

Syrian civil war / United States should intervene

< Syrian civil war

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Position: United States should intervene

This position addresses the topic Syrian civil war.

For this position

“ First, Iran’s President Rouhani, who continues to send signals that he wants to make a deal on the nuclear program, will inevitably be weakened once it becomes clear that the U.S. cannot use force against Syria. At that point, paradoxically, the hard-liners in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and around the Supreme Leader will be able to claim that there is only an economic cost to pursuing nuclear weapons but no military danger. ”

From Blocking action on Syria makes an attack on Iran more likely, by Dennis Ross (*The Washington Post*, September 9, 2013) (view)

“ An attack that weakened regime forces could, of course, help the jihadists gain ground — but only if the United States and its allies failed to simultaneously bolster the mainstream Free Syrian Army. That’s why it is essential that Mr. Obama couple any strikes with a stepped up train-and-equip program for vetted rebel units. The way to counter the threat posed by the jihadists is not to leave the Assad regime in power, but to empower the moderate and secular majority. ”

From Syria’s al-Qaeda threat, by The Washington Post editorial board (*The Washington Post*, September 7, 2013) (view)

“ Especially after this lengthy buildup and public debate, Syrian rebels and their supporters would view a U.S. failure to act as abandonment of their cause. In particular, the moderate Syrian opposition, which relies on support from the United States and its allies, would be devastated. These people are the majority of the opposition. ”

From On Syria, a weak strike is better than none, by Frederick W. Kagan (*The Washington Post*, September 6, 2013) (view)

“ There is a reason for the taboo on WMDs, reasons why humanity is particularly horrified by their use. And there will be consequences if the world as a whole looks the other way when a dictator shoots rockets filled with poison at his own people. ”

From The consequences of doing nothing in Syria, by Frida Ghitis (*The Miami Herald*, September 5, 2013) (view)

“ The longer the war drags on in Syria, the more Al Qaeda elements gain strength, the more Lebanon and Jordan are destabilized, and the more people die. It’s admirable to insist on purely peaceful interventions, but let’s acknowledge that the likely upshot is that we sit by as perhaps another 60,000 Syrians are killed over the next year. ”

From The Right Questions on Syria, by Nicholas D. Kristof (*The New York Times*, September 4, 2013) (view)

“ Republicans should know that deficits are exploding not because of military spending or foreign aid—as a percentage of GDP, George W. Bush spent less on defense in 2008 than Jimmy Carter did in 1980—but because of the growth of entitlement programs. Republicans should know, too, that investing in global order deters more dangerous would-be aggressors and creates a world congenial to American trade, security and values. One cost-effective way of doing that is making an example of a thug who flouts U.S. warnings and civilized conventions. ”

From The Robert Taft Republicans Return, by Bret Stephens (*The Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2013) (view)

“ But the Sunnis are themselves divided between the pro-Western, secular Free Syrian Army, which we’d like to see win, and the pro-Islamist and pro-Al Qaeda jihadist groups, like the Nusra Front, which we’d like to see lose. That’s why I think the best response to the use of poison gas by President Bashar al-Assad is not a cruise missile attack on Assad’s forces, but an increase in the training and arming of the Free Syrian Army — including the antitank and antiaircraft weapons it’s long sought. ”

From Arm and Shame, by Thomas Friedman (*The New York Times*, September 3, 2013) (view)

“ We only hope Secretary of State John Kerry is wrong and that U.S. inaction won’t give Iran or the various terrorist organizations operating in the region a cue to strike. After all, if chemical weapons are tolerated, then what other behavior might cause the U.S. and the Europeans to look the other way rather than dispatch the military? ”

From Syria: Where is the outrage?, by The Baltimore Sun editorial board (*The Baltimore Sun*, September 3, 2013) (view)

“ Costly as it is for us to assume global responsibilities, it would be even costlier, in the long run, to abdicate them amid internal political discord, which is why Sen. Arthur Vandenberg evolved from a pre-World War II isolationist to a postwar internationalist. ”

From Syria, a cause for bipartisanship, by Charles Lane (*The Washington Post*, September 2, 2013) (view)

“ International condemnation has minimized the use of chemical weapons since World War I, and any breach of that dam now invites a flood. Such a scenario would be particularly horrific to Israel, where the use of chemical weapons by a hostile neighbor presents a fundamental existential threat, but nations such as Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon also would not rest easy. ”

