



# Newsletter

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## Nexus Mixer

Dear Nexus member

It is now time for the Nexus fall Mixer. The spring Mixer was a hoot and there is no reason to expect this will be different! We will meet, again, at Slippbarinn at Hotel Marina and Nexus will, again, offer some light snacks. The event is on Thursday 12 September and starts at 16.30 and until 18.00 we can buy drinks at happy hour prices.



## World Free of Weapons

On 3 June 2013, Nexus hosted an event at the University of Iceland: World Free of Weapons.

Among the topics discussed were: Disarmament and Arms Control: a general overview, Applying arms control to the Arctic, The next generation of research



For those who are interested but could not make it, the recordings of the speakers can be found [here](#).

## No, the Sky is Not Falling

By David C Speedie

In the cascade of commentary on the current state of the U.S.-Russia relationship, perhaps the most appropriate summary might come from an unlikely source, the folk tale character Chicken Little: the sky does indeed seem to be falling. According to a former Russian prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, writing recently <[http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-08-08/opinions/41199723\\_1\\_civil-activists-edward-snowden-crisis](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-08-08/opinions/41199723_1_civil-activists-edward-snowden-crisis)> in the Washington Post, "Political relations between Russia and the United States have been steadily fraying . . . they have never been at such odds as they are today." The view of U.S. observers was in concert with this, with references by Russia scholar Stephen Cohen in a series <<http://www.thenation.com/authors/stephen-f-cohen#axzz2c3MjzGx3>> of articles in The Nation to a "new Cold War."

If this is indeed so, why is it so? To cite from recent history: the first stumble down the slippery slope may be seen, ironically, as what ought to have been a potential major, if chiefly symbolic, turning point in bilateral relations, the long-overdue repeal of the Jackson-Vanik amendment <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson%E2%80%93Vanik\\_amendment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackson%E2%80%93Vanik_amendment)>. This hoary Congressional economic sanction against the Soviet Union (automatically and unfairly transferred to Russia at the Cold War's end) served as punishment for preventing Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union, a practice that had, of course, long since ceased. Fearful perhaps of being seen to do the right thing on Russia, the U.S. Congress tacked on to the repeal the "Magnitsky Act" <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnitsky\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnitsky_Act)>," ostensibly a principled stance against human rights abuses in Russia by targeting officials supposedly involved in the suspicious death in prison of the opposition figure Sergei Magnitsky. In fact, the act was a) unnecessary, as Justice Department sanctions are in place to prevent egregious human rights abusers from entering or doing business with the United States and b) judicially flawed; it provides for the blacklisting of people based on "data" and "information" from [unspecified] nongovernmental organizations in Russia? a clear violation of due legal process. The act is, in the words of Stephen Cohen, "a fit of sanctimonious lawmaking . . . a blacklist without due process." [The Nation <<http://www.thenation.com/article/172256/americas-new-cold-war-russia#axzz2c3MjzGx3>>, February 4, 2013] The Kremlin's response was a bill prohibiting American adoption of Russian orphans (this following some instances of serious abuse at the hands of the adoptive parents). Mere tit-for-tat, perhaps, but it is interesting to note, as Cohen does in The Nation article cited above, that whereas criticism was virtually nonexistent of the Magnitsky Act and President Obama's decision to sign it, President Putin was roundly castigated in much of the Russian press for his retaliation.

On went the ping-pong match of mutual recrimination, culminating, of course, in the Edward Snowden affair, with the National Security Administration's whistle-blowing contractor being first hunkered down in some secure transit area of Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport, and then granted a year's asylum in Russia. The ping-pong ball flew back in Russia's direction with Obama's canceling of a scheduled summit meeting with Putin during the Group of 20 economic summit in St. Petersburg next month.

Be all this as it may, Chicken Little is wrong; nor, indeed, is this "the lowest point [in U.S.-Russia relations] since the fall of the Soviet Union," as Kathy Lally solemnly observed in a recent Washington Post article <[http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-08-08/world/41190099\\_1\\_dmitri-trenin-u-s-russia-carnegie-moscow-center](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-08-08/world/41190099_1_dmitri-trenin-u-s-russia-carnegie-moscow-center)>. The title of her article is here revealing: "U.S.-Russia relations turn chilly? again." The key word is, of course, "again," and it reinforces two simple truths: we have seen this before, and matters between the two have been worse. Let us pose the question: Is the current state of affairs actually worse than, or even as bad as, that which arose from the expansion of NATO to Russia's borders in the 1990s? Or the bombing of Russia's ally, Serbia, by U.S.-led NATO forces in 1999? On the personal level, there was the infamous photograph of Obama and Putin seated together at the June 2013 summit in Northern Ireland, each in a grim "I'd ather not be here," eye-contact ?avoiding pose. But is this actually worse than the caustic exchange between Putin and then-President George W. Bush at the Beijing Olympics, when differences over Russian-Georgian hostilities provoked the description of Putin by Bush: "cold as ice"?

The difference between strains and stresses, past and present is important: NATO expansion, the Yugoslav war, the Georgia conflict, are all "big-deal" causes that truly divide; the current crop are largely symbolic and gratuitous. Is it not ironic that, in the context of the Magnitsky Bill, it was a prominent former Republican congressman, Ron Paul, who observed that "If Congress really is concerned about the human rights of prisoners, perhaps they might take a look at the terrible treatment of U.S. Army Private Bradley Manning."? We are, to be sure, in a zero-sum game? again? but the stakes are pretty paltry. One hopes and expects that President Obama, while garnering some political capital for "sticking it to the Russians" in canceling the meeting with his Russian counterpart, will keep his eye on the ball when it comes to the things that really matter? things like arms control, cooperation on international terrorism, and, yes, economic cooperation

and improving the lamentably low trade figures, now that Russia has officially been listed <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/imf-upgrades-russia-to-rich/482727.html> as one of the world's "rich" nations.

