



An Agenda In Disarray

As Obama Attempts To Redefine His Foreign Policy Agenda, Much Of The World Is Still Reeling From An Already "Frustratingly Ineffective" International Strategy

Today, In Response To Criticism That He "Has Forsaken America's Leadership Role," Obama Will Lay Out A "Retooled" Foreign Policy Agenda In A Speech At The U.S. Military Academy At West Point. "President Obama, seeking to answer criticism that he has forsaken America's leadership role, plans to lay out a retooled foreign-policy agenda on Wednesday that could deepen the nation's involvement in Syria but would still steer clear of major military conflicts. In a commencement address at the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., Mr. Obama will seek, yet again, to articulate his view of the proper American response to a cascade of crises, from Syria's civil war to Russia's incursions in Ukraine, according to a senior administration official who is helping draft the speech." (Mark Landler, "Obama To Detail A Broader Foreign Policy Agenda," [The New York Times](#), 5/24/14)

- **His Talk Comes As The White House Is Dealing With Tensions With Russia And Mounting Skepticism That Obama "Will Succeed On The Top Foreign-Policy Priorities Of His Second Term."** "His speech on Wednesday will come as the White House is grappling with an unexpected standoff with Russia, which the U.S. previously considered an ally. It also coincides with growing skepticism that Mr. Obama will succeed on the top foreign-policy priorities of his second term: Iran, Syria and Middle East peace." (Carol E. Lee, "Obama Begins New Foreign-Policy Push," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 5/25/14)

"Unlike Good Scotch And Wine, This Poor Image Of Obama's Foreign Policy May Not Improve With Time." (Aaron David Miller, "A Poor Chapter In The History Books," [Foreign Policy](#), 5/22/14)

OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY HAS BEEN PLAGUED BY "SIGNIFICANT MISSTEPS," "UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS" AND "TROUBLING DISARRAY"

The New York Times: Obama Has Had Several "Significant Missteps," "Unreasonable Expectations," And A "Maddeningly Bland Demeanor" In His Foreign Policy Approach. "Through a combination of a few significant missteps, circumstances beyond his control, unreasonable expectations and his maddeningly bland demeanor, Mr. Obama has opened himself to criticism that he is not articulating a strong, overarching blueprint for the exercise of American power and has not been able to bend authoritarian leaders to his will." (Editorial, "President Obama And The World," [The New York Times](#), 5/3/14)

"Mr. Obama Positioned Himself As A Transformational Leader, But In Foreign Affairs, As In Domestic Policy, He Overestimated The Degree To Which The Mere Fact Of His Election Could Achieve That Transformation." (Editorial, "President Obama And The World," [The New York Times](#), 5/3/14)

- **The Council On Foreign Relations' Richard Haass: Obama Has Opted For A "Feckless" Foreign Policy Approach.** "The Obama administration has largely opted for the former, i.e., feckless approach. The most egregious case is Syria, where the president and others declared that 'Assad must go' only to do little to bring about his departure." (Richard N. Haass, Op-Ed, "A Foreign Policy Flirting With Chaos," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 4/29/14)

Haass: "American Foreign Policy Is In Troubling Disarray." (Richard N. Haass, Op-Ed, "A Foreign Policy Flirting With Chaos," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 4/29/14)

OBAMA'S STRATEGY HAS PROVED "FRUSTRATINGLY INEFFECTIVE" IN SOME OF THE MOST RECENT INTERNATIONAL CRISES

Obama's Strategies "Have Proved Frustratingly Ineffective In The Most Recent Crises." "As he learned to play the long game, the Treasury Department became Mr. Obama's favorite noncombatant command. It refined the art of the economic squeeze on Iran, eventually forcing the mullahs to the negotiating table. But so far those tools — or even the threat of them — have proved frustratingly ineffective in the most recent crises." (David E. Sanger, "Global Crises Put Obama's Strategy Of Caution To The Test," [The New York Times](#), 3/16/14)

Russia

Right Now, It Looks Like Putin Is "Winning An Awful Lot Of Battles" And "The Obama Administration Seems Hard-Pressed To Stop Him." "Russian President Vladimir Putin may end up losing the current war, but right now, it sure looks like he's winning an awful lot of battles. And with very few good options, the Obama administration seems hard-pressed to stop him." (Aaron David Miller, "A Poor Chapter In The History Books," [Foreign Policy](#), 5/22/14)

Years Later, The Reset In U.S.-Russian Relations Has "Devolved Into A Chilly Standoff." "After four years, the much-vaunted reset in U.S.-Russian relations has devolved into a chilly standoff over issues like the Kremlin's support for Syria and an intensifying crackdown on dissent in Russia. Instead, the White House's blunt public announcement Wednesday of the summit's cancellation evoked Cold War-era showdowns." (Josh Gerstein, "President Obama's Russia Reset Unravels," [Politico](#), 8/7/13)

