

Counter-Terrorism Vs. “Regime Change” in Syria. US-Russia Clash at the UN Security Council

Russia, China, Venezuela Support Counter-Terrorism; US-NATO Seek Regime Change in Syria

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Russia held the Presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of September.

On September 30, the Ministerial level UN Security Council meeting was entitled: Maintenance of International Peace and Security. Settlement of Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and Countering the Terrorist Threat in the Region. With stunning intellectual force, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov began the debate, stating:

The euphoria that engulfed many following the Arab Spring changed to horror with the spread of chaos, the escalation of violence, the shadow of religious warfare looming over the region and, of course, the unprecedented terrorist threat. The heinous activities of the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaida in Iraq, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Yemeni branch of Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram and other groups have faded in the light of the expansion of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Across the territories of Iraq and Syria, ISIL has created an extremist quasi-State on the ground that possesses a vast repressive apparatus, stable sources of income, a well-equipped army and elements of weapons of mass destruction.

ISIL cells are flourishing in Libya, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Its announced plans include the capture of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem and the spread of its evil activities to Europe, Central and South-East Asia, and Russia. These terrorists carry out mass killings and public executions, and threaten the very existence of various ethno-religious groups, including Christians, Kurds and Alawites. ISIL has a professional propaganda machine active in dozens of languages.....Unless we learn the lessons to be drawn from the reckless, mistaken adventures undertaken over the past 10 or 12 years, we will not be successful...Russia’s multi-ethnic and multireligious character gives us unique experience when it comes to peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups and religious communities.

Next, Wang Yi, China’s brilliant Foreign Minister, captured in a single image, and with heartrending immediacy, the intolerable human dimension of this crisis, stating: “Wars and Conflicts, humanitarian disasters and terrorist threats are interlinked. The image of the drowned 3-year old Syrian boy is an affront to human morality and strikes at the conscience of the international community...In the twenty-first century, the coexistence of civilizations requires the spirit of harmony without imposed uniformity.....People need a Middle East of self-advancement. The Middle East is the home of all the peoples in that region. Therefore, its future and destiny should be determined

by those same countries, through consultation. Countries outside of the region may provide help but should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and – even more importantly – avoid imposing a specific model on them.

Venezuela's Foreign Minister, Mrs. Rodriguez Gomez boldly declared:

We should also be talking about the social and economic model that breeds poverty and misery....what has the Arab Spring done for these peoples? Has it brought them greater happiness and more democracy? Because what we are hearing today we have heard before, all in the name of democracy, freedom and the people's welfare. The unilateral, imperialistic interventions we have witnessed have bypassed this Organization, contravened the Charter and made people less equal and more unhappy. What has been the result in Iraq, in Libya, in Afghanistan? The destruction of sovereign States. And now what do we want to do for Syria? The same thing? Can it be that the terrible photograph of a little Syrian boy on a seashore does not affect us or touch our souls and our hearts?

How many more children must we see die? We have heard all of this before. I must say it frankly to the world, all of those imperialist wars have been preceded by media wars and lies. It was lies that led to the interventions by those countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and 10 years later, they say that yes, it was a lie, but we made mistakes and we have learned a lesson. But what we see is that no lessons have been learned.....Today in Syria, there are more than 500 terrorist groups. Who is funding them? We need an answer to that question. Who is training them and giving them logistical support? What we see are the vicious cycles of imperialism. They are the cycles that first destroy nations and States and then create a space where terrorist groups can proliferate....There should be no excuses about how we do not like a particular leader. The Arab spring has already showed us what can happen then. We must stop choosing that false and immoral course of action. If we truly want a safer and less violent world, we must fight the causes of terrorism and not its consequences, which is a pretext to intervene in other countries and trample on the Charter of the United Nations.