This will mean accepting two things: first, grandiose speeches and imagery are not sufficient. The much-vaunted 2009 "reset" policy [http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles\\_papers\\_reports/0027.html](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/0027.html) toward Russia sounded awfully good, but what did in fact result? The United States got the three big prizes it sought: cooperation in supplying NATO forces in Afghanistan; further sanctions on Iran; and Russia's agreement not to veto the UN Security Council resolution 1973 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council\\_Resolution\\_1973](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1973) on Libya. What did Russia get in return? Further hectoring on human rights and the "spread of democracy." And with respect to another matter of critical importance to Russia, as Lally's Washington Post article points out: "The summit was called off, according to the White House, because there was no sign that any progress would be made on U.S. priorities of missile defense and arms control." [my emphasis]

This leads us to the second point: Russia too has genuine security interests, which we must take into account, and among those is missile defense. There is simply no point in harping on about this not being a threat to Russia; it is not how Moscow sees things. We must also understand that Russia has different, and entirely justified, concerns, over Syria, and specifically over a post-Assad scenario of jihadist extremism whose flames lick dangerously close to Russia's southern border. Add to this Russian fears of chaos in Afghanistan that spill over to Central Asia and we have a pretty impressive list of sleepless night scenarios. In his landmark work, *Politics Among Nations*, the political philosopher Hans Morgenthau advanced "The Promise of Diplomacy: Its Nine Rules." Under "fundamental rules," he urges that "diplomacy must look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations," and goes on to quote the great 18th century British parliamentarian, Edmund Burke: "Nothing is so fatal to a nation as an extreme of self-partiality, and the total want of consideration of what others will naturally hope or fear." [1954, 2nd. Edition] Russia's hopes and fears (and ambitions) may differ from ours, but, one would argue, this is more a difference of degree rather than kind.

In sum, and to repeat, we are not in uncharted territory here: there have been moments of historically high tension, graver than today. The dialogue must resume, for a couple of reasons: first, it's engagement, as we have just argued, the right thing to do. Second, it is the sensible thing to do, given the gravity of the challenges and Russia's singular potential contribution to their amelioration. Russia, after all, borders, and must deal with, virtually every nasty neighborhood on the planet, from North Korea to the Middle East. The stakes for Russia could not be higher. A mature and sensible approach here could reverse what has been, in Russian eyes at least, a 20-year pattern of triumphalist policy on the part of the United States?we won the Cold War, we'll call the post-Cold War shots, if you want to come on board, that's fine, if not, we'll proceed anyhow.

In an essay for the 2008 book *To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine* (edited by Melvyn P. Lefler and Jeffrey W. Legro), Massachusetts Institute of Technology political science professor Stephen Van Evera writes: "What grand strategy should the United States adopt in the post-9/11 era? . . . The world's major powers should organize themselves into a grand alliance, or concert?along the lines of the 1815 Concert of Europe?to take united action against WMD proliferation, WMD terrorism and threats to the global commons. The United States should lead in creating and sustaining this new concert." To the extent that this ambitious concert is achievable, and for all the differences that exist and will persist, Russia would be an indispensable member. Our common strategic interests outweigh our differences; let's not allow the latter to prevail.

Read More: Human Rights [http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/search\\_out?argtypes=sa\\_Topics&sa\\_Topics=human%20rights](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/search_out?argtypes=sa_Topics&sa_Topics=human%20rights),

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David C. Speedie  
Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs  
170 East 64th Street  
New York, NY 10065

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## Diplomatic Fallout: G-20, U.N. Summits Likely to Highlight, Not Resolve, Global Tensions

By Richard Gowan

Believers in international cooperation need to be optimists. It takes faith and patience to endure the endless conferences, committees and communiqués that make up multilateral diplomacy. But even upbeat advocates of global governance are liable to feel gloomy about the prospects for two major meetings scheduled for next month. The first is the annual G-20 summit, to be hosted by Russia <[http://www.g20.org/docs/summit/summit\\_2013.html](http://www.g20.org/docs/summit/summit_2013.html)> in St. Petersburg on 5-6 September. The second is the gathering of world leaders for the opening of the new session of the U.N. General Assembly <<http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/index.shtml>> in New York beginning 24 September. Both events are more likely to highlight the limits of multilateralism than its benefits, and the G-20 summit could prove to be an especially excruciating affair.

The world's press will descend on St. Petersburg on high alert for signs of tensions between the U.S. and Russia. U.S. President Barack Obama has canceled bilateral talks with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, citing the latter's decision to offer asylum <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/07/politics/obama-putin>> to intelligence leaker Edward Snowden. Obama announced that the G-20 meeting was too important to miss, but he has been deeply critical of Russia's handling of the Syrian conflict and its new anti-gay legislation <<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2013/08/07/president-obama-no-patience-for-anti-lgbt-laws-in-russia>>. Putin, whose lack of rapport with Obama <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/08/07/the-photo-that-perfectly-sums-up-obamas-relationship-with-putin>> is now notorious, may not be able to refrain from trying to embarrass his guest. Putin could raise the Snowden affair or, even more cruelly, compare Washington's recent equivocations over the Egyptian crisis to its hard line on Syria.

Obama will at least take comfort from the fact that he won't have to see the Russian leader again in New York. Putin is giving the opening of the General Assembly a miss. This is not especially surprising, as he also failed to attend last year. Perhaps more tellingly, Chinese President Xi Jinping will be absent too, passing on his first opportunity to address the U.N. since he replaced Hu Jintao. This may signal the low priority that Beijing places on U.N. affairs (by contrast, Xi is planning to make it to St. Petersburg). But other significant leaders are staying away from the General Assembly as well.

