

Sometimes the Enemy of Your Enemy Is Still the Enemy

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Unless the United States quickly establishes a mechanism for Bashar al-Assad's departure, the Islamic State and similar groups will remain potent regional actors.

With the growth of the Islamic State have come voices for the United States and Western countries to engage with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The fact is, however, that a strategy for defeating the terrorist group is far more complex than cozying up to Assad.

Assad is held up as "the lesser of two evils" in Syria and now backed by the Russian military. American foreign policy pundits are rumored to be lining up appointments with Assad in Damascus to determine if he might be a partner in fighting terrorism. It's natural when attempting to "degrade and eventually destroy" the Islamic State to invoke that most overused Middle East cliché: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." But doing so would be a mistake.

The problem does not lie just in the optics and ethics of Americans engaging with murderous dictators who have tried (and in Assad's case, failed) to torture, gas and Scud missile their people into submission. The Assad regime in its current form is politically rigid, and as a result lacks manpower to hold anything between a quarter and a third of its territory...

[Read the full article on the *Washington Post* website. \(https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/12/04/sometimes-the-enemy-of-your-enemy-is-still-the-enemy/\)](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/12/04/sometimes-the-enemy-of-your-enemy-is-still-the-enemy/) ❖

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