



The Guardians of the Cedars issued the following communiqué:

The Syrian regime is famous for its politics of evasiveness and walking the fine line, and for three decades was indeed successful in using that policy not because of its shrewdness as many believe but because of the foolishness and short-sightedness that afflicted its enemies during those decades. Which explains the survival of that regime for all these years in one of the most troubled regions of the world and in a country that set a record of military coups d'état to the point where the residents of Damascus wished each other a "good coup" instead of "good night" before going to bed every night.

To contain internal unrest the Syrian regime relied on an iron-fist policy to nip in the bud any prospective coups, liquidate its enemies one after the other, take away public and private freedoms, and suppress free thinking and free speech. It thus turned the country into a huge prison, and wiped out an entire city that tried to rebel against it.

Internationally it adopted a policy of masked toughness, an iron-fist but velvet-gloved policy made up of deception, misleading, bending like a willow whenever storms threatened it, and containment of dangers, only to turn against its opponents at the opportune time and ruthlessly fight them through a third party – i.e. by proxy and not by direct confrontation. That is how it was able in the 1980s to evict NATO and Israeli forces from Beirut through terrorist organizations it created, supported, and nurtured. Then it forced Israel in 2000 into a humiliating withdrawal from South Lebanon and by the beginning of the war on Iraq it opened its borders to the hordes of Arab and Arabist volunteers and terrorists to fight the coalition forces and inflict severe casualties in their ranks. Those borders remain open to this day under the pretext that the regime is unable to control them... And it did all that without losing a single soldier from its army which it kept to suppress its own people inside Syria and our people in Lebanon.

But after the attacks of September 11 and after America woke up from its slumber the rules of the games began to change. The Syrian regime's antics were being unmasked one after the other and its margin of maneuver began to rapidly narrow. The noose began to tighten and isolation grew. The noose was on account of the presence of American troops along its eastern border and Israeli troops along its southern border, the list of demands for corrective action presented by Mr. Colin Powell with which the Syrian regime simply cannot comply, and the Syria Accountability Act that hit the bull's eye. As for the isolation it is the result of the complete surrender of the Libyan regime to the American demands, the flexibility displayed by the Iranian regime with respect to its nuclear programs, and the shift by the Saudi regime towards moderation in religious curricula and toughness in fighting fundamentalists and terrorists.

More than all of that, the Syrian regime has lost its credibility towards the West. No sooner had the regime recently called for a resumption of negotiations with Israel that a swift American response came back reminding Damascus of the necessity of implementing the list of corrective demands first, and an Israeli response calling for an expansion of Jewish settlements on the Golan Heights. And no sooner had the Syrian regime called on clearing the region of all weapons of mass destruction that the answer from Washington and London came that Syria must give up its own WMDs first.

Concerning the visit by the Syrian president to Turkey – Syria's historical enemy – and putting aside the warm welcome and sugar-coated words, as well as his previous trips to Egypt and Greece etc., they won't be of much help to Assad because they are all part of his strategy of gaining time, of preemptive protection, and of undermining the daily mounting pressures, but which won't succeed in removing or eliminating those pressures.

And before concluding, we would like to remind some of the fools in the American and Israeli administrations who still believe to this day in the usefulness of a dialogue with the Syrian regime after thirty years of lies, evasiveness, and walking the tight rope that fighting terrorism won't succeed unless it begins and ends in Damascus.

Lebanon, at your service,
Abu Arz,
January 10, 2004