Angela Merkel can't attend because of Germany's elections. Britain's David Cameron is sending his deputy, Nick Clegg. With Cameron, Putin and Xi elsewhere, Obama and French President Francois Hollande will be the only leaders of permanent members of the Security Council to be present. Hollande, who has a good story to tell about France's fight for Mali, will not stay long.

There will still be some intriguing diplomatic moments for those leaders who do get to New York. There is particular interest in whether Iran's new president, Hasan Rouhani, will attend and if he makes any major gestures towards detente with the West over Syria or nuclear issues. U.N. Officials may try to cobble together a meeting between the Syrian government and rebels in the margins of the meeting, as it has so far proved impossible to bring the two sides together for much-heralded peace talks in Geneva.

Obama could still be the star of the show. His fellow leaders will be intrigued to see if he makes any significant statements on climate change, an issue he has emphasized domestically since his re-election. The president and his secretary of state, John Kerry, will probably try to make as much capital as possible out of the latter's success in revitalizing the Middle East peace process. But the Egyptian crisis has already set back Obama's reputation for diplomatic competence, and Snowden's revelations about U.S. spying make it rather tricky for the president to talk idealistically about global cooperation.

None of this may matter very much. Even if the St. Petersburg summit is chilly, it may run more smoothly than the last two top-level G-20 conclaves in Cannes, France, and Los Cabos, Mexico. The Cannes summit was overwhelmed by urgent diplomatic maneuvers over the eurozone crisis <[http://ecfr.eu/blog/entry/is\\_the\\_g20\\_bad\\_for\\_the\\_eu](http://ecfr.eu/blog/entry/is_the_g20_bad_for_the_eu)>, and the Mexican meeting was also dominated by the European Union's problems. With the euro enjoying a period of relative stability, there should be less drama this time. Officials who have participated in G-20 meetings report that the main discussions are stilted and formulaic, and this year may be no exception.

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The fact that the U.N. General Assembly is unlikely to achieve very much is hardly a shock. Obama has given good speeches at the U.N. in the past, but none have had lasting resonance. In the past, leaders such as Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Libya's Moammar Gadhafi and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez spiced up the meeting <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-01/netanyahu-bomb-joins-castro-chickens-in-un-theater-of-the-absurd.html>> with bizarre or fiery rhetoric. But Ahmadinejad is no longer in office, and Gadhafi and Chavez are no longer on this earth. The U.N. will be a duller place in their absence, but as I have recently noted <<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13107/diplomatic-fallout-celebrate-the-u-n-s-successes-but-fear-for-its-future>>, lower-level and less colorful officials have made progress over the last year on issues such as the Arms Trade Treaty. The U.N. tends to advance through such gradualist successes.

Yet the fact that the supposed high points in the multilateral calendar may well be flops signals something significant about the state of international relations. In 2009, when Obama first addressed the General Assembly and hosted a G-20 summit in Pittsburgh, these top-level meetings were useful opportunities to show that the world was pulling together in the face of the financial crisis. But as the economy has stabilized, security issues, ranging from Syria to disputes in the South China Sea, have created a new sense of international polarization, especially among the West, Russia and China.

Multilateral meetings, whether under the G-20 or the U.N., might be good mechanisms for reducing such polarization in theory. Yet they are losing salience. The most important summit to have taken place so far this year was arguably the bilateral meeting between Obama and Xi in June <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-22828678>>. In an age of polarization, such one-to-one contacts will carry far more weight than multilateral circuses.

\*Richard Gowan is the associate director for Crisis Management and Peace Operations at New York University's Center on International Cooperation and a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. His weekly column for World Politics Review, Diplomatic Fallout <<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/authors/541/richard-gowan>>, appears every Monday.\*

## EU Institute for Security Studies

### The Russia-Ukraine trade spat

by Nicu Popescu

Russia's recent step to essentially block imports from its neighbour marked the opening salvo in a dispute that may still escalate into a full blown trade war. However, with the prospect of further Ukrainian economic integration with the EU in the form of an Association Agreement looming on the horizon, might Moscow's actions prove, once again, self-defeating?

Click [here](#) to read the alert

### Russia and Syria - The odd couple

by Florence Gaub and Nicu Popescu

With the G20 summit underway, this alert explores the reasons for continued Russian intransigence on Syria. If support of the Assad regime is not simply designed to irk the West, what other, deeper considerations are at play in this unlikely partnership?

Click [here](#) to read the alert

### UN-veiling world governance

by Thierry Tardy

With the 68th General Assembly of the United Nations set to open shortly in New York, this alert re-examines what global governance means today in an environment where the state-centric Westphalian system has long given way to a more multi-centric and less regulated world.

Click [here](#) to read the alert

### Keeping the Eastern Partnership on track

by Nicu Popescu

As the EU and most of its eastern partners enter the final phases of signing Association and Deep and Comprehensive Free-Trade Area agreements, this alert highlights the pitfalls that can still derail the process, as Russia steps up economic pressure on countries like Armenia and Ukraine.

Click [here](#) to read the alert

### After the chemical attacks in Syria - now what?

by Jean Pascal Zanders

In the wake of the chemical attacks that occurred on 21 August in Syria, and the ensuing international outcry, this alert highlights the dangers of instrumentalising chemical warfare allegations in pursuit of other policy goals. It concludes that rather than rushing to action, waiting for the results of the UN investigative team tasked with analysing the evidence may be the wisest option for all.

