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[Article 1.](#)

The New York Times

## **More Answers Needed on Syria**

Editorial

August 28 - Despite the pumped-up threats and quickening military preparations, President Obama has yet to make a convincing legal or strategic case for military action against Syria. While there should be some kind of international response to the chemical weapons attack that killed hundreds of civilians last week, Mr. Obama has yet to spell out how that response would effectively deter further use of chemical weapons. For starters, where is the proof that President Bashar al-Assad of Syria carried out the attack? American, British, French and Turkish officials have been unequivocal in blaming Mr. Assad for the attack, which seems likely since there has been no indication that his regime has lost control of its chemical weapons arsenal or that the opposition has the capability to deliver such a weapon. Still, no evidence to support this claim has been released.

If the Obama administration has such evidence, it should make it public immediately. Given America's gross failure in Iraq — when the Bush administration went to war over nonexistent nuclear weapons — the standard of proof is now unquestionably higher. We are also eager to hear the conclusions of the United Nations inspectors who are in Syria taking samples from victims and interviewing witnesses. On Wednesday, the Syrian government added to the fog by blaming the rebels for three previously unreported chemical attacks last week. Those claims also must be investigated.

Before Britain proposed a resolution at the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday, the White House seemed ready to ignore the U. N. because Russia and China had repeatedly thwarted efforts to hold Mr. Assad to account. Despite diplomatic frustrations, the Security Council, on which Russia and China sit and have veto power, should be the first venue for dealing with this matter since chemical weapons use is a war crime and banned under international treaties.

Ideally, once presented with evidence, the council would condemn Mr. Assad, impose a ban on arms shipments to Syria (including materials used to make chemical weapons, which the regime is trying to buy on the open market) and send Mr. Assad's name to the International Criminal Court for prosecution. That is what should happen; Mr. Assad's Russia and Chinese enablers are the ones most able to stop his brutality.

Instead, Britain proposed a draft that would authorize military force against Syria. Predictably, Russia, Syria's main arms supplier, and China balked,

but there is still value in pushing the resolution to a vote so they are forced to choose to defend a leader accused of gassing his people.

Whether that resolution is acted on or not, President Obama now seems prepared to move toward military strikes. But not only is he unlikely to win Security Council backing for such an operation, he has failed to lay out any legal basis for it and has not won support from key organizations — namely the Arab League and NATO — that could provide legitimacy. The league, in a statement, did charge the Syrian government with chemical weapons use, but its member states like Saudi Arabia, a top funder of the anti-Assad rebels, declined to support the use of force publicly.

Without broad international backing, a military strike by the United States; France and Britain, two former colonial powers; and Turkey could well give Mr. Assad a propaganda advantage.

There is also no sign that the White House will ask Congress to authorize military action, which seems to put Mr. Obama at odds with his own past statements about the limits of presidential war powers. House Speaker John Boehner sent Mr. Obama a trenchant letter on Wednesday, asking more than a dozen critical questions, including whether the administration had contingency plans in case foreign powers, especially Iran and Russia, were implicated in the chemical attacks and how the administration planned to pay for the military action.

Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain also ran into domestic pressure that forced him to push back a quick vote in Parliament to support military action.

Mr. Obama has yet to make clear how military strikes — which officials say will last one to two days and target military units that carried out chemical attacks, the headquarters overseeing the effort and the artillery that have launched the attacks — will actually deter chemical attacks without further inflaming a region in turmoil and miring the United States in the Syrian civil war.

Any action, military or otherwise, must be tailored to advance a political settlement between the Assad regime and the opposition, the only rational solution to the conflict. If military action has a broader strategic purpose and is part of a coherent diplomatic plan, Mr. Obama needs to explain it.

## **Don't Attack Syria**

[Dov S. Zakheim](#)

August 29, 2013 -- For all his stirring rhetoric about ending America's decade of war, President Obama appears intent on extending it for several years more. A missile strike against Syrian targets will not result in Bashar Assad's removal from power any more than the Clinton-era strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan resulted in regime change in those countries. On the other hand, full-scale Western intervention in the Syrian civil war, at a minimum along the lines of the 2011 operation against Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, will provide Russia on the one hand, and Iran and Hezbollah on the other, the excuse for even more intense and open support of the Assad regime. Indeed, Hezbollah, with Iranian connivance, is likely to retaliate against American military or even civilian targets elsewhere in the world. And what if Assad were to depart the scene, and the rebels were to seize power? As Seth Jones of RAND, one of the most respected analysts of insurgencies has pointed out, the most formidable rebel group is Al Nusra, the Al Qaeda-linked Salafi group. Al Nusra may not be the largest rebel faction, but it is the best organized, and its superior organization will no doubt enable it to come out on top in any post-Assad struggle for power. That, of course, is how the Bolsheviks came to dominate Russia for eighty years. And should the Islamists seize power, the days of Hashemite rule in Jordan, America (and Israel's) closest Arab ally, may well come to an end. The Administration's case for intervention—Assad's employment of chemical weapons—is flimsy at best. The United States did not intervene when Saddam Hussein employed chemical weapons against his own people. What has changed since then? Some who press the case for a strike against Syria argue that the international community now has accepted the "[responsibility to protect](#)" citizens against their governments. Why wasn't that responsibility taken seriously vis a vis Syria until now? Why should action be taken when the Assad regime kills a thousand people, but nothing done during the past two years, when that regime annihilated one hundred thousand of its citizens? Moreover, it should not be forgotten that not only has Washington tolerated the use of chemical weapons by a government

against its citizens, it actually supported Saddam even as he fired chemical weapons in his war with Iran.

