

# U.S. Backing Of Syrian Extremists: Another Afghanistan In The Making

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The war against Syria has been underway for over 20 months. Clearly the Syrian people have a right to determine their own future rather than having it imposed by external opposition groups controlled by Western countries and their Sunni Arab allies. But this war from the beginning has been about the geopolitical advantage of NATO and its Arab allies. The policy of regime change is actively promoted by Britain, France, the US, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt. In recent weeks, the political and military wings of the external opposition were reorganized in an attempt to make them more effective.

Throughout the last 20 months the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the military wing of the external opposition, has been led by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. In addition to the FSA, Syria has been flooded with thousands of foreign Islamist terrorists waging what they call a jihad, a holy war. These extremists dream of a global caliphate and their objective in Syria is to create an Islamic government as part of the global caliphate process.

All of these paramilitary forces are financed and supplied by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and various Islamic non-state actors. The US, Britain, and France also provide assistance, training, and guidance to the FSA.

Reporting from war correspondents shows that real fighting over the past 20 months has been waged by the foreign Islamist terrorist groups. After they clear areas, the FSA forces move in. The FSA commanders and the foreign jihadi forces closely coordinate and are allies in the field of battle.

The foreign jihadi forces reportedly come from such countries as Libya, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and even from Central Asia.

US President Barack Obama just placed the al-Nusra Front, the leading foreign jihadi group, on the US terrorist blacklist. Washington has delayed doing this for months because al-Nusra has been in effect a key ally in the war against Syria.

Washington's move is designed as a fig leaf to cloak an embarrassing arrangement of convenience. The extremely capable and experienced al-Nusra fighters and others like them will continue their jihad against Syria and continue to coordinate with the FSA. Washington can now better pretend that it is not allied with Al Qaeda in Syria.

But the US is publicly supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its Syrian branch which dominates the political and military wings of the external Syrian opposition. The problem for Washington is that the Muslim Brotherhood's Egyptian and Syrian branches are secretly interfaced with Al Qaeda.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's secret paramilitary organization, the Special Apparatus, has for decades interfaced with Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. This apparatus has over the years trained various Syrian Muslim Brotherhood operatives who themselves later interfaced with Al Qaeda and similar extremist organizations.

Some reports from Cairo indicate that the Special Apparatus is the dominant faction within the Muslim Brotherhood and thus exercises decisive influence over its political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party.

Against this background, is another Afghanistan in the making? Time will tell.

*The author is an educator and former senior professional staff member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.*

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