

**AS SYRIA DESCENDS INTO CIVIL WAR, OBAMA'S FUTILE  
"ENGAGEMENT/RESET" POLICY FLOUTED BY RUSSIA, CHINA,  
IRAN**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, June 21, 2012

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**SYRIA'S CEASE-FIRE OF THE GRAVE**

iran/

Editorial

*Wall Street Journal, June 13, 2012*

Syria continues to sink deeper into a civil war that we were told would break out if the U.S. and its allies *intervened* to oust Bashar Assad. So the West has stayed out, but the killings have multiplied to include at least four massacres in [three] weeks.... Even "leading from behind" worked better than this.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton continued her intervention of words [last week], disclosing that "We are concerned about the latest information we have that there are attack helicopters on the way from Russia to Syria." Russia's foreign minister responded the next day by saying the U.S. arms other countries in the region—which doesn't do much for Syria's opposition, which is carrying a gun to a tank and artillery fight.

This is the same Russia that has protected Mr. Assad from even the mildest U.N. sanctions. Readers may also recall that Russia and Syria were Exhibits A and B of Mr. Obama's policy of engaging with countries that supposedly only disagreed with America because Dick Cheney was Vice President. Four years later, Syria remains Iran's best ally and is slaughtering its own people, while Russia of the famous "reset" in relations is resorting to its Cold War vetoes of collective Western action.

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius has called on the U.N. Security Council to enforce U.N. envoy to Syria Kofi Annan's cease-fire, by military force if necessary. That would be the same cease-fire that Mr. Assad agreed to honor in April but has since violated every day. The Russians and Chinese can veto any such U.N. move....

The reality is that Mr. Assad and his protectors aren't going to accept any cease-fire or peace plan until it is the peace of the grave for his opponents. This is an existential fight for survival by a hard regime backed by even harder regimes that don't want to lose a client. Mr. Assad isn't going to accept a "transition"—Mrs. Clinton's policy word of choice for Syria—until he is dislodged by force.

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**Mr. Assad the ophthalmologist can see even without eyeglasses that Mr. Obama has no desire to intervene militarily to stop the slaughter. That perception alone gives Damascus a freer hand to carry out the very massacres Mrs. Clinton and her colleagues condemn....**

**The Administration's stated case against military intervention is that it would make the humanitarian situation worse, though we doubt that is how they see it in the massacre towns of Houla and Qubeir. There's also the fear that we don't know enough about the Syrian opposition and what it might do if it came to power.... But it's hard to imagine how Syria under new leadership could be worse for U.S. interests than the Assad clan.**

**If the realists are right that Iran is America's greatest threat in the region, then ousting Iran's best friend would be a strategic victory. On the other hand, if Mr. Assad murders enough people to survive, he will be even more beholden to Iran and Russia, and more inclined to make trouble for Lebanon, Turkey, Israel and the Gulf Arab states. If he prevails, the rest of the region—and the world—will also know that he did so despite insistent but irrelevant calls from the U.S. that he had to go. American credibility and influence will be weaker for it.**

**Intervening in Syria does not mean reprising the war in Iraq. A Bosnia-style air campaign targeting elite Syrian military units could prompt the general staff to reconsider its contempt for international opinion, and perhaps its allegiance to the Assad family. Short of that, carving out some kind of safe haven inside Syria would at least save lives.**

**The best argument against intervention at this point is Mr. Obama himself. Only a U.S. President can lead a coalition of the willing outside of the U.N...and Mr. Obama clearly doesn't want to do it.... Mr. Obama wants his Syrian nightmare to go away before the election, and with Russian helicopters and Mr. Assad's efficient butchery, it might.**

**AMERICA, RUSSIA AND THE TRAGEDY OF SYRIA**

**Fouad Ajami**

***Wall Street Journal, June 19, 2012***

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The ordeal of Syria has been a rebuttal of what the diplomacy of Barack Obama once promised and stood for. It is largely forgotten now that Syria and Iran were the two regimes in the Greater Middle East that Mr. Obama had promised to "engage."