Some have argued, prominent among them Israeli prime minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), that were Assad to "get away" with using chemical weapons, Iran would conclude that the West is toothless in the face of any outrage, and would never back away from its nuclear weapons program. In fact, the opposite is likely to be the case. On the one hand, the consequences for international security of the civil war in Syria can in no way be compared to those arising from Iran going nuclear. The Syrian war is an internal affair. Should Assad prevail, the likelihood of spillover to neighboring countries is minimal, nor is Israel likely to strike Damascus. He will at best be a weakened force and will have to concentrate on his domestic challenges.

In contrast, Iran's nuclear weapons program is very much an international matter. Tehran is perceived as intending to employ nuclear weapons not against its own people, but against the populations of other states, notably Israel. It is for that reason that the closer Iran comes to developing a bomb, the more likely it is that Israel, or America, or both, and perhaps with the assistance of others, would launch a strike against its nuclear facilities. In light of ongoing sanctions and the threat of a military strike, the incentive for Iran to negotiate an agreement would in no way have been diminished, regardless of whether Assad prevails.

Ironically, should Assad fall, there is virtually no chance that Iran would agree to halt its program. Having watched the United States change yet another Middle Eastern regime, the ayatollahs would conclude once and for all that the only way to survive is to follow the example of North Korea and both acquire and then brandish a nuclear capability as soon as possible. It is troubling that the Obama Administration continues to be short on its knowledge of Middle Eastern attitudes and history; Middle Easterners—and, for that matter, the Russians and Chinese—are not. A U.S. attack will be seen by all sides as yet another assault on Muslims, and another attempt by Washington to dominate the Middle East and mold it in its own image. American influence in the region will inevitably decline still further. Lastly, any strike on Syria, which could cost hundreds of millions of dollars at a time when the U.S. defense budget is being ruthlessly pared back, may only be a down payment if the Assad regime continues to press

on with its offensive. There is no guarantee that the United States and its allies will not find themselves drawn into a much longer and costlier operation than the White House anticipates. The Libya operation cost America well over a billion dollars, and exhausted the resources of France and especially Britain. Compared to what might be required in Syria, Libya was a budgetary bargain. How the president would propose to finance a prolonged Syrian exercise in the face of the ongoing sequester is a question that remains to be addressed.

President Obama spoke too hastily when he described the use of chemical weapons in Syria as a "red line." He should not compound that mistake by engaging Syrian forces (and perhaps their Russian advisors) in military hostilities whose duration and consequences are in no way predictable. Now is the time for restraint, not military action; the president should lead accordingly, and not from behind either.

*Dov Zakheim served as the undersecretary of defense (comptroller) and chief financial officer for the U.S. Department of Defense from 2001–2004 and as the deputy undersecretary of defense (planning and resources) from 1985–1987. He also served as DoD's civilian coordinator for Afghan reconstruction from 2002–2004. He is a member of [The National Interest's](#) advisory council.*

[Article 3.](#)

The Washington Post

## **In Syria, U.S. credibility is at stake**

[David Ignatius](#)

August 28 -- What does the world look like when people begin to doubt the credibility of U.S. power? Unfortunately, we're finding that out in Syria and other nations where leaders have concluded they can defy a war-weary United States without paying a price.

Using military power to maintain a nation's credibility may sound like an antiquated idea, but it's all too relevant in the real world we inhabit. It has become obvious in recent weeks that President Obama, whose restrained and realistic foreign policy I generally admire, needs to demonstrate that

there are consequences for crossing a U.S. “red line.” Otherwise, the coherence of the global system begins to dissolve.

Look around the world and you can see how unscrupulous leaders are trying to exploit Obama’s attempt to disentangle America from the tumult of the Middle East. As we consider these opportunistic actions, it’s easier to understand the rationale for a punitive military strike against Syria for its use of [chemical weapons](#).

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad overrode a clear American warning against such use of chemical weapons. According to U.S. intelligence reports, Assad’s military last week fired rockets tipped with chemical warheads into rebel-held civilian neighborhoods east of Damascus. Reports from doctors on the scene are heart-rending. Medicine “can’t do much” to ease the suffering, wrote one doctor, because the concentration of the nerve gas sarin was so intense.

What did Assad and his generals think would happen in response to this blatant violation of international norms? Apparently, not much, and in a way, you can understand their complacency: Previous Syrian chemical attacks on a smaller scale hadn’t triggered any significant U.S. retaliation, despite Obama’s warning a year ago that such actions would be “[a red line for us](#).”

Here’s another thought to ponder: Is it possible that the Syrian chemical weapons attack was planned or coordinated with its key ally, the Quds Force of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps? Surely, it was in the loop. “After all, they’re running the show,” argues a Lebanese analyst who knows the Quds Force well.

