

**OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN "TATTERS" ENTERING FINAL
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[Latest Syria Setback Marks Five Years of Failure for Obama Administration: Kelly McParland, *National Post*, Oct. 4, 2016](#) — Sputnik International, a government-backed Russian “news” service, has soothing words for concerns about the ongoing carnage in Syria.

[Obama's November Surprise: Gregg Roman, *The Hill*, Sept. 26, 2016](#) — There is growing speculation that President Obama will spring a diplomatic surprise on Israel during the interregnum between the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8 and his departure from office in January.

[Obama's Hostile Eulogy: Caroline Glick, *Breaking Israel News*, Oct. 10, 2016](#) — US President Barack Obama's eulogy to Shimon Peres last Friday at Mt. Herzl was a thinly disguised assault on Israel. And he barely bothered to hide it.

[Yom Kippur - How It Changes Us: Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Rabbi Sacks*, Oct. 10, 2016](#)— To those who fully open themselves to it, Yom Kippur is a life-transforming experience.

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**LATEST SYRIA SETBACK MARKS FIVE YEARS
OF FAILURE FOR OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

Kelly McParland

[National Post](#), Oct. 4, 2016

Sputnik International, a government-backed Russian “news” service, has soothing words for concerns about the ongoing carnage in Syria. The Putin government’s “limited military engagement” on behalf of Syrian President Bashar Assad “has helped to bring stability to several regions” of the country “and boost morale of the Syrian Arab Army,” it says. Russian involvement, it continues, quoting an “analyst,” “was instrumental in helping government-led forces and their local allies break the tide of the years-long war.”

While that view doesn’t accord with Western opinion, it should be no surprise if Moscow feels justified in applauding itself a year after launching its intervention. In just 12 months, President Vladimir Putin has managed to comprehensively outmanoeuvre the U.S., reverse the momentum to Assad’s favour, embarrass Washington and increase its own influence in a region that seems perpetually engulfed in conflict.

Washington, meanwhile, has been reduced to spluttering objections and threats of unspecified “actions” if Moscow fails to rein in its activities. Fat chance of that. If the Obama administration has demonstrated anything over the five years — and half a million deaths — of the Syrian tragedy, it is its inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to fabricate a policy capable of ending the misery imposed on millions of Syrians. It has been outflanked at every step by a Russian government intent on flexing its military muscle and oblivious to the polite ways of diplomacy and international opinion.

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Putin demonstrated this yet again when he met the latest complaints from Washington by shipping an advanced anti-missile system to Syria, the first time it has deployed the system outside its own borders. That followed accusations by Secretary of State John Kerry that Moscow had responded to a so-called ceasefire by stepping up bombing attacks on Aleppo, the besieged city that is systematically being reduced to rubble by Russian and Syrian forces.

A State Department spokesman on Tuesday warned that diplomatic efforts to end the fighting were "on life support." A day later Kerry gave up on diplomacy and suspended talks with Moscow, while administration officials threatened unspecified "actions...that would further underscore the consequences of not coming back to the negotiating table." Russia in turn halted a program with the U.S. on the disposal of weapons grade plutonium while threatening that a U.S. attack on Syrian targets "will lead to terrible, tectonic shifts not only on the territory of this country but also in the region in general."

Such is the state of affairs as Obama enters his final weeks in office. Whatever else historians conclude about his legacy, his record in Syria must go down as an utter failure. Assad now has a very real chance of clinging to power, and perhaps even regaining significant areas of the country that had been lost to him before Russia's arrival. U.S. actions have been so ineffectual it now finds itself with few options. It cannot intervene militarily, even if it had the will, without the danger of a direct clash with Moscow. Where once it had the opportunity to impose a no-fly zone to limit Assad's assaults, it cannot do so now for fear of starting a shooting war with Russian jets.

Obama's clear reluctance to get caught in another Middle East war has hobbled U.S. goals from the beginning. He drew his famous "red line" against chemical weapons, and then decided not to enforce it. He not only refused to commit substantial troops, but hesitated even to arm Assad's opponents. Diplomatic efforts have gone in circles, first with failed United Nations efforts and more recently with Kerry's futile shuttling from capital to capital. Relations with Turkey and Saudi Arabia have soured as the Obama administration dithered and delayed.

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Humanitarian actions have been similarly half-hearted. An estimated 4.8 million Syrian refugees continue to seek international assistance, almost entirely from countries other than the U.S. In August the administration announced it had admitted its 10,000th Syrian, reaching a cruelly unambitious resettlement goal for the year. Canada, with a tenth the U.S. population, has accepted 30,000 Syrians, while Germany has accepted almost 900,000 and paid a heavy political price for a war it did nothing to start.

