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[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

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## False Equivalencies: ISIS and Assad

By John Wight  
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It is always a treat to listen to a British prime minister issuing diktats to other countries about the fate of their governments, especially a government that for the past four and a half years has been manning the ramparts of civilization against the barbarian hordes of ISIS and their like.

Perhaps like his view of working people and the poor in Britain, the problem with David Cameron when it comes to foreign policy is that his brain is stuck somewhere in the 19th century. If so he needs to get himself into the 21st century sooner rather than later, because the British Empire is no more and Syria's government is a matter for the Syrian people to decide and not a British prime minister with delusions of colonial grandeur.

In relation to recent events in Syria, Russia's decision to provide military support for Syria can only be considered controversial or wrong if you believe that a moral equivalence exists between ISIS and the Assad government.

The prolongation of the conflict in Syria and suffering of the Syrian people is a direct result of the mendacity and perfidy that informs the West's stance towards the region. Indeed the lack of any moral clarity, leadership, and competence on the part of Western governments has been nothing short of criminal, with scant evidence of it changing anytime soon. Only in an upside down world could any equivalence be drawn between ISIS in Syria and the Assad government. Yet this is exactly the equivalence that the West continues to make, thus hampering efforts to destroy a movement that is intent on turning the clock back in Syria to the seventh century, embracing inhuman levels of butchery and barbarity in the process.

ISIS is the Khmer Rouge of our time, holding to a similar objective of turning an entire nation into a cultural, human, and physical desert. It revels in its cruelty and bestiality, enslaves and rapes women on a grand, and has been allowed to grow to the point where it now constitutes a direct threat to centuries of human progress. Thus we are talking about an organisation that has no programme that can be negotiated with, nothing to offer except carnage and chaos, making its complete and total destruction a non-negotiable condition of saving millions of people from a horrific fate.

In contradistinction to ISIS the Assad government is secular, believes in modernity, and upholds the rights of minorities, both Muslim and non-Muslim. More crucially, regardless of the huge campaign of demonisation that has been unleashed against it in the West, it retains the support of its people, who understand more than any Western diplomat, politician, or ideologue the nature of the struggle they have been engulfed in these past four and half years.

Yet just as when it came to Saddam Hussein and Iraq, along with Muammar Gaddafi and Libya, we are being bombarded with the inference that Syria consists of one man in the shape of its leader. This narrative is employed to condition and shape domestic public opinion when it comes to currying support for seeing said leader's removal, even though the empirical evidence of Iraq and Libya's descent into an abyss of sectarian violence, mayhem, and societal collapse is undeniable in this regard.

Assad's crime is not that he is a dictator or that he is oppressing his own people, as his detractors would have us believe – else why on earth does the West count among its closest regional allies Saudi Arabia, arguably the most corrupt, venal, and barbaric regime in the world today? The problem with the Assad government in Syria is that it has long been marked for regime change as a pole of resistance to a US hegemonic agenda going back to the Bush administration. It is an agenda currently being driven most vigorously by US regional allies such as Israel, the aforementioned Saudis, and Turkey in pursuit of their own interests, which are self evidently inimical to stability.

There is no and never has been a fully formed liberal democracy waiting in the wings to take over in Syria, just as there wasn't in Iraq or Libya when it came to either Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi. But even so, like a blind man groping and lurching around a china shop, the

West remains attached to a blinkered strategy that only succeeds in sowing mayhem with each step it takes in pursuit of it.

Russia's rational and coherent alternative stands in marked contrast. President Putin has been calling for an international coalition to combat terrorism and extremism for some years now and been continually rebuffed. He has also been calling for a diplomatic and political solution to the conflict in Syria, but again those efforts have been continually thwarted by Western leaders whose obduracy is literally killing people, in addition to creating the worst refugee crisis the world has seen since the Second World War.

Russia's refusal to relinquish its support for Syria, despite coming under huge pressure to do so, and instead to increase that support demonstrates commendable principle and courage given the risks involved. It will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the ground, raising the morale of the Syrian Arab Army and the Syrian people, whose courage and tenacity has been extraordinary. Not only have they resisted an invasion of the country by thousands of foreign extremists and jihadists, they have done so in the teeth of massive external pressure from the West throughout.

The barbarians are at the gates and Russia alone is heeding the call to intervene in order to save not just the Syrian Government or Syria, but civilization itself.