Back when he was redeemer in chief, Mr. Obama had been certain that the regime in Damascus would yield to his powers of persuasion. He cut Damascus a wide swath, stepped aside when the Syrian regime all but laid to waste the gains of the 2005 Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, assassinating and terrorizing its way back into its smaller neighbor.

When the storm that broke upon the Arabs in early 2011 hit Syria, the flaws of the Obama approach were laid bare. It took five months of hesitation and wishful thinking before Mr. Obama called on the Syrian ruler to relinquish power. That call made, he had hoped that the storm would die down, that the world's attention would drift from the sorrows of Syria.

But the intensifying barbarism of Bashar al-Assad's regime, the massacres and atrocities have given Mr. Obama nowhere to hide. A United Nations report recently determined that children as young as 9 have been subjected to "killing and maiming, arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, and use as human shields."

For months the abdication over Syria sought cover behind the diplomacy of Kofi Annan, the designated envoy of the Arab League and the U.N. But Mr. Annan has conceded that his diplomacy has been helpless before the violence. A regime built for a crisis such as this, fine-tuned by a ruling family and a dominant sect over the last four decades, had nothing but contempt for U.N. diplomacy....

Indeed, the U.N. monitors [in Syria] came under attack last week. En route to the besieged town of Haffa, their convoy was shot at and set upon by thugs throwing stones and wielding metal rods. U.N. chief peacekeeper Hervé Ladsous described the situation on the ground well when he said, "Keeping a peacekeeping force when there is definitely no peace to observers—that summarizes the situation." Last Saturday's official suspension of that peacekeeping effort is an acknowledgment of

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that glaring reality.

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Those hamlets of grief that came to fame in recent days, Houla, Qubair, sites of cruel massacres, tell us that the Assad regime is convinced that no outside intervention is on the horizon. Syria is in the midst of the sectarian war Assad sought all along. He has trapped his own Alawite community, implicating it in his crimes. In the recent massacres, Sunni areas have been sacked by neighboring Alawi villages. The army did the shelling, then the Alawi neighbors closed in and did the killing—women and children shot at close range, corpses burnt, crops and livestock and homes destroyed.

This sectarian slaughter is what the Assad tyranny had wrought, and what the abdication of the democracies had fed in the cruel, long year behind us. In this ordeal, there was always another appeal to the Russians. We ascribed to them powers they did not have because their obstructionism was useful. The Assad regime, long a Russian asset in the region, is a variation on the Russian autocracy of plunder and terror. By all accounts, there is glee in Moscow that Washington and NATO pay tribute to Russia.

And why would Russian strongman Vladimir Putin do us any favors over Syria? Despite Mr. Obama's inane announcement Monday at the Group of 20 summit that he and Mr. Putin "agreed that we need to see a cessation of the violence," Russia has come to believe the Syrian regime is engaged in a war with Islamist radicals much like its own against the Chechens. Grant Mr. Putin his due; the way he brushed aside Mr. Obama's pleas on Syria should lay to rest the fantasy of a Russian compromise....

The Obama policy rests on a blissful belief that Syria will burn out without damage to American interests, and that the president himself can stay aloof from this crisis.... The wider forces at play in the Greater Middle East do not detain this president. His political advisers have not walked into the Oval Office reporting that he'll win re-election if only he takes a more assertive stance toward the dictators in Damascus or Tehran. The world can wait—Syria has twisted for 15 months, and it is only five months until [November]....

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**isranet-publications**

**Isranet Daily Briefing, June 21, 2012**

**<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/syria-descends-civil-war>**

**-obamas-futile-engagementreset-policy-flouted-russia-china-**

**(Fouad Ajami is the author most recently of "The Syrian Rebellion.") iran/**

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**SYRIA AND THE DECLINE OF THE UN**

**Dore Gold**

***Israel Hayom, June 15, 2012***

**The crisis over Syria is the third major case of mass murder in the last 20 years in which the U.N. has completely failed to halt the continuing bloodshed. The inability of the U.N. to intervene in the previous crises in Rwanda and Srebrenica (Bosnia) caused many commentators to charge that the U.N. was becoming a bankrupt organization, that was not fulfilling one of its main original purposes.**