From We can’t look away from Syria now, by Chicago Sun-Times editorial board (*Chicago Sun-*

Times, September 1, 2013) (view)

“ At one point yesterday, Obama noted that: “Out of the ashes of world war, we built an international order and enforced the rules that gave it meaning.” He’s right about that but seems not to understand that the global order is crumbling largely because America is no longer willing to enforce the rules. Or, more to the point, that America’s current president is no longer willing to enforce the rules. ”

From Obama puts politics over morals in abdicating presidential authority in Syria, by Michael Goodwin (*New York Post*, September 1, 2013) (view)

“ The biggest difference now, compared to two years ago, is that the Syrian war is also evolving into a regional Sunni-Shiite conflict that is helping al Qaeda. The Islamist al-Nusra front has become the strongest rebel force in Syria, thanks to the U.S. refusal to help other rebels. These al Qaeda allies aim to establish a caliphate in Damascus and are already helping to revive sectarian strife in Iraq. ”

From The Non-Intervention War, by The Wall Street Journal editorial board (*The Wall Street Journal*, May 7, 2013) (view)

“ Whatever the case, Obama has blown off other red lines with impressive equanimity. He has tolerated the shelling of residential areas, the slaughter of civilians, the use of the air force to bomb and strafe, missiles fired into population centers, attacks on journalists and, just last week, the reported massacre by government forces of about 70 people in the village of al-Bayda. This line was red for obvious reasons. ”

From Obama's loss for words on Syria, by Richard Cohen (*The Washington Post*, May 6, 2013) (view)

“ A failed Syria creates another haven for terrorists, a danger to neighbors who are all American allies, and the threat of metastasizing Sunni-Shiite sectarian war across a volatile and vital region. “We cannot tolerate a Somalia next door to Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey,” said Vali Nasr, who since leaving the Obama foreign-policy team in 2011 has become one of its most incisive critics. ”

From Syria Is Not Iraq, by Bill Keller (*The New York Times*, May 5, 2013) (view)

“ Never mind that by staying out of this fight for so long, America today has fewer good options. If Obama does not intervene, no one will ever take his threats seriously — least of all the Iranian mullahs seeking a nuclear weapon. They are watching Syria with keen-eyed delight. ”

From Obama’s thin red line, by New York Post editorial board (*New York Post*, May 4, 2013) (view)

“ What’s needed is what the opposition has repeatedly requested: a no-fly zone in parts of Syria, or other measures — such as attacks with missiles and stealth bombers — to ground the Syrian air force. Yes, such measures would have to be taken without a United Nations resolution, and they would upset Mr. Putin. But if Mr. Obama continues to pursue a policy of awaiting U.N. consensus and deferring to Russia, the result will be more crossings of his red line — and grave damage to U.S. interests. ”

From U.S. policy on Syria still lacks coherence, by The Washington Post editorial board (*The Washington Post*, May 1, 2013) (view)

“ I accept that it is hard after Iraq to talk of the national interest or of Nato or the EU's interest. But the facts of grand strategy have not changed. Even if you can suppress all humanitarian impulses, it is not in the west's interest to have an Assad regime more beholden to Iran than ever on the shores of the Mediterranean. ”

From Syria is bleeding to death and the west stands by, by Nick Cohen (*The Observer*, June 8, 2013) (view)

“ Even Obama's chemical weapons red line is a farce. Its very pronouncement advertised passivity, signaling that anything short of WMD — say, massacring 80,000 innocents using conventional weapons — would draw no U.S. response. And when that WMD red line was finally crossed, Obama went into lawyerly overdrive to erase it. Is it any wonder that Assad's allies are on full offensive — Hezbollah brazenly joining the ground war, Russia sending a small armada and mountains of military materiel, Iran warning everyone to stay out? ”

From Message from the ruins of Qusair, by Charles Krauthammer (*The Washington Post*, June 6, 2013) (view)

“ Of course, the Middle East is not the Balkans, the Russian government is more confident now than it was then, and Americans are tired after a decade of war. But there are similarities: The Kosovars, too, bickered among themselves, and some were said to be terrorists. The Russians backed Serbia — and at one point suggested that their naval fleet in the Black Sea would intervene. Like Mr. Assad, Mr. Milosevic was rational and calculating — he, too, wanted to survive. ”

From To Get a Truce, Be Ready to Escalate, by Wesley Clark (*The New York Times*, June 18, 2013) (view)

