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Article 1.

NYT

## **The Syrian Pact**

Editorial

September 15, 2013 -- The United States-Russian agreement to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons arsenal is remarkably ambitious and offers a better chance of deterring this threat than the limited military strikes that President Obama was considering.

Even so, the task of cataloging, securing and destroying

President Bashar al-Assad's poison gas cache — which Washington and Moscow have estimated at 1,000 tons — is daunting. It will require vigilance and commitment by the United Nations, with success ultimately dependent on the cooperation of Mr. Assad, whose forces are responsible for most of the 100,000 deaths in the brutal civil war, including what the United States says were more than 1,400 deaths in a chemical attack in August.

Mr. Kerry said on Sunday that the agreement was a “framework” that would have to be put into effect in a United Nations Security Council resolution. The world won't have to wait long to see if the deal, announced by Secretary of State John Kerry and Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, will get off the ground.

Under the deal's terms, Syria is required to provide a “comprehensive listing” of its chemical arsenal within a week. That includes the types and quantities of poison gas, and storage, production and research sites. The agreement also requires “immediate and unfettered” access to these sites by international inspectors, with the inspections to be completed by November. Also by November, equipment for mixing and filling munitions with chemical agents must be destroyed. All chemical weapons and related equipment are to be eliminated by the middle of 2014.

The deadlines are necessary to keep the pressure on, but meeting them will not be easy in the middle of a civil war, even if Mr. Assad cooperates. The United States and Russia have worked for 15 years to eliminate their own chemical arms stocks and still have years to go.

The agreement avoids imminent American military action, but Mr. Assad will be responsible for providing security for United Nations inspectors, as well as access to sites and information. If he fails to dismantle his program, the Security Council resolution would authorize punitive measures. President Obama has said that American military action is still on the table.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia has undoubtedly elevated his stature in the Middle East with this diplomatic move. But he is now on the hook as he never was before to make sure that Mr. Assad does not use chemical weapons. Mr. Putin has drawn a line at poison gas, but it will be cynical and reprehensible if he continues to supply Mr. Assad with conventional arms, which have killed the vast majority of Syria's civilian victims.

President Obama deserves credit for putting a focus on upholding an international ban on chemical weapons and for setting aside military action at this time in favor of a diplomatic deal. The Syria crisis should demonstrate to Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, that Mr. Obama, who has held out the possibility of military action against Iran's nuclear program, is serious about a negotiated solution. Mr. Obama's disclosure that he had indirectly exchanged messages with Mr. Rouhani was encouraging.

There are many uncertainties ahead, including what the administration will do to support the Syrian opposition. Now that Russia and the United States have reached a deal, there's reason to hope this cooperation will help advance an overall peace settlement for Syria.

The Wall Street Journal

## **Even if Assad gives up his chemical weapons, he escapes unpunished for using them**

Editorial

15 September, 2013 -- Politicians on the right and left are praising Saturday's U.S.-Russia "framework" to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons as a step away from American intervention. That is true only in the looking-glass world in which politicians are desperate to avoid voting on a military strike. The reality is that the accord takes President Obama and the U.S. ever deeper into the Syrian diplomatic bazaar, with the President hostage to Bashar Assad and Vladimir Putin as the friendly local tour guides.

Two weeks ago, Secretary of State John Kerry called Assad "a thug and a murderer" who had "used those weapons multiple times this year." Today, we are told he has been knocked off his tank on the road to the Damascus suburbs and will come clean about his entire CW stockpile in a week and then lead U.N. inspectors to every cache. All of this is supposed to be guaranteed by the Russians who for two years have protected Assad from any international sanction and still insist he didn't use chemical weapons.

Merely stating these expectations underscores their

implausibility, and already the Russians are disputing U.S. information about where and how much poison gas Assad holds. There are a hundred ways to cheat on this agreement, starting with the declaration.

Meanwhile, Russia got Mr. Obama to concede that all of this will go to the United Nations for approval without any mention of enforcement. If Assad does cheat, the U.S. would have to go back to the Security Council again for another resolution to use force, which the Russians will veto.

U.S. officials are insisting that Mr. Obama reserves the right to use force without U.N. approval, but the prospect of that is vanishingly small. The President leapt at Mr. Putin's diplomatic offer precisely because he knew he was headed for defeat in Congress. The Russians and Assad know Mr. Obama won't take that political risk again.

Even if Assad does declare and destroy his entire CW stockpile, he will have emerged unpunished for having used these terror weapons. Mr. Obama told ABC's George Stephanopoulos on Sunday that "my entire goal throughout this exercise is to make sure that what happened on August 21st does not happen again."

That isn't how he and Mr. Kerry described their goal over the last two weeks when Mr. Obama explicitly urged a military strike to "make clear to the world we will not tolerate their use," referring to chemical weapons. Assad will have violated what Mr. Obama repeatedly called "international norms"—killing at least 1,400 people including 400 children—and then get a pass for promising not to do again what he claims he didn't do but Mr. Kerry says he did at least 14 times.

