

## Passage of time shows Turnbull's judgement was right on Syria (Letter in *The Australian*, Sept 10-11, 2016. Bits in square brackets deleted by Ed)

David Crowe writes as if he has been too long attending the current outburst of international conferences where there is almost always a tendency to either play down or not mention at all an important policy issue ("Omens good for PM, thanks to a fish called Dasher" 9/9.) He says that Malcolm Turnbull was wrongly ridiculed a year ago for emphasising the need for a political solution but that it now appears that his judgement was sound. At the same time, Crowe wants to have an each way bet by claiming that under Turnbull Australia will increase its attacks on Islamic State. [He also acknowledges though that Putin asked Turnbull who you are fighting for but got no answer after he (Putin) said he was fighting for the "legitimate" Syrian government, which is not the rebels who are being supported by the US.]

While Turnbull has, so far, continued Australia's military training contingent and limited air attacks in Syria, the US has acted similarly and refused to put troops on the ground [there or in Iraq]. In Syria, this policy has allowed killings and bombings by Premier Bashar al-Assad with Russian support and, until very recently, allowed ISIS to control a large section of Iraq. Separately, while the US has attempted to reach agreement with Putin on a political solution, it has become apparent that the latter's main interest is to demonstrate the failure of US policies.

The reality is that the extremist religion followed by ISIS is unlikely to be defeated by a new political arrangement until it has been defeated by a military attack. [There are some signs that with Iraq as the main player the US realising this.] Whether Turnbull is in the same boat is unclear, given the doubts he expressed at the G20 conference about the nature of our alliance with the US.

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