“ Obama was left with two unpalatable options: escalate or accept defeat. Doing nothing might have led to irreversible results, the collapse of the rebels, so he chose to escalate — but only a little and with a vow to put no U.S. boots on the ground. Some critics will still warn that he has stepped onto a slippery slope that leads to direct military intervention. But that's where the Aspin Doctrine comes in. There are plenty of examples of the United States aiding one faction in a civil war, only to disengage if our client army failed (Ronald Reagan's Contras in Nicaragua, for example). ”

From Obama, Syria and the Aspin Doctrine, by Doyle McManus (*Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 2013) (view)

“ Far better for a week of missiles to rain down on the dictator's “command-and-control” centres, including his palaces. By doing this, Mr Obama would certainly help the rebels, though probably not enough to overturn the regime. With luck, well-calibrated strikes might scare Mr Assad towards the negotiating table. ”

From Hit him hard, by The Economist editorial board (*The Economist*, August 31, 2013) (view)

“ Leading from behind won't cut it. The president will neither recover his credibility nor deter Assad from his deadly course until he strikes in a way that either topples the Assad regime or deprives him of his most important military capabilities. Such a strike would open up good possibilities for Syria, and make Iran and other enemies think twice about their own actions. ”

From Just do it, Mr. President, by New York Post editorial board (*New York Post*, August 31,

2013) (view)

“ If there is no response, the Assad regime will use them again, on an even larger scale, and other dictators in future conflicts will calculate that they, too, can use these ghastly weapons at no cost. And there will be no response if the United States does not take the lead. ”

From Obama to take his Syrian case to Congress, by The Washington Post editorial board (*The Washington Post*, August 31, 2013) (view)

“ Of course there’s something arbitrary about telling a dictator he can kill his subjects with bullets but not gas. But there’s something arbitrary about any constraint we impose on lesser powers. The point is to sustain an environment of constraint, period — in which troublemakers are constantly aware they can only push so far before American military power pushes back. ”

From War, What Is It Good For?, by Ross Douthat (*The New York Times*, August 31, 2013) (view)

“ Nobody wants another Iraq. Iraq is why we don’t trust our intelligence agencies when they tell us Assad used chemical weapons. Iraq is why we dread another invasion. But our mistakes in Iraq also conceal the perils of the road not taken. What would have happened if Saddam’s defiance of the U.N. inspectors had gone unpunished? What would other regimes have concluded about the world’s willingness to police the development and use of weapons of mass destruction? ”

From Pain in the Assad, by William Saletan (*Slate*, August 30, 2013) (view)

“ In 1998, after al-Qaeda blew up two U.S. embassies in Africa, Bill Clinton lobbed a few cruise missiles into empty tents in Afghanistan. That showed ‘em. It did. It showed terminal unseriousness. Al-Qaeda got the message. Two years later, the USS Cole. A year after that, 9/11. ”

From Shamed into war?, by Charles Krauthammer (*The Washington Post*, August 29, 2013) (view)

“ "History will not kindly judge the Democratic Party foreign policy establishment for turning its back on the plight of the Syrian people. Ever since the revolt against the Assad regime commenced in March, 2011, the abdication of Democratic Party humanitarian DNA toward Syria is Exhibit A for a foreign policy dictated by political expediency rather than determination and resolve." ”

From Why Have Democrats Abandoned Syria?, by Marc Ginsberg (*The Huffington Post*, August 29, 2012) (view)

“ Yet all diplomatic avenues have failed. Now it falls to the world’s superpower to punish a regime that violates all semblance of international law by employing rockets loaded with chemical warheads. No civilized nation could — or should — sanction such behavior, especially when directed at a country’s own citizens. ”

From Time for consequences in Syria, by The Dallas Morning News editorial board (*The Dallas Morning News*, August 28, 2013) (view)

“ To me there’s some hope that destroying military aircraft or intelligence headquarters can persuade Assad that chemical weapons are not worth the cost and that he is better off employing more banal ways to slaughter his people. That’s unsatisfying but would still be a useful message to other leaders. It would reinforce the international norm against weapons of mass destruction. ”

From Reinforce a Norm in Syria, by Nicholas D. Kristof (*The New York Times*, August 28, 2013) (view)

