

America's War on Syria, With or Without the Authorization of the U.N. Security Council?

UN Security Council Resolution 2118 on Syria. Achilles Heel, Reference to Chapter VII of UN Charter

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According to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin E. Dempsey:

"Once we take action, we should be prepared for what comes next. Deeper involvement is hard to avoid ... A decision to use force is no less than an act of war, and we could inadvertently empower extremists or unleash the very chemical weapons we seek to control."

In a letter to Senator Carl Levin, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Dempsey warns that the price of military involvement in Syria would be enormous, ultimately costing well over 1 billion dollars per month.

For sixteen days this month, from October 1 through October 16, the United States government was paralyzed by a shutdown of its dysfunctional system, imperiling the world economy, shattering global confidence in the United States, which was crippled amidst a fierce dispute about budget expenditures. At stake are expenditures for medical care, social security and other social services which provide the mere basic necessities of life for the majority of United States taxpayers, a dispute over billions of dollars for care for American citizens.

It is staggering to recall that little more than one month ago, the Wall Street Journal headlined: "US Makes Case for Strike as Military Builds in Mideast," despite the alarming assessment by the US military's chief expert, General Dempsey, explicitly advising against the dire risks and exorbitant cost of US military action against the Syrian Government.

Nowhere is the irrational, indeed suicidal character of the capitalist system revealed more blatantly than in this glaring disconnect between the warning of the disastrous cost and consequences of military action, by the foremost military expert in the United States, General Dempsey, and the decision to ignore his expertise, and recklessly embark on that most profitable of oligarch capitalist enterprises, war. This decision was announced on the front page of the Wall Street Journal merely one month after Dempsey clearly opposed such wanton, reckless military action.

President Obama, a professor of Constitutional Law, had decided to attack the government of Syria, a sovereign nation which had not attacked the United States, without authorization by the United Nations Security Council, "without the international consensus he championed during his rise to power...Britain wouldn't be a partner, neither would the Arab League. No

other multilateral institution had authorized the use of military force against Syria.” Perhaps to avoid the risk of impeachment, perhaps restrained by a rational reluctance to further bankrupt the already failing United States economy, and possibly ignite a world war, Obama decided to leave the decision to a Congressional vote, with bleak prospects for support there.

In one of history’s great ironies, it was Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov who rescued the Obama Administration from the self-destructive military adventure it had embarked upon, and provided the practical, face-saving solution to Obama’s dilemma of appearing either weak or outrageously irresponsible. Russia offered Obama a solution by advising the removal and destruction of chemical weapons from Syria instead of military strikes, thereby throwing a lifeline to the American President, sparing him the ignominy and insanity of another military involvement, (by now abhorrent to the war-weary majority of United States citizens), avoid an embarrassing no-confidence vote from Congress, and step back from the cliff of unilateral military action, possibly this time igniting a world war, obliging the Nobel Prize Committee to demand the return of the Peace Prize they had so rashly awarded him several years ago.

And this time, the Obama administration was promised the United Nations Security Council resolution it had long coveted, confirming the agreement between Sergei Lavrov and John Kerry, Resolution 2118 (2013) adopted unanimously on September 27th in New York.

This resolution, though clearly adamant in neither recommending nor authorizing any punitive or military action against the Assad government, is nevertheless vulnerable to abuse and misinterpretation, and, as was the case of Resolution 1441 on Iraq in 2003, can be misrepresented in the future, and falsely portrayed as support for military action against Syria, despite its apparently total omission of any authorization for force or military action. The resolution states:

“Recalling the obligation under resolution 1540 (2004) that all states shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-state actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, and their means of delivery” and, “18: Reaffirms that all Member States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-state actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery and calls upon Member States, in particular Member States neighboring the Syrian Arab Republic, to report any violations of this paragraph to the Security Council immediately.”

These paragraphs explicitly prohibit the arming of the rebel forces in Syria (non-State actors) and would implicate Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey or even the United States if these Member States persist in sending weapons to the rebels. These paragraphs appear to establish equal restraint upon both the Syrian government and the opposition forces, and imply that both sides of the civil war are potentially culpable and responsible for perpetrating the criminal activities and massive human rights violations. The neutrality in attribution of responsibility and blame would appear to be further reiterated in Annex 1, OPCW Executive Council Decision which states: “The use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances would be reprehensible and completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of the international community.”