Assad also knows he has all but ended the threat of future Western military intervention. He can now renew his military offensive against the rebels, including the bombing of civilian neighborhoods with planes and helicopters. It's no accident that the Syrian rebels quickly dismissed the U.S.-Russia accord as a victory for Assad. They can be killed by bombs as easily as by sarin gas.

The least Mr. Obama can do amid his larger retreat is give the rebels a better chance to fight and survive. The CIA seems finally to be providing small arms, but the non-jihadist rebels need heavier weapons to defend against air and tank assaults. If he folds to Russian protests and shuts down U.S. aid, then Mr. Obama should encourage the Saudis and Qataris to provide those arms.

This might prevent a victory for Assad and his friends in Moscow and Tehran. If there is a bloody stalemate, and Syria slowly bleeds Tehran and Hezbollah, then there is a chance for a negotiation. One result might be a Syrian partition into a rump Alawite nation run by Assad and a separate Sunni-dominated state.

A stalemate would also delay the worst strategic impact of an Assad-Iran-Russia victory until we get a new President who isn't perceived as a naive American tourist among the hard killers of the Middle East.

[Article 3.](#)

Bloomberg

# **New Syria Agreement Is a Big Victory.** **For Assad.**

Jeffrey Goldberg

Sep 15, 2013 -- A couple of months ago, the Obama administration was -- at least rhetorically -- targeting Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad for removal. Today, the U.S. has in a perverse way made Assad its partner.

The U.S. and Syria will now be working together on an improbable, even fantastical project: ridding a brutal country at war with itself of chemical weapons.

The agreement, reached over the weekend, to begin disarming Syria represents an astonishing victory for the Assad regime. It is also a victory for Assad's main weapons supplier and diplomatic protector, Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Which is not to say that this isn't also a victory -- a provisional, morally ambiguous victory -- for President Barack Obama as well.

But first, Assad. Why is this agreement a victory for him? Two reasons:

1. So long as he doesn't use chemical weapons on his people, he'll be safe from armed Western intervention. Roughly 98 percent of the people who have died in the Syrian civil war so far have not been killed with chemical weapons, so obviously Assad and his regime have figured out ways to cause mass death

in conventional ways. It's safe to assume that he'll increase the tempo of attacks on rebels and civilians, knowing now that he can do so with impunity. Obama won't be outlining any further "red lines," it would seem.

2. By partnering with Russia and the West on the disarmament process, a process that is meant to last into 2014 (and most likely won't be finished for years, even if it is carried out in good faith, which is a big "if"), Assad has made himself indispensable. A post-Assad regime wouldn't necessarily be party to this agreement, and might not even go through the motions. Syria, post-Assad, might very well be more fractured and chaotic than it is now, which is to say, even less of an environment in which United Nations weapons inspectors could safely go about their work. The U.S. now needs Assad in place for the duration. He's the guy, after all, whose lieutenants know where the chemical weapons are.

This agreement represents a victory for Putin for fairly obvious reasons: He is the leader of a second-tier power who has nevertheless made himself into the new power player of the Middle East (he's heading off to Iran now for discussions on its nuclear program). He has shown up an American president, and he will be considered, by the perpetually naive at least, to be something akin to a peacemaker, when, in fact, he's a bloody-minded autocrat.

So why, if this agreement is a victory for Assad and Putin, could it also be considered a victory for Obama? In the narrowest political sense, it's a victory because the president is no longer compelled to launch military strikes that the American people clearly didn't support. In a broader sense, it's a victory because,

by threatening to attack, he has forced the Syrian regime to acknowledge that it does, in fact, possess chemical weapons, and that it will give them up. In so doing, the president has achieved his limited goal of reinforcing the international taboo on the use of chemical weapons, and that's not nothing.

Eventually, though, this limited Western victory might feel like a moral and strategic defeat, for two reasons.

1. Our allies across the Middle East, having seen the U.S. promise to help remove Assad and then not follow through, will further doubt American steadfastness and friendship and will reorient their policies accordingly, with some adverse consequences for the U.S.

2. This plan probably won't work. Assad is a lying, murdering terrorist, and lying, murdering terrorists aren't, generally speaking, reliable partners, except for other lying, murdering terrorists. In any case, disarmament experts say that this process, properly carried out, would take years and years to accomplish, but of course they really don't know how long this might take because no one has ever tried to locate and secure hundreds of tons of chemical weapons on an active battlefield, particularly one in which Hezbollah and al-Qaeda are vying for supremacy.