No matter who wins the U.S. election in November, they will be left with a shambles of a situation in Syria. Putin may be turning Russia into an "outlaw nation", as the *New York Times* recently charged, but it's an outlaw the U.S. has failed utterly to bring to justice, and shows limited interest in challenging.

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OBAMA'S NOVEMBER SURPRISE

Gregg Roman

[The Hill](#), Sept. 26, 2016

There is growing speculation that President Obama will spring a diplomatic surprise on Israel during the interregnum between the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8 and his departure from office in January. Some say the surprise will be a speech laying down parameters for a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute or some type of formal censure of Israeli settlements in the West Bank,

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but the scenario generating most discussion is a decision to support, or perhaps not to veto, a UN Security Council resolution recognizing a Palestinian state.

This would be a bombshell. Washington's long-stated policy is that a Palestinian state should be established only through an agreement negotiated directly between the two sides. In practice, this would require that Palestinian leaders agreed to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and concede the so-called "right of return" for refugees of the 1948 war and their descendants to areas within Israel's borders, a prospect which would mean the demographic destruction of Israel.

For decades, Palestinian leaders have made it clear they won't do this: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas doesn't mince words, telling a gathering of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo in November 2014, "We will never recognize the Jewishness of the state of Israel." Efforts to win recognition of Palestinian statehood by foreign governments and multilateral institutions are designed to skirt this precondition for statehood.

Any state that comes into existence without Palestinian leaders formally recognizing Israel will be a brutal, unstable train wreck, with areas under its jurisdiction likely to remain a hotbed of terrorism. On top of whatever existing factors are producing the endemic corruption and autocracy of the Abbas regime (not to mention the Hamas regime in Gaza), unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state will vindicate radicals who have been saying all along that there's no need to compromise.

On the other hand, official Palestinian acknowledgement once and for all that Israel is not just here to stay, but has a right to stay, would deprive Palestinian leaders of time-honored tools for manipulating their constituents - appealing to and inflaming their baser anti-Jewish prejudices, promising them salvation if they'll only shut up 'til the Zionists are defeated, and so forth. Instead, they will have to do things like govern well and create jobs to win public support.

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Previous American administrations have understood that recognizing Palestinian statehood before Abbas and company allow Palestinian society to undergo this transformation would be the height of irresponsibility. This is why American veto power has consistently blocked efforts to unilaterally establish a Palestinian state by way of the UN Security Council. Notwithstanding his apparent pro-Palestinian sympathies and affiliations prior to running for the Senate and later the White House, President Obama initially maintained this policy. The expressed threat of an American veto foiled Abbas' 2011 bid to win UN member-state status for "Palestine." He settled for recognition of non-member-state status by the General Assembly in 2012.

As moves by the PA to bring the issue of statehood to the UN picked up steam last year, however, it appeared to walk back this commitment. While U.S officials privately maintained there was "no change," Obama and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power refused - despite the urging of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid - to state publicly that the U.S. would use its veto to stop a resolution recognizing Palestinian statehood.

The conventional wisdom was that Obama's refusal to make such a public declaration was intended to exert pressure on Netanyahu to tone down his opposition to the Iran nuclear deal, and later to punish him for it or hold it out to secure concessions. As his presidency enters its final months, it's clear something even more nefarious is at work.

President Obama's failure to clarify his administration's position has greatly damaged prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Even if it is Obama's intention to veto any resolution on Palestinian statehood that comes up at the UN, his refusal to publicly state this - or, put differently, his determination to go on the record for the history books not saying it - has fueled perceptions among Palestinians and European governments facing pressures of their own that American will is softening.

It is imperative that Congress use the tools at its disposal to make this unwise path as difficult as possible for the Obama administration. Ultimately, a one-sided UN declaration such as this serves only to postpone by a long shot the day when Palestinian leaders accept Israel as it is - the homeland of the Jewish people - and allow their subjects to enjoy the lasting peace and prosperity they and their neighbors deserve.

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OBAMA'S HOSTILE EULOGY

Caroline Glick

[Breaking Israel News](#), Oct. 10, 2016

US President Barack Obama's eulogy to Shimon Peres last Friday at Mt. Herzl was a thinly disguised assault on Israel. And he barely bothered to hide it. Throughout his remarks, Obama wielded Peres's record like a baseball bat. He used it to club the Israeli public and its elected leaders over and over again. Peres, Obama intimated, was a prophet. But the suspicious, tribal people of Israel were too stiff necked to follow him.

In what was perhaps the low point of a low performance, Obama used Peres's words to slander his domestic critics as racist oppressors. "Shimon," he began harmlessly enough, "believed that Israel's exceptionalism was rooted not only in fidelity to the Jewish people, but to the moral and ethical vision, the precepts of his Jewish faith." Fair enough. You could say that about every Israeli leader since the dawn of modern Zionism.

