

## Bombing Syria won't make the blindest bit of difference, Tony Blair



Talk of armed intervention in Syria is all about western powers satisfying their desire not to look impotent

Tony Blair's calls for military action in Syria 'would be doing little more than satisfying our own sense of retributive morality and one that has become blurred with a large dollop of action-hero crap'

His comment piece in the Times today ([paywalled link](#)) is vintage Tony Blair: "Western policy is at a crossroads: commentary or action; shaping events or reacting to them." In other words, we must stop wringing our hands from the sidelines, it's time for action. Cue some macho sabre-rattling and the firing up of jet engines in Cyprus. Yet the prospect of bombing Bashar al-Assad's army is entirely reactive. Simply an escalation of tit-for-tat that changes none of the fundamental political geography. It is all about the urgent need to do something – or worse, the need to be seen to do something.

What politicians hate most is the perception that they are ineffective and that they are being led by events rather than in control of them. Yet this is precisely what an attack on Syria would represent. For there is obviously no wider plan as to how the west might enable Syria to transition to a more stable and peaceful state. Perhaps no such plan is possible.

I am not saying that armed intervention is always mistaken. If it could help fix things, or even improve them, all well and good. And that is where a plan comes in. But if the logic is simply that Assad is a 24-carat wrong-un, that his use of chemical weapons against his own people is a moral outrage, therefore we need to act – then we are doing little more than satisfying our own sense of retributive morality, and one that has become blurred with a large dollop of action-hero crap.

The problem with this is that it makes the tragedy of Syria all about us, about our need to act, and not about them. What we learned from Iraq is that our desire for immediate action can blind us to the less adrenaline-pumped requirements of the long view.

So, will somebody please explain to us how bombing Assad will make the blindest bit of difference in the grand scheme of things? Because if this is really all about our political leaders being incapable of dealing with their own impotence, then dropping bombs is not going to help.

Giles Fraser / The Guardian