

A Syria Policy for Trump: How Washington Can Get to a Settlement

[*Andrew J. Tabler*](#) and [*Dennis Ross*](#)

Foreign Affairs

November 28, 2016

Continued passivity would only reinforce the perception that the United States is acquiescing to Russia and Iran's regional plans, so the incoming administration should prepare a series of robust diplomatic and military steps.

When U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is inaugurated on January 20, 2017, his most complicated foreign policy challenge will be what to do about Syria. Under President Barack Obama, Washington's Syria policy has focused on fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). But with ISIS teetering, the government of Bashar al-Assad gaining ground, and outside powers such as Iran and Russia becoming ever more involved, simply fighting the caliphate may not be enough for the next leader of the United States.

In order to destroy ISIS and uproot the extremism that has been generated by the Syrian war, the United States will need to help stabilize opposition-controlled areas of the country while pressuring Iran and Russia to move toward a viable political settlement. To get there, President Trump will need to be more willing to put pressure on Moscow and Tehran than he has so far indicated. That means he should be ready to impose penalties on both if they do not fulfill any commitments they make...

[**Read the full article on the Foreign Affairs website.**](#)