The main rationale for military action by the United States [and its allies](#) should be restoring deterrence against the use of chemical weapons. The strike should be limited and focused, rather than a roundhouse swing aimed at ending the Syrian civil war. But it should be potent enough to degrade Assad’s command-and-control structure so he can’t conduct similar actions in the future. Officials hope the strike will make a diplomatic settlement more possible; they don’t want a decapitation of the regime that would leave no counter-party for negotiation.

A second example of the dangerous opportunism that Obama has unintentionally fostered is that of Russian President Vladimir Putin. He’s a pugnacious former KGB officer who seems determined to take advantage

of our reasonable, reticent president and the fatigued nation he represents. For a while, Putin's chip on the shoulder was merely annoying. But in [turning a blind eye](#) to Syria's use of chemical weapons, the Russian leader is undermining one of the precepts of the global political order.

Putin will try to exploit the fallout of U.S. action, just as he harvested the benefits of inaction. But the Russian leader has truly brought this crisis on himself. Back in February in Munich, Vice President Biden and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [were talking privately](#) about the shared U.S.-Russian interest in containing Syria's chemical weapons. Russian behavior in the months since has been selfish and obtuse, and I suspect in the long run it will prove costly to them by fostering more disorder in the region.

Obama needs to calibrate his military strike in Syria with two other regional players in mind: Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Iranians surely have read Obama's caution (correctly) as a sign that he wants to avoid another war in the Middle East. Unfortunately, history tells us that an ambitious, revolutionary nation such as Iran makes compromises only under duress. U.S. action against Assad may not deter the Iranians, but it will at least make them think twice about crossing Obama's "red line" against their acquiring nuclear weapons.

Among Egyptian generals, Saudi princes, Israeli politicians and other conservative players in the Middle East, the consensus seems to be that Obama is a weak president — and that they need to rely on themselves for security. Obama won't change that opinion by authorizing a retaliatory strike against Syria. But if he moves sensibly, in coordination with allies, he will at least remind people that U.S. military power is not to be taken lightly.

[Article 4.](#)

The New Republic

## **We must do something in Syria**

[Leon Wieseltier](#)

August 27, 2013 -- After years of hectoring for American action against Assad, the prospect of American action against Assad makes me sad.

Obama seems to be readying a strike of some kind against the author of the atrocity at East Ghouta, the suburb of Damascus whose name has entered the rolls of contemporary evil, alongside Halabja and Srebrenica and Rwanda. Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians—or more accurately, his latest use of chemical weapons against civilians: according to Dexter Filkins's Syrian sources, he has used them 35 times—was one crime against humanity too many for the president. The administration is now speaking in somber hawkish tones and leaking to reporters various possibilities for the deployment of air power. There was some fussing about verifying that Assad was in fact responsible for the horrors, which reminded me of Clemenceau's jibe about the complexity of the origins of World War I—that whoever started it, it wasn't Belgium; but the factual matter has been officially closed, and everyone awaits a military operation. And this, as I say, makes me sad.

I am not the only one who is saddened, of course. Obama's imminent bout of historical decisiveness is worrying everyone who applauded his indecision, who found wisdom in his willingness to tolerate the massacres of children and the disintegration of our position in the Middle East. This week the "realists" are panicking. I confess that I am enjoying the spectacle. What saddens me, rather, is that Obama's awakening comes so shatteringly late. There is one response that crimes against humanity always provoke, and it is tardiness. The gassings at East Ghouta were not a unique outrage, a sudden outburst of tyrannical madness. They were perfectly consistent with the logic of the Syrian situation as it has unfolded over almost three years. They could have been predicted; they were predicted. When Assad went unmolested for his previous resort to weapons of mass destruction, there were some who noted that this would further disinhibit him and make him more likely to resort to them again. You do not need a security clearance to understand this.

Assad's cruelty against his own population has been steadily escalating in conformity with his view that there would be no retaliation from the West. Until now, his view was correct. But he should not yet abandon it entirely. A close reading, insofar as it is possible, of Obama's intentions reveals that what we are about to witness is not a renunciation of his previous policy on Syria. The realists should relax, and ride out the passing interventionist unpleasantness. Consider this remark by Jay Carney: "What we are talking

about here is a potential response ... to this specific violation of international norms. While it is part of this ongoing Syrian conflict in which we have an interest and in which we have a clearly stated position, it is distinct in this regard.” The logic of the Syrian situation, in other words, is precisely what American action will not address. The atrocity at East Ghouta has been analytically isolated from its context. It will not be allowed to falsify the prior assessment or the prior hesitation. What has roused the president is the WMD question and the international law question, not the humanitarian question and the strategic question. Meanwhile a torrent of liberal commentary is imploring him to sustain this distinction, to act but not with a new attitude about action. The White House and its supporters are seeking intervention without interventionism. An operation must be designed that will be limited and fleeting, that will do the right thing as inconsequentially as possible: a cop-out in the shape of a cruise missile. Assad will be punished and left in place; which is to say, unpunished. If he chooses never again to use chemical weapons, then his slaughter may never again be disturbed. Above all, the memory of Iraq will not be defiled. If we must do something—there is that “red line,” after all—then we will do something; but once we do something, we can go back to doing nothing.

