



Obama's U.N. Disengagement

Obama Puts His Campaign Ahead Of International Diplomacy Despite Mounting Instability Abroad

"Obama's Relatively Low-Key U.N. Itinerary Will Also Be A Stark Reminder That The Heady Optimism That Greeted Him When He Took Office Promising To Be A Transformational Statesman Has Cooled, Giving Way To Geopolitical Realities." "From Middle East upheaval to the troubled Afghan war effort to a more assertive Russia, President Barack Obama is facing pressures that threaten to chip away at a foreign policy record his aides hoped would be immune to Republican attack. Obama's final turn on the world stage before facing voters will be a reflection of where his priorities lie. Despite simmering global crises, he will skip traditional private meetings with foreign counterparts and squeeze his U.N. visit into just 24 hours so he can jump back on the campaign trail. But Obama's relatively low-key U.N. itinerary will also be a stark reminder that the heady optimism that greeted him when he took office promising to be a transformational statesman has cooled, giving way to geopolitical realities." (Matt Spetalnick, "Obama Foreign Policy Bright Spot Now Looking Dimmer," [Reuters](#), 9/23/12)

OBAMA'S LOFTY PROMISES TO PROMOTE PEACE HAVE GONE UNFULFILLED

Obama In 2009: "We Know The Future Will Be Forged By Deeds And Not Simply Words. Speeches Alone Will Not Solve Our Problems -- It Will Take Persistent Action." (President Barack Obama, Remarks At The United Nations General Assembly, [New York, NY](#), 9/23/09)

- **Obama Claimed It Was America's Unilateralism That Had Fueled Anti-American Sentiment Abroad And Blocked Collective Action At The U.N.** OBAMA: "I took office at a time when many around the world had come to view America with skepticism and distrust. Part of this was due to misperceptions and misinformation about my country. Part of this was due to opposition to specific policies, and a belief that on certain critical issues, America has acted unilaterally, without regard for the interests of others. And this has fed an almost reflexive anti-Americanism, which too often has served as an excuse for collective inaction." (President Barack Obama, Remarks At The United Nations General Assembly, [New York, NY](#), 9/23/09)

In 2009, Obama Said He Would Focus On "Energizing Our Efforts To Prevent Conflicts Before They Take Hold." OBAMA: "Our efforts to promote peace, however, cannot be limited to defeating violent extremists. For the most powerful weapon in our arsenal is the hope of human beings -- the belief that the future belongs to those who would build and not destroy; the confidence that conflicts can end and a new day can begin. And that is why we will support -- we will strengthen our support for effective

peacekeeping, while energizing our efforts to prevent conflicts before they take hold.” (President Barack Obama, Remarks At The United Nations General Assembly, [New York, NY](#), 9/23/09)

- **But The Protracted Bloodshed In Syria Poses A Serious Challenge To The U.N.’s Ability To Prevent Conflict And Protect Civilians.** “The U.N.’s original raison d’être is the prevention of war, which makes Syria’s steadily mounting death toll, and the danger that its civil war could trigger a regionwide conflagration, the top security issue facing this year’s General Assembly. But the U.N. has been unable to stop the bloodletting, because key member states continue to pursue their geopolitical goals through opposite sides of the conflict.” (Tony Karon, “The U.N. General Assembly: 5 Political Potholes For Obama,” [Time](#), 9/24/12)
- **Russia And China’s Opposition Has Blocked Any Action To Restore Peace In Syria.** “One of the biggest obstacles for the Obama administration is Russia, which has supported the ceasefire but has also backed Assad and allegedly provided arms to the Syrian army. While Obama administration officials have frequently accused Russia of being complicit in the deaths of Syrians, they’ve also said they won’t take stronger action without the international community’s backing, something Russia remains opposed to allowing. Russia and China, who has joined the Russians vetoing more UN action, were invited to this week’s Friends of Syria meeting, but the countries did not attend.” (Jeremy Herb, “Obama Faces Tough Choices In Syria,” [The Hill’s “DEFCON Hill”](#), 4/21/12)