But for now, the president has underscored the international norm governing the use of chemical weapons, and he has done what the American people say they wanted -- staying out of the conflict. He may not be a clear winner in this drama, like Assad and Putin are, but compared to Congress -- in particular its reflexively isolationist, self-destructive Republican caucus -- he looks like Churchill.

Who are the real losers in this episode? That one is easy. The Syrian people. They will continue to be raped, tortured and slaughtered in their homes, in their markets, on their streets, in their hospitals and in their mosques. So long as they die in conventional ways, no one will pay their deaths much mind at all.

*Jeffrey Goldberg is a Bloomberg View columnist.*

Article 4.

The Washington Post

## **Try as he might, Obama can't dodge the Mideast's bullets**

Jackson Diehl

September 16 -- When the Syrian army launched its sarin attack in the Damascus suburbs on Aug. 21, the country's civil war was on a deep back burner in the Obama administration. Senior officials were in the middle of a policy review to determine how to respond to the bloody crackdown by the Egyptian military that had killed hundreds in Cairo one week earlier. On Aug. 27, a meeting of the "principals committee" of top national security officials agreed on a calibrated package of cuts and delays in arms deliveries to Egypt for Obama's approval.

Obama never announced a decision. Instead, Egypt was thrust to

the deep back burner itself and attention refocused on what to do about the Syrian chemical weapons attack. While the president and his advisors have weaved between ordering a military strike, asking for a Congressional vote and now seeking a diplomatic solution at the United Nations, Egypt's generals have been methodically constructing a quasi-fascist police state that indulges in anti-American propaganda and is looking considerably more repressive than the former autocracy of Hosni Mubarak.

Just in the last week, a state of emergency allowing mass detentions and summary military trials was extended for two months, a respected journalist was arrested and charged by the military with “spreading false news” and the offices of the secular pro-democracy movement that led the 2011 revolution against Mubarak were raided. Former president Mohamed Morsi and hundreds of members of his Muslim Brotherhood remain jailed, even as a campaign gains momentum to install Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, the leader of the July 3 coup against Morsi, as president.

Obama's passivity in response to these developments, following a public statement on Aug. 23 that “we can't return to business as usual” with Egypt, is symptomatic of the rudderlessness that has overtaken his Middle East policy. There is no pretense of a strategy — only a reactive racing from fire to fire and the ad-hoc concoction of responses that, like the Egypt aid cutoff or the punitive military strike in Syria, end up stalled or diverted. Far from offering a vision, Obama regularly laments in public that he is compelled to pay attention: “I would much rather spend my time talking about how to make sure every 3- and 4-year-old gets a good education,” he said amid the Syria debate.

The president appears at least to recognize his malaise. Passing the Syria decision to Congress was a way of acknowledging it. In his televised speech last week, he groped for one of his middle-way formulas, declaring that “America is not the world’s policeman” immediately after quoting Franklin Roosevelt’s argument that resistance to foreign entanglements must yield when “ideals and principles that we have cherished are challenged.”

It wouldn’t be surprising if Obama made an effort at reset in the coming weeks. We’ll probably hear one of his well-polished speeches devoted to articulating principles that can apply to Bashar al-Assad’s chemical weapons as well as Gen. al-Sissi’s entrenchment, the Arab-Israeli peace process as well as the Iranian nuclear program. But it probably will be a minimalist approach. Obama will make a doctrine of his gut wish not to spend his time and political capital on the region’s multiple crises.

The problem is that the attempt to disengage, to claim that the United States need not take sides in the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites or generals and Islamists, only leads back to the same cycle of passivity and ad-hoc reaction in which Obama is now stuck. That’s partly because, as the last month has demonstrated, a stand-back policy can’t hold when more than 600 unarmed protestors are gunned down in a single day in Cairo, or when 1,400 civilians are suffocated by sarin gas outside Damascus. A failure to respond by the only outside power capable of making a difference only invites greater crimes and worse threats to vital U.S. interests.

More to the point, inaction is a way of supporting a side —

usually the wrong one. U.S. aid still flows to the Egyptian armed forces while their persecution spreads from Islamists to secular journalists and liberal democrats. The Sunni regime in Bahrain uses U.S.-supplied weapons to suppress a Shiite uprising. And clinging to the sidelines in Syria cedes the battlefield to Assad, Iran and al-Qaeda.

At the root of Obama's foreign policy dysfunction is a refusal to accept that an American president must take on the history that erupts on his watch — whether it is the fall of the Berlin Wall, the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, or the Arab revolutions — and use his unique power to shape it. It's no use lamenting that this is not where he wants to spend his time or that the public isn't interested. In the end, he will be obliged to act; the question is whether he will drive events, or they him.

Article 5.