A word about ambivalence, in the form of a Jewish joke. The setting is a rabbinical court. The plaintiff rises and makes his case. “You know, you’re right,” the rabbi says. The defendant rises and makes his case. “You know, you’re right,” the rabbi says. The bailiff rises and says: “But rabbi, they can’t both be right.” “You know, you’re right,” the rabbi says. In *The New Yorker* the other day, George Packer published [an ingenious and exasperating dialogue between a hawk and a dove](#) on the impending Syrian intervention, or rather between the divided voices in his own thoughtful head. The disputation is a draw. It turns out that neither side owns the moral high ground, that absolute certainty is ethically and intellectually disfiguring. People will die whatever we do or do not do. Innocence is not an option for any of us. I have no doubt that many of Packer’s readers were grateful for his skillful portrait of their own ambivalence. My problem is that it such double-mindedness is useless at a principals meeting. Worse, the president is himself a wallower in complexity. The relationship of complexity to decisiveness is, well, complex; but at some point arguments

must be accepted and arguments must be rejected. I have sometimes wondered about Eisenhower on the night before Normandy. He knew what would happen to the thousands of soldiers who had the misfortune, and the honor, to be the first on those beaches. Ambivalence is inevitable, at least in morally scrupulous people; but ambivalence never came to the rescue of anybody. The idealization of ambivalence is a version of the search for perfection, for a wholly clean conscience, when no such human immaculateness exists and not even just causes are perfect causes. Evil is certainly unambivalent. So it is good to be warned of all the impurities of power; but we are forgetting that power, our power, may be used for good and high purposes. The recent insistence on the decline of American power is in part the expression of the wish that America be less powerful. But it is too late for that, too. If our might cannot make right, it can at least serve it.

*Leon Wieseltier is an [American writer, critic, and magazine editor](#). Since 1983 he has been the literary editor of [The New Republic](#).*

[Article 5.](#)

Die Zeit

## **Let's not set Egyptian quest for democracy back**

Ezzedine Choukri Fishere

29 August -- It was never easy to be an Egyptian democrat; it is less so today. Many in the West view events in Egypt as a security crackdown by remnants of Mubarak's regime on an elected President and his political organization. Arrests of Brotherhood leaders and banning of their rallies are used as irrefutable evidence of this crackdown. The killing of hundreds of innocent civilians leaves little space for nuanced positions. If you believe in universal human values, you are required to condemn the killer first and foremost. As a democrat, indeed as a human being, I condemn the killing, unreservedly. But beyond that the question remains intact: what should be done to steer Egypt towards a pluralistic democracy?

For decades, Mubarak's regime threatened democrats with the specter of the totalitarian Muslim Brotherhood. Two and half years ago, we took the challenge and went to the streets to replace Mubarak's regime with a

democracy. The Brotherhood joined us, at least in the beginning. Few months later, our paths bifurcated as the Brotherhood started its climbing over ballot boxes – and our shoulders – to seize control of the state. The rise and fall of the alliance between us democrats and the Brotherhood is a tragic story, filled with hope, betrayal, anger and death.

During the first transitional process, we have failed, as democrats often do, in organizing and uniting ourselves sufficiently to contest power. In the first round of 2012 presidential elections, many of us voted for the Brotherhood candidate, Mohamad Morsi, to prevent a return of the old regime. Some still thought that Islamists shared our desire to build a democracy. Others argued that the exercise of governance will moderate the Brotherhood and force its leaders to answer hard questions about equality and freedom.

Unfortunately, power didn't moderate the Brotherhood. Its leaders quickly fell to extremist views regarding equality and human rights. They ignored their democratic partners and allied themselves with the orthodox Salafi groups as well as the armed Gama'a Islamiyya and Jihad. Morsi's Enabling Act of November 2012 made it clear that the Brotherhood is using its electoral victory to Islamize – not democratize – the country. Ultimately, the democratic forces invited the masses to take to the streets in order to overthrow the new despotism, de facto inviting the military to intervene and depose the president as they did with Mubarak.

Many outside Egypt accuse Egyptian democrats of taking an easy but undemocratic path instead of the hard but superior option of contesting power in the next election. They accuse us of abandoning our own democratic ideal to cover up for our ineptness. We might well be inept, but this doesn't mean that we deserve authoritarianism. It was obvious that the Brotherhood is actively changing the rules of the game to ensure that its control cannot be challenged in future elections. It repudiated its commitments and repeatedly rejected offers to agree on common 'ground rules' for the democratic game. It tightened its grip on the legal, administrative and coercion structures of the authoritarian state including the army and police – instead of reforming them. When we opposed this emerging tyranny, the Brotherhood resorted to the tactics of Mubarak's regime, introducing restrictive legislation and using brutal force. When the Brotherhood leaders felt that the security services were not harsh enough

on protestors, they deployed their own militants to ensure effective repression.

