

## PS 114S. International Security in a Changing World

### Debate #2 Rules

#### Background

During the last two weeks, lectures and readings have talked about the difficulties of counter-insurgency and insurgency. These discussions have not included the topic of third-party intervention, however, when outsider states choose to militarily assist either the rebel or governments. These “internationalized” civil wars are becoming increasingly more prominent: 60% of all civil wars now involve some form of third-party intervention. Further, these wars tend to be bloodier and last longer than those without intervention. Why? In class today, we will try to apply existing knowledge about counterinsurgency and insurgency by discussing a case in which the United States has consistently thought about intervening to help the rebels, but ultimately punted on: the Syrian Civil War.

We’ll motivate our discussion by considering a fun historical counterfactual President Obama brought up in an interview with Thomas Friedman back in 2014 about the Syrian Civil War:

**Resolved: If the United States had intervened in the Syrian Civil War in 2013, the security situation in the Middle East would be less dire.<sup>1</sup>**

In formulating a response to this claim, think about the following:

- What is a just cause for intervention? Did the Syrian Civil War present one?
- What do you mean by “security situation?” Is it restricted to Syria?
- What do you mean by “less dire?” What does this look like? Give examples where possible.
- What are some possible advantages to military intervention in a civil war?
- What are some possible disadvantages to military intervention in a civil war?
- How does third-party intervention change how civil wars are fought?
  - Would US intervention have made a peace settlement more likely?
  - Would US intervention have stopped the rise of ISIS?
- What are the domestic political reasons for why Obama did not intervene? Were these credible reasons? Explain.
- What are the international reasons for why Obama did not intervene? Were these credible reasons? Explain.

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<sup>1</sup> The actual question was “But wouldn’t things be better had we armed the secular Syrian rebels early or kept U.S. troops in Iraq?”

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/09/opinion/president-obama-thomas-l-friedman-iraq-and-world-affairs.html>>

## **Roles and Debate Format.**

**Team Sanders (Judge #1):** 2 – 4 people

**Team McCain (Judge #2):** 2 – 4 people

**Judging:** Two teams will adjudicate the debate by role-playing as if they are either Senator Bernie Sanders or Senator John McCain. Judges will not disclose who “won” the debate (which is impossible to determine in such a short amount of time anyway), but evaluate the strength and weaknesses of each argument in relation to what these two policy-makers believe about these threats within the context of US foreign policy.

**Team Pro-Intervention (Aff):** 2-4 people

**Team Anti-Intervention (Neg):** 2-4 people

**Debaters:** Two teams will debate the resolution; they should either defend the claim or oppose it on some level, but the degree to which they do so is entirely up to them. They should specify whether the US should have intervened and provide reasons why. **Each speech must be made by a different person on the team**, but any individual from a team may ask or answer questions during cross-examination.

The debate will be structured by the following time format:

- Affirmative Speech #1: 3 minutes
- Negative Speech #1: 3 minutes  
(2 minute prep for both sides to prepare rebuttals)
- Affirmative Speech #2: 2 minutes
- Negative Speech #2: 2 minutes
- Final Affirmative Rebuttal: 1 minute
- Final Negative Rebuttal: 1 minute

**Judges Confer about Debate Results** (2 minutes)

**Judge Evaluations** (3-4 min/team)