

By Robert S. Dudley

Report From Utopia

"The only way to be assured that Syrian chemical weapons will not be used in the future is ... through a successful international effort. ... [This includes] an urgent effort to convene without conditions the long-delayed peace conference the United States and Russia announced in May. A resolution in the UN General Assembly to condemn any further use of chemical weapons, regardless of perpetrator, would be approved overwhelmingly, and the United States should support Russia's proposal that Syria's chemical weapons be placed under UN control. ... This could lead to convening the Geneva peace conference, perhaps including Iran, that could end the conflict."—*Former President Jimmy Carter, op-ed in the Washington Post, Sept. 11.*

Report From the Grassy Knoll

"No one doubts that poison gas was used in Syria. But there is every reason to believe it was used not by the Syrian Army, but by opposition forces, to provoke intervention by their powerful foreign patrons, who would be siding with the fundamentalists."—*Russian President Vladimir V. Putin, op-ed in the New York Times, Sept. 11.*

Bred in the Bone

"In my last days as Defense Secretary earlier this year, I made one final effort on Capitol Hill to persuade the leadership of Congress not to let sequestration happen. I described the serious impact on defense readiness and the real danger that it would hollow out the force. Every member of the leadership, Democrat and Republican, agreed with my analysis but to a person admitted there was little that could be done. I persisted. ... Finally, one member ... said: 'Leon, you don't understand. The Congress is resigned to failure.'"—*Former Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, op-ed in the Washington Post, Sept. 2.*

Days of Goons and Gulags

"He's about lost power, lost empire, lost glory. It will be very difficult to make headway as long as he's there."—*Former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin, New York Times, Sept. 2.*

The Buck Skips Here

"First of all, I didn't set a red line [on Syrian use of chemical weapons]. The world set a red line. The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use even when countries are engaged in war. Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated—in a piece of legislation titled the Syria Accountability Act—that some of the horrendous things that are happening on the ground there need to be answered for. ... Point No. 2, my credibility is not on the line. The international community's credibility is on the line. And America and Congress' credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important."—*President Barack Obama, remarks at a Stockholm press conference, Sept. 4.*

Hallucinations

"They are opening the champagne in Iran and probably switching to higher gear on their way to nuclear weapons. If anyone really thinks this President will strike Iran based on evidence that Iranians have crossed the red line towards nuclear weapons, they must be hallucinating."—*Uri Ariel, member of the Knesset in Israel, referring to President Obama's waffling on what to do about Syria, Los Angeles Times, Sept. 1.*

No, Really, It's Been Fun

"What was she going to be doing anyway? Something more strenuous than sitting in a chair? We don't concede there's been any stress involved."—*Ronald Herrington, lawyer for Naval Academy midshipman accused of rape. He referred to the accuser, who said she was exhausted from spending several days on the witness stand, Washington Post, Aug. 30.*

Two-War Memory

"Will we be able to look in more than one direction at a time? The cornerstone of US foreign and security policy since the end of World War II was that America would be able to prevent a World War III by retaining sufficient

military force to keep regional conflicts from spreading into global conflicts. The linchpin of the ability to limit conflict is the ability to fight two wars at once. Shattering combat commands, trimming war plan requirements, and shuttling forces from one crisis to the next are all indicators that the global safety net against future global conflicts is atrophying to dangerously low levels."—*James Jay Carafano, Heritage Foundation, from "Omens of a Hollow Military," The National Interest, Sept. 4.*

Quack, Quack

"So far, armed drones have been used either over countries that do not control their own airspace (Somalia, Mali, Afghanistan) or where the government has given the United States some degree of permission (Yemen, Pakistan). Those circumstances are rare. When the foe can actually defend itself, the use of armed drones is extraordinarily difficult. ... Drones are slow and noisy; they fly at a low altitude; and they require time to hover over a potential target before being used. They are basically sitting ducks."—*Audrey Kurth Cronin, George Mason University, from "Drones Over Damascus," Foreign Affairs, Sept. 2.*

Nice While It Lasted

"Nuclear weapons have not been central to America's national security for the past two decades because its primary foes—Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and al Qaeda—did not have them. ... But times are changing. ... China has become more assertive in pursuing revisionist claims in East Asia, confronting America's allies, and building military capabilities—including anti-ship ballistic missiles and submarines—tailored for a fight with the United States. ... Even relations with Russia, America's partner in arms control, are becoming more competitive: The civil war in Syria bears every hallmark of a Cold War-style proxy battle. In short, great-power political competition is heating up once again, and as it does, nuclear weapons will once again take center stage."—*Matthew Kroenig, Georgetown University, from "Think Again: American Nuclear Disarmament," Foreign Policy, September/October issue.*