Morsi's year as president confirmed our worst fears about the Brotherhood's approach to democracy. As other Islamists did in Iran in 1979, in Sudan in 1988, and in Gaza in 2006, the Brotherhood leaders used elections as a ladder to power, to be pushed away once they are up. They tailored the new regime in ways that make it impossible to challenge from within. As was the case with Mubarak's regime, the only effective way to challenge its despotism was from outside the system. Waiting for next elections was recipe for a certain death of the democratic ideal.

Many in the West call for incorporating the Brotherhood in the new transitional process both as a sign of inclusiveness and to reduce the potential for violence. But the vast majority of Egyptians do not accept to dilute the democratic rules in order to include anti-democratic forces that threaten them.

We have learned, the hard way, that a nascent democracy needs to be protected from those who oppose it. Democratic transition is incompatible with changing the basic rules of the system after winning elections.

Democracy is incompatible with incitement for sectarianism, hatred or violence. Democracy is incompatible with calls for inequality among citizens. Democracy is incompatible with calling for disregarding basic human rights and freedoms. There is an entry ticket for the democratic club. The Muslim Brotherhood will have to renounce its anti-democratic practices as a price for joining the democratic club, or continue its all-out confrontation with the people it seeks to rule.

So far, the Brotherhood leaders seem bent on derailing this new transitional process, hoping to break the military and return to power. They won't. The Brotherhood, together with its regional supporters, might be able to prolong the ongoing confrontation, but that will not bring it back to power. In fact, this all-out confrontation offers hardliners in the security services an opportunity to uproot the Brotherhood. And the fiercer the confrontation becomes the more power the security services acquire, and the more difficult the Brotherhood return will be. In addition, the confrontation with the Brotherhood could lead other Islamists, inside and outside the organization, to dissent and create an alternative that is more compatible

with democracy and more acceptable to the public. All in all, this is not a confrontation the Muslim Brotherhood can win.

Today, a vast majority of Egyptians stand on the same side of the military and the police that they revolted against in 2011. It is an unlikely and difficult alliance, fraught with dangers. And although we democrats are still poorly organized, the public desire for democracy is formidable. This is where we draw our political strength. Therefore, if the military moved away from their commitment to democratic reforms, they will be facing not just us, but the same public on whose support they rely. They cannot maintain this support only by manipulating the media, employing phony political figures and forging elections. These days are gone. And the international community's pressure will make this option even less viable. In a nutshell, despite our presumed ineptness neither of the two non-democratic forces can prevail in Egypt. Only a democratizing regime has a chance of ruling over a population that has rejected the garb of authoritarianism and offer stability. The question is, however, whether such a regime would emerge soon or whether we will have to go through another round of conflict before the need for a genuine democratization is understood by all.

*The author is an Egyptian novelist and professor of politics.*

[Article 6.](#)

Foreign Policy

## **The Qatar problem**

Jeremy Shapiro

August 28, 2013 -- On the face of it, Qatar has been one of the United States's most valuable allies in the Middle East over the last decade. Qatar hosts a large U.S. Air Force base in the Persian Gulf and has often provided political and financial support for U.S. initiatives in the Middle East. Indeed, Washington has often encouraged Qatari activism to legitimize U.S. diplomacy, including its political support at the Arab League of a potential U.S. strike against Syria.

But Qatar's role in the United States's Middle East policy is far more problematic than is commonly recognized. The tiny yet ambitious Gulf emirate has sought to use its immense hydrocarbon wealth to finance and arm civil wars in Libya and Syria, to support Hamas in Gaza, and to mediate disputes in Sudan and Lebanon. Its interest sometimes align with the United States's -- but too often, they do not. The launch of Al-Jazeera America, the news network its government owns, should redirect attention to Doha's goals and means.

Qatari activism over the last few years has been a mixed blessing for the United States. Indeed, it has often actively and purposefully undermined U.S. efforts on key problems. In Egypt, for example, Qatar's lavish and unconditional funding of the Morsi government enabled it to avoid taking the difficult steps that the International Monetary Fund (and the United States) believed were necessary to get the Egyptian economy back on track and to compromise with domestic opponents. In Gaza, Qatar helped undermine U.S. efforts to isolate and delegitimize Hamas by its strong and public embrace of its leadership including through high-level visits to Gaza.

In Libya, U.S. efforts to support the formation of a moderate and inclusive Libyan transitional government capable of effectively governing Libya were constantly thwarted and undermined by an independent Qatari policy. While the United States and its other partners tried to promote the opposition Transitional National Council (TNC) on the world stage, Qatar repeatedly and unhelpfully pushed for a more prominent role for alternative opposition groups that were dependent on Qatar. Qatar also [funneled weapons and ammunition](#) to Islamist militias outside of the TNC structure, strengthening the voices of groups opposed to the U.S. vision for post-Qaddafi Libya and undermining the TNC's ability and legitimacy to establish control. According to a senior Israeli official, "Qatar's reckless conduct in Libya was disastrous. They supported dangerous Islamist actors." As was often predicted at the time, these practices contributed to Libya's inability to form an effective central authority and to rein in those militias.