Click [here](#) to read the alert

## Europe's struggle for influence in Egypt

By Rem Korteweg

Egypt tests Europe's ability to influence events in its southern neighbourhood. In January 2011, the protestors in Tahrir Square brought down President Mubarak, despite lukewarm support from Western countries. After Mubarak's removal from power, the EU adopted a new policy based on the 'more for more' principle; the more a country enacts democratic reforms, the more EU aid it can expect. In November 2012, after the elections that led to Mohamed Morsi's brief presidency, the European Union announced a package of grants and loans totalling nearly 4.2 billion. The following week President Morsi announced his autocratic grab for Egypt's constitutional powers. When European officials complained about the violation of religious or women's rights in Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood officials would retort by pointing at rising Islamophobia in Europe. Now, in spite of intense American and European diplomatic pressure, the interim government has used disproportionate force to disperse the pro-Morsi sit-ins, killing more than 800. A cycle of violence has ensued as dozens of policemen and security officers have been killed in response. Egypt now balances on the precipice of further violent conflict.

Europe's diplomatic relations with Morsi's government were troubled, but things are no easier now. The liberals and the moderates in the current government, those that the EU and Washington considered allies, have either been co-opted or outflanked by the hardliners. Prime minister Hazem el-Beblawi, a liberal economist, supported the crackdown against the sit-ins and has suggested the Muslim Brotherhood's licence to operate as a political party could be revoked. Another moderate and key interlocutor of the West, Mohamed ElBaradei, is no longer influential after he resigned in protest at the violence and even faces legal charges over that decision. Meanwhile, Tamarod, a grass roots protest movement which appeared to share Western values, is becoming more nationalist and has called for tearing up Egypt's peace treaty with Israel and an end to American military aid.

Following last week's violence, the EU has decided to stop the sale of all 'arms that can be used internally'. In practice the EU measure is likely to halt the export of small arms, munitions and possibly armoured personnel carriers. The army and police are too powerful for the EU's decision to influence the internal balance of power. And if the Egyptian military run out of guns and bullets, there are many more suppliers able to replenish its stocks. Given the proliferation of arms from places like Libya, the same also holds true for the Islamists. And so, the EU's decision will do little to bring the parties back to the table. It seems calculated to make clear that Europe disapproves of the violence, but not of the new regime.

If it had wanted to make a stronger point, the EU could have suspended aid, withdrawn its ambassadors, made a common demarche on the Egyptian MFA or slapped economic sanctions on the assets and movements of senior government or military officials. Of course, the EU could still do all these things, but it seems unwilling to antagonise the Egyptian government. Egypt is too important for several European interests; a secure Suez Canal, enduring Arab peace with Israel and the fight against militant Islam.

Behind closed doors US and European security and intelligence communities will have welcomed Morsi's replacement by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Morsi's government looked the other way while lawlessness flourished in the Sinai peninsula. Militants have bombed the natural gas pipeline to Israel and Jordan thirteen times in the past two years. The peninsula has become a conduit for Libyan arms to Hamas and Syria's rebel groups (intelligence agencies have been particularly concerned about the spread of shoulder-fired missiles that can shoot down helicopters and planes). In the Sinai, there are nearly daily attacks against the police and army (in mid-August 24 police officers were killed in an ambush). Despite their restrictions on arms exports, most European governments probably hope that Egyptian security forces have enough weapons to reimpose order in Sinai.

But the overthrow of Morsi is unlikely to bring peace. Al Qaeda's chief, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has called on his followers to resist the interim government in Cairo. The Egyptian economy is on life support. Sectarian attacks on Coptic Christians and their churches have increased. The Suez Canal, a maritime chokepoint that carries roughly 8 per cent of global seaborne trade is at risk. This puts Europe in the uncomfortable position of giving preference to its security interests over its liberal values, without being sure that it can protect either.

The larger story of Europe's pursuit of influence in Egypt relates to the changing balance of power in its southern neighbourhood. With America unwilling to get involved, European countries have tried, with mixed success, to take the lead on issues in Libya, Mali and Syria. In Egypt the EU now finds itself competing with the Gulf countries for influence. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, primarily concerned with domestic support for the Muslim Brotherhood, have welcomed the assault on the Brotherhood and have given the interim government a cheque worth \$12 billion, almost 9 billion.

Reasoning that Cairo, if it wanted, could simply ignore Europe and rely on the Gulf states, the EU has decided to keep its aid and trade relationship intact. It is betting that by denouncing the violence, stopping arms sales but maintaining other ties, Brussels will be able to keep doors in Cairo open.

One positive for the EU in the Egyptian crisis is that member-states are allowing Catherine Ashton to coordinate EU policy. She was the first European leader to visit Egypt after the fall of Mubarak, and the only senior foreign official to have visited Morsi after his detention. This gives her credibility in Europe and in the region. European governments should mandate Ashton, and the EU's Special Representative for the region, Bernardino Leon, to coordinate efforts with the Gulf states and the US and reach out to the interim government to help establish a national political dialogue.

Europe's influence also relies on the power of its markets. Europe's aid package is less than half of the Gulf states' financial commitment, but Egypt needs foreign investment and deeper trade relations, rather than a line of credit. Once stability has been restored, the EU should be prepared to help the country deal with its vicious cycle of unemployment, inflation, capital flight, rising debts, falling currency reserves and increasing budget deficit (running at roughly 12 per cent of GDP) by further opening its markets to Egyptian goods. In time, the Egyptian government will also have to reduce its subsidies on fuel and bread, actions that could spark popular unrest. The EU has also made macro-financial assistance to Egypt, worth 500 million conditional on the successful negotiation of an IMF loan. European leaders should continue to push the interim government to strike a deal even though the political environment is not ready for this yet.

