

The Truth About Syria

Is overthrowing the Syrian government really worth so much suffering and death?

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As the terrorism of Daesh (ISIS) and other extremists grows more intense, and as millions of Syrians have become refugees, the heavy costs of the U.S. government's "regime change" operation in Syria should come into question.

Education, health care and national rebirth

Since winning its independence, Syria's Baathist leadership has done a great deal to improve the living standards of the population. Between 1970 and 2009, the life expectancy in Syria increased by 17 years. During this time period infant mortality dropped dramatically from 132 deaths per 1,000 live births to only 17.9. According to an article published by the *Avicenna Journal of Medicine*, these notable changes in access to public health came as a result of the Syrian government's efforts to bring medical care to the country's rural areas.

A 1987 country study of Syria, published by the U.S. Library of Congress, describes huge achievements in the field of education. During the 1980s, for the first time in Syria's history, the country achieved "full primary school enrollment of males" with 85 percent of females also enrolled in primary school. In 1981, 42 percent of Syria's adult population was illiterate. By 1991, illiteracy in Syria had been wiped out by a mass literacy campaign led by the government.

The name of the main political party in Syria is the "Baath Arab Socialist Party." The Arabic word "Baath" literally translates to "Rebirth" or "Resurrection." In terms of living standards, the Baathist Party has lived up to its name, forging an entirely new country with an independent, tightly planned and regulated economy. The Library of Congress' Country Study described the vast construction in Syria during the 1980s: "Massive expenditures for development of irrigation, electricity, water, road building projects, and the expansion of health services and education to rural areas contributed to prosperity."

Compared to Saudi-dominated Yemen, many parts of Africa, and other corners of the globe that have never established economic and political independence, the achievements of the Syrian Arab Republic look very attractive.

What the Western colonizers failed to achieve during centuries of domination, the independent Syrian government achieved rapidly

with help from the Soviet Union and other anti-imperialist countries. The Soviet Union provided Syria with a \$100 million loan to build the Tabqa dam on the Euphrates River, which was "considered to be the backbone of all economic and social development in Syria." Nine-hundred Soviet technicians worked on the infrastructure project which brought electricity to many parts of the country. The dam also enabled irrigation throughout the Syrian countryside.

These huge gains for the Syrian population should not be dismissed and written off, as Western commentators routinely do when repeating their narrative of "Assad the Dictator." For people who have always had access to education and medical care, it is easy to trivialize such achievements. But for the millions of Syrians, especially in rural areas, who lived in extreme poverty just a few decades ago, things like access to running water, education, electricity, medical care, and university education represent a huge change for the better.

Like almost every other regime in the crosshairs of U.S. foreign policy, Syria has a strong, domestically-controlled economy. Syria is not a "client state" like the Gulf state autocracies surrounding it, and it has often functioned in defiance of the U.S. and Israel. It is this, not altruistic concerns about human rights, that motivate Western attacks on the country.

Syria needs reform, not terrorism

In 2012, Syria ratified a new constitution in response to the protests during the Arab Spring. In compliance with the new constitution, Syria held a contested election in 2014, with international observers from 14 countries.

One thing that distinguishes Syria from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and various other U.S.-aligned regimes throughout the region is religious freedom. In Syria, Sunnis, Christians, Alawites, Druze, Jews, and other religious groups are permitted to practice their religious faith freely. The government is secular, and respects the rights of the Sunni Muslim majority as well as religious minorities.

Though Syrian President Bashar Assad is an Alawite, his wife, Asma, is Sunni like the majority of the country. Historically, the biggest opponents of the Syrian government have been supporters of the Muslim brotherhood, with a bloody episode taking place in 1982. Hoping to heal the longstanding tension, President Assad has made many gestures of solidarity toward the Sunni community in recent years.

Syria's political system is certainly in need of reform and modernization, however, the civil war which has raged across Syria for the last five years, is not about reform, democratization or modernization.

The BBC published a "guide to Syrian rebels" in 2013. Among them are not only the infamous "Islamic State" organization, which now horrifies the world, but also the Nusra Front, previously known as Al-Qaida in Syria. Other organizations with names like the "Islamic Front," the "Islamic Liberation Front," and the "Ahfad al-Rasoul Brigades" are also listed.

While Western media presents the Syrian civil war as a "battle for democracy" led by "revolutionaries," the primary goal of almost every insurgent organization is creating a Sunni caliphate. The unifying religious perspective of the Syrian "rebels" is the interpretation of Sunni Islam practiced and promoted by Saudi Arabia, known as Wahhabism.

Foreign fighters, chemical weapons and child soldiers

A large number of the insurgents are not Syrian. Impoverished people from throughout the Middle East have been recruited to fight against the Syrian government. Facilities in Bahrain train recruits to kill, and send them to Syria.

Terrorist training facilities exist in many other U.S.-aligned Gulf states. Foreign fighters from as far away as Malaysia and the Philippines have been found among the ranks of the foreign Wahhabi insurgents that are trying to depose the Syrian government.

The Israeli government has made a point of aiding the Wahhabi extremists by providing them medical care in the occupied Golan Heights. Israel has also made a point of targeting allies of the Syrian government with airstrikes.

While Western media has highlighted allegations that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons, Carla Del Ponte from the United Nations confirmed that the foreign-backed insurgents have long been using sarin nerve gas and other chemical weapons.

As the insurgents make life unlivable in Syria, kidnapping for ransom, bombing schools and hospitals, beheading people, torturing people, they do it with thousands of child soldiers among their ranks. Impoverished children from across the Arab world have been recruited to work toward violently overthrowing the Syrian government, according to UNICEF.

Between 50 and 72 percent of the population lives in areas controlled by the Syrian government. Meanwhile, even USAID confirmed that the turnout in Syria's 2014 elections was more than 70 percent.

The fact that the Syrian government remains strongly intact after a five-year onslaught shows that the country is dedicated to preserving its independence.

How can the war end?

Western media continues to blame the Syrian government for the conflict. However, the war would have been a very short one if not for the foreign support given to the extremists. As an independent country with a centrally planned economy, Syria has served as an example to the world. It has proven that without neoliberalism and Western economic domination, it is possible to improve living conditions and develop independently.

The war in Syria is not a domestic conflict. This is a war imposed on Syria by Israel, the U.S., and other Western capitalist powers.

At least 470,000 people are dead, and millions of others have been forced to become refugees, but Western leaders and their allies do not end their campaign. The insane chorus of "Assad Must Go" has transformed a small, domestic episode of unrest into a full-scale humanitarian crisis. The war has nothing to do with the calls for democratic reform and the peaceful protests of 2011.

As Daesh (ISIS) now threatens the entire world, the consequences of the Wall Street regime change operation, promoted with "human rights" propaganda, are becoming far more extreme. The Syrian government rallies a coalition of Christians, Communists, Islamic Revolutionaries, and other forces who are fighting to maintain stability and defeat Takfiri terrorism. (The term "Takfiri" refers to groups of Sunni Muslims who refer to other Muslims as apostates and seek to establish a caliphate by means of violence.)

The only real peace plan for Syria is for the U.S., France, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, and other powers to end their neoliberal crusade. The internationally recognized and recently re-elected Syrian government could easily defeat the insurgents if foreign meddling ceased.

As U.S. media bemoans the humanitarian crisis, somehow blaming on the Syrian government and its president, and the U.S. directly sends its military forces into the country, the people of the world should ask Western leaders and their allies: Why are you prolonging this war? Why can't you just leave Syria alone? Why do you continue funding and enabling the terrorists? Isn't five years of civil war enough? Is overthrowing the Syrian government really worth so much suffering and death?

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