Although Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, with exquisite clarity, states the imperative that the resolution “does not fall under Chapter VII and does not allow for any automatic use of coercive measures of enforcement...any violations will have to be 100 per cent proved,” the “Achilles Hell” of this resolution, which potentially re-opens the future risk of military conflagration in the Mideast – and beyond – is contained in “21” which states: “ Decides, in the event of non-compliance with this resolution, including unauthorized transfer of chemical weapons, or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic, to impose measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.”

The inclusion of the ultimate threat within this same resolution: upon “non-compliance” to “impose measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter “ leaves Syria vulnerable to the same fate as Iraq in 2003: Resolution 1441, which also referred to possible use of force (“serious consequences”) contained in Chapter VII, required a subsequent meeting of the Security Council to vote upon the authorization for the use of force against Iraq. This second, required Security Council meeting, failed to approve the use of force, which was vetoed by France. Nevertheless, the Bush administration had what it claimed was United Nations support for its attack on Iraq, in the original Un Security Council Resolution, merely because it included the reference to possible future imposition of measures under Chapter VII.

Similarly, history may repeat itself. Although prior to September 27 the Obama administration failed to obtain a single United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing Chapter VII action against Syria, and was forced to threaten unilateral military strikes against Syria, which would have been in brazen violation of international law,...(“Without the international consensus he championed during his rise to power...Britain wouldn’t be a partner, neither would the Arab League...no other multilateral institution had authorized the use of military force against Syria,”), today the United States government has the United Nations Security Council Resolution that may be misrepresented and portrayed, to a naïve public, as United Nations approval in any future attempt to follow the clearly established pattern of aggression against the formerly independent governments Iraq and Libya.

Despite the cautious and deliberate wording of Resolution 2118, and the technical necessity for another Security Council meeting in the event of “non-compliance” in order to determine which “measures under Chapter VII” could be imposed, the September 27 Resolution can be portrayed to those unaware of the details, as UN Security Council support for Chapter VII measures against Syria.

It will be no problem for US-NATO to contrive, or fabricate “non-compliance” by the government of Bashar Assad, thus triggering Chapter VII enforcement measures. This Resolution’s timeframe for Syrian chemical weapons disarmament and destruction of chemical weapons is exceedingly stringent, requiring: “(c) “complete the elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014, (d) Complete as soon as possible and in any case not later than 1 November 2013, the destruction of chemical weapons production and mixing/filling equipment.”

According to The New York Times, September 15, 2013,

“The United States effort to get rid of its own stockpile has now taken 28 years

and \$35 billion, and is not yet over.” “When Col. Muammar al-Qaddafi had to convince the world 10 years ago that he was serious about giving up his chemical weapons, he dragged warheads and bombs into the desert and flattened them with bulldozers. When Saddam Hussein, defeated in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 had to demonstrate that he was giving up his chemical arsenal, Iraqis protected by little more than tattered cloths over their faces poured some of the agents into ditches and set them on fire – to the shock of inspectors warching in heavy ‘moon suits.’ “ “The agreement calls for the destruction of chemical agent mixing equipment by November, and perhaps most ambitious, for Syria to completely rid itself of chemical weapons and production facilities in less than a year, a timetable that would set a speed record and one that many experts doubt could be completed even with Syria’s full cooperation...But the destruction of chemical agents is a painstaking process that to be done safely and securely can easily take decades.” “Mr. Assad also knows that Mr Hussein and Colonel Qaddafi were both deposed and ultimately executed years after giving up their weapons. ‘The history does not exactly create an incentive’ a senior administration official said.”

“Raymond A. Zelinkas, a senior scientist at the Montrey Institute of International Studies and a former United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq, said chemical experts would get up early to beat the desert heat, donning full body protective suits that protected them from hazardous fumes at sites where lethal toxins were being incinerated in open pits. ‘They’d supervise the Iraqis’ he said of the United Nations inspectors. But the local workers themselves, he added, ‘wore sandals and put rags over their faces.’”