**After all, the U.N. was established in 1945, when the horrors of the Holocaust were on the minds of its founders. One of its most critical early documents, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, spoke of the "barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind." It was clear that the U.N. was founded to prevent this sort of mass murder from ever recurring. In that spirit, the U.N. General Assembly also adopted the Genocide Convention at the same time.**

**However, in the 1990s, the U.N. proved to be completely ineffective in halting the very acts of genocide it was intended to prevent.**

**In 1994, the commander of the U.N. forces in Rwanda, Gen. Romeo Dallaire, sent a cable to U.N. headquarters in New York saying that he had information from an informer that the country's Hutu leaders were planning to massacre Rwanda's Tutsi population. Dallaire wrote that he planned to destroy the Hutu militias' weapons depots. The head of U.N. peacekeeping, Kofi Annan, cabled back instructions to Dallaire to refrain from interfering. In the months that followed, some 800,000 Rwandans were butchered. The U.N. Security Council debated what action should be taken but ultimately did nothing; the Rwandan regime in fact sat on the council as a legitimate diplomatic partner.**

**The failure of the U.N. to stop mass murder continued. After the outbreak of the Bosnian War, the U.N. Security Council created a "safe**

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IRAN**

**isranet-publications**

**Isranet Daily Briefing, June 21, 2012**

**<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/syria-descends-civil-war>**

**-obamas-futile-engagementreset-policy-flouted-russia-china-**

**area" for Bosnian Muslims in the area of the town of Srebrenica. The iran/  
U.N. commander declared to the Muslim population that had fled to  
Srebrenica: "You are under the protection of the United Nations." He  
added: "I will never abandon you." Yet, in July 1995, the Bosnian Serb  
army assaulted the Srebrenica enclave and began systematically killing  
8,000 Muslims....**

**When tested, the U.N. peacekeeping force did not protect the Muslims.  
Its Dutch battalion fled. The Dutch press reported that while the  
massacres were underway, the peacekeepers held a beer party in the  
Croatian capital of Zagreb. The U.N. launched an internal investigation  
about Srebrenica. The report concluded by saying that "the tragedy of  
Srebrenica will haunt our history forever...."**

**Now the U.N. has [a] new Srebrenica.... So far more than 14,000 people in  
Syria have been killed. Yet again, the U.N. is failing...to prevent the mass  
murder of innocent civilians.**

**The reason why the U.N. fails time and again to halt mass murder and  
even genocide is because of the interests of its member states. It  
refuses to take a firm moral position condemning those who perpetrate  
massacres and then it refrains from imposing effective measures against  
them. In the case of the Darfur rebellion, which began in 2003, while the  
U.S. called the actions of the Sudanese army "genocide," the U.N.  
refused to adopt the same term and adopted ineffective actions for the  
following eight years, while thousands died.**

**There are two lessons for Israel from the international response to the  
Syrian crisis. First, the behavior of the U.N. proves yet again that Israel  
must never compromise its doctrine of self-reliance when its own  
security is at stake by relying on the protection of international forces. A  
second lesson is how Israel should relate to the constant criticism it  
receives from various U.N. bodies.... If the U.N. is a paralyzed  
organization that cannot take decisions about cases of genocide...then  
why should Israel listen to its moral judgments about the Israeli-  
Palestinian conflict?...**

**Indeed, the Syrian crisis is just the latest example of how the U.N. has  
lost the moral authority it had when it was founded. Israel must**

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IRAN**

isranet-publications

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<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/syria-descends-civil-war>

-obamas-futile-engagementreset-policy-flouted-russia-china-

internalize the change in the U.N.'s status the next time a U.N. official decides to issue another politicized "condemnation" about its actions. iran/

*(Dore Gold, a former Israeli Ambassador to the UN,  
is President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.)*

**CHEMICALLY UNSTABLE**

Yaakov Katz

*Jerusalem Post, June 14, 2012*

It was July 2007 and in Aleppo, Syria, the muezzins were just starting to issue the early-morning call for prayers. It was a different Syria at the time—Bashar Assad's rule appeared stable and was not threatened by rebels....