“ If and when an attack comes, it must be forceful enough to convince Assad that use of chemical weapons will weaken him, not help him. And it must be justified explicitly as retaliation for violation of international treaties on use of chemical weapons — not as an attempt to dictate the outcome of the civil war. A missile attack appears the likeliest and smartest option. It could be used to weaken Syria's air power, to destroy units that used the chemical weapons, to strike the weapons themselves, or to attack other targets. ”

From Syrian chemical attack demands precise strike, by USA Today editorial board (*USA Today*, August 27, 2013) (view)

“ There is no doubt that Mr. Assad’s government has violated humanitarian principles throughout the two-year-old war, including the prohibition on the indiscriminate killing of civilians, even in non-international conflicts, set out in 1949 in the Geneva Conventions. But the conventions also don’t mean much unless the Security Council agrees to act. It is an indictment of the current state of international law that there is no universally recognized basis to intervene. ”

From Bomb Syria, Even if It Is Illegal, by Ian Hurd (*The New York Times*, August 27, 2013) (view)

“ Now, at long last, the Obama administration is weighing its options — which are, of course, fewer than they might have been had the Syrian people not been made to endure two years of abuse and their Mideast neighbors floods of refugees. Clearly the debating society that is the United Nations is useless with Syria’s best buddy Russia holding veto power in the Security Council. ”

From Waking up to Syria, by Boston Herald editorial board (*Boston Herald*, August 27, 2013) (view)

“ When we and others urged Mr. Obama to form a coalition of the willing against Damascus in 2011, opponents declared that such intervention would cause Assad to use chemical weapons, while running the risk of empowering jihadists, destabilizing Jordan, and spreading Sunni-Shiite conflict to Iraq and Lebanon. All of those fears have become reality after Mr. Obama failed to act and ceded the advantage in the Syrian conflict to the malign influence of Iran and Russia. ”

From Syria Side Effects, by The Wall Street Journal editorial board (*The Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 2013) (view)

“ The United States can’t dictate the outcome in Syria, and it would be foolish to send ground troops in an effort to do so. But by combining military measures with training, weapons supplies and diplomacy, it could exercise considerable influence. The military measures could include destroying forces involved in chemical weapons use and elements of the Syrian air force that have been used to target civilians, as well as helping to carve out a safe zone for rebels and the civilian populations they are seeking to protect. ”

From Syria strategy can't rely solely on military might, by The Washington Post editorial board (*The Washington Post*, August 26, 2013) (view)

“ Are the relatively few deaths caused by nerve gas really so different from the many more deaths caused by bullets, rockets and bombs? Yes, I believe they are. There is an international consensus that chemical weapons, because of their potential for mass annihilation, are beyond the pale; any government that uses them will lose all legitimacy. If one tinhorn despot is allowed to get away with gassing his opponents, other thuggish strongmen — a category of which there is no shortage — will be emboldened to follow suit. ”

From The U.S. must act against Assad, by Eugene Robinson (*The Washington Post*, August 26, 2013) (view)

“ A serious bombing campaign would have substantial targets — most plausibly the Syrian air force, the service once headed by Assad's father, which gives the regime much of its edge over the rebels, as well as the air defense system and the country's airports, through which aid arrives from Iran. But should the Obama administration choose any kind of bombing campaign, it needs to face some hard facts. ”

From Syria will require more than cruise missiles, by Eliot A. Cohen (*The Washington Post*, August 25, 2013) (view)

“ Obama's policy regarding Syria has been a strategic failure. More perplexing and more alarming, it has also been a moral failure. It has permitted — or at least not impeded — the deaths of upward of 70,000 people and created a humanitarian calamity with well over 1 million refugees. ”

From Obama dithers, people die, by Richard Cohen (*New York Daily News*, April 30, 2013) (view)

“ First, there is good reason to discourage—by force, if necessary—the use of chemical weapons. After 100,000 were killed in World War I from poison gas, the League of Nations in 1925 adopted a ban on their use, which even the adversaries in World War II observed. The United Nations adopted a ban of its own in 1992. Secondly, there is good reason for the United States, once it declares a “red line,” to observe it. ”

From It's Time to Intervene in Syria, by John Judis (*The New Republic*, April 30, 2013) (view)

“ The distrust, cynicism and hatred with which the United States is regarded in much of the world, particularly among Muslims across the Middle East and North Africa, is already a cancer. Standing by while Assad gasses his people will guarantee that, whatever else Obama may achieve, he will be remembered as a president who proclaimed a new beginning with the Muslim world but presided over a deadly chapter in the same old story. ”