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But then Obama went for the jugular. In a startling non-sequitur he continued, "The Jewish people weren't born to rule another people," he [Peres] would say, "From the very first day we were against slaves and masters." We don't know the context in which Peres made that statement. But what is clear enough is that Obama used his words to accuse the majority of Israelis who do not share Peres's vision for peace - including Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu who was sitting in the front row listening to him - of supporting slavery. This libelous assault on Israel was probably the most unhinged remark ever directed at the Jewish state by an American president. What does the fact that Obama said this at Peres's funeral tell us about Obama? What does it tell us about Peres? Obama was not merely wrong when he accused Peres's detractors of support for slavery, he was maliciously wrong.

Due to Peres's Oslo accords, since 1995, all the Palestinian population centers in Judea and Samaria have been governed by the PLO. Israel hasn't been in charge of any aspect of their daily civic existence. And they have only suffered as a result. Between 1967 and 1996, when the Palestinians of Judea and Samaria were governed by the military government, the Palestinians were free. They only became "enslaved," when the PLO took over. Under Israeli rule, the Palestinians enjoyed far more expansive civil rights than they have since we left. The PLO transformed their lives into chaos by implementing the law of the jungle, enforced by mob-style militias. Their property rights were trampled. Their civil rights have been gutted.

The fact that PLO chief Mahmoud Abbas and his cronies delayed their municipal elections indefinitely the day after Peres's funeral is yet another testament to the absence of freedom in the PLO - as opposed to Israeli - ruled areas. But really, Obama couldn't care less. He didn't come here to tell the truth about Peres. He came here to use Peres as a means to bludgeon the government the people elected. Obama began his attack as he often begins his political assaults on his opponents. He created a straw man. Peres's critics on the Right, he said, "argued that he refused to see the true wickedness of the world, and called him naïve." In other words, as far as Obama is concerned, Israelis are prisoners of their dark view

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of the world. Unlike Peres the optimist, his countrymen are tribal pessimists.

Peres, whose vision for peace rested on giving the outskirts of Tel Aviv and half of Jerusalem to terrorists wasn't naïve. He "knew better than the cynic," Obama continued. He was better than that. He was better than us. This brings us then to the paradox of Peres's life's work. Over last quarter century of his life, we, the people of Israel wanted to feel empowered by Peres's superstar status. We wanted to get excited when Hollywood stars and A-list politicians came to his birthday bashes at the President's House and the Peres Center. But every time we tried to see Peres's success as our success, some visiting VIP would smile before the cameras and kick us in the shins.

The higher Peres's star rose in the stratosphere of celebrity stardom, the worse Israel's global position became. The international A-listers who showed up at all of Peres's parties always seemed to view him as their guy, not our guy. He was one of them - and above the likes of us. How did this happen? How did the last surviving member of Israel's founding generation become a prop for Israel's chorus of international critics? The most extraordinary aspect of Peres's long life is that he packed two full - and contradictory - careers into one lifespan.

Peres's first career began with Israel's founding. It ended with the Likud's victory in the 1977 Knesset elections. Over the course of that career, Peres used his formidable diplomatic skills to build and strengthen Israel's defenses. He cultivated and expanded complex strategic relationships with the French and British. Those ties led the two major powers to fight at Israel's side in the 1956 Suez Campaign. They led to France's decision to help Israel build its nuclear program and its arms industries.

In the 1970s as defense minister, Peres was able to rely on his warm ties to foreign leaders to shield the country as he established the Jewish communities in Samaria and Hebron. They empowered him to oversee the hostage rescue mission

at Entebbe. But following the Likud's rise to power, Peres changed gears. Ever since 1981 when he almost managed to scuttle the air force's bombing of Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor, Peres used his diplomatic talents and ties to foreign leaders to advance his own agenda, regardless of whether that agenda was aligned or contradicted Israel's national agenda, as set out by its elected leaders.

Time and time again, on the backs of the public that failed to elect him and the politicians the public elected instead of him, Peres cultivated and used the relationships he enjoyed with foreign leaders to press his own policies. Each attempt to derail the policies of the government expanded Peres's chorus of supporters abroad. Peres's second career reached its high water mark in 1994 when along with Rabin and Yassir Arafat he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the Oslo process. The world embraced and celebrated Peres for his peace deal that brought neither peace nor security to his people...

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YOM KIPPUR - HOW IT CHANGES US

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

[Rabbi Sacks](#), Oct. 10, 2016

To those who fully open themselves to it, Yom Kippur is a life-transforming experience. It tells us that God, who created the universe in love and forgiveness, reaches out to us in love and forgiveness, asking us to love and forgive others. God never asked us not to make mistakes. All He asks is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, grow through them, and make amends where we can.

