



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 30, 2015

## Lack of U.S. Military Intervention in Syria Blamed for Paris Attacks

In an [op-ed piece](#) published in the *New York Times* on November 27, contributing opinion writer Peter Wehner criticized President Barack Obama for his “failure to act in any meaningful way to avert the humanitarian disaster now engulfing Syria.” Specifically, Wehner pointed to the president’s lack of follow-through on several promises to ramp up the U.S. military presence in Syria as a proximate cause of the current crisis and the Paris massacre:



He repeatedly insisted he would not put American soldiers in Syria or pursue a prolonged air campaign. He refused to declare safe havens or no-fly zones. And it was also in 2012 that Mr. Obama warned the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, that using chemical weapons would cross a “red line.” Yet when Mr. Assad did just that, Mr. Obama did nothing.

The president, perhaps fearful of offending the pro-Assad Iranian government with which he was trying to negotiate a nuclear arms deal, chose to sit by while a humanitarian catastrophe unfolded.

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With regard to the use of American military resources in the Syrian civil war, advocates of intervention often cite two constitutional provisions related to the ability to wage war: Congress’ power to declare war in Article I, Section 8 and the president’s role as commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy as set out in Article II, Section 2.

Apart from those two misinterpreted (and habitually misapplied) provisions, the hawks turn to an analysis of the history and application of the War Powers Resolution.

The Constitution grants to Congress *all* legislative power. Laws passed by Congress and signed by the president then become “the supreme law of the land” (see Article VI). There is one qualification of that power, however. Article VI endows laws passed by Congress with legal supremacy provided that they are made “in pursuance” of the Constitution.

In the case of the War Powers Resolution, this piece of legislation grants the president more power than the Constitution by placing the use of the American armed forces at the president’s sole and unchecked discretion (albeit for 60 days before he must seek congressional approval for the continuation of the deployment).

At best, this “law” is an end run around the Constitution, and at worst it is a disregard of the exclusive war-making authority granted by the states to Congress in the Constitution.

Either way, it does not seem to pass the “in pursuance thereof” test, therefore it is, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, “*ab initio*, null, void, and of no force or effect.”

Next, Wehner’s unapologetic beating of the war drum is unlikely to bring harmony to the cacophonous Middle East. In fact, it’s almost certain to add more voices to the chorus of those calling for attacks on



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the United States.

Why?

In a word: blowback.

Blowback in this case is defined as violent counter-attacks carried out as revenge for covert operations. After years of living with the constant hum of drones and blasts from the Hellfire missiles they deploy, relatives of those killed in these strikes have spoken with the clarity and carelessness that comes from the mixture of mourning and rage.

“You want us to stay quiet while our wives and brothers are being killed for no reason. This attack is the real terrorism,” said Mansoor al-Maweri, whom CNN reported as being “near the scene of the strike” that “mistakenly” killed 13 Yemenis attending a wedding in 2012.

Then there was this from “an activist” who lives near the site of the September massacre:

“I would not be surprised if a hundred tribesmen joined the lines of al Qaeda as a result of the latest drone mistake,” said Nasr Abdullah. “This part of Yemen takes revenge very seriously.”

One struggles to imagine anything more likely to convince young Yemenis that the United States is not their ally, but rather their enemy, a far away menace that routinely murders innocent men, women, and children. As [reported by the U.K.’s Guardian on December 12](#):

Farea al-Muslimi, a Yemeni activist who testified to the US Senate about the impact of the drone strikes earlier this year predicted the strike would drain Yemeni citizens’ outrage over the recent attack on the defense ministry by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula that killed more than 50 people.

“The strike today literally saved AQAP’s image and shorted by months the PR work [they] would have needed to do,” al-Muslimi said. “Nothing could have made Yemenis forget the horrible images of the attack in Sanaa more than the images of this current drone strike that targeted a wedding party.”

Perhaps Americans shouldn’t worry about blowback, about the recruitment of battalions of new “extremists.” There are some who argue that the goal of the drone war is not to reduce the number of “extremists,” but to increase the safety of the United States.

The problem with that premise is that there is no way to know who is an “extremist” at heart and who was compelled to consider the U.S. an enemy after witnessing the summary execution of many who never harbored militant intent.

More to the point, when did “extremism” become a crime? If it is a crime, where is it defined? How can anyone know if he is guilty of extremism if such a crime is not defined? Could one hypothetically be an extremist without knowing it, given that the crime is nowhere defined?

During a recent appearance on Fox Business, former congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul commented on the likely expansion of extremism if the current policies are pursued. Paul predicted that there will be “a lot more” blowback, specifically referring to the slaughter in Paris earlier this month, if the United States does not call a halt to the interventionist foreign policy that has been on the agenda of several generations of presidential administrations.

The liberty-minded Paul criticized the U.S. government’s “foreign policy of constant occupation, bombing, and killing people, and eliciting this hatred toward us.” He recommended a return to the non-



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interventionist, republican principles promoted by the Founders as a way to reduce the level of violence.

After rehearsing his own record of political and military service and expressing his “love of liberty,” George Washington urged the states to remain united and to “avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty.”

Obviously, the United States has failed to follow President Washington’s wise recommendations.

Our own massive military-industrial complex counts profits in the billions derived from supplying our armed forces currently deployed around the globe. Defense contractors sign billion-dollar contracts with the government, and funnel millions into the campaign coffers of key congressmen whom they can count on to keep the money flowing and the troops fighting.

To avoid the plague of perpetual war, Washington warned against “foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues.”

Sadly, our modern proclivity is to surrender sovereignty to international bodies whose members are not elected and thus not accountable to the American people, and to send monetary and military support to “freedom fighters” in the Middle East, including those in Syria, a program the author of the above-quoted op-ed piece in the *New York Times* recommends.

As the massacre of at least 130 innocent people in Paris demonstrates, however, all this patronage has failed to purchase peace.

And, the U.S. government’s failure to follow Washington’s counsel has served to enrage the ranks of those who would carry out such savagery, not to tame them.



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