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Russia Vows to Block Any UN Mandate for Intervention in Syria

By John Glaser

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov Thursday stated unequivocally [there would be no UN Security Council mandate for outside intervention in Syria](#), making clear Moscow would use its veto to block any military action.

“There will not be a Security Council mandate for outside intervention, I guarantee you that,” Lavrov told reporters, while speaking out against efforts by the U.S. and its allies to bring down the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

“Either we gather everyone with influence at the negotiating table or once again we depart into ideology... where it is declared shamelessly that everything is the fault of the regime, while everyone else are angels and therefore the regime should be changed,” he said.

As Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma and an expert on Syria, [wrote in Foreign Policy this week](#), “Let’s be clear: Washington is pursuing regime change by civil war in Syria. The United States, Europe, and the Gulf states want regime change, so they are starving the regime in Damascus and feeding the opposition.”

But Lavrov argued the opposition could not be trusted. “There are sides in the Syria conflict, especially the so called Syrian National Council, who are saying no negotiations with the regime, only continued armed battle until the Security Council gives a mandate for outside intervention,” he said.

Russia's interests in Syria, which acts as a sort of client state for Moscow, have lead to consistent promises of vetoes for any UN Security Council resolution justifying intervention. There might have been some kind of international intervention back in early February, when [China and Russia vetoed a resolution](#) that very well could have led to military action.

For now, the White House [has officially opposed direct military intervention](#) on the grounds that it would lead to greater chaos and escalate the humanitarian crisis in the country.

“We do not believe that militarization, further militarization of the situation in Syria at this point is the right course of action,” [White House Spokesman Jay Carney said](#). “We believe that it would lead to greater chaos, greater carnage.”

While the Obama administration rightly opposes military intervention, they have unfortunately [already begun providing lethal and non-lethal aid](#) to the [Syrian opposition](#). This, despite the fact that the rebel fighters [have committed serious atrocities](#) themselves and that al-Qaeda elements are known to cooperate in the rebel fight against Assad.

[This aid to the opposition is likely to](#) spread the violence and increase the number of Syrian dead without increasing the likelihood of Assad's departure. [Also](#), as we saw in Libya, such policies tend to boost the power of fighting groups and marginalize those who favor peaceful political transition.

The foreign meddling in Syria is almost certainly prolonging the conflict. Support for the Assad regime from Russia and Iran and for the opposition from the U.S. and its allies in Europe and the Persian Gulf is emboldening both sides and preventing either from giving up and ceding to a political transition.

But Russia's threat of a veto is at least blocking another Western war in the Middle East and marginalizing somewhat the very transparent calls for U.S. intervention which are being made by hawks [who want to stick it to Iran as opposed to save the Syrian people](#).