But then the city was rocked by an explosion. Looking out their windows, residents could see smoke rising from a military base located on the outskirts of the ancient city. The damage was isolated to a single building, one that very few people—even those who served in the base—knew the purpose of.

Fifteen people were reported killed and several dozen more were rushed to the Aleppo University Hospital nearby with severe burns all over their bodies.... The Syrians immediately blocked off the base and prevented the media from reaching the scene. They also tried to destroy any evidence of the work that was taking place inside.... A few months would pass before the real nature of the explosion was to be revealed.

Apparently, the base everyone in Aleppo thought was an old arms dump was really one of the most secretive installations in Syria's chemical weapons program. The nondescript building that was destroyed in the blast had been a sophisticated laboratory used to manufacture non-conventional warheads with VX, Sarin and mustard gas. The explosion took place as Syrian and Iranian engineers were reportedly trying to weaponize a Scud missile with a mustard gas warhead. The blast led to the dispersion of various chemical agents, causing the severe burns on people outside the facility who were not wearing the necessary

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"ENGAGEMENT/RESET" POLICY FLOUTED BY RUSSIA, CHINA,  
IRAN**

**isranet-publications**

**Isranet Daily Briefing, June 21, 2012**

**<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/syria-descends-civil-war-obamas-futile-engagementreset-policy-flouted-russia-china-iran/>**

**protective gear....**

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**The Syrian-Iranian alliance was the result of a series of defense agreements the countries had signed since 2005 aimed at advancing military cooperation, including assistance each side would provide the other in the event of a military confrontation with Israel or the United States. The agreements also reportedly included a Syrian commitment to allow Iran to store weapons on Syrian soil.**

**Two years later, Maj.-Gen. (res.) Amos Yadlin, then-head of Military Intelligence, gave a little more insight into the way the relationship worked between the countries. Weapons were usually designed and developed in Iran, Yadlin said in 2009, while production took place in Syria. When it was time to test the weapons, special invitations would be sent to Hezbollah and Hamas headquarters as well as to North Korea, which often sent its own military representatives to the events....**

**The threat that Israel faces from Syria's chemical weapons...focuses on two stark possibilities. The first is that the weapons will fall into rogue hands—either al-Qaida or Hezbollah, which is believed to already be working to move some of the advanced military systems it has been storing in Syria to Lebanon out of fear that they will be captured by rebel forces. The recent takeover of an air defense base in Syria by rebels underscores that fear.**

**The second option...is that Assad will use the weapons against Israel if he starts to think that his end is near. This way, he will try to divert attention away from the massacres his military forces have been perpetrating throughout Syria and instead have his people rally behind him in a war against Israel....**

**It is not known how many times the Syrians were close to using their chemical weapons against Israel. One case, though, was in September 2007, shortly after Israel bombed the Al Kibar nuclear reactor Assad was building covertly along the Euphrates River. According to a US diplomatic cable from 2008 published by Wikileaks, Assad had put his mobile missile forces on high alert after the strike but ultimately ordered them not to fire.... Then-prime minister Ehud Olmert told a delegation of US congressmen visiting Jerusalem: "That took discipline."**



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In recent years, as the explosion in [Allepo in] 2007 demonstrated, Iran has played a key role in helping Syria upgrade its chemical weapons and missile capabilities.... Today, Syria is assessed to have one of the largest chemical weapons arsenals in the world with thousands of bombs that can be dropped from the air alongside dozens of warheads that can be installed on Scud missiles.... While Israel has developed the Arrow missile defense system to protect against Syrian Scuds, the major question is what it will do if intelligence one day shows the chemical weapons beginning to proliferate to rogue actors throughout the region....

Israel's options vary. One possibility could be to attack from the air convoys of chemical weapons or bases where the weapons are stored. While this would be seen as an act of aggression by Israel, if done in the twilight of Assad's regime, the chances that it would spark an all-out war would be slim. On the other hand, an Israeli strike against a weapons convoy in Syria could provide Assad with the opportunity to use Israel as a scapegoat and divert attention away from his violent crackdown....