- **Politico Headline: "President Obama's Russia Reset Unravels"** (Josh Gerstein, "President Obama's Russia Reset Unravels," [Politico](#), 8/7/13)

"Moscow-Washington Are Going To Be Stuck In Their Worst State In Decades, Putting At Risk The International Collaboration That's Developed And That The Obama Administration Needs." (Edward-Isaac Dovere, "Obama-Putin Relationship Hangs Over Ukrainian PM Visit," [Politico](#), 3/12/14)

It Seems Obama Will Be Known "As An American President Who Presided Over Moscow's Successful Effort To Challenge, If Not To Rewrite, The Rules Of The Post-Cold War Era Without Much Immediate Cost Or Consequences." "Right now, with regard to Russia and Ukraine, it looks like Obama will be remembered -- unfairly or not -- as an American president who presided over Moscow's successful effort to challenge, if not to rewrite, the rules of the post-Cold War era without much immediate cost or consequences." (Aaron David Miller, "A Poor Chapter In The History Books," [Foreign Policy](#), 5/22/14)

Ukraine

Facing The Crisis In Ukraine, "Obama Is Once Again Finding Himself Portrayed As A Weak Leader." "Facing his toughest test yet in Ukraine, Obama is once again finding himself portrayed as a weak leader, outmaneuvered by a wily, opportunistic Russian President Vladimir Putin intent on reviving the United States' nemesis." (Steve Holland, "Obama's Caution In Ukraine May Loom Over Midterm Election," [Reuters](#), 3/4/14)

According To Former Administration Advisers, Obama's Pushback Against Moscow Has Been "Too Little And Too Late" And It Has Failed To Match Its Own Tough Rhetoric. "But Mr Obama's pushback against Moscow has been too little and too late, according to former administration advisers, and has failed to match the tough rhetoric from the White House about the Crimean takeover." (Richard McGregor, "No More Speeches At Brandenburg Gate' Is Only Certainty For Obama," [The Financial Times](#), 3/23/14)

- **"[T]here Has Been A Mismatch Between What The Administration Has Been Saying And What They Have Been Willing To Put Behind It,' Said One Former Obama Adviser."** (Richard McGregor, "No More Speeches At Brandenburg Gate' Is Only Certainty For Obama," [The Financial Times](#), 3/23/14)

The Washington Post Headline: "Obama's Half-Measures Give Vladimir Putin Little To Fear" (Editorial, "Obama's Half-Measures Give Vladimir Putin Little To Fear," [The Washington Post](#), 4/28/14)

- **Putin's Actions In Ukraine Have Been "Relentless And Increasingly Reckless" While Obama's Response Has Been "Slow And Excruciatingly Measured."** "Vladimir Putin's assault on Ukraine has been relentless and increasingly reckless: Forces working with Russian personnel in eastern Ukraine are torturing and murdering opponents and holding international observers hostage. In contrast, President Obama's response has been slow and excruciatingly measured. New U.S. sanctions announced Monday fall well short of the steps that senior officials threatened when the Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine began three weeks ago." (Editorial, "Obama's Half-Measures Give Vladimir Putin Little To Fear," [The Washington Post](#), 4/28/14)

"In The Brutal World Of Global Power Politics, Ukraine Is In Particular A Casualty Of Mr. Obama's Failure To Enforce His 'Red Line' On Syria." ("Putin Declares War," Editorial, [The Wall Street Journal](#), 3/2/14)

Syria

"It's Hard To Pinpoint Just When, Exactly, Barack Obama's Syria Policy Fell Apart... But Collapse It Has..." "It's hard to pinpoint just when, exactly, Barack Obama's Syria policy fell apart. ...But collapse it has, and more than 130,000 deaths later, the White House is now pinning its hopes on a peace conference in Switzerland later this month that is being billed as the last, best hope for a negotiated solution to a conflict that has displaced a staggering 40 percent of Syria's total population, some 23 million people, in what the United Nations says is fast becoming the worst and most expensive humanitarian catastrophe in modern history." (Michael Weiss, "The Unraveling," [Politico](#), 1/2/14)

Obama's Handling Of The Syrian Crisis "Has Been One Of The More Stunning And Inexplicable Displays Of Presidential Incompetence" Ever Witnessed. "It has been one of the more stunning and inexplicable displays of presidential incompetence that I've ever witnessed. The failure cuts straight to the heart of a perpetual criticism of the Obama White House: that the President thinks he can do foreign policy all by his lonesome. This has been the most closely held American foreign-policy-making process since Nixon and Kissinger, only there's no Kissinger." (Joe Klein, "Obama And Syria: Stumbling Toward Damascus," [Time](#), 9/11/13)

