



U.S. should use ISIS' enemies against it

By Joseph Lawler

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Doug Bandow for [the Cato Institute](#): [Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wants to address the [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria](#) “on both sides of what is essentially at this point a nonexistent border” between [Iraq](#) and [Syria](#).

However, Washington’s intelligence capabilities in Syria remain limited. More important, the Obama administration has spent three years attempting to overthrow Syria’s [Assad](#) regime, which possesses an air defense system and warned that it would treat any attacks as “aggression.”

The administration should reconsider its policy in Syria. As I point out in Forbes online, “The Assad government is even more committed than Washington to eliminating the Islamic State as a geopolitical force.”

Yet America’s support for the opposition has weakened the Assad government’s ability to fight ISIS. Washington’s preference for less radical groups also has discouraged Damascus from targeting the Islamic State, whose existence inhibits U.S. involvement.

Reaching a modus vivendi with Damascus would encourage Bashar Assad to focus on ISIS. Assad is no friend of liberty, but Washington must set priorities. ...

Rather than turn ISIS into a military priority and take America into war against the group, Washington should organize an Islamic coalition against the Islamic State. Even Dempsey called for a regional effort to “squeeze ISIS from multiple directions,” but that actually requires Washington to do less militarily.

WAGES FALLING FOR MOST AMERICANS

Elise Gould for the [Economic Policy Institute](#): The fact is, if we care about middle-class incomes and living standards, we need to care about paychecks. In fact, reliance on paychecks

for living standards is pretty much a decent definition of middle-class. Over the last year, median real wages have declined, a signal that median incomes will likely also falter into 2014. ... Over the entire 1979 to 2013 period, median real wage growth would have been negative if not for the tight labor market of the late 1990s. This dismal middle-class wage growth was despite a substantial rise in economy-wide productivity over this same period, including over this last year as real wages fell. ...

Moving to the bottom of the wage distribution, we see one glimmer of positive news over the past year. Unlike the rest of the wage distribution, wages did not fall at the 10th percentile between the first half of 2013 and the first half of 2014. Why did wages fall for everyone except for the bottom? The answer is simple: we still have some labor standards that provide wage protections. Several states, which make up of 40 percent of the workforce, increased their minimum wage in the first half of 2014 (either through legislation or through automatic inflation adjustments). When we look at the 10th percentile wages between states with and without a minimum wage increase, we see a distinct divergence in trends.

SCHOOL SEGREGATION GETS WORSE

Reed Jordan for the Urban Institute's [MetroTrends](#) blog: Fifty million children will start school this week as historic changes are under way in the U.S. public school system. As of 2011, 48 percent of all public school students were poor, and this year, students of color will account for the majority of public school students for the first time in U.S. history.

What is surprising about these shifts is that they are not leading to more diverse schools. In fact, the Civil Rights Project has shown that black students are just as segregated today as they were in in the late 1960s, when serious enforcement of desegregation plans first began following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Despite our country's growing diversity, our public schools provide little contact between white students and students of color. We've mapped data about the racial composition of U.S. public schools to shed light on today's patterns at the county level. These maps show that America's public schools are highly segregated by race and income, with the declining share of white students typically concentrated in schools with other white students and the growing share of Latino students concentrated into low-income public schools with other students of color. ...

The separation of races is most clearly seen in large metropolitan counties that hold the bulk of a state's population and most of its students of color. For example, in Chicago (Cook County), the overall student population is about 25 percent white, 31 percent black, and 37 percent Latino, but 96 percent of black students attend majority non-white schools and 67 percent of white students attend majority white schools. In other words, white students tend to attend schools with other white students and black and Latino students attend schools with other students of color.