US Secretary of State John Kerry unsurprisingly did not address the socio-economic root causes that breed terrorism, and evidently, having learned nothing from the disastrous consequences of regime change in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, called for regime change in Syria as the solution to the problem of terrorism in the region. He stated:

“Pursuant to those procedures in Syria over the past year, the coalition has now conducted nearly 3,000 airstrikes against ISIL targets, and we are now in position, with France, Australia, Canada, Turkey and other coalition partners joining the campaign, to dramatically accelerate our efforts. That is what we will do...One thing is certain: the vast majority of States represented around this table know that the ISIL forces and ISIL itself cannot be defeated as long as Bashar Al-Assad remains president of Syria. It cannot happen by definition of the lines of this battle. It cannot happen because of who has lined up with whom and because of the nature of these protagonists...Al-Assad will never be accepted by those whom he has harmed; it will never be possible for him to become a legitimate leader in future or to lead a reconciliation or unification of the country. That cannot happen until he makes clear his willingness to actually heal the nation, end the war and decline to be part of the long-term future.”

The primary goal of US-NATO policy from the inception of this crisis in Syria, 5 years ago, has been regime change, the destruction of the secular government of President Assad, which had guaranteed women's empowerment, a goal that US-NATO claims to defend, along with other social safety nets. Failing to obtain UN Security Council authorization for military action against Assad, following three Chapter VII resolutions that were vetoed three times by both Russia and China, US-NATO initially resorted to unilateral covert action, relentlessly escalating the crisis by arming so-called "moderate" rebel groups.

On October 13, The New York Times reported:

"The American-made TOW anti-tank missiles began arriving in the region in 2013, through a covert program run by the United States, Saudi Arabia and other allies to help certain CIA-vetted insurgent groups battle the Syrian government. The weapons are delivered to the field by American allies, but the United States approves their destination. The CIA program that delivered the TOWS (an acronym for tube-launched, optically-tracked wire-guided missiles) is separate from and significantly larger than the failed \$500,000,000 Pentagon program that was cancelled last week after it trained only a handful of fighters. Rebel commanders scoffed when asked about reports of the delivery of 500 TOWs from Saudi Arabia, saying it was an insignificant number compared with what is available. Saudi Arabia in 2013 ordered more than 13,000 of them. Given that American weapons contracts require disclosure of the "end user," insurgents said they were being delivered with Washington's approval. One official with a rebel group that is fighting in Hama called the weapons supply "carte blanche." "We can get as much as we need and whenever we need them."

As the conflict escalated, incubating ISIS, US-NATO forces underwent multiple contortions in an effort to legitimize their incitement of civil war in Syria, a war intended to result in the destruction of the government of President Assad.

On August 22, 2014 the New York Times headline announced:

U.S. General Says Raiding Syria is Key to Halting Isis: Airstrikes in Iraq are seen as inadequate to defeat a Foe that Crosses Borders." On August 29, 2014 the New York Times headline announces: "Asking Congress to Back ISIS Strikes in Syria is Tricky for Obama," and, with a classic Orwellian distortion, on September 24, the New York Times headlines announces: "U.S. Invokes Defense of Iraq in Legal justification of Syria Strikes.' The article continues the contorted Orwellian attempt at justification, alleging that the American-led airstrikes against the Islamic State - carried out in Syria without seeking the permission of the Syrian government, or the United Nations Security Council - were legal because they were done 'in defense of Iraq.' The September 24 article continues: "International law generally prohibits using force on the sovereign territory of another country without its permission or authorization from the United Nations, except as a matter of self-defense. American intelligence agencies have concluded that the Islamic State poses no immediate threat to the United States.

One year later, and 3,000 US-Coalition airstrikes later, ostensibly against ISIL targets in Syria, and ISIS is thriving, and spreading, as described on October 14, 2015: "Chaos Swells for Afghan Civilians as ISIS Branch Makes Inroads Against Taliban.' The New York Times reports: 'The Islamic State has made major inroads in turf battles against Taliban commanders, particularly in places in Nangarhar province like the Maamand Valley. And the

result, rather than weakening the overall insurgency, has mostly been to inflict more chaos and misery for Afghan civilians...But one big difference soon became obvious: the fighters were suddenly flush with cash”

In his September 28, 2015 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Russian President Putin declared:

Suffice it to look at the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. Certainly, political and social problems in this region have been piling up for a long time. And people there wished for changes. But how did it actually turn out? Rather than bringing about reforms, an aggressive foreign interference has resulted in a flagrant destruction of national institutions and the lifestyle itself. Instead of the triumph of democracy and progress we got violence, poverty and social disaster. And nobody cares a bit about human rights, including the right to life

I cannot help asking those who have caused this situation: do you realize now what you have done? But I am afraid no one is going to answer that. Indeed, policies based on self-conceit, and belief in one's exceptionalism and impunity have never been abandoned. It is now obvious that the power vacuum created in some countries of the Middle East and North Africa led to emergence of anarchy areas. Those immediately started to be filled with extremists and terrorists. Tens of thousands of militants are fighting under the banners of the so-called 'Islamic State.' Its ranks include former Iraqi servicemen who were thrown out into the street after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Many recruits also come from Libya, a country whose statehood was destroyed as a result of a gross violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1973.