NYT

## **The Missing Partner**

Bill Keller

September 15, 2013 -- I sincerely hope Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, calculating showman (and now my fellow Op-ed writer), wants to play peacemaker in Syria. I'm skeptical of his intentions, as I wrote last week, and my skepticism was compounded when Putin began imposing preconditions for the

surrender of Syria's poison gas, starting with an American vow not to back up diplomacy with the threat of force. I look forward to being proved wrong. But if the United States really believes in a diplomatic resolution of Syria's fratricidal war — beyond the important but insufficient goal of chemical disarmament — it needs to pull up a few more chairs to the bargaining table. The most indispensable missing player is Iran.

Russia provides President Bashar al-Assad of Syria with weapons and political cover, including a veto on the U.N. Security Council. But Iran, directly and through its patronage of Hezbollah fighters, has given Assad his battlefield advantage. Russia sees Syria as a pawn in a geopolitical game — a foothold in the region, a diversion for jihadists who might otherwise be menacing Russia, a chance to cut Washington down to size. For Iran, the stakes are higher: Syria is a pillar of resistance to Israel and the United States, and a front in a gathering battle among Islamic powers for dominance in the Muslim world. Since the election in June of a new and less confrontational Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, and his choice of a seemingly sophisticated and pragmatic foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the foreign affairs journals and think tanks have been abuzz with talk of new opportunity. There is intense speculation that Rouhani has a mandate to strike a deal limiting Iran's nuclear program, in order to get his country out from under the painful economic sanctions and reduce the threat of an American or Israeli pre-emptive attack on Iran's nuclear sites. Rouhani's trip to New York for the U.N. General Assembly later this month is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate good faith. But there is remarkably little sign that President Obama's White House or State Department sees this as bearing on Syria. Iran

figures in the Syria debate only as an audience we are trying to impress: we must enforce a chemical red line in Syria, the argument goes, so Iran will respect a nuclear red line. We tend to treat Iran as a rogue nuclear program with a country attached to it, rather than as a regional power with which we could do useful business. I have no illusions about the Iranian regime. I was there for the disputed elections in 2009. I witnessed the savage suppression of the protests in Tehran, and fled the batons of the regime's paramilitary thugs in the provincial city of Isfahan. I have little faith that Iran's nuclear enrichment is purely civilian in purpose (though I am convinced that attempting to bomb the nuclear program out of existence would have the opposite of the intended effect.) And I don't kid myself that the election of an Iranian president more genial than his hate-spewing predecessor means the ultimate authority, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has gone soft. Iranian politics are rarely as simple as our understanding of them. Iran has not exactly been a constructive presence in its neighborhood. Ray Takeyh, an Iran expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, compares Iran to the arsonist who sets buildings on fire and then shows up offering his services as a fireman. Iran has a strong interest in sustaining Assad's rule. Syria is Iran's only consistent ally in the region, the overland corridor for resupplying Hezbollah and a bulwark against Sunni extremists, who make up one growing faction of the anti-Assad rebels. Only the last purpose overlaps with American interests. So with Iran at the Syria table there is no guarantee diplomacy will work. Without Iran at the table, though, failure is more likely, especially if we hope to go beyond the issue of chemical weapons and halt the "conventional" carnage that is claiming 1,000 lives a week. Karim Sadjadpour of the Carnegie Endowment for International

Peace says our differences with Iran over Syria may be irreconcilable, but he points out, “We really won’t know whether Iran can play a more constructive role in Syria unless we try.”

So what’s stopping us? There are several reasons Obama might be reluctant to include Iran in Syria talks, even though he came into office touting dialogue and fresh starts. One is inertia. There has long been a debate among Iran-watchers between those who urge a single-minded focus on Iran’s flagrant violations of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and those who argue that a wider menu of discussions might build a bit of trust and help end the nuclear stalemate. American policy has been more or less firmly committed to the first view: keep our eye on the nukes. We are stuck in a policy rut. The price we pay for this pinhole focus is that America and Iran are not talking to each other about a range of issues where Iran has influence, including Afghanistan, Iraq, terrorism, as well as Syria. That has meant missed opportunities in the past, notably in the weeks after the U.S. attacked Afghanistan in 2001. Washington and Tehran share a common enemy in the Sunni fanatics of the Taliban. But a flicker of cooperation was snuffed out when President George W. Bush decided to include Iran in his “axis of evil.”

Another reason for not inviting Iran into the Syria conversation is Saudi Arabia. The Saudis don’t want their main regional rival to be seated at the grown-ups’ table. Although our interests do not always coincide, the Saudis have been important partners. They are essential enablers of the tough international sanctions that Obama mobilized against Iran’s nuclear enrichment; the Saudis stepped up supplies to countries that had been dependent

on Iranian oil. The Saudis would also be needed for any armistice in Syria, since they and other gulf monarchies have been arming Syrian rebel factions. Russia and Iran together, if they choose, can probably persuade Assad to cease fire; getting the fractious bands of rebels to stop shooting will be much more difficult, and impossible without the Saudis.

