Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad isn’t in grave danger of losing power, and the conflict there will likely last at least another year, says Robert Rabil, a professor of Mideast studies at Florida Atlantic University.

“I don’t think the regime is on the verge of collapse now,” he tells Newsmax TV’s Kathleen Walter. “The regime has lost legitimacy. The regime has lost large parts of land. But despite what other mainstream media are saying, I don’t think the regime has a number of days until collapse.”

Assad is taking steps to defend vital territory, though he may lose Damascus, Rabil says. The strongman still has the support of Hezbollah, Iraq, and Iran and plenty of weaponry to continue the civil war.

The government would love to negotiate a settlement, Rabil says. “But the opposition now is in no mood for a negotiated settlement. So I don’t know what the near future is going to bring.”

Fighting should continue for another 12 to 18 months, Rabil says. That’s because if Assad stays in his heartland, and Iran, Hezbollah, and Iraq keep supporting him, “it’s going to be very difficult for the opposition to go ahead and seize that territory.”

The United States, which has now recognized the opposition, must engage more diplomatically with that opposition and with neighboring countries, Rabil says. Arms should be provided to rebel fighters whom we can identify as non-radicals.

To be sure, “I don’t think the United States now is in a position to dictate or to influence in great measure the politics and dynamics in post-Assad Syria,” Rabil says. “The dynamics are still very fluid, very volatile.”

Asked by Walter whether Syria could turn into another Egypt, which has a political mess of its own, Rabil said that’s actually overly optimistic.

“I wish I could say that it’s going to become the next Egypt,” he says. “Despite the fact that I’m a very cautious optimist, with Syria I am a pessimist. What’s happening now is not a recipe for a quick settlement.”

There are just so many different groups who share little in common, ideologically or otherwise, Rabil says. “You have ethnic backgrounds, you have religious backgrounds, you have countries in the region like Saudi Arabia and Iraq and Qatar and Turkey who support certain factions, and you don’t have much unity.”

Once the regime finally collapses, there will be a second fight – among the opposition, Rabil says. He hopes the United States, its allies and countries in the region will work together on behalf of the non-radical opposition to give it an edge over opponents.