From Obama should remember Rwanda as he weighs action in Syria, by Anne-Marie Slaughter (*The Washington Post*, April 26, 2013) (view)

Against this position

“ Just Friday, a rebel group claimed responsibility for a chemical attack for which “intelligence” tags Syrian strongman Bashar Assad. Another rebel group was exposed for summarily executing captured Syrian soldiers. These are the kinds of rebels who appear to hold sway, hardly the “moderates” that Mr. Kerry insists “intelligence” shows to be dominant. ”

From Strike Syria? Think again, by Pittsburgh Tribune-Review editorial board (*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, September 8, 2013) (view)

“ Iraq and Afghanistan didn't go well, Libya is lawless. In Egypt we threw over a friend of 30 years to embrace the future. The future held the Muslim Brotherhood, unrest and a military coup. Americans have grown more hard-eyed—more bottom-line and realistic, less romantic about foreign endeavors, and more concerned about an America whose culture and infrastructure seem to be crumbling around them. ”

From Why America Is Saying 'No', by Peggy Noonan (*The Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 2013) (view)

“ During the pressure of the 2012 campaign, Obama made rash and amateurish statements about those weapons being a “red line” for the U.S., but Congress is not obliged to bail him out. Nor must Congress pretend that gassing civilians, as horrifying as that is, is any more despicable than bombing them by the thousands or crushing them with tanks. ”

From Reject Obama's request to attack Syria, by The Denver Post editorial board (*The Denver Post*, September 6, 2013) (view)

“ International law recognizes only three lawful routes to the use of military force. It recognizes the right of every country to launch military force in order to prevent its own borders from being invaded or to subdue those who commenced an invasion. It also recognizes the ability of any U.N. member state to come to the aid of any other U.N. member state when one of them has been invaded. And treaties to which the U.S. and Syria are parties permit limited purpose invasions when approved by the U.N. None of these lawful scenarios applies to Syria. ”

From Syria: What Is the War Good For?, by Andrew Napolitano (*Reason*, September 5, 2013) (view)

“ “A shot across the bow,” explained Barack Obama. Now, a shot across the bow is a warning. Its purpose is to say: Cease and desist, or the next shot will sink you. But Obama has already told the world — and Bashar Assad in particular — that there will be no next shot. ”

From Unserious Commander-in-Chief, by Charles Krauthammer (*National Review*, September 5, 2013) (view)

“ None of the White House staff has any experience in war or understands it. So far, at least, this path to war violates every principle of war, including the element of surprise, achieving mass and having a clearly defined and obtainable objective. ”

From A war the Pentagon doesn't want, by Robert H. Scales (*The Washington Post*, September 5, 2013) (view)

“ It may not be ideal for the world to see Washington divided, but "United We Stand for an incompetent, self-loathing U.S. foreign policy" is no battle cry for these dangerous times. ”

From Syria Vote Is A Political Trap Republicans Can Avoid, by Investor's Business Daily editorial board (*Investor's Business Daily*, September 3, 2013) (view)

“ A successful Iraq — self-sufficient, secular, democratic, stable — was never anything less than a 50-year exercise in nation building. Americans have made it clear that they don't have that kind of patience. Knowing what we know about ourselves should shape U.S. policy from now on. We are not going to follow up, so there is no reason to waste a single \$1.4 million missile on the likes of Syria. ”

From Obama wants Congress to hold him back, and it should, by Kevin O'Brien (*The Plain Dealer*, September 3, 2013) (view)

“ If the administration's concern is that not providing aid to the opposition will make it more difficult to get them to the negotiating table in Geneva next month, an argument can be made that the opposite is true. Suspending aid would be a clear signal of what their situation would be if they refused to at least talk to representatives of the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad about ending the war and sharing power. ”

From Stay out of Syria, by Dan Simpson (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 29, 2013) (view)

“ Nothing about the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan or tensions with Iran or older confrontations with Lebanon suggest the U.S. has a particular credibility in the region or recipe for political or military resolutions. ”

From Obama's valid caution on Syria, by The Seattle Times editorial board (*The Seattle Times*, May 9, 2013) (view)

“ The United Nations, in the wake of the Rwandan atrocities in 1994, adopted an international norm called “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) that says nations have an obligation to intervene when another nation commits crimes against humanity. Even if Mr. Assad hasn't gassed his people — the U.N. isn't entirely sure of that — he qualifies on any number of other counts. But intervention would not be easy, nor cheap, nor predictable and not certain to wind up doing more good than harm. ”