While the Brotherhood is suppressed, the military is the most organised political institution in the country. Under current conditions, a rush to the ballot box would almost certainly mean victory for the military's candidate, perhaps al-Sisi himself, and enrage the Brotherhood's supporters. At a conference in Cairo in March, one of the speakers, since elevated to a very senior position in government, said that if Morsi's government failed, it would mean the bankruptcy of political Islam in Egypt. His words now read like a policy prescription. The interim government has detained 75 senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Morsi himself. Under the existing electoral law, given their criminal indictments, many of the Brotherhood's leadership would not be eligible to participate in the elections. By purging the Brotherhood, General al-Sisi hopes to stop his opponents from playing a meaningful role in Egypt's politics.

The EU has an interest in a pluralist democracy, not in military rule sanctioned through quick elections. However difficult it may be, to give the opposition parties a fair chance it would be sensible to gather all parties (including the Brotherhood) in a process that lets them determine the timing of the elections. The recently created European Endowment for Democracy could also use its admittedly limited funds to support some of Egypt's nascent political parties.

If the military insist on pushing the Brotherhood underground, however, this is likely to create security problems of its own. As avenues for democratic participation are closed to the Brotherhood, the likelihood increases that its supporters will resort to violence (as happened in Algeria in 1991 when the military intervened to deprive Islamists of their election victory, sparking civil war). The Brotherhood's hardliners will gain influence, condemning the US and Europe as anti-Islamic and hypocritical for condoning the overthrow of a democratically elected government. The Brotherhood could also reverse its earlier renunciation of violence. Political Islam in Egypt would become more anti-Western and less amenable to democratic ideas, opening the way for a rise in violent extremism, including against Western interests, in a region that is rife with conflict. Tragically, Europe's access to Cairo's powerbrokers would then become even more important, even as its policy choices become more unpalatable.

Rem Korteweg is a senior research fellow at the Centre for European Reform.

#### **More along those lines:**

How the EU can help Kerry with Israeli and Palestinian peace talks. By Clara Marina O'Donnell, 7 August 2013

(<http://cer.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=e5ac52c2f8bd1b249ef1a8d18&id=3b8c2d7fc4&e=ba8869b585>)

The US convinced Israelis and Palestinians to sign up to new negotiations. The EU's actions helped, and it can do more.

Putin's Russia: Stability and stagnation. By Charles Grant, 2 August 2013

(<http://cer.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=e5ac52c2f8bd1b249ef1a8d18&id=736accf9e3&e=ba8869b585>)

Although Russia's economy is slowing, its politics is very stable. Meanwhile the Edward Snowden affair is damaging Moscow's relationship with Washington.

## Seven reasons US intervention in Syria is a bad idea

By David Speedie

The Christian Science Monitor - CSMonitor.com

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2013/0830/Seven-reasons-US-intervention-in-Syria-is-a-bad-idea/Do-no-harm>

In the face of tens of thousands of deaths in Syria, something must be done. This has been the mantra of those who push US intervention in the country's bloody civil war. Following what the Obama administration has called clear evidence that Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against civilians, these pro-interventionists say America has a moral obligation to get involved.

While understandable, this view is wrong for seven key reasons, both moral and pragmatic.

### 1. Do no harm

The call for intervention is surely trumped, even on humanitarian grounds, by the principle borrowed from medicine: first, do no harm or, in this case, no greater harm than already done.

US air strikes on Damascus and Homs, with every risk of civilian casualties, would almost certainly provoke an enraged response by government forces. A conflict whose flames have already fanned into Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey could well sweep toward Israel (which constitutes the only strategic US interest in the region). An even broader and more perilous ripple effect would be felt if any Russians or Iranians were among the victims of an attack.

### 2. Air strikes won't do anything

What will two days of air strikes do, other than salve some consciences that "something" has indeed been done? The answer would seem to be that it would infuriate further Muslim-street opinion against the US and the West without bringing the bloodshed of innocents to an end. There is already a degree of opprobrium in the Arab world over "waging war at 35,000 feet" via the use of drones, with what is euphemistically termed "collateral damage" to civilians.

### 3. Disregard for the UN

Why send in the UN inspectors in the first place if an attack is, as seems all too clear with each passing day, inevitable? Is this to be a reprise of Iraq in 2003, when hostilities commenced even as inspectors were urgently asking for more time to do their work?

### 4. Syria has friends

Unlike Muammar Qaddafi's Libya, Syria is not a "friendless pariah state." The rationale for intervention that bypasses international law (a UN resolution) is that Russia would almost certainly apply a Security Council veto to any UN-sponsored initiative in Syria. But what would the response be from the West if Russia were to wage war as it saw fit, justifying its avoidance of a veto from the US and its UN Security Council allies?

UN Security Council Resolution 2011 <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>> on Libya evolved from protecting civilians to waging war; Russia signed on to the original intent, and is understandably leery this time around.

### 5. Kosovo is not a good precedent

The NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 is being widely invoked as a precedent for military action in Syria. It is a dubious association on many levels. "Illegal, yet legitimate," was the ethically challenged verdict of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo. But unlike with Syria, NATO was claiming the right to take preventive action in its own backyard illegal, [il]legitimate or not. And Serbia is self-evidently not Syria, most especially in terms of the spillover effect to a regional conflict.



A UN investigation team with blue helmets speaks with Free Syrian Army fighters in the Damascus-area town of Zamalka, Syria, Aug. 29. (AP)



Moreover, the efficacy of the NATO action in Kosovo has since been challenged. Hindsight has led to the realization that the aerial bombing campaign against Serbia without "boots on the ground" actually prompted Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to abandon whatever restraint came precisely from fear of a NATO attack on the ground. In fact, violence in Kosovo intensified after the aerial strikes.