None of the options are particularly appealing for Israel but with the situation in Syria escalating daily, a decision will need to be made. What Israel does could determine the future balance of power in this ever-changing Middle East.

**ISRAEL BETS BIG ON THE SYRIAN UPRISING**

Daniel Nisman

*Wall Street Journal, June 14, 2012*

This [month] has witnessed a remarkable shift in the Israeli government's approach to the Syrian conflict. Politicians and defense officials alike have taken turns slamming Bashar al-Assad's regime, bringing an end to Israel's year-long policy of disciplined ambiguity on the Syrian unrest.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu led the charge, adding his voice to the chorus of national leaders who condemned Mr. Assad for the latest massacre near Hama. Mr. Netanyahu told his cabinet that "the axis [of

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**-obamas-futile-engagementreset-policy-flouted-russia-china-**

**evil] is rearing its ugly head"—a reference to Iran and Hezbollah. Israel's ~~iran/~~ ambassador to the United Nations, Ron Prosor, declared that "on behalf of the Israeli people and the Jewish people, I say directly to the Syrian people: we hear your cries. We are horrified by the crimes of the Assad regime. We extend our hand to you." Kadima Party Chairman and Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz has now called for international intervention in Syria....**

**Until very recently though, Israeli's leaders had been hesitant to speak out against the atrocities, leading Western pundits to suggest that Israel actually preferred the rule of the House of Assad to the chaos that might engulf Syria in its stead. Mr. Assad is, after all, the devil Israelis know—a ruthless dictator and staunch enemy, who nonetheless kept the peace on the Golan Heights. In the Arab world, Israel is commonly portrayed as Mr. Assad's partner in genocide. Cartoons depicting Israeli and Syrian tanks side-by-side, flattening Sunni Arabs, have become common in Arab media (conveniently ignoring the decades-long, bitter rivalry between the two nations).**

**The fact is that Israel, perhaps more than any other nation in the region, stands to benefit from Mr. Assad's downfall. Despite the 40-year stability along their shared border, tension between the two states has long been boiling beneath the surface. The Syrian military is the focus of a high number of the Israeli Defense Forces' large-scale training exercises.... Most importantly, Mr. Assad remains the key link to Iranian influence in the eastern Mediterranean....**

**The silence from Jerusalem over the past 15 months of Syrian conflict was not due to Israeli fears over a destabilized Syria, nor of the rise of a more radical, Sunni-dominated regime. It was rather part of Israel's closely adhered-to government policy aimed at preventing the Assad regime from delegitimizing its opponents by portraying their struggle as a foreign conspiracy. The decision to break that silence was also carefully strategized—both in timing and in nature.**

**In condemning Assad's regime, the Israelis appealed directly to the hearts and minds of the Sunni-Arab world at a time when both find themselves pitted against a common enemy: Mr. Assad. Accusations of Iranian involvement in Syria are meant to remind Mr. Assad's opponents**

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**isranet-publications**

**Isranet Daily Briefing, June 21, 2012**

**<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/syria-descends-civil-war>**

**-obamas-futile-engagementreset-policy-flouted-russia-china-**

**in the Gulf that Israel stands on their side in the struggle against Shia iran/  
regional domination.**

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**The recent appointment of Syran-Kurdish activist Abdelbasset Sida to head the main opposition group in exile, the *Syrian National Council*, now presents Jerusalem with an opportunity to express tacit support for a possible successor to Mr. Assad. The Kurds have traditionally maintained positive views of Israel, a relationship that grew from their peaceful coexistence with Jews in northern Iraq prior to the Jewish expulsion after World War II....**

**Ultimately, the Israelis are convinced that the hourglass of Mr. Assad's tenure has been flipped on its head, and have begun making preparations for the day after his ousting.... While few in Jerusalem expect a peace agreement to follow Mr. Assad's downfall, Israeli leaders have made their position clear to the region and world: When it comes to Syria, they'll take anyone but Mr. Assad.**