In 2010, Obama Told The U.N. General Assembly That The U.S. Would Support Civil Society And “Guarantee Its Expansion Within And Across Borders.” OBAMA: “Civil society is the conscience of our communities and America will always extend our engagement abroad with citizens beyond the halls of government. And we will call out those who suppress ideas and serve as a voice for those who are voiceless. We will promote new tools of communication so people are empowered to connect with one another and, in repressive societies, to do so with security. We will support a free and open Internet, so individuals have the information to make up their own minds. And it is time to embrace and effectively monitor norms that advance the rights of civil society and guarantee its expansion within and across borders.” (President Barack Obama, Remarks At The United Nations General Assembly, [New York, NY](#), 9/23/10)

- **But “In His First Year In The White House, [Obama] Had Not Made The Promotion Of Democracy Abroad A Permanent Priority.”** “In his first year in the White House, he had not made the promotion of democracy abroad a permanent priority. During a high-profile speech in Cairo in June 2009, in which Obama tried to reset US relations with the Muslim world, he only gently urged democratic reforms in the region and declared that ‘no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other’ – a clear reference to President Bush’s invasion of Iraq. The following week, when an apparently crooked election in Iran was followed by popular rebellion, Obama did not rush to back the uprising.” (David Corn, *Showdown*, 2012, p.151)
- **In The Aftermath Of The Egyptian Revolution, Obama Missed The Opportunity To “Support Civil Society.”** “The United States has built its relationship with Egypt around the Army, which it has supported with more than \$39 billion in military aid over the last three decades. Egypt’s year-old, pro-democracy revolution gave Washington a chance — and a reason — to alter that relationship to support civil society. The Obama administration made a serious error in choosing not to do so. Even worse, the purpose was largely to protect American arms manufacturers who produce the weapons sent to Egypt.” (Editorial, “Enabling Egypt’s Military Rulers,” [The New York Times](#), 3/26/12)
- **And In The Face Of Putin’s Opposition To U.S. Pro-Democracy Aid, Obama Agreed To Cease All USAID Operations In Russia.** “The United States said Tuesday it is ending the U.S. Agency for

International Development's operations in Russia after a Kremlin demand that the aid organization leave the country, dealing a blow to President Barack Obama's policy of 'resetting' relations between Washington and Moscow. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters that Russia sent a letter last week saying it didn't need Washington's help anymore. She didn't cite a political reason for the closure, but President Vladimir Putin has long complained about U.S. democracy and human rights promotion efforts." ("USAID Work Halted In Russia, Dealing Blow To Obama's 'Reset' In US-Russian Relations," [The Associated Press](#), 9/18/12)

In 2011, Obama Said There Was "No Excuse For Inaction" In Syria. OBAMA: "Already, the United States has imposed strong sanctions on Syria's leaders. We supported a transfer of power that is responsive to the Syrian people. And many of our allies have joined in this effort. But for the sake of Syria -- and the peace and security of the world -- we must speak with one voice. There's no excuse for inaction. Now is the time for the United Nations Security Council to sanction the Syrian regime, and to stand with the Syrian people." (President Barack Obama, Remarks At The United Nations General Assembly, [New York, NY](#), 9/21/11)

- ***The Wall Street Journal*: "For Over A Year, We've Heard From Obama Administration Officials That Western Intervention Would Push Syria Into A Civil War, Kill Thousands And Put The Assad Regime's Stockpile Of WMD At Risk Of Falling Into Terrorist Hands. The U.S. Hasn't Intervened, And All Of This Has Happened."** "For over a year, we've heard from Obama Administration officials that Western intervention would push Syria into a civil war, kill thousands and put the Assad regime's stockpile of WMD at risk of falling into terrorist hands. The U.S. hasn't intervened, and all of this has happened. The conflict has spread beyond rebel strongholds around Hama and Homs, with vicious fighting in the capital of Damascus for a third straight day Tuesday. The regime has started to move its sizeable cache of chemical weapons for unclear reasons. An estimated 17,000 are dead; the toll rises by the dozens, sometimes hundreds, weekly. The Red Cross on Sunday declared this a civil war, subject to the Geneva Conventions." (Editorial, "The Syrian Civil War," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 7/17/12)
- **White House Officials Admitted That Obama Had Put A "Political Lid" On U.S. Involvement In Syria Before The Election.** "Two administration sources confirmed that the president has issued a finding allowing non-lethal assistance to non-violent groups inside Syria, which opens the door to more communications and intelligence help for the local councils, but closes the door on the idea of providing the Free Syrian Army with direct arms, military training, or other deadly assistance. It also closes the door on the idea of providing safe havens inside Syria using U.S. assets. The White House wants to try to limit U.S. involvement in the crisis before the election, these administration sources said, in what one official said amounts to a 'political lid,' and the agencies are trying to come up with strategies to increase pressure on Assad within those boundaries." (Josh Rogin, "Inside The Administration's 'New' Approach On Syria," [Foreign Policy's "The Cable"](#), 8/1/12)

