

APRIL 2013

BUILDING A SYRIAN STATE IN A TIME OF CIVIL WAR

ADAM BACZKO, GILLES DORRONSORO,
AND ARTHUR QUESNAY

The solution to the Syrian crisis lies in building a state within rebel-held territory that can replace the regime in Damascus. But the effort to create institutions and integrate rebels is threatened by increasing political fragmentation and sectarian tensions. Overcoming these obstacles and establishing a new state amid civil war will require greater unity on the ground and support from outside.

The State of Syria

- Fighting continues throughout Syria, but accelerating the insurgency's military progress should not be the priority.
- Building institutions capable of running the liberated territory in northern Syria should be the focus.
- In rebel-held areas, the armed opposition is becoming progressively more engaged in state building, creating institutions that will subsequently serve as models for the whole country.
- A civil administration and a regular army that incorporates the Free Syrian Army are both taking shape in the north. But these institutions are far from well-established and are not completely separate from armed rebel groups.
- The Islamic militant organization Jabhat al-Nusra and the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) through its local Syrian arm, the Democratic Union Party, are building parallel institutions that challenge the nascent state. This is fueling political fragmentation and could further prolong the civil war.
- With institutions on the ground lacking the resources to assert their authority, foreign aid could have a decisive effect.

Recommendations for the International Community

Encourage the establishment of national or provincial coordination committees. Aid should focus on bolstering national institutions, not strengthening independent actors or directly financing armed groups. Decisive support for new institutions put in place by rebels will help to marginalize spoilers like Jabhat al-Nusra and the PKK.

Provide rebels financial support to pay fighters and technical assistance to train officers. The Free Syrian Army is militarily handicapped by the lack of coordination among armed groups and the absence of career officers from its ranks. Providing compensation and training will help build a more professional force.

Accelerate the transformation of the National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces into an interim government. The institution must be given the resources it needs to wield authority over local structures and to directly pay the tens of thousands of civil servants in rebel-held territory.

Fund independent media. This is a first step toward preventing war crimes and crimes against humanity from being carried out with impunity.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Adam Baczko is a PhD candidate at the School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (Paris). His research focuses on justice in civil wars.

Gilles Dorronsoro is a professor of political science at the University of Paris-Sorbonne and a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Arthur Quesnay is a PhD candidate at the Sorbonne University. His research focuses on the social and political organizations of Kirkuk.

CONTACT

Scott Toussaint
Government Affairs Manager
(202) 939-2307
stoussaint@ceip.org

Charita Law
Media Manager
(202) 939-2241
claw@ceip.org

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

The world's first truly global think tank with operations in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Beirut, and Brussels.

© 2013 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All rights reserved.

The Carnegie Endowment does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented here are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Endowment, its staff, or its trustees.

CarnegieEndowment.org

 @CarnegieEndow

 [facebook.com/CarnegieEndowment](https://www.facebook.com/CarnegieEndowment)