Despite all these efforts, “Libya is left with thousands of pounds of mustard blister agents that it is still working to destroy, two years after Colonel Qaddafi’s death.”

Let us, for the moment , leave aside the possibility that the Syrian rebels could easily have obtained some of Libya’s still remaining chemical weapons, and thus could be held responsible for the chemical weapons disaster of August 21, 2013, as Russia has suggested, and as Mother Agnes Miriam, the Lebanon born nun who had lived in Syria for years also alleges, having been in Damascus at the time of the attacks. According to the New York Times, September 22, 2013,

“Through conversations with Syrians and clergy throughout the country, Mother Agnes Miriam said she uncovered ‘the false flag of the Arab Spring.’ Instead of a popular uprising by citizens enraged by economic stagnation and political oppression, she said she found a conspiracy cooked up by international powers to destroy Syria. She said the government’s brutal crackdowns on peaceful protesters had been concocted by the news media, and she dismissed the slow transformation of the opposition movement into an armed uprising, saying the rebels had rushed to violence. While allowing that some protesters had good intentions, she said the conflict was driven by foreign powers, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda. ‘What happened is the interference of half the globe in Syrian affairs, infiltrating Syria with foreign fighters, recycling Al Qaeda and putting under threat the civilian population.’”

Resolution 2118 demands complete disarmament and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria by the first half of 2014, and the destruction of chemical weapons production and mixing/filling equipment by November 1, 2013, a deadline that many experts consider impossible to meet ‘even with Syria’s full cooperation.’”

Resolution 2118's unrealistic deadline sets up the Syrian government to be inevitably condemned for 'non-compliance,' triggering the imposition of Chapter VII action. And consequently, those in US-NATO intent on military aggrandizement, in the service of capitalism's geopolitical agenda, and in defiance of the Pentagon's own General Martin Dempsey's warning of a bankrupting cost of more than 1 billion dollars each month, now have the UN Security Council imprimatur, a Resolution that can be distorted and misrepresented to provide a fig-leaf falsely rationalizing military strikes and the ultimate destruction of the Syrian government, reducing that once progressive nation to the status of a failed state of terrorists, with Shiites and Sunnis slaughtering each other as well as Christians, Jews and all other "infidels," much as the once functioning countries of Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan have been demolished and reduced to squabbling, impoverished balkanized fragments.

Their rich resources are now vulnerable and unprotected, and free to be ravaged by those multinational corporations and plundered by transnational "interests" who have plundered so much of the earth to enable dynastic oligarchic powers to amass their great fortunes. To quote Voltaire: "Behind every great fortune lies a great crime."

May 17, 2013 The New York Times headlined:

"War's Pressure is Causing Syria to Break Apart : Many Factions at Odds: Even if Assad Leaves, Deep Splits Imperil Nation's Integrity." "After more than two years of conflict, Syria is breaking up, a constellation of armed groups battling to advance their own agendas are effectively creating the outlines of separate armed fiefs: As the war expands in scope and brutality, its biggest casualty appears to be the integrity of the Syrian State."

September 5th, 2013, across five columns of the front page of The New York Times a color photo displays the naked, flayed backs of prisoners whose wrists are tied behind them, and whose faces are pushed into the dirt by armed Syrian rebels. The headline reads: "Rebel brutality in Syria Posing Dilemma in West: Assad Foes Executing Soldiers after Capture" by C. J. Chivers:

"The Syrian rebels posed casually, standing over their prisoners with firearms pointed down at the shirtless and terrified men. The prisoners, seven in all, were captured Syrian soldiers. Five were trussed, their backs marked with red welts as the rebel commander recited a bitter revolutionary verse...The moment the poem ended the commander known as 'the uncle,' fired a bullet into the back of the first prisoner's head. His gunmen followed suit, promptly killing all the men at their feet." (So much for democracy, due process and Article 22 of the Geneva Conventions governing treatment of prisoners of war.) "This scene was documented in a video smuggled out of Syria a few days ago by a former rebel who grew disgusted by the killings. As the United States debates whether to support the Obama Administration's proposal that Syrian forces should be attacked for using chemical weapons against civilians, this video, shot in April, joins a growing body of evidence in an increasingly criminal environment populated by gangs of highwaymen, kidnappers and killers."