And any conciliatory gesture toward Iran is politically risky at home. “There’s a real disinclination to do anything that might appear to be legitimizing Iran’s role in Syria,” said Suzanne Maloney, a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. “But the reality is, they’re part of the fight.”

Would there be a larger payoff to including Iran? Some experts, such as Trita Parsi of the National Iranian American Council, suggest that enlisting Iran as a partner on Syria and other regional troubles might help break the nuclear impasse; in this view, engagement would allay fears in Tehran that our real aim is to overthrow the theocratic regime. “If Iran is part of the solution in Syria,” Parsi contends, “then we also have a stake in assuring some degree of stability in Iran in order to make sure the solution does not fall apart.” Others say the official Iranian suspicion of America is too deep to be overcome by dialogue. Sadjadpour argues that the regime actually needs America’s hostility to justify its authoritarian rule.

Nonetheless, he recognizes that attempting to engage Iran “is a win-win.” If the Iranians help stabilize the situation in Syria, and if that in turn creates a better climate for a nuclear deal, then the world is a safer place. On the other hand, if we engage the Iranians and they don’t reciprocate then it becomes clearer than ever that the problem is Tehran, not Washington. It is probably

naïve to think reaching out to Iran in this immediate crisis would be a step toward rapprochement. But it could, at least, be a step back from the brink.

Article 6.

The National Interest

## **Why No Middle Eastern Metternichs?**

Bernd Kaussler

September 16, 2013 -- As U.S. secretary of state John Kerry and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, recently negotiated the denouement of Russia's very own "Syrian Missile Crisis" in Switzerland, the fate of the Middle Eastern stability is once again subject to the Great Powers.

The Obama administration's unilateral threat of use of missile strikes against Syria, which was not authorized by the United Nations, has thus far been stopped by a Russian proposal for Syria to hand over its chemical-weapons stockpile and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Reminiscent of October 1962, the Syrian president insists that the initiative is contingent on the U.S. ceasing "its policy on threatening Syria ." Such quid pro quo is subject to a myriad of technical problems in finding and destroying the stockpiles in a warzone. It also represents a considerable leap of faith by the U.S. government to test Syrian and Russian assurances and

commitment to an international monitoring regime. Most importantly, however, negotiations take place in the shadow of the U.S.-Iranian nuclear standoff. So what's at stake is not so much human security for Syrians or regional stability, but Obama's nonproliferation credibility towards Iran, as well as Putin's chauvinistic vision of Russia's place in the world.

Once again, the Middle East is a pawn in great power politics.

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the popular uprisings since 2010, the international relations of the Middle East have been far from stable. Alignments and alliances between regional states have always been subject to domestic politics, regime survival, wars with Israel or the manipulation by outside powers during and after the Cold War. There has never been a collective security pact for the Middle East nor any effective economic or political union like the EU, ASEAN or NAFTA. However, with the political changes and violent conflicts associated with the Arab Spring, international relations of the Middle East have become an even more complex web of enemies, friends and backstabbing allies.

One of Henry Kissinger's greatest books, A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822 (which was his PhD thesis at Harvard) analysed how two European statesmen, British foreign secretary, Viscount Robert Castlereagh, and Prince Klemens von Metternich, Austria's foreign minister, created the "Concert of Europe," a sustainable peace between European powers following the Napoleonic wars. Metternich, who ultimately would become the inspiration for Kissinger's policy of détente with China and the USSR during the Nixon administration, was described by Kissinger as a

statesman of the equilibrium. The Austrian aristocrat wanted to create and maintain a sufficient balance of power to ensure system stability amongst European powers rather than trying to defeat a specific foe. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Metternich forged a peaceful balance of power and redrew the post-Napoleonic political map of Europe. European peace was maintained by containing the forces of nationalism and democratization. By subduing demands for checks on monarchical rule and national self-determination, the “Concert of Europe” was the first international regime based on collective security and created a stable peace on the Continent, which—with the exception of the Franco-Prussian War between 1870-1871—would last a hundred years. Europe, ravaged by centuries of war, would experience no major conflict until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

As statesman, Henry Kissinger practiced Metternich’s qualities, divorcing diplomacy from morals and ideology or concerns about the internal politics of other countries. To Kissinger, stability was the primary goal of diplomacy. Other great statesmen like Otto von Bismarck’s unification of Germany, Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik (post-war Germany’s version of détente), Helmut Kohl’s commitment to European integration and management of German reunification after 1989, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s leadership before, during and after the Second World War and even the EU’s policy of constructive engagement with Iran until 2003 mirrored this commitment to stability.

Why is there no peace?

But why does the Middle East have no Metternichs?

Why is there no Congress of the Middle East, capable of maintaining regional peace and security?

The answer to this question has to be attributed to both the nature of regional political systems and the curse of geopolitics. The Middle East has thus far not produced an indigenous collective security system or even an alliance system close to the Concert of Europe, never mind NATO. There certainly has been no shortage of efforts.