- **The Washington Post Headline: "Mr. Obama Is Choosing Not To Act On Syria"** (Editorial, "Mr. Obama Is Choosing Not To Act On Syria," [The Washington Post](#), 5/15/14)

Time Headline: "Obama's New Syria Crisis" (Michael Crowley, "Obama's New Syria Crisis," [Time](#), 5/23/14)

- **"Chemical Warfare Is Again Underway In Syria" And This Time, "The Weapon Of Choice Is Chlorine."** "Chemical warfare is again underway in Syria. This time the weapon of choice is chlorine, which may be harmless in a swimming pool but is lethal in concentrated form. Human Rights Watch says there is 'strong evidence' of multiple chlorine attacks in Syria last month, with clouds of yellow gas killing 11 people and sickening another 500 with symptoms that can include vomiting, splitting headaches and uncontrollable coughing. Syrian activists say another chlorine

attack earlier this week killed a disabled teenager. France's foreign minister says Syrian forces may have used chlorine 14 times in recent months." (Michael Crowley, "Obama's New Syria Crisis," [Time](#), 5/23/14)

Even Former Senior Obama White House Officials Have Conceded That Obama "Erred In Failing To Have A Plan To Back Up His Declaration That President Bashar Al-Assad Had To Leave Office."

"Still, some senior officials who left the White House after the first term concede — when assured of anonymity — that Mr. Obama erred in failing to have a plan to back up his declaration that President Bashar al-Assad had to leave office." (David E. Sanger, "Global Crises Put Obama's Strategy Of Caution To The Test," [The New York Times](#), 3/16/14)

The Obama Administration Acknowledged That Diplomacy, "The Main Pillar" Of Its Syria Policy, Is Failing. "The Obama administration acknowledged Tuesday that diplomacy, the main pillar of its Syria policy, is failing even as civil war is destroying the country, leaving open the question of what the United States will or can do to stop the slaughter." (Anne Gearan, "Diplomacy Is Failing In Syria, Obama Acknowledges," [The Washington Post](#), 2/11/14)

Egypt

Obama Has "Done Too Little, Too Late" And His Administration "Has Repeatedly Sent Mixed Messages" On Crisis In Egypt. "Critics argued that Obama had done too little, too late and that his administration has repeatedly sent mixed messages - among them its failure to brand Morsi's ouster a military coup - thereby eroding its ability to influence events." (Arshad Mohammed And Lesley Wroughton, "Obama Criticized For Weak Response To Egypt Crisis As U.S. Continues To Send \$1.3 Billion Aid To Military," [Reuters](#), 8/15/13)

- **Georgetown University's David Super: "[O]ur Response Has Been Remarkably Short-Sighted And Always A Step Behind."** (David A. Super, Op-Ed, "We Have Failed Egypt," [The Baltimore Sun](#), 2/23/14)

The Obama Administration's "Mixed Approach" To Egypt Leaves It Betting On A Regime That Has Failed To Deliver. "The United States seeks the stabilization of Egypt under 'an inclusive, democratically elected civilian government based on the rule of law, fundamental freedoms and an open and competitive economy,' the State Department said Wednesday in announcing the new aid policy. The problem is that its mixed approach leaves it still betting on a regime that is delivering none of those goods." (Editorial Board, "Obama's Mixed Messages On Egypt," [The Washington Post](#), 10/10/13)

- **"The U.S. Is Struggling To Identify A Coherent Position In Egypt After The Military Ouster Of The Country's First Democratically Elected President."** (Matthew Lee, "Analysis: Obama's Grand Plan For Mideast Shrinks," [Associated Press](#), 1/11/14)

FOR OBAMA, MORE "MISSES THAN HITS" ON HIS FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA

NPR Headline: "Obama's Foreign Policy: More Second-Term Misses Than Hits" (Frank James, "Obama's Foreign Policy: More Second-Term Misses Than Hits," [NPR](#), 3/18/14)

- **"[I]n The Sixth Year Of His Presidency, Foreign Policy Appears To Be Giving President Obama More Fits Than Achievements."** (Frank James, "Obama's Foreign Policy: More Second-Term Misses Than Hits," [NPR](#), 3/18/14)

Middle East Peace Talks

The Washington Post Headline: "Kerry's Nine-Month Quest For Middle East Peace Ends In Failure" (William Booth And Ruth Eglash, "Kerry's Nine-Month Quest For Middle East Peace Ends In Failure," [The Washington Post](#), 4/29/14)

The Obama Administration's Efforts To Facilitate A Peace Deal Between The Israelis And Palestinians Ended "With Neither A Whimper Nor Much Of A Bang." "Nine months after it began, the Obama administration's marquee diplomatic effort to broker a peace deal between Israel and the

Palestinians ended Tuesday with neither a whimper nor much of a bang.” (William Booth And Ruth Eglash, “Kerry’s Nine-Month Quest For Middle East Peace Ends In Failure,” [The Washington Post](#), 4/29/14)

- **“Even Before The Recent Breakdown In Talks, The Dispute Didn’t Appear Ripe For Resolution.”** (Richard N. Haass, “A Foreign Policy Flirting With Chaos,” [The Wall Street Journal](#), 4/29/14)

Pivot To Asia

Obama’s Much-Touted “Pivot To Asia” Has Languished Amidst A Lack Of High-Level Direction.