August 23, 2013, The New York Times bylined C. J. Chivers reporting:

“Matthew Schrier was helpless. An American photographer held in a rebel-controlled prison in the Syrian city of Aleppo, he and a fellow prisoner had been caught trying to gouge a hole in their cell’s wooden door. The captors took his cellmate, he said, beat him and brought him back with blood-streaked ankles and feet. Now it was Mr. Schrier’s turn. Wearing masks, his jailers let him out, sat him down and forced a car tire over his knees. They slid a wooden rod between his legs, locking the tire in place. Then they rolled him over. Mr. Schrier was face down on a basement floor, he said, legs immobilized, bare feet facing up. ‘Give him 115’ one of his captors said in English as they began whipping his feet with a metal cable. When the torture ended, Mr. Schrier could not walk. His captors, he said, dragged him to his cell. For seven months, Mr. Schrier, 35, was a prisoner in Syria of jihadi fighters opposed to President Assad. Held in prisons run by two Islamist rebel groups, he said, he was robbed, beaten and accused of being an American spy by men who then assumed his identity online. His captors drained one of his bank accounts. They shopped in his name on eBay. They sent messages from his e-mail account to his mother and his best friend assuring them he was fine.”

Friday, September 13, 2013, The New York Times:

“ Saudi Arabia, quietly cooperating with American and British intelligence and other Arab governments, has modestly increased deliveries of weapons to rebels fighting in Southern Syria, the rebels say...Publicly the Saudis expressed patience with pro-monarchy newspapers saying that the negotiations over Syrian chemical weapons would probably founder and that American military strikes would follow sooner or later. But behind the scenes analysts say, leaders in Saudi Arabia and allies like Qatar chafed as rebel leaders fumed that their larger need – a way to shift the balance in the two-year old civil war – was being ignored...for months, Saudi Arabia has been quietly funneling arms, including antitank missiles, to Free Syrian Army groups through Jordan, working covertly with American and British intelligence and Arab governments that do not want their support publicly known...Gen. Salim Idris, the nominal commander of the Free Syrian Army, declared his ‘absolute rejection’ of the chemical weapons deal offered by the Syrian and Russian governments.”

On July 28, 2013 The New York Times headlined:

“Worries mount as Syria Lures West’s Muslims; Radical Fighters seen as Threat on Return ..’Syria has become really the predominant jihadist battlefield in the world’ “Matthew G. Olsen, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center told a security conference in Aspen, Colorado this month. He added, ‘The concern going forward from a threat perspective is there are individuals traveling to Syria becoming further radicalized, becoming trained and then returning as part of really a global jihadist movement to Western Europe and potentially, to the United States.’” “More Westerners are now fighting in Syria than fought in conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia or Yemen...there is concern that they will come back with a burst of jihadist zeal, some semblance of military discipline, enhanced weapons and explosives skills, and in the worst case, orders from affiliates of Al Qaeda to carry out terrorist strikes.”

It should by now be clear that among the deadliest weapons of mass destruction are he exponentially increasing and expanding jihadists, especially “martyr brigades” of suicide bombers., infiltrating, metastasizing, destabilizing normally functional independent societies. It is strange, indeed, that no genuine attempt is being made to stanch the

increasing spread of religious terrorists that prey upon and are spawned by increasing numbers of economically destitute areas of the developing world – and elsewhere. This scourge spreads daily – by October 10th The New York Times reports:

“Extremist group Based in Somalia Gains Foothold in Kenya: Kenya’s slums have long provided a fertile recruiting ground for Muslim extremists.” The utility of the jihadist weapon of mass destruction in implementing and advancing the geopolitical interests of Western capitalism is increasingly obvious. Syria is the fulcrum beyond which lies the exorbitant riches of natural gas and oil in Russia and Central Asia, stretching to China, the burgeoning superpower whose rise to global prominence threatens the dominance of the West. In this larger context, reports leaked in the London Telegraph on August 30, 2013 of a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan expose the Western blueprint for dominance. Among these reports, Prince Bandar threatens President Putin that if he does not agree to help force Syrian President Assad from power, Chechen terrorist attacks may be carried out on the Russian hosted Winter Olympics next year in Sochi. Bandar is quoted stating: “The Chechen groups that threaten the security of the games are controlled by us.”