In 1950, the Tripartite Declaration between France, Britain and the U.S. vowed to supply arms to regional states (contingent on non-aggression) for the “internal security and self-defense or defense against regional outside aggressor.” Two years later, Turkey and Greece joined NATO. Both were initiatives designed to deter the Soviets rather than deal with regional security. Further attempts to create mutual defense regimes in the Middle East failed. President Truman failed with a military pact, the “Middle East Command”, based in Egypt and modeled after NATO with an integrated command structure and led by a British supreme commander. It was rejected by Egypt’s leadership, which beneath the veneer of this anti-Soviet alliance recognized the signs of Western imperialism and the threat it posed to Arab independence. The “Baghdad Pact” in 1955, was a mutual defense regime between Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Britain was also rejected by Egypt, with Gamal Abdel Nasser branding Iraqi prime minister Nuri Said an “Anglo-American stooge” and was, therefore, sacrificed on the altar of pan-Arabism. The pact was eventually dissolved with the overthrow of the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy in Iraq in 1959.

Legacies of the Gulf wars – all three!

There has been no regional defense pact since then. Neither the Arab League nor the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have collective-security treaty obligations. Rather, U.S. extended security and power balancing between states have created a highly fluid system of allies and enemies. U.S. regional surrogates, like Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Israel have either been armed with weapons made in America, enjoy an iron-clad relationship with Washington or are hosting U.S. forces.

The Pax Americana in the Middle East has never been a stable one. The U.S. served as honest broker only after all of the Israeli-Arab wars. The U.S. government also could not prevent the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988, but instead fueled it (as did European powers) to contain revolutionary Iran. Fully aware that Iraq could attack Iranian troops with chemical weapons, the Reagan administration provided Saddam Hussein with vital intelligence and political support. And whatever forces and allies the George H.W. Bush administration was able to amass in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991, it was unable to do before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990. More importantly, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the UN Security Council enforced the concept of collective security for the second time only after the Korean War in 1950. The fact that the international community was coming to the immediate rescue of Kuwait only reinforced Iran's security dilemma. After all, Tehran had been fighting Saddam Hussein's Iraq in what was the twentieth century's longest conventional war. Iran's painful experience of mustard gas, cyanide and sarin on the battlefield and Western complicity during the conflict, followed by the international coalition to liberate Kuwait, has not only led to deeply entrenched societal abhorrence of

chemical weapons but also continues to inform Iran's mistrust of the international community and its strategy of deterrence towards the Arab states, towards Israel, and towards the United States in particular. The Iran-Iraq war created a reference point for regional security and further consolidated an American security framework for the Persian Gulf. So, far from creating a sustainable peace after 1988, the U.S.-led Gulf Wars in 1990-91 and 2003 coupled with the policy containment of Iran only reinforced the region's balance-of-power politics and the confrontational course Washington and Tehran had embarked on after 1979.

### Order before justice

As if regional relations weren't precarious enough, then there comes the Arab Spring. The impact of the political upheavals on the international relations of the Middle East has divorced the region even further from the prospect of peace.

Realists put a premium on order before justice. It is evident that President Obama is much less informed by a humanitarian imperative, but rather needs to restore U.S. credibility, given his warning that the use of chemical weapons would constitute a "red line." Right now there is neither order nor justice in the Middle East. International order is unlikely to be achieved with missiles fired from the Mediterranean into Syria, nor by the continuous lack of diplomatic comanagement by regional powers. By the same token, justice and democracy seem a distant reality for the people of the Middle East. Power-based diplomacy between regional states and by outside powers has not brought about peace between Israel and the Arab states nor between Israel and Palestine. Power-based diplomacy has also

prevented any rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran and has allowed Saudi Arabia to violently crush democratic movements in the Gulf and beyond. In fact, following the Saudi-led GCC Operation Peninsula Shield in 2011 to restore order and stamp out democratic dissent in Bahrain, the host country of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, King Abdullah has been described by one scholar as the "Metternich of Arabia". As the West enforced a UN-sanctioned no-fly zone over Libya, the air forces of the UAE and Qatar (which was the first Arab country to recognize the Libyan rebels as the new legitimate representative of the country) joined U.S., British and French forces in helping Libyan rebels in ousting Muammar Qaddafi. In the same year, the antirevolutionary and antidemocratic would-be Metternichs of the Gulf forwarded the prospect of membership to the only two monarchies outside the Gulf, Morocco and Jordan. In February 2013, Morocco's King Mohammed VI and King Abdullah II of Jordan were allocated \$2.5 billion dollars in aid from the Gulf monarchies to maintain the political status quo and further extend Saudi influence and strategic depth outside the Gulf. After the ousting of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi by the Egyptian armed forces in July of this year, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait were quick to congratulate the military relics of the ancien regime—and pledged over \$ 12 billion assistance in form of oil, capital and interest-free deposits in the Central Bank of Egypt. This kind of political power brokerage across the region has been funded by high oil proceeds. Needless to say, oil rents continue to be used by the Gulf monarchies to shore up their own domestic support. More importantly, however, according the IISS 2013 Military Balance, petrodollars have allowed a rise in defense spending in the region from \$155.9 billion in 2011 to \$166.4 billion in 2012.