'And now the ranks of radicals are being joined by the members of the so-called 'moderate' Syrian opposition supported by the Western countries. First they are armed and trained, and then they defect to the Islamic State. Besides, the Islamic State itself did not just come from nowhere. It was also initially forged as a tool against undesirable secular regimes.' 'We believe that any attempts to play games with terrorists, let alone to arm them, are not just short-sighted, but 'fire-hazardous.' This may result in the global terrorist threat increasing dramatically and engulfing new regions. Especially given that Islamic State camps train militants from many countries, including the European countries. Unfortunately, Russia is not an exception. We cannot allow these criminals who have already felt the smell of blood, to return back home and continue their evil doings. No one wants this to happen, does he? Russia has always been firm and consistent in opposing terrorism in all its forms. Today, we provide military and technical assistance both to Iraq and Syria that are fighting terrorist groups. We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian government and its Armed Forces, who are valiantly fighting terrorism face-to-face. We should finally acknowledge that no one but President Assad's Armed Forces and Kurd Militia are truly fighting the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations in Syria.'

More than one year and 3,000 US-Coalition airstrikes later, the US-Coalition forces have failed to defeat or even weaken ISIS, which now raises legitimate questions about US-Coalition ineptitude, or worse, the sinister possibility of its collusion with ISIS. As the scourge of ISIS has metastasized, Russia has suddenly increased its military support of Syrian President Assad's struggle against ISIS, very much to the shock and dismay of US-Coalition forces. With breathtaking effrontery, on October 1, USA Today headlined:

"U.S. Rebukes Russian Strike: Russia launched its first airstrike in Syria on Wednesday after its military buildup in the embattled country, drawing a sharp

rebuke from the United States and raising tensions further in the region. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter called Russian policy in Syria 'ill-advised,' and said it was 'doomed to fail.'"

In view of the failure of 3,000 US-Coalition airstrikes to curtail the spread of ISIS, Carter's own remarks would appear to be 'ill-advised.' That same day, The New York Times reported: "Russian aircraft carried out a bombing attack against Syrian opposition fighters on Wednesday, including at least one group trained by the CIA, eliciting angry protests from American officials....Russia's entry into the Syrian conflict, foreshadowed by a rapid military buildup in the past three weeks at an airbase in Latakia, Syria, makes the possibility of a political settlement in Syria more difficult."

The Russian participation, in response to the failed US-Coalition attempt to defeat ISIS, should have been welcomed with enthusiasm, if the US-Coalition goal was to defeat ISIS. An alliance of forces would have been recognized as a desperately needed strengthening of any genuine counter-terrorism effort. But, taken by surprise, and off-guard, the US-Coalition's alarmed response exposed the fact that counter-terrorism is not their goal, or their agenda. Their purpose is regime change, and the destruction of the existing government infrastructure of Syria, reducing Syria to the dangerously chaotic rubble that regime change has already caused in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan.

The reality of the US-Russia proxy war in Syria is inescapable. A NATO encircled Russia is striking back in defense of its base in Syria. And the cold war paranoia about resurgent Russian militarism is being resurrected to reinvigorate NATO. On October 15, The New York Times stated: "In a report this month for the European Council on Foreign Relations, Gustav Gressel argued that Mr. Putin had overseen the most rapid transformation of the country's armed forces since the 1930's. 'Russia is now a military power that could overwhelm any of its neighbors, if they were isolated from Western support, wrote Mr. Gressel, a former officer of the Austrian military.'"

This paranoia will guarantee the astronomical profits of the military-industrial complex, while driving the world to the boiling point of possible nuclear war in Ukraine, Syria, and now other regions.

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