According to these leaked reports, Putin replied:

“We know that you have supported the Chechen terrorist groups for decades. And that support, which you have frankly talked about just now, is completely incompatible with the common objectives of fighting terrorism that you mentioned.” Bandar evidently replied that there would be no escape from the military option of Russia declines the Saudi ultimatum.

On July 4th, according to The New York Times,

“Russia’s most wanted terrorist, Doku Umarov uttered his most direct threat to date that he plans to attack the Winter Olympic Games that Russia will host next year. The Caucasus Emirate, led by Mr. Umarov – a former Chechen nationalist leader who now heads a broad Muslim separatist movement and advocates global jihad – and its predecessor organizations in the Chechen independence movement of the 1990’s have a record of staging horrific terrorist attacks...’In 2010 Mr. Umarov took responsibility for two separate suicide bombings on the Moscow subway. The bombings killed 40 Muscovites. Mr. Umarov also claimed responsibility for the 2011 attack on Moscow’s Domodedovo Airport which resulted in the slaughter of a huge number of innocent civilians.”

The New York Times, August 9, 2013 headlined:

“Militants flood havens in Syria posing a threat: 6,000 Foreign Fighters – Western Officials Fear Qaeda Rise.” “Western intelligence officials describe this influx of foreign Islamic militants as ‘one of the biggest terrorist threats in the world today.’ “Many are assembling under a new, even more extreme umbrella group, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, that is merging some Syrians with fighters from around the world – Chechnya, Pakistan, Egypt and the West as well as Al Qaeda in Iraq.” “Known as fierce fighters, willing to employ suicide car bombs, the jihadist groups now include more than 6,000 foreigners, counterterrorism officials say...In Raqqa recently a commander of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, a Syrian, described this movement’s goals

as reaching far beyond the country's borders. He did not speak of attacking the United States. But he threatened Russia, suggesting that Russia is a legitimate target. This week the jihadist group Jaish al-Muhajireen wal Ansar, or the Army of Emigrants and Supporters, led by a fighter from the Caucasus known as Abu Omar al Shesheni - the Chechen - worked with Free Syrian Army battalions to take the Menagh air base in Aleppo Province after 10 months of trying."

Every country that US-NATO has attacked, ostensibly to impose and enforce 'democracy,' from Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya and now Syria, has disintegrated into havens for Islamic terrorists, deadly conflicts between religious extremist factions, spawned by economic disasters resulting from Western military attacks and the destruction of their hitherto functioning economic and social infrastructure. This social and economic infrastructure had, prior to US-NATO military intervention, provided health and education facilities for their citizens, who are now ravaged and overrun by terrorism, criminal gangs, etc.

The September 29 New York Times envisioned a "remapped Middle East" where "5 countries could become 14". Absent a coherent nation state government apparatus, the entire area is ripe and vulnerable for plunder by capitalism's multinational corporate entities - transnational predators denuding the area of its wealth of resources.

With this spreading deterioration in sovereignty and territorial integrity, one cannot deny the legitimacy of China's fear that the Uighur separatist movement may ultimate pose such a potential threat to China's survival. According to recent reports, Uighur separatist agitation continues within the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, a strategically important area in Western China bordering Central Asia.

The Chinese government contends that many of the Muslim Uighur separatist agitators are linked to global jihadists. In view of the disintegration into chaos of the many countries within which Islamic Jihadists have been spawned and are exerting increasing control - and terrorist violence - including the Caucasus in Southern Russia, and even areas on the Russian Volga, Tartarstan and Bashkurtistan, China has valid reasons to fear for its own survival, and those controlling the Islamic jihadists, now admittedly Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia, and his allies, have reason to escalate their support for terrorism.

Increasing Global poverty assures an inexhaustible supply of foot-soldiers for terrorist operations, foot-soldiers whose destitution in this world makes them willing to violently leave it for religion's promise of 70 virgins and hope in the afterlife beyond a martyr's death.

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