As post-conflict Libya struggles with a weak central government and a slow process of DDR (demobilization, disarmament and reintegration) of militias and the armed forces, the Syrian theatre witnessed the influx of these very weapons, foreign military and intelligence advisers and paramilitaries from across the region. The Syrian conflict has become the main theatre for the proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

### Fine-tuning the regional balance of power first

The statesmanship of Metternich and Castlereagh lied in the fact that they managed to create a balance of power amongst the European powers, which, though neither fair nor just, was accepted by European leaders as legitimate. Iran's violent projection of power across the region and Saudi Arabia's meddling in the affairs of regional states (with the tacit approval of the U.S.) reflect respective ambitions for regional dominance rather than stability. It's about old-fashioned power first, the much-cited Shia-Sunni fault line second. If there ever were to emerge a Middle Eastern concert among the Arab States, Iran and Turkey to manage regional relations jointly, to engage in meaningful preventative diplomacy and if violent conflicts occur, to resolve it themselves, it needs to be accepted as legitimate in the first place. It won't happen as long Iran is being kept out. After all, even France was allowed to join the Concert of Europe in 1818. There could have not been a peace without its membership. Today, the Arab League's secretary general, Amr Moussa, is no Metternich, neither are any of the Gulf monarchs, nor Iran's president, Hassan Rowhani, nor its supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. However, rather than trying to save face internationally through a military strike, the U.S. should allow these regional leaders to be stakeholders for

regional peace and support a political solution which caters to the warring parties inside and outside of Syria and addresses immediate human-security needs.

Another international conference in Geneva at the end of September won't be a Congress of Vienna. It will also not bring about the independence of Palestine, end confessional and sectarian violence in Lebanon, or meet the socioeconomic needs of Arabs in North Africa. But it could be a first step towards a regional order accepted as legitimate by all states. Iran wants acceptance as a regional power. So do Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The Levant craves peace, Palestine statehood, and North Africa's youth are yearning for dignity and democracy. A regional solution to end the bloodletting in Syria could very well assist in fine-tuning the regional balance of power. A future stable Middle Eastern concert, able to sustain peace, may then eventually become a genuine security community, in which the use of force will become unthinkable and political systems are based on justice and integrity. After all, it worked for history's most violent region: Europe.

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Politico

## **Arabic media's view of Obama**

Stephen J. Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter and Roland Schatz

September 15, 2013 -- As President Barack Obama tries to stop the bleeding in Syria, contain the terrorist threats from Al Qaeda in Yemen and restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, he has an unlikely ally: the leading Arabic broadcasters, which provide surprisingly positive coverage of his government.

A detailed content analysis of nightly television reports of five key Arabic language media outlets — Al Jazeera, the region's dominant broadcaster; Al Arabiya, linked to the Saudi royal family; Nile News, based in Egypt; the Lebanese Broadcasting Corp.; and Al-Manar, linked to Hezbollah — found them more positive about Obama during his first 18 months in office than key European broadcasters and the U.S. television networks.

The findings, part of a study by Media Tenor Ltd., a provider of international content analysis, challenge frequent claims about anti-U.S. media in the Arab region. The research also speaks to the effectiveness of U.S. government efforts to court the international media.

The findings are based on an analysis of 172,739 statements about the U.S. government on evening newscasts by nine international television broadcasters (five Arabic, four European) and four U.S. television networks over 18 months from January 2009 through June 2010.

Roughly one out of five international news stories relates to the president specifically, with the remainder covering other topics relating to U.S. politics and policies.

Native-language speakers analyzed evening news reports on a sentence-by-sentence basis for topic, subject and tone. Our research took those analyses and subtracted the percentage of negative statements from positive ones; we thus created a net measure of the tone of each outlet's coverage.

During Obama's first year in office, for example, the president enjoyed his greatest honeymoon with Arabic broadcasters, whose combined coverage was 8 percent net positive in tone. Coverage among four European broadcasters — two from the United Kingdom and two from Germany — was slightly less upbeat, with reports that averaged 6 percent net positive in tone.

In contrast, the evening news shows on ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox News levied far more criticism — 8 percent net negative in tone for the group. Although Fox was the most critical, coverage on the four U.S. networks overall was more negative than positive.