It has been no better in Syria. Qatar emerged after 2011 as arguably the most important external supporter of the Syrian opposition to the Assad regime. Qatar has spent, [according to news reports](#), over \$3 billion on aid

to the opposition. Qatar has been among the opposition's primary suppliers of arms and ammunition and may have the most influence of any external actor with the fractious Syrian opposition. Many allies pose difficulties for the United States in the Syria context, but Qatar has proven the greatest obstacle to forging allied unity on Syria policy. As in Libya, the Qataris have used their influence to frustrate the efforts of the United States and others to foster unity within the Syrian opposition that is the prerequisite for a negotiated solution to the war. [According to press reports](#), Qatar's actions -- its tendency to support multiple Islamist factions, its willingness to engage with Jihadist actors, and its refusal to channel aid solely through the Syrian Military Council (SMC) -- have exacerbated the divisions within the opposition and contributed to the opposition's refusal to negotiate. As Middle East analyst Mishaal Al Gergawi puts it [in Al-Monitor](#), "[t]he parties Qatar supports ... have carried a sectarian and non-cooperative message, at times implied and at others stated outright." All of this is a problem for U.S. policy on Syria. While U.S. policy on Syria has many defects, no U.S. policy could hope to restore stability unless the United States forged consensus with the countries commonly considered its allies in Syria. If U.S. airstrikes or lethal assistance were to hasten the fall of the Assad regime, opposition unity would be essential for stability in post-Assad Syria. The recent decision by the Obama administration to arm the Syrian opposition is intended in part to foster opposition unity and empower moderates. But without the cooperation of key U.S. allies, U.S. lethal assistance will only exacerbate opposition divides as sponsors compete to fund their favorite proxies. Allied unity is necessary to ensure a coherent opposition and a unified opposition, in turn, is necessary to achieve the negotiated solution the United States seeks. So what are the Qataris trying to do? According to Mehran Kamrava of Georgetown University, Qatar seeks the prestige that comes from [playing a role](#) on all of the big issues of the day. But, judging from its pattern of activity of the past few years, Qatari activism is also clearly part of a larger Qatari strategy that has been playing out across the Muslim world. As Brian Katulis explains, Qatar sees the Arab Awakening as an opportunity to [spread Qatari influence](#) through the establishment of Islamist governments that look to Qatar (and not to Saudi Arabia or the United States) for support and guidance. It is this dual interest in promoting

influence and ideology that informs Qatari foreign policy from Libya to Palestine.

In many places, this strategy has meant fostering a government made up of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) related groups that are beholden to their benefactors in Doha. Qatar's decision to patronize MB movements, as opposed to alternative factions, is driven by two factors.

First, Qatar thinks that it can exercise greater control over the MB than other political movements. When the emir took power in the mid-1990s, the MB was a client [without a Sunni Arab patron](#). This enabled Qatar to position itself as a unique and indispensable ally of the MB, with all of the leverage that entailed. In contrast, Salafi movements, for instance, have long enjoyed the patronage of Saudi Arabia. Should Qatar choose to back Salafi groups, it would find itself in a competition for influence with its regional rival, undermining Qatar's control of its client.

Second, Qatar probably assesses that the [MB is the wave of the future](#) in the Middle East, a movement that resonates with pluralities -- if not majorities -- in many Arab countries, despite its recent setback in Egypt. While Qatar may be able to acquire comparable influence over secular and liberal groups, which also badly need external support, the Qatari leadership likely believes these movements would not afford it much influence abroad. The former emir's record of supporting MB organizations throughout the region (with Qatar, itself, being the notable exception) and the emirate's long-standing relationship with the influential MB-affiliated cleric Yusuf Al-Qaradawi have given Qatar an enormous advantage in cultivating alliances with emboldened Islamist groups throughout the Middle East.

Qatari leaders might logically fear that the march of populist movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, across the Arab world might someday [threaten their rule](#). But, sheltered by its vast wealth, the Qatari government seems confident it can contain the threat posed by potential domestic MB movements in Qatar while supporting the MB abroad. This Qatari strategy implies that U.S.-Qatari divides are not simply a difference in tactics, as U.S. officials often assert. Nor is Qatar simply filling a U.S. leadership vacuum. As the Libya example demonstrates, Qatar has the capacity to frustrate U.S. goals even when the United States is deeply engaged. Rather, the superficial similarity in U.S. and Qatari

goals masks much deeper and more abiding differences about the two countries' visions for the Middle East. At times, these visions coincide and allow effective cooperation. But when they don't, Qatar has proven willing to work actively to frustrate important U.S. policy goals.

In Syria, for example, Qatar's goal of establishing a MB government dependent on Qatar cannot be achieved through a political settlement. The very process of negotiation, particularly one brokered by the United States and Russia, would dilute the influence of the MB within the opposition and require some degree of compromise with elements of the Assad regime. Thus, Qatar's goals require military victory, first by the opposition forces over the Assad regime and then by Qatar's political and military proxies over other sponsors' proxies within the opposition. So, Qatar's actions have not been aimed at promoting a political solution in Syria, nor have they been aimed at promoting a more coherent opposition.

One of the most conspicuous -- and disruptive -- manifestations of this approach was Qatar's overt support for the divisive MB candidate for interim prime minister, Ghassan Hitto, in March. His selection led nine members of the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) to suspend their memberships, undercutting opposition unity, and seemed intended to derail SOC President Moaz Al-Khatib's initiative to start a dialogue with the regime. [Khatib resigned](#) shortly thereafter.

