

Palestine, Egypt and Syria: New Lows for Obama's Failed Middle East Policy

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Obama seemed so traumatized by his Middle East blunders he decided to take a break, giving Ukraine a try instead. The distraction was just what the president needed. And the U.S. media followed obediently, while barely glancing at the flames in the rear-view mirror — until another explosion piqued their interest. The predictable break down of peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians occurred when the Palestinian Authority backed out of a “peace process” they had zero to gain from.

Yet another failure after a string of Middle East fiascos: Obama's failed “surge” in Afghanistan, his disastrous bombing campaign and regime change in Libya (an international crime initially cheered as a “success” in the U.S. media), and his catastrophic proxy war in Syria, which grinds on with no end in sight and which helped re-ignite the Iraq conflict — another “success” turned disaster for U.S. foreign policy.

Obama has turned away in denial from the chaos he helped create, but the Middle East is still there, still in crisis, and balancing on a razor's edge: [Israel has bombed Syria](#) and the Palestinian territories several times in recent months; while al-Qaeda style extremists still dominate giant swaths of Iraq and Syria (thanks to Obama's Syrian proxy war). Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt are especially combustible, though one could make such an argument for every single country in the region. Obama's proxy war in Syria is acting as the fuel.

Having turned away from the Middle East, Obama has been throwing fresh flames at Russia; perhaps Obama's policy in Ukraine — backing a fascist-filled provisional government — will be more successful than his policy in Syria — supporting a Jihadi-packed political opposition.

Like President Bush, Obama prefers the role of arsonist to firefighter.

Obama's current silence on Middle East issues should be unsettling; he is, of course, not going to simply pack his bags and forget about the region. His so-called “pivot” to Asia — to set China ablaze — has been delayed, there is simply too much at stake in the Middle East, and the U.S. military is stretched too thin.

But what about the peace process Obama started with Syria and Iran? Obama saved face by backing off of his bombing threat in Syria by agreeing to Russia's plan of removal of Syrian chemical weapons, and later beginning peace talks with the regional power Iran. This process has stalled, no doubt due to the right-wing pressure in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and in the U.S. corporate elite.

The recent lack of action in the Middle East reflects the crisis of U.S. foreign policy — Obama

simply has no idea what to do next; he's continued the Bush-era policy of tearing the region asunder and, like Bush, he doesn't have the political-military power to put the smoldering jigsaw back together again — at least not in a way favorable to "U.S. interests."

The president is under immense pressure from his base: the U.S. corporate elite — especially the military-industrial complex — is demanding that he act tough, especially after he's been humiliated by his lack of power in Syria and with Russia. The sanctions against Russia are his first timid steps back in the ring after getting his nose bloodied in Syria.

The globe's only super power will not react to these affronts by adopting a foreign policy of peace. And peace could be easily achieved. The U.S. still has immense diplomatic power in the region, which Obama has used thus far to pressure his Middle East allies — the Gulf monarchy dictatorships — to pursue the Syrian proxy war, as Obama directs the politics and military arms running behind the scenes.

A fair and equitable peace could easily be achieved, and as author [Franklin Lamb recently pointed out](#), Syria and Iran are fulfilling their end of their diplomatic agreements with the U.S. Will Obama respond in kind? Or will he escalate tensions for the sake of re-enforcing "U.S. regional power?"

Unfortunately, peace is never as profitable as war. If Obama leaves the Middle East, Russia and China will fill in the gaps, slurping up the profits that would have otherwise gone to U.S. corporations. And if U.S. corporations felt that they were making enough profit at home, they'd politely bow out of the contest, especially since U.S. foreign policy has been one Godzilla-like disaster after another.

But U.S. corporations remain starving for overseas profits; the U.S. domestic economy is still struggling towards the endlessly promised land of "recovery," and the really big profits of U.S. corporations have come from foreign investments, using the cheap Fed-printed dollars to speculate in foreign currency and foreign raw materials — an obviously unsustainable strategy. At home U.S. corporations are largely continuing their investment strike, waiting for cheaper labor, additional tax breaks, fewer regulations, and larger guaranteed opportunities for profit than currently exist, which is why corporations are refusing to invest over \$7 trillion of hoarded dollars.

A just and fair peace with Iran and Syria would thus be especially infuriating for the corporate U.S. war hawks, since treating Iran and Syria in a fair way would imply that they deserve to be "equal partners" in the foreign policy world, again making the U.S. seem weak, unable to push around "inferior" nations into unequal political and economic arrangements favorable to U.S. corporations — violating the spirit of imperialism.

Another equally vexing problem with creating a fair peace with Iran and Syria is getting "buy in" from their regional rivals, Israel and Saudi Arabia — the two most important regional allies of Obama's, regardless of their rampant violations of human rights and violent foreign policy.

Egypt, too, has slid out of the grasp of the U.S., which Saudi Arabia is no doubt using as an important regional bargaining chip to lure the U.S. back in the fight against Syria and to crush the Iran peace process. Nothing Obama can do will solve the current dilemma he's put himself into.

Ultimately, it's safe to say that Obama is incapable of accomplishing the peace process he started with Iran, Syria and Israel-Palestine. The domestic profit rate of U.S. corporations is too thin, while Saudi Arabia and Israel are determined to go down swinging. All working and poor people have a direct interest in achieving peace in the Middle East, for their own future and the future of the millions suffering from decades of the U.S. foreign policy nightmare of unending war.

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Notes

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