From The compelling, but still unpersuasive, case for war on Syria, by St. Louis Post-Dispatch editorial board (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 9, 2013) (view)

“ U.S. efforts need to be directed strongly to moving the combatants to the negotiating table as soon as possible before matters get worse. The Israeli air attacks and the rebels using sarin gas are clear messages to all interested parties, including Iran, Qatar, Russia and Saudi Arabia, that enough is now more than enough. ”

From Volatile Syria: There are more reasons for the U.S. to stay out, by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorial board (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 7, 2013) (view)

“ Isn't it the case that Syria presents no good options, only bad ones? Isn't it unclear whether U.S. intervention can even alleviate the Syrian people's pain, much less advance U.S. interests? And although doing nothing seems like a bad alternative, doesn't the only other choice presently available — doing something for the sake of doing something — look worse? ”

From Questioning Syrian Intervention, by Eugene Robinson (*The Washington Post*, May 6, 2013) (view)

“ Even precision bombs launched from drones, notes University of Chicago scholar Robert Pape, author of "Bombing to Win," have a blast radius of up to 50 feet, and their shock waves can easily bring down neighboring buildings. Our drone strikes in rural Pakistan do enough collateral damage to sow deep anger among the locals. In urban Syria, civilian fatalities would be far higher. ”

From America Needs to Stay Out of Syria, by Steve Chapman (*Reason*, May 2, 2013) (view)

“ As for Israel’s supporters — of which I am one — shouldn’t we recognize that, with Israel’s mortal enemies busy slaughtering each other, they’re not killing Israelis? Might it not be useful if Syria remained a Vietnam for fanatical Islamists, Hezbollah and Arab nationalists alike? ”

From Too late for Syria, by Ralph Peters (*New York Post*, May 2, 2013) (view)

“ A Syria liberated of Assad would still leave an armed Alawite minority in fear of its lives. The civil war could well outlast his fall. Victory would also reveal the fault lines in the rival rebel groups claiming it. Post-Assad Syria could be Libya writ large. ”

From Syria: the ugly choice ahead, by The Guardian editorial board (*The Guardian*, May 10, 2013) (view)

“ If ever there was a time for a U.S. intervention — and we don’t think there was — that time is past. The Islamists are firmly in control of the rebellion, though the war is not going so well for them now that Assad’s forces have recaptured a strategic town, seeming to cement his control on the Shiite-Alawite parts of Syria. ”

From Obama right to show restraint in Syria, by Chicago Sun-Times editorial board (*Chicago Sun-Times*, June 7, 2013) (view)

“ The good news is that we’d be fighting the war against not just Syria but the army of Hezbollah, the arms of Russia and the treasury of Iran, the allies who’ve kept Assad in power the past two years despite nearly unanimous world opinion that he would fall. That’s good news only in relation to the bad-news part of the equation, which is that *our* principal ally would be al-Qaida, the puppetmaster behind the most effective of the Syrian groups. The last time we made common cause with those guys, aiding the resistance to Soviet rule of Afghanistan, we wound up with the Taliban rising to power and inviting Osama bin Laden to be their guest. ”

From War Party beats drums for action in Syria, by Glenn Garvin (*The Miami Herald*, June 3, 2013) (view)

“ How are we meant to furnish machine guns and anti-tank weapons to one set of opposition forces, without them ending up in the hands of men like the al-Qaeda-affiliated thugs who executed a child for telling a joke? The answer is that we have no means of preventing such a disaster, any more than we can control what kind of “government” the rebels — if they were successful — would form in Damascus. ”

From We’ve left it too late to save Syria – this conflict can never be won, by Boris Johnson (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 17, 2013) (view)

“ These are the very same Islamists against whom – if they are on British soil – Government Ministers posture and froth, demanding that they are deported, silenced, put under surveillance and the rest. But when we meet the same people in Syria, we want to give them advanced weapons. One of these ‘activists’, a gentleman called Abu Sakkar, recently publicly sank his teeth into the bleeding heart of a freshly slain government soldier. ”

From We set Syria ablaze... Now we're hurling in explosives, by Peter Hitchens (*Daily Mail*, June 1, 2013) (view)