If Qatari involvement in Syria has hindered the prospects for the emergence of a stable, functioning, and representative Syrian opposition, this is not the unintended consequence of a poorly designed or implemented policy. Rather, it is the logical culmination of a strategy that privileges Qatari influence and favored actors over peace in Syria and the stability in the region.

Overall, while Qatar is not necessarily an enemy of the United States, it is certainly not an ally. The usual U.S. government response to such deviationism among partners is to advocate "high-level engagement" to make known U.S. displeasure and to convince the ally of the errors of its ways. But in the Qatari case, engagements at the highest levels on both Libya and Syria (as well as on efforts to get the Qataris to cut off their support to Hamas) have failed to alter Qatari behavior. It is time to recognize this and consider whether the United States needs to reconsider its approach to Qatari activism.

The recent leadership transition in Qatar, in which the emir stepped down in favor of his son, might present some new opportunities for the United States to turn Qatar from its present course. But most analysts agree that there is little indication that the new emir would seek to change [Qatari foreign policy](#). In his maiden speech as emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani seemed to be at pains to demonstrate continuity in foreign policy, vowing to follow his father's "path" and strongly asserting that Qatar would continue its "[independent behavior](#)." Indeed, [Tamim](#) is widely regarded as one of the [architects](#) of Qatar's Libya and Syria policy over the past two years, including his country's patronage of the MB.

The United States should certainly be open to a more cooperative relationship if Tamim agrees to alter the pattern of recent Qatari policy. But it would be imprudent to assume that the new emir will fundamentally change what Qatar views as a successful policy. If the pattern persists, it will be time to accept that U.S.-Qatari differences do not result from failures to communicate. They are differences over goals in Syria and elsewhere. Accordingly, the United States should cease trying to convince the Qataris that their actions are undermining shared goals and accept their objectives in these cases are not the same as those of the United States. Instead, it is a question of changing the cost-benefit calculus that Qatar faces in its Syria policy. This would be very difficult in the case of Qatar because of its wealth, its role in U.S. basing in the Persian Gulf, and its value to the United States on other geopolitical priorities in which U.S. and Qatari [interests are more aligned](#) and Qatar is working well with the United States.

In the end, Qatar is neither an enemy nor an ally of the United States. While the United States cannot build a deep strategic relationship with Qatar, this does not mean it should oppose Qatar at every turn. Rather the United States should realize that it will always have a very transactional relationship with Qatar and thus should seek to get the best deal on every transaction. And, the United States does have some cards to play, and should consider if it decides that the new Qatari government intends to continue Qatar's recent policies.

In the case of Syria, the United States could try to use its influence with Turkey and Jordan to cut off Qatar's access to the theater. In Jordan, which fears Qatar's influence on Islamist actors in Syria, this is not a difficult case

to make. But in Turkey, the United States may need to point out that Qatar doesn't have the intelligence apparatus to support a weapons-delivery process that ensures its cargo reaches the intended recipient with any degree of reliability. It would be very surprising if a significant share of Qatari arms didn't leak to other groups, including the Kurds given their proximity to shipment routes from Turkey. Even if Bashar al-Assad falls, Qatari efforts may ultimately result in a second civil war that will pit secularists versus Islamists and Arabs versus Kurds and risk the dismemberment of Syria -- an outcome that Turkey fears might [worsen its Kurdish problem](#). Concurrently, the United States could try to reduce Qatari influence by encouraging Saudi Arabia, which is more supportive of moderate and secular Syrian factions and more aligned with U.S. goals, to use its financial resources to substitute for Qatar, as new reports indicate [may already be happening](#).

In addition to denying Qatar's access to Syria, the United States could seek to raise the costs for Qatar of continuing on its current course. The United States could exploit the long-standing [Qatari-Saudi rivalry](#) and encourage the Saudis to host Qatari dissidents who challenge the legitimacy of the Thani family and even give them a platform on Al-Arabiya, the Saudi satellite television network (a reversal of the Qatari practice of putting Saudi dissidents on Al-Jazeera). Similarly, the U.S. government could suggest that universities and think tanks invite members of collateral branches of the Thani family at odds with the emir and his branch to events in the United States and elsewhere to demonstrate splits, or at least the perception of splits, within the ruling family. On the international front, the United States could consider embarking on a systematic campaign to publicize the deplorable conditions under which over a million migrant laborers work and live in the emirate. Such negative publicity could tarnish Qatar's reputation as it gets ready to host the 2022 World Cup and plans a bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics.

On a broader level, dealing with Qatar's negative effect on U.S. Middle East policies would require changing the terms of the U.S.-Qatari bargain. Qatar is deeply unpopular with its more powerful neighbors and has long sheltered its immense wealth behind a U.S. military presence. It depends on the United States to keep open the shipping lanes that allows its gas to get to the market. But the critical role the United States plays in protecting

Qatar from its neighbors buys the United States shockingly little influence with the Qatari government. The Qataris seem to understand that the U.S. desire to play the regional hegemon in the Persian Gulf requires bases in Qatar, giving them all the leverage in the bilateral relationship. They are reinforced in this belief by U.S. officials and military officers who tell them that the U.S. military presence in Qatar is critical to U.S. policy even though its importance is declining dramatically as the United States withdraws from Afghanistan.