The sad truth is that post-conflict Kosovo remains, in the words of two expert observers in 2005 <<http://www.gees.org/documents/Documen-840.pdf>>, "a political and economic morass" with the rump Serbian population (one half of the 200,000 in 1999) living in UN-protected "isolated enclaves, fearful of reprisals by the provinces two million ethnic Albanians." And Neil Buckley wrote in May 2012 in the Financial Times <[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/1a758b60-98f4-11e1-9da3-00144feabdc0.Authorised=false.html?\\_i\\_location=http%3A%2F%2F#axzz2dSXM0q6Q](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/1a758b60-98f4-11e1-9da3-00144feabdc0.Authorised=false.html?_i_location=http%3A%2F%2F#axzz2dSXM0q6Q)> that "North Kosovo remains a constant potential flashpoint with fears that even a small spark could ignite a conflagration."

### **6. Tensions with Russia**

As Russian President Vladimir Putin has starkly warned, military action in Syria absent absolute proof that chemical weapons were used, and that it was the regime who employed them, is a dangerous and foolhardy ratcheting up of tensions between the US and Russia.

This critically important relationship has already been strained lately by two relatively trivial distractions. First, there was the episode surrounding Sergei Magnitsky, the Russian auditor who was killed in prison, prompting US sanctions against those officials deemed responsible, followed by Russia blocking foreign adoptions to the US. Then there was Edward Snowden, the government contractor who leaked information about National Security Agency surveillance and was given temporary asylum in Russia.

### **7. A better option exists**

The international community does have one more option for intervention in Syria: concerted Western/Russian efforts to an immediate cessation of hostilities and of arms shipments from all quarters, including Russia, to both sides in the conflict. This would be followed by negotiations, without preconditions, for a post-war Syria.

This idea was first advanced by Moscow over a year ago, and was basically agreed upon by US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at their meeting in June. The stumbling block has been the refusal of some rebel representatives to participate. The West should use its powers of persuasion on the responsible opposition, thus marginalizing the extremists whose influence in a future Syria is rightly feared. Otherwise, this path to a peaceful outcome will remain on the table obscured by the current dangerous drumbeat to war.

David C. Speedie is director of the US Global Engagement program at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs.

## Don't pretend the UN can save Syria

By Richard Gowan

It is time to set Lakhdar Brahimi free. After a year's service as envoy for the United Nations and Arab League to Syria, the veteran Algerian mediator faces the final breakdown of his efforts to end the war. Disillusioned with both the Syrian government and its opponents, he came close to resigning in May. Since then he has hung on, mainly because his departure would look like an admission that a peace deal is impossible. His demeanor suggests that he is painfully conscious of the hopelessness of his situation.

A week ago, with Western military action against Damascus apparently looming after the regime's suspected use of chemical weapons in Ghouta, it looked like Brahimi finally had a way out. If the United States and its allies launched missile or air strikes without a U.N. mandate, he could resign with a clear conscience. Yet since Britain balked and U.S. President Barack Obama declared that he would put the issue to Congress, there have been calls for Brahimi to make a last-ditch attempt to show there is still some diplomatic way out of the crisis.

This weekend, for example, the International Crisis Group argued <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2013/mena/syria-statement.aspx> that the U.N. envoy should make "renewed efforts" to help the United States "optimize chances of a diplomatic breakthrough." Over the next week, Brahimi and his boss U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon are likely to talk a lot about the need for restraint and compromise. But the chances of brokering honest negotiations between the Syrian government and rebels remain remote. It would be foolish, or just dishonest, to claim that Brahimi and Ban as individuals or the U.N. as an institution can overcome the political obstacles that have frustrated multiple mediators since 2011.

Brahimi has certainly never had much of a chance of forging a peace deal. He was called up to defend the U.N.'s honor after Kofi Annan stood down as Syria envoy in August 2012. He has been frustrated by the obduracy and bloodthirstiness of President Bashar al-Assad and the maneuverings of Assad's opponents in the Arab League, such as Saudi Arabia, which have never had much interest in a compromise peace. His one success was to engineer regular meetings on the crisis between senior Russian and U.S. diplomats, raising hopes for a backroom deal.

By the second quarter of this year, however, he had concluded that he could achieve no more. He was on the verge of resigning <http://gulfnnews.com/in-focus/syria/brahimi-to-quit-as-syria-peace-envoy-diplomats-1.1178215> in May, but U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry upset Brahimi's plans with his joint call with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for a new peace conference in Geneva to follow up on talks in the Swiss city convened by Annan in July 2012. Under pressure from Kerry, Brahimi agreed to stay on to oversee the conference. But with the Syrian government ruling out Assad's resignation and rebel leaders bickering publicly over whether to attend at all, "Geneva 2" has been repeatedly postponed.

Brahimi and Ban Ki-moon have been reduced to a sort of Greek chorus in the Syrian tragedy, sternly cataloging the unfolding horrors of the war and making pleas for peace, yet unable to shape events. The U.N. duo did manage to get some traction last week, warning the West not to take military action without a Security Council mandate and demanding that U.N. Weapons inspectors have time to investigate Ghouta properly. While U.S. Officials indicated that they did not want to get bogged down in U.N. process issues, their British counterparts felt obliged to float a Security Council resolution approving military action to protect Syrian civilians. While the British were primarily motivated by memories of Iraq and public opposition at home to non-U.N.-mandated action, Ban and Brahimi's calls for caution did feed into debates in London in the run-up to Thursday's parliamentary vote against military engagement.

Nonetheless, Brahimi appears to be fatalistic about the future of his diplomatic process, telling journalists, "the Russians and the Americans are both telling me <http://news.yahoo.com/military-intervention-syria-u-n-approval-brahimi-102647443.html> they remain committed to Geneva 2, but what will happen, I think, we will know only if and when this military action takes place." In reality, the events of the last fortnight have already rendered Brahimi's strategy of trying to build consensus between Russia and the United States over Syria null and void. An eventual U.S. military strike, Lavrov made clear <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/us-strike-could-kill-geneva2-meet-lavrov/article5086554.ece?homepage=true&ref=relatedNews> this week, would "push the planned Geneva 2 a long way back or even kill it altogether."