“ For a quarter-century, from Kuwait to Kosovo to Kandahar, the civilized world has gone to war only in order to save or liberate Muslims. The Pentagon is little more than central dispatch for the U.S. military’s Muslim Fast Squad. And what do we have to show for it? Liberating Syria isn’t like liberating the Netherlands: In the Middle East, the enemy of our enemy is also our enemy. ”

From An Accidental War, by Mark Steyn (*National Review*, August 30, 2013) (view)

“ Some people think we have to uphold the powerful international taboo against poison gas to keep its use from spreading beyond Syria. But the main reason nasty regimes have abstained is not respect for global norms. It's naked self-interest. Chemical weapons are hard to control once dispersed, making them a threat to the army that uses them. They can also provoke devastating retaliation. ”

From The costs of symbolism in Syria, by Steve Chapman (*Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 2013) (view)

“ The United States of America has no business attacking Syria. Our national security is not at stake. The one and only reason we are on the verge of war is because the President thought it personally advantageous to rattle the sabers just before the 2012 election. It is schoolyard diplomacy, but with real missiles. ”

From Red lines: Obama's costly bluster, by New Hampshire Union Leader editorial board (*New Hampshire Union Leader*, August 29, 2013) (view)

“ If a fourth military intervention is coming, it will not be to decisively alter events, which we cannot do, in a nation vital to U.S. interests, which Syria is not. Rather, its purpose will be to rescue Obama from his words. ”

From Obama is talking America into a war, by George F. Will (*The Washington Post*, August 28, 2013) (view)

“ Supposedly, the United States now has to take action because if we don’t, our subsequent threats won’t be taken seriously by other powers. It’s already too late for that. The reluctance of the Obama administration to take action even after the president’s red line was crossed is transparent and obvious to all. Unless the military action is large enough to result in Assad’s ouster, which doesn’t appear to be in the offing, the rest of the world will continue to significantly discount the Obama administration’s bluster. ”

From Action in Syria about saving face, by Robert Robb (*The Arizona Republic*, August 28, 2013) (view)

“ The deeply dysfunctional Syrian state is not something outsiders have the tools to repair. Cruise missiles launched from ships and submarines won't persuade the divided Syrian opposition to unite around a common goal, nor are they likely to cause President Bashar Assad's supporters to capitulate and throw in their lot with the rebels. But such strikes will result in additional death and destruction on the ground. ”

From Outsiders have no tool to fix Syria, by Christopher Preble (*USA Today*, August 27, 2013) (view)

“ Mr. President, do you really think it's wise to send our missiles and aircraft to provide fire support for al Qaeda? That is exactly what you'll be doing, if you hit Assad. Assad's an odious butcher, filth on two legs. But in the world of serious strategy, you rarely get a choice between black and white. You choose between black and charcoal gray. ”

From Obama's third war, by Ralph Peters (*New York Post*, August 27, 2013) (view)

“ So if ousting Assad is your priority, you are stuck with Islamists and jihadists. Unless you're in favor of a very long-term American occupation of Syria, no one else could get the job done — and, in fact, many secularists and religious minorities prefer Assad, the devil they know, to the prospect of Egypt 2.0. ”

From Don't Intervene in Syria, by Andrew C. McCarthy (*National Review*, April 6, 2013) (view)

“ It would be wrong to seek the survival of a dictator as brutal and oppressive as Assad solely because of his effectiveness in squelching militant Islam. But it would be foolish to give advanced weapons and training to rebels who, after dealing with Assad, are likely to threaten U.S. allies and interests. ”

From In Syria, U.S. inaction is better than intervention, by Eugene Robinson (*The Washington Post*, April 29, 2013) (view)

“ Whatever America's interest in the stability of Syria—which certainly is less than America's interest in peace—there no longer is any stability to keep. Intervention today would mean joining a fratricidal conflict in which neither side is pure and future rounds of killing are likely. Americans would die for no good purpose—and probably keep on dying as part of an interminable occupation force. ”

From Syria: The Only Red Line Should Be To Stay Out, by Doug Bandow (*Forbes*, April 29, 2013) (view)

Mixed on this position

“ Most important, Obama has to explain what he expects after missiles devastate Syrian targets: Would U.S. assaults shorten this civil war and its suffering? Or would strikes risk regional warfare and new waves of refugees? ”

From Syria: The case for No, by Chicago Tribune editorial board (*Chicago Tribune*, September 6, 2013) (view)