“President Barack Obama’s much-touted pivot to Asia — a foreign policy drive which has languished recently amidst a lack of high-level direction — could be reinvigorated by Vice President Joe Biden, analysts said.” (Josh Gerstein, “Can Joe Biden Rescue The Asia Pivot?” [Politico](#), 12/3/13)

- **Stephen Bosworth, Obama’s Former Coordinator For North Korea: The Asia Rebalancing Concept “Was Ill Conceived And Bungled In Its Implementation.”** “Stephen W. Bosworth, Mr. Obama’s coordinator for North Korea in his first term, agreed. The rebalancing concept, Mr. Bosworth argued, ‘was ill conceived and bungled in its implementation.’” (David E. Sanger And Mark Landler, “Obama’s Strategic Shift To Asia Is Hobbled By Pressure At Home And Crises Abroad,” [The New York Times](#), 4/21/14)

The Obama Administration Touted Its Pivot To Asia Policy, “But Has Repeatedly Disappointed.”

“Another is that the administration trumpeted its intent to make Asia a higher priority — the Asia pivot — but has repeatedly disappointed.” (Editorial, “What Happened To The Asia Pivot,” [The Chicago Tribune](#), 4/22/14)

Obama’s Pivot To Asia Strategy “Has Failed To Meet The Lofty Expectations He Set Three Years Ago.” “President Obama’s bid to focus U.S. attention on Asia has failed to meet the lofty expectations he set three years ago in a grand pronouncement that the new emphasis would become a pillar of his foreign policy.” (David Nakamura, “Obama Aims To Reinvigorate Asia Strategy,” [The Washington Post](#), 4/16/14)

EVEN OBAMA ALLIES ARE DISAPPOINTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION’S FOREIGN POLICY

Former Members Of The Administration’s Foreign Policy Team Say Missteps By Obama Are To Blame For The Current Tumultuous Foreign Climate. “In some cases, the current climate has been driven by factors outside the White House’s control. But missteps by the president also are to blame, say foreign policy analysts, including some who worked for the Obama administration.” (Julie Pace, “For Obama, World Looks Far Different Than Expected,” [Associated Press](#), 8/25/13)

- **Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta: “[I]t’s Been A Mixed Record, And The Concern Is, The President Defining What America’s Role In The World Is In The 21st Century Hasn’t Happened.”** “‘The president has made some tough decisions,’ Mr. Panetta said. ‘But it’s been a mixed record, and the concern is, the president defining what America’s role in the world is in the 21st century hasn’t happened.’” (Mark Landler And Amy Chozick, “Hillary Clinton Struggles To Define A Legacy In Progress,” [The New York Times](#), 4/16/14)
- **Vali Nasr, A Former Administration Adviser, Said, “The President Has Not Had A Long-Term Strategic Vision.”** “‘The president has not had a long-term strategic vision,’ said Vali Nasr, who advised the Obama administration on foreign policy in the first term and now serves as dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. ‘They’re moving issue to issue and reacting as situations come up.’” (Julie Pace, “For Obama, World Looks Far Different Than Expected,” [Associated Press](#), 8/25/13)

IT’S NO SURPRISE AMERICANS ARE NOT CONFIDENT IN OBAMA’S LEADERSHIP ABROAD

According To A Recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News Poll, Approval Of Obama's Handling Of Foreign Policy "Sank To The Lowest Level Of His Presidency." "The poll showed that approval of President Barack Obama's handling of foreign policy sank to the lowest level of his presidency, with 38% approving, at a time when his overall job performance drew better marks than in recent months." (Janet Hook, "Americans Want To Pull Back From World Stage, Poll Finds," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 4/30/14)

- **Only 38 Percent Of Americans Approve Of Obama's Handling Of Foreign Policy.** "The poll showed that approval of President Barack Obama's handling of foreign policy sank to the lowest level of his presidency, with 38% approving, at a time when his overall job performance drew better marks than in recent months." (Janet Hook, "Americans Want To Pull Back From World Stage, Poll Finds," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 4/30/14)

According To An *Associated Press*/GfK Poll, 56 Percent Of Adults Disapprove Of Obama's Handling Of Relationships With Other Countries, While 42 Percent Approve. ([AP-GfK](#) Poll, 1,354A, MoE 3%, 5/16-19/14)