News on the domestic networks tends to be more critical of presidents than international news for three reasons: differences in the topics that interest domestic and international audiences, the traditionally adversarial approach domestic journalists bring to their work, and the difficulty foreign reporters have in getting through to policymakers.

U.S. television news covers the daily slog of the president's legislative priorities in Washington far more closely than international reporters do. How many news consumers abroad

care about the commentary offered by U.S. House Republican leaders, or would even recognize their names? And how many busy policymakers would devote precious time to interviews with foreign reporters? In addition, U.S. reporters thrive on competition, and failing to respect the norm of critical coverage would undermine their reputations.

The U.S. government, in other words, looks very different from 30,000 feet — or 9,144 meters.

To be sure, specific topics generated an extremely harsh response in Arabic television news. Obama's policies in Afghanistan were heavily criticized, as were reports relating to U.S. homeland security measures. And Middle East public opinion remains highly critical of the United States, despite the more favorable portrait painted by the region's media.

Even so, the relatively positive treatment of Obama by Arabic television news can help tell America's story in a part of the world often thought — before our research demonstrated otherwise — to be dominated by anti-U.S. voices.

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## **4 Things You Need to Know About the U.S.-Russia Agreement**

Eli Lake

September 16 - In the coming days, the Syrian government is supposed to provide an accounting to the United Nations of its chemical weapons program. The declaration expected from Syria is spelled out in a four-page framework agreement forged Saturday by the United States and Russia in Geneva. That document may present President Obama with a way to solve the most pressing national security crisis of his second term without taking military action that most American citizens and members of Congress oppose. Will it work? Here are four things you need to know about the proposed deal. 1) The plan is very ambitious. The first step of the U.S.-Russian framework agreement requires President Bashar al-Assad's regime to submit to the United Nations "a comprehensive listing, including names, types, and quantities of its chemical weapons agents, types of munitions, and location and form of storage, production, and research and development facilities." Press reports say Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed in private talks in Geneva last week week that Syria possessed about 1,000 metric tons of chemical agents, including nerve gas and blistering agents. But the devil is in the details. After the first submission from Syria, the U.S.-Russia plan says an initial

round of inspections is supposed to be complete by the end of November, and Syria's chemical stocks should be destroyed by the middle of 2014. To get a sense of how ambitious that stipulation is, consider what the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Gen. Mike Flynn, told a conference for intelligence community contractors in Washington on Thursday: "Today I asked a few of our folks from our own chemical system, 'How long did it take for us to kind of get rid of everything?' ...It took us about seven years, so it's going to take a while."

2) The pro-Western rebels are not happy. Two weeks ago it appeared that Obama was finally willing to enter the Syria conflict against Assad. The leaders of the Free Syrian Army, the opposition groups fighting Assad that are not affiliated with al Qaeda, greeted the prospect of American air strikes against Syrian military targets with praise. Mohammed al-Aboud, commander of the eastern front for the Free Syrian Army's Supreme Military Council, told *The Daily Beast* on Sunday: "In my area on the eastern front—this is where most of the oil and gas is—this has been targeted by the extremist forces. There is increased pressure by the extremist forces. This makes the fight much harder because the perception is our forces will not be getting support from the United States." For now, the Free Syrian Army will continue to rely on other patrons in the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia, where Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the former Saudi ambassador to Washington, has worked to provide Assad's more moderate opponents with weapons and other kinds of support.

3) For now, Obama avoids political humiliation. Obama acknowledged last week in interviews with major U.S. television

networks that he may not have had the votes for even a modest authorization of force against Syria. So on Tuesday, the president asked Congress to delay the vote. The delay almost certainly spared him a defeat in the House of Representatives, where even close allies of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) such as Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA) announced their opposition to a military strike. One Democratic member of Congress told The Daily Beast over the weekend of party leaders complaining bitterly to senior White House staff that the proposed resolution would put them in an impossible position with their constituencies. One Republican staff member told The Daily Beast on Sunday that he saw the main victory of the diplomatic initiative as sparing “the Congress of having to cast a vote.” This staff member added: “The actual rejection would have been a tsunami throughout our foreign policy. It did not happen and that is a plus.”

4) Any deal will be a defeat for America’s political strategy. For now Obama has claimed a tentative victory. Over the weekend, the president said in his weekly address that the credible threat of force spurred Assad to take steps to acknowledge and possibly disarm his chemical arsenal. “A dictator must not be allowed to gas children in their beds with impunity,” Obama said. But even if Assad loses all his chemical weapons and cooperates with the ambitious schedule laid out in the U.S.-Russia framework, he will likely remain in power. It also is unclear whether the limited support the U.S. government has provided to the Free Syrian Army would continue if Assad made progress on his chemical weapons. In that sense, while Assad’s alleged use of chemical weapons is punished with a disarmament process, he would still be able to say he survived

despite crossing what Obama has said is one of the world's gravest red lines.

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