“ Today our only hope seems to be supporting and arming Salim Idriss, the one rebel commander who speaks in moderate, tolerant tones. But he could easily turn, or could be overwhelmed by the jihadists. As they say in the Middle East, you don't buy allies here. It's strictly a rental. ”

From Pink line over Damascus, by Charles Krauthammer (*The Washington Post*, May 9, 2013) (view)

“ Meanwhile, wherever we can identify truly “good” rebels, we should strengthen them, but we should also be redoubling our diplomatic efforts to foster a more credible opposition leadership of reconciliation-minded Syrians who can reassure all of Syria's communities that they will have an equitable place at a new cabinet table. (Never underestimate how many Syrians are clinging to the tyrannical Bashar al-Assad out of fear that after him comes only Hobbes or Khomeini.) That way, when the combatants get exhausted and realize that there can be no victor and no vanquished — a realization that took 14 years in Lebanon's civil war next door — a fair power-sharing plan will be in place. ”

From This Ain't Yogurt, by Thomas Friedman (*The New York Times*, May 4, 2013) (view)

“ Would U.S. intervention--no-fly zones, arms, aid to the opposition forces--make things better? It depends on what one means by better. It would certainly intensify the civil war. It would also make the regime of Bashar Assad more desperate. Perhaps Assad has already used chemical weapons; with his back against the wall, he might use them on a larger scale. As for external instability, Landis points out that if U.S. intervention tipped the balance against the Alawites, they might flee Syria into Lebanon, destabilizing that country for decades. ”

From With or Without Us, by Fareed Zakaria (*Time*, May 3, 2013) (view)

“ More broadly, we should give military aid to the more secular elements of the opposition, to strengthen them vis-à-vis the dominant radicals and give ourselves some allies on the ground. It would have been much better if the president had done this long ago, rather than putting all his faith in meaningless gestures and words. As the violence has dragged on and Sunni powers in the Middle East have armed their favored proxies, the most militant elements of the anti-insurgency have gained ground. Assad is a murderous wretch allied with Iran, but Syria is becoming an illustration of the Middle East principle that the enemy of my enemy is a complete bastard. ”

From Assad Crosses the Red Line, by National Review editorial board (*National Review*, May 3, 2013) (view)

“ Once Washington crosses the threshold of action, there's no retreating from blame for anything that follows, whether through action or inaction. And in the weeks and months to come, dangers will only deepen. First, quick hits rarely achieve enduring political goals — and often produce more costs or unintended consequences than benefits. I've seen it so often before. ”

From The risk of taking on Syria, by Robin Wright (*Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2013) (view)

“ Going to war against Mr. Assad cannot be justified merely as revenge, as sweet as that might be, but only as an object lesson to other brutes with access to hideous weapons. President Obama's reluctance to act earlier, when missiles might not have been the language of negotiations, leads to the harder decision he faces now. ”

From Showdown in Syria, by The Washington Times editorial board (*The Washington Times*, August 28, 2013) (view)

“ The best-case scenario is probably this: a negotiated outcome in which Assad departs and other regime elements agree to form an interim government with the non-extremist members of the opposition. The new government would then need to engage in a multi-year power struggle (aided by the United States) with the jihadists. But this approach would require convincing the regime it can't win militarily. Which would probably only happen after a Kosovo-style, Western air campaign. ”

From Syrian war leaves no easy choices, by Michael Gerson (*The Washington Post*, August 26, 2013) (view)

“ The Free Syrian Army, which is fighting to overthrow Assad, says it has what it believes to be an unexploded chemical weapon deployed by government forces. Indeed it may. But neither the existence of such a weapon nor the reports of isolated instances of what appears to be human exposure to Sarin gas constitutes reliable evidence that the Assad regime is employing chemical weapons. Suspicion -- even strong suspicion -- is not enough to justify more active U.S. involvement in Syria's civil war. ”

From Facts, not merely suspicions, must guide U.S. policy regarding Syria, by The Plain Dealer editorial board (*The Plain Dealer*, April 30, 2013) (view)

“ The failure to act now could be misread by Mr. Assad as well as leaders in Iran and North Korea, whose nuclear programs are on America's radar. But Mr. Obama should only act if he has compelling documentation that the sarin gas was used in an attack by Syrian forces and was not the result of an accident or fertilizer. ”

From Ill-Considered Advice on Syria, by The New York Times editorial board (*The New York Times*, April 29, 2013) (view)

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