EVEN WITH INSTABILITY GROWING ABROAD, OBAMA CHOOSES NOT TO MEET WITH INTERNATIONAL LEADERS

Obama's Fear Of Political Fallout Prevents Him From Leading At The United Nations

Despite World Leaders Gathering In New York At The United Nations, "Obama Has No Plans To Meet Privately With Any Of Them" But Will Make Time For Daytime TV. "The world's leaders are gathering in New York, but President Barack Obama has no plans to meet privately with any of them. He will make time for 'The View,' a freewheeling TV talk show more likely to reach voters than Obama would

with the diplomacy he is skipping at the United Nations.” (Ben Feller, “Obama, In Election Mode, Tightens His UN Diplomacy,” [The Associated Press](#), 9/22/12)

With Crises Abroad, Obama’s Decision To “Jump Back On The Campaign Trail” Instead Of Meeting With Top Foreign Leaders Is A “Reflection Of Where His Priorities Lie.” “Obama’s final turn on the world stage before facing voters will be a reflection of where his priorities lie. Despite simmering global crises, he will skip traditional private meetings with foreign counterparts and squeeze his U.N. visit into just 24 hours so he can jump back on the campaign trail.” (Matt Spetalnick, “Obama Foreign Policy Bright Spot Now Looking Dimmer,” [Reuters](#), 9/23/12)

Unlike Obama’s Predecessors, He Is “Skipping The Face-To-Face Meetings With Counterparts Where Much Of The U.N. Work Gets Done...” “Just six weeks until the election, the realities and priorities of campaign politics hang prominently over Obama’s final turn on the world stage before facing voters. Unlike his predecessors, he is skipping the face-to-face meetings with counterparts where much of the U.N. work gets done, leaving Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to pick up more of those sessions herself. Obama’s itinerary on Monday and Tuesday is compressed so that he can get back to campaigning in some of the most contested states such as Ohio and Virginia.” (Ben Feller, “Obama, In Election Mode, Tightens His UN Diplomacy,” [The Associated Press](#), 9/22/12)

- **Both President George W. Bush And Bill Clinton Held Meetings With Foreign Leaders During U.N. Visits In Their Re-Election Years.** “Both Presidents George W. Bush in 2004 and Bill Clinton in 1996, though, held a series of meetings with foreign leaders during U.N. visits in their re-election years. The Obama White House opted not to jam in a few and risk offending the allies who were left out, administration officials said.” (Ben Feller, “Obama, In Election Mode, Tightens His UN Diplomacy,” [The Associated Press](#), 9/22/12)

Last Year At This Time, Obama’s “Schedule Was Packed With Personal Diplomacy” But “This Year, Not One Is Scheduled.” “This time last year, with Mideast peace at the forefront, Obama’s schedule was packed with personal diplomacy. He set up separate meetings with the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Afghanistan, Brazil, Turkey, Japan, Britain, and France, among others. This year, not one is scheduled.” (Ben Feller, “Obama, In Election Mode, Tightens His UN Diplomacy,” [The Associated Press](#), 9/22/12)

NBC’s Chuck Todd Pointed Out That Obama’s Campaign Strategy Is To Avoid Making News During The U.N. General Assembly, Even If It Means Abandoning The One-On-One Meetings That Usually Occur During The International Summit. NBC’S CHUCK TODD: “President Obama, he’s been doing mock debates, he had another one on Friday, it was his third that we know of that he has done. He spent a couple of days here in New York City, opening of the United Nations General assembly. But unlike every other year he’s come here, he’s not going to have a single one-on-one meeting with any foreign dignitary, why? They want to make as little news as possible here because he wants to get back on the campaign trail and try not to make any news or create any new controversies.” (NBC’s [“Nightly News,”](#) 9/23/12)

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