The United States could stop reassuring Qatar in this way and, to the contrary, convince it that it has other options for protecting U.S. interests in the Gulf. The existence of such options would undoubtedly focus the Qataris on just how important U.S. protection is to their continued vitality in a very difficult neighborhood. Of course, making this case will actually require devising some realistic alternative basing options. But the first step in doing that is acknowledging the price that the United States is currently paying for its reliance on Qatar.

None of this is easy. But at the end of day, U.S. policy on critical Middle East issues like Syria is being held hostage by the contrary agenda of a tiny country that the United States defends militarily. This is massive failure of diplomacy.

*Jeremy Shapiro is a visiting fellow with the Foreign Policy program at Brookings. From 2009-2013, he served in the State Department on the Policy Planning Staff and in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and currently consults for the Policy Planning Staff. The opinions and characterizations in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent officials positions of the United States Government.*

[Article 7.](#)

The Wall Street Journal

## **How an Endangered Google Policy Got Results**

Brian M. Carney and Isaac Getz

August 28, 2013 -- Published reports in recent weeks indicate that [Google](#) has been cracking down on employees' "20% time"—the policy of letting Googlers spend a fifth of their time working on whatever innovative, maybe even crazy, projects they wished.

The news was a shocker. Google had widely touted its 20% time as a cornerstone of its "innovation machine." [Larry Page](#) and [Sergey Brin](#) also cited 20% time as leading to many of Google's "most significant advances." These include Gmail, Google News and AdSense—and that last one accounts for a quarter of Google's \$50 billion-plus in annual revenue. Founders Page and Brin, together with ex-CEO [Eric Schmidt](#), reportedly used 20% time personally. Google's current top brass seems to have forgotten, or to have misunderstood, the reasons for the company's success. Continuous innovation is one of the hardest tricks in business. Sustaining it over decades has proved impossible for all but a select few, such as 3M or W.L. Gore & Associates, the makers of Gore-Tex. One can't just throw money and bodies at innovation—there is no correlation between the size of a company's budget and its innovation rate. Most ideas are bad ones, so you have to entertain a lot of them to find the real gems.

According to academic research, a company, on average, needs 3,000 ideas to get 300 of them formalized, 125 of them into small experimentation, 10 of them officially budgeted, 1.7 launched—and one that makes money. Those are long odds. So naturally many executives seek to "optimize" these dynamics. They decide on, say, 10 official projects to favor. This kills most of the informal ideas, which employees just keep to themselves—or bring to a competitor. What's more, it is extremely unlikely that people at the top know in advance which ideas are going to be the big winners.

At 3M and Gore, it is their employees' initiatives that have introduced them to new markets. Take Gore's Elixir guitar strings—which started as an employee's informal idea for an innovative bike-gear cable. Today Elixir is a market leader, and one of 1,000 new products the company has successfully launched since it invented Gore-Tex in 1969.

Seen in this light, freeing up time for innovation is not just another on-the-job perk. It is a token of respect that offers room for personal growth and a degree of autonomy to employees, regardless of what their "day job" is. On paper, a step like Google's possible elimination of 20% time might look like it saves money. But the signal it sends is that management, not the

workers, knows what the most productive use of employees' time is. It's a step down the road to a company of clock-punchers.

The freest, most innovative companies we know were coherently built to produce a corporate culture that nurtures those universal needs of intrinsic equality, growth and self-direction. In such a culture, people are self-motivated and decide for themselves what initiatives are best for advancing the corporate vision.

Google has never consciously built such a culture. And now it seems that the company's 20% time was not part of a freedom-of-initiative culture, but a perk. Google has a legendary collection of those, from free gourmet food to, nowadays, a death perk: As Chief People Officer Laszlo Bock explained to Forbes last year, an employee's surviving spouse gets a 10-year pay package, with all stock vested immediately, while any children receive \$1,000 monthly until 19 (or 23 if a student).

Adding perks is a business decision. They are powerful retention tools, and reducing turnover by several percentage points saves a lot of money. But scrapping perks is also a business decision. At some point, some executive will demonstrate that a given perk's cost exceeds its benefits. Paradoxically, as soon as a perk becomes established, it loses its motivating power and becomes a potential liability. Ex-Googlers tell us that the crackdown on 20% time began during the post-crisis recession, as the company's revenues declined. This suggests that 20% time has long been viewed by management as just another expensive indulgence.

When 20% time or its equivalent isn't a perk but part of the freedom-of-initiative culture, higher-ups are acknowledging that they don't know what the next Gmail or AdSense is, and so they're counting on employees to find it. A company that wants to put "more wood behind fewer arrows" is a company that believes it has already found all the targets worth aiming at. Such a company risks leaving its best growth in the past, and exporting its best ideas to competitors.

*Mr. Carney is editorial page editor of The Wall Street Journal Europe. Mr. Getz is a professor at ESCP Europe Business School. They are co-authors of "Freedom, Inc." (Crown Business, 2009).*