]
Sent: Friday, July 27, 2012 9:06 AM
To: H
Cc: Jacob J Sullivan (SullivanJJ@state.gov); Cheryl Mills; Abedin, Huma
Subject: FT op-ed on Syria (they requested it) that will run next week

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I thought you should see a preview. I will send it to folks at the WH as well. Note that Reuters reports this morning that the Turks have been "begging Washington for drones and surveillance, but to no avail."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/27/us-syria-crisis-centre-idUSBRE86Q0JM20120727> That may be wrong, but it's out there and it's a v detailed article.

"When we control Syria, we won't forget that you forgot about us." That is how the sister of a dead Free Syrian Army member responded when NPR reporter Kelly McEvers told her family that Americans are afraid of getting mired in another Iraq or Afghanistan. Not surprisingly, she and millions of her fellow Syrians cannot not understand why with all the U.S. government's talk of freedom, democracy, and human rights, its willingness to send hundreds of thousands of troops to topple a government in neighboring Iraq and to provide air cover for Libyan rebels, it will not send the types of arms necessary to allow zones controlled by the opposition to defend themselves against counter-attack by Bashir al-Assad's regime and gradually to extend their territory.

Sooner or later some combination of the groups currently fighting to carry forward the revolution begun by millions of peaceful protesters 16 months ago will indeed control Syria. And when they do, their allegiances and memories of who did what during the struggle to achieve a democratic Syria are going to matter far more to the U.S. and Europe than policymakers currently calculate.

That is the long game (although it may well be shorter than many people think). It is essence of strategy to plan for and play that game, identifying long-term goals and charting a path to achieve them. One of President Obama's top goals coming into office was to forge a "new beginning" between the United States and the Muslim world, a goal that he announced in Egypt. Revolutions like the one unfolding in Syria would seem to afford the perfect opportunity. But he and his fellow NATO leaders are far more focused on the short-term risks than the long-term gains.

Those risks are plentiful. They include:

- Getting too enmeshed in Syria will hurt President Obama's chances of re-election.
- Sending arms, much less planes, to Syria without UN approval will put the U.S. on the wrong side of international law and undo three years' worth of work patiently restoring U.S. credibility as a multilateral player in the U.N. and regional organizations.
- Acting more strongly and visibly to help the Syrian opposition will tie the U.S. to the opposition's fortunes in ways that will inhibit the U.S. "rebalancing" toward Asia.
- Providing anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to the FSA, together with active intelligence and communications assistance to help individual FSA units use those weapons effectively, risks fueling the ongoing conflict and possibly even arming al-Qaeda fighters who are infiltrating into Syria.
- Providing weapons to the FSA when Iran and Russia are arming the Syrian regime will drag the U.S. into a proxy great power war.

All of these risks are real, although some are much more likely than others. The American public, for instance, may be for or against more active engagement in Syria, but the idea that any foreign policy issue is going to determine the election in the current economic environment is laughable. The one exception may be perceived support for Israel in key states like Florida, but in that case moving to help remove a key Iranian ally in the region and help stabilize a growing threat on Israel's borders can only help Obama.

The larger point is that *all* policies carry risks. Many in Washington would argue that the current U.S. policy toward Syria, which is to squeeze the regime diplomatically and economically as tightly as possible; work with expatriate opposition groups to help unite them and plan for a transition; push for resolutions against the Assad regime in the UN and thereby force China and Russia to repeatedly side with Assad; provide an increasing flow of intelligence and communications equipment and vetting of opposition groups on the ground for the receipt of Turkish arms; and build international consensus to make clear to Assad the costs of using chemical weapons while planning for a possible military operation to

secure those weapons in the case of regime collapse and chaos, is working. Assad's government is visibly weakening; the opposition is making steady gains in terms of controlling parts of the country and bringing the fight to Aleppo and Damascus. But the risks of this multi-pronged incrementalism are enormous.

- The arms that are flowing, at least from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, are going to Islamist members of the opposition, many of whom are strongly opposed to the U.S. and could push a future Syrian government in directions dangerous to the U.S. and to Israel.
- The longer the conflict rages, the more likely revenge killings will turn a revolution into a sectarian civil war that cannot be staunched even by a political transition, and the more chance al Qaeda has to infiltrate and coopt it.
- The more Syria fragments, the more danger of conflict spilling over into Lebanon (via the Allawites), Turkey (via Syrian Kurds), Iraq (via al-Qaeda) and even Jordan (via refugees).
- The more fragmented the Syrian opposition becomes on the ground the more chance of the kind of chaos following regime collapse that will leave chemical weapons stocks unsecured.

It is time for bold action, of the kind Obama took in deciding to go after Bin Laden in Abbottabad and to intervene in Libya. In Syria that would mean putting together a coalition of countries to change the game. This coalition would commit to provide heavy weapons and possibly air cover to all commanders on the ground in Syria who sign the "Declaration of Values" supporting a peaceful, democratic, and pluralist Syria put forward last week by the 9 Commanding Generals of the Military Council of the FSA. Moreover, these commanders must admit foreign journalists, NGO activists, and UN monitors into the zones they control to monitor their actual implementation of those principles and to allow citizen journalists from all groups to upload photographs of what they witness to an official website maintained by the coalition.

The U.S. is consumed with domestic politics. European leaders are focused on the Olympics, the Euro crisis, and August vacations. But the eventual winners in Syria will matter a great deal to the health, wealth, and stability of what is still the most strategic region in the world. They will remember those who remember them and cared enough to level the playing field to help them win.

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