

Cross Purposes at the United Nations: Sabotaging Hope for a Negotiated Peace in Syria

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United Nations General Assembly A/67/L.63, adopted by a slim majority on May 15, 2013, is a deliberate and pathological refusal to acknowledge reality, in an attempt to justify wanton militarism and obstruct efforts by both United Nations Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and by John Kerry and Sergei Lavrov to achieve a negotiated settlement ending the civil war between the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad and the motley group of terrorist infested opposition forces.

On April 27, 2013, Reuters reported:

“Syria’s Prime Minister survived a bomb attack on his convoy in Damascus on Monday as rebels struck in the heart of President Bashar al-Assad’s capital....As prime Minister, Wael al-Halki wields little power but the attack highlighted the rebel’s growing ability to target symbols of Assad’s authority in a civil war that, according to the United Nations has cost more than 70,000 lives....Assad picked Halki in August just weeks after a bombing killed four of the President’s top security advisers....One man accompanying Halki was killed as well as five passers-by...Mezze is part of a shrinking ‘Square of Security’ in central Damascus, where many government and military institutions are based and where senior officials live...it has been sucked into the destruction ravaging much of the rest of Syria...as rebel forces based to the east of the capital launch mortar attacks and carry out bombings in the center.”

May 16, 2013: ABC News, by Alexander Marquardt published the following:

“In recent days, the videos posted online from Syria have highlighted a deepening sectarianism and a brutality never before seen in this conflict...The execution of the three officers of the Syrian government took place in a public square in Raqqa, a northern city controlled by the Sunni, al Qaeda-linked extremist rebel group, Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. The slain men were Alawites, the sect of Shia Islam that President Al-Assad and his most loyal forces belong to...The Raqqa public execution clip surfaced just days after another grisly video was posted online of a Sunni rebel commander slicing open the body of a dead government soldier with a knife, removing his lung and biting into it. ‘I swear to God we will eat your hearts and your livers, you soldiers of Bashar the dog,’ the man says to the camera.’Hopefully we will slaughter all of them (Alawites)’ The commander Khalid-al-Hamad, later told Time magazine: ‘I have another video clip...in the clip I am sawing another shabiba (pro-government militiamen) with a saw. The saw we use to cut trees. I sawed him into small pieces and large ones.’”

United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights Navi Pillay stated:

“Mutilating or desecrating corpses during a conflict is a war crime. I urge the armed opposition groups in Syria to do everything in their power to halt such gross crimes.” Pillay called for a probe into other serious violations by the foreign-backed militants in Syria, such as acts of torture, summary execution and extra-judicial killings.

Against this backdrop of barbarous acts committed by the Syrian opposition, openly sabotaging prolonged efforts by UN Representative Lakhdar Brahimi to bring the Syrian government and opposition to the negotiating table, on May 15, 2013 Qatar introduced draft resolution A/67/L.63 to the United Nations General Assembly. Section 26 of this draft states:

“Welcomes the establishment of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces on 11 November, 2012 in Doha as effective representative interlocutors needed for a political transition...and notes the wide international acknowledgement, notably at the fourth ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People of the Coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.”

This schizophrenic resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly by a small majority of 107 out of the 192 nations holding seats in the General Assembly. The statements in opposition to the resolution follow:

Ambassador Sacha Sergio Lorenty of Bolivia stated that his position was “not informed by a desire to gain oil or mining concessions, or to find cheap labour... The resolution had been submitted at a strange time, just as the United States and the Russian Federation were jointly proposing a peace conference that offered a negotiated solution as a real prospect.” “He said that the resolution did not seek to de-escalate violence, but was an attempt to put out a fire by putting gasoline on it.’ It also was biased and unbalanced, with no responsibility given to the coalition for atrocities committed. Instead, they had been afforded international legitimacy. Because the draft’s aims were part of a geostrategic effort to achieve hegemony over the region, its adoption would mean the triumph of interference over sovereignty and of militarism over politics.”

The Representative of Indonesia abstained, and said that “the draft’s implication of who constituted the legitimate representative of the Syrian people did not comply with his country’s beliefs.”

the Brazilian representative abstained, stating that “only the Syrian people and