But even if the United States steps back from launching strikes, it will be very hard for Moscow and Washington to agree on any diplomatic alternatives. The Obama administration is out of patience with Russia's obstructionism at the U.N. while President Vladimir Putin has poured scorn on U.S. statements about the Ghouta atrocity. Brahimi's bet that the two powers could eventually be induced to cooperate has decisively failed. The Syrian government, meanwhile, is treating the delay in Western action as a victory -- the idea that Assad's emissaries would negotiate in good faith in Geneva is just not credible.

So what is left for the U.N. to do? One option would be for Brahimi to stand down and Ban to appoint another envoy to inject fresh energy into diplomacy. But this would largely be window-dressing. It is hard to think of any potential envoy who could really make a difference. Since the Syrian conflict has escalated, diplomats have kicked around a range of other names. Former Finnish president, and successful mediator in Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari was one serious early alternative to Annan. But some ambassadors at the U.N. have previously told Ban that it would look farcical to name a third envoy: if the U.N. is to have any further role in peacemaking in Syria, the Secretary-General should lead it himself.

Ban probably doesn't want to do that. He has spoken out strongly against the violence in Syria for two years, infuriating Assad, but engaging directly in negotiations would put his personal credibility at risk. The Secretary-General might prefer to take a higher-profile route, using the upcoming meeting of world leaders for the new session of the U.N. General Assembly (starting September 24) as the basis for a peace conference. There has also been talk of Australia, which holds the Security Council's rotating presidency this month, trying to find common ground between the United States and Russia.

The chances of either the General Assembly or Security Council delivering significant diplomatic dividends are, however, minimal. Putin is not even scheduled to attend the General Assembly. Hawkish Arab leaders, still intent on ousting Assad, may use the assembly as a platform to demand forceful action against Assad, undermining any peace initiatives. While European policy makers still place considerable weight on the Security Council, especially after the British vote, the Obama administration will not wait for a U.N. mandate for military action if it can secure congressional backing.

Rather than scramble to pull off an unlikely diplomatic coup, Ban could challenge the United States and Russia -- along with the main Middle Eastern powers -- to find a way out of the impasse they have created. One option would be for Moscow and Washington, and their various European and Arab allies, to send delegations of intelligence and military officials to Geneva for discussions on how to stop Assad from using chemical weapons again. In the short term, it may be easier to make progress on this limited goal than to search for a broader diplomatic breakthrough. In the longer term, if Russia and the United States can find a way to cooperate on the chemical weapons issue, it could allow them to rebuild some of the trust they have lost.

Brahimi could still play a role in convening discussions of this type. But once he has done so, he should be allowed to step away from the Syrian war. He has worked hard to end the war. But if there is no hope of compromise between the United States and Russia, he cannot continue indefinitely. To do so would simply be to nurture false hopes about the vanishingly small prospects for a diplomatic solution on Syria.

\*Richard Gowan is Research Director at New York University's Center on International Cooperation and a Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.\*

## Highlights from the Atlantic Community - The Open Think Tank

### Central and Eastern Europe to Benefit the Most from TTIP

Think Tank Round-Up: Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is poised to be a big winner from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which would heavily benefit areas such as the Slovakian auto industry and Poland's R&D sector. TTIP would also provide a measure of security to CEE as the US would become rerooted in Europe.

### European Global Power Tied to Increased Defense Spending

Alexander Ackley: The burden imbalance in the alliance between Europe and the US is both unsustainable and impractical. European nations need to seriously review their defense spending practices and capabilities or risk being left behind in a world of rising military threats.

### NATO's Strategic Airlift Capability

NATO: Air-and sea-lift capabilities are a key enabler for NATO operations - so that forces and equipment can be deployed quickly to wherever they are needed. The C-17 Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC), which is based in Hungary, is a multinational initiative delivering a vital capability to the Alliance.

## America's diplomatic hocus-pocus at the UN

By Richard Gowan

Can Barack Obama ever trust the United Nations Security Council again? And will the Security Council, and the U.N. more broadly, trust the U.S. president? Last week, Obama vented his frustration with diplomacy over Syria at a press conference during the G-20 summit in Russia. Asked why he had called for military action in response to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's resort to the use of chemical weapons, Obama claimed the alternatives <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/06/remarks-president-obama-press-conference-g20>> would be some resolutions that were being proffered in the United Nations and the usual hocus-pocus.

This was a sour if pithy turn of phrase from a president who has scored some significant victories at the U.N., ranging from tighter sanctions on Iran to a mandate for military action in Libya. But Obama and his advisers have made it clear that they are weary of negotiating with Russia and China over Syria. In short, the new U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Samantha Power, told a Washington audience <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/09/07/samantha-powers-case-for-striking-syria>> on Friday, "the Security Council the world needs to deal with this urgent crisis is not the Security Council we have."

It is hard to argue with that. As I have noted in previous columns <<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12926/diplomatic-fallout-has-russia-won-the-syrian-war>>, throughout the Syrian crisis Russia has bamboozled the U.S. with deceptive offers of diplomatic cooperation and wrecking tactics in the Security Council. A sizable majority of the U.N.'s members have signed onto General Assembly resolutions implicitly criticizing Russia's stance. But Obama and his team should be aware that many diplomats, including those representing America's allies, think the U.S. is guilty of hocus-pocus too.

There are three reasons for this. The first is the perception that Washington played fast and loose with the Security Council mandate for action in Libya in 2011. The second is a suspicion that the U.S. has been lukewarm to U.N. diplomacy over Syria all along. The third is a sense that the Obama administration, while more favorable toward the U.N. than its Republican predecessor, has become cynical toward the institution overall.