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No religion has held such a high view of human possibility. The God who created us in His image, gave us freedom. We are not tainted by original sin, destined to fail, caught in the grip of an evil only divine grace can defeat. To the contrary we have within us the power to choose life. Together we have the power to change the world.

Nor are we, as some scientific materialists claim, mere concatenations of chemicals, a bundle of selfish genes blindly replicating themselves into the future. Our souls are more than our minds, our minds are more than our brains, and our brains are more than mere chemical impulses responding to stimuli. Human freedom - the freedom to choose to be better than we were - remains a mystery but it is not a mere given. Freedom is like a muscle and the more we exercise it, the stronger and healthier it becomes.

Judaism constantly asks us to exercise our freedom. To be a Jew is not to go with the flow, to be like everyone else, to follow the path of least resistance, to worship the conventional wisdom of the age. To the contrary, to be a Jew is to have the courage to live in a way that is not the way of everyone. Each time we eat, drink, pray or go to work, we are conscious of the demands our faith makes on us, to live God's will and be one of His ambassadors to the world. Judaism always has been, perhaps always will be, counter-cultural.

In ages of collectivism, Jews emphasised the value of the individual. In ages of individualism, Jews built strong communities. When most of humanity was consigned to ignorance, Jews were highly literate. When others were building monuments and amphitheatres, Jews were building schools. In materialistic times they kept faith with the spiritual. In ages of poverty they practised *tzedakah* so that none would lack the essentials of a dignified life. The sages said that Abraham was called *ha-ivri*, "the Hebrew," because all the world was on one side (ever *echad*) and Abraham on the other. To be a Jew is to swim against the current, challenging the idols of the age whatever the idol, whatever the age.

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So, as our ancestors used to say, *"'Zis schver zu zein a Yid,"* It is not easy to be a Jew. But if Jews have contributed to the human heritage out of all proportion to our numbers, the explanation lies here. Those of whom great things are asked, become great - not because they are inherently better or more gifted than others but because they feel themselves challenged, summoned, to greatness.

Few religions have asked more of their followers. There are 613 commandments in the Torah. Jewish law applies to every aspect of our being, from the highest aspirations to the most prosaic details of quotidian life. Our library of sacred texts - *Tanakh, Mishnah, Gemarra, Midrash*, codes and commentaries - is so vast that no lifetime is long enough to master it. Theophrastus, a pupil of Aristotle, sought for a description that would explain to his fellow Greeks what Jews are. The answer he came up with was, "a nation of philosophers."

So high does Judaism set the bar that it is inevitable that we should fall short time and again. Which means that forgiveness was written into the script from the beginning. God, said the sages, sought to create the world under the attribute of strict justice but He saw that it could not stand. What did He do? He added mercy to justice, compassion to retribution, forbearance to the strict rule of law. God forgives. Judaism is a religion, the world's first, of forgiveness...

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[Atoning for Sins on Yom Kippur: Dvora Waysman, Jerusalem Post, Oct. 11, 2016](#)—Freedom of choice is a basic Jewish doctrine from Genesis's first story. "If you feel shame over having sinned, Heaven immediately forgives you." These comforting words (Brachot 12B Hagiga 5A) are timely at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, but we should also remember what Mark Twain wrote: "Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to."

[White House Silent: Palestinians Attack Jews Praying at Joseph's Tomb: Editorial, Jerusalem Post, Oct. 10, 2016](#)—The US State Department's recent condemnation of Israel's proposed solution of the illegal Amona outpost issue unfortunately reiterates the erroneous view that "settlements are the core problem" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Worse, it contributes to the prolongation of the conflict by incorrectly invoking international law under the pretext of "evenhandedness" toward the parties involved.

[Congress Blasts Obama for Preparing Anti-Israel Offensive: Jenna Liphits, Weekly Standard, Oct. 9, 2016](#)—The Obama administration is manufacturing a crisis with Israel in anticipation of a post-election diplomatic push targeting the Jewish state, and this past week launched a series of broadsides criticizing the Israelis through the media and in press briefings, according to congressional sources and Jewish-American officials who spoke to the Weekly Standard.

[Barack Obama's Stillborn Legacy: At Home and Abroad, the President's Agenda is in Tatters: Charles Krauthammer, New York Daily News, Oct. 6, 2016](#)—Only amid the most bizarre, most tawdry, most addictive election campaign in memory could the real story of 2016 be so effectively obliterated, namely, that with just four months left in the Obama presidency, its two central pillars are collapsing before our eyes: domestically, its radical reform of American health care, aka Obamacare; and abroad, its radical reorientation of American foreign policy — disengagement marked by diplomacy and multilateralism.

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