U.S. officials naturally don't agree with these views. Some veterans of the first Obama administration even argue that it over-invested in the U.N. On many issues. But the U.S. needs to tackle these criticisms firmly, especially if they want to defend their position at the U.N. after any eventual strike on Syria. Even if Congress and the president veer away from military action, the fallout from the hocus-pocus line will linger on.

The legacy of Libya is an especially explosive topic. Critics of the NATO campaign that led to the fall of former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi argue that the U.S. and its allies twisted the original Security Council mandate to protect civilians beyond recognition. Susan E. Rice, who was the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. when that mandate was secured and is now Obama's national security adviser, has argued that her foes are distorting history. She made the case for large-scale military action in Libya early and forcefully. But even many Western diplomats admit they stretched the mandate very thin indeed.

There are also differences among Western officials over how the Security Council handled earlier phases of the Syrian conflict in 2011 and 2012. Britain and France led initial efforts <[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/08/03/syrian\\_shadow\\_boxing](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/08/03/syrian_shadow_boxing)> to address the crisis in the Security Council in 2011. The U.S., correctly anticipating Russian opposition, argued for lower-profile talks. As the war escalated in 2012, Washington invested more in U.N. options such as the appointment of Kofi Annan and Lakhdar Brahimi as envoys to Syria. But U.S. allies sensed that the Obama team's main priority was to keep diplomacy alive, and suppress calls for an intervention, until after the November 2012 presidential elections.

At times, the U.S. and Russia even seemed to share an interest in eye-catching but unproductive clashes in the Security Council. Russia could appear strong by standing up to the Americans. The Americans, and their European partners, could portray themselves as morally superior by condemning Moscow's refusal to compromise.

In the meantime, Russia and the U.S. also appeared happy to work behind the scenes to defend their privileged positions as permanent members of the Security Council. They stonewalled in the face of proposals<<http://pragati.nationalinterest.in/2013/02/indias-big-bet-at-the-un>> led by Brazil, Germany, India and Japan to reform the council's composition. (The first three countries, all aspiring to permanent seats of their own, had equivocated over Libya.) And they shot down proposals by a coalition of smaller U.N. members to reform the council's working practices, including a suggestion that the permanent members should not use their vetoes<[http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Swiss\\_withdraw\\_UN\\_draft\\_resolution.html?cid=32719648](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Swiss_withdraw_UN_draft_resolution.html?cid=32719648)> in cases involving crimes against humanity.

So when American officials complain that "the Security Council the world needs" does not exist, many of their foreign counterparts are liable to grumble that the U.S. hasn't seemed too keen on change before.

All this adds up to a very bleak vision of American motivations and choices at the U.N. over the past two years. And it is profoundly unfair to many U.S. diplomats who have worked themselves to exhaustion trying to broker a deal on Syria. In private, they have been flabbergasted by Russia and China's refusal to deal rationally with the issue or respond humanely to the slaughter. They also bristle at criticism from powers such as India and Brazil, which have spoken a good deal about the international principles at stake in Libya and Syria without offering substantive alternative approaches toward a peace deal.

Obama and Power's statements last week underlined that they will not balk at calling out those powers they feel have been ruthless or feckless over Syria. Caught in the middle of a fierce domestic debate over military action, they need to be frank about the realities they face overseas. But the administration will need to return to diplomacy, especially if Congress refuses to sanction military action: Obama has a date at the U.N. on 24 September to address the General Assembly<<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13173/diplomatic-fallout-g-20-u-n-summits-likely-to-highlight-not-resolve-global-tensions>>.

What he will have to say there is now exceptionally hard to predict. He may have to justify a non-U.N.-mandated strike, whether completed or forthcoming, on Syria. He may have to try to reassert his authority after a defeat in Congress. In either case, he is unlikely to devote much time to the legacy of Libya, the early phase of the Syrian war or the niceties of Security Council reform. But he will also need to dispel his audience's suspicions that American diplomacy at the U.N. does not extend beyond the "usual hocus-pocus."

\*Richard Gowan is the associate director for Crisis Management and Peace Operations at New York University's Center on International Cooperation and a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. His weekly column for World Politics Review, Diplomatic Fallout<<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/authors/541/richard-gowan>>, appears every Monday.\*

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## A New SIPRI publication: Iran's Policy on Afghanistan: The Evolution of Strategic Pragmatism

By Bruce Koepke

### Summary

Iran, with its breadth of experience in Afghanistan and long support for the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan, could continue to play a constructive role after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014. In this report the author details the evolution of Iran's policy of strategic pragmatism in Afghanistan. Understanding this policy could provide an opportunity for the international community to re-engage with Iran on a broad range of issues of mutual concern. This paper is published under the Wider Central Asia Initiative, a two-year SIPRI project to promote and facilitate dialogue among the main external stakeholders in Afghanistan's future. The initiative is funded by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

### About the author

Dr Bruce Koepke (Australia/Germany) is a Senior Researcher with SIPRI's Armed Conflict and Conflict Management Programme who has been working on and in Afghanistan for the past 15 years. Prior to joining SIPRI he was employed with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), initially based in northern Afghanistan and Kabul and later in Tehran, where he headed UNAMA's liaison office.

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### Egypt's Tragedy and Democracy's Future

by Matthew Bryza.

Director of the International Centre for Defence Studies (ICDS) Matthew Bryza addresses the bloodiest day in Egypt since the pro-democracy uprising two years ago, which left hundreds dead and drew international condemnation. For Your interest a new blog entry "[Egypt's Tragedy and Democracy's Future](#)".

## Call for papers

As you all know by now, the Nexus website is under revision and a new and improved site will be launched this fall. We are in the process of gathering material for the website and encourage all members to send us papers, articles, book reviews, pictures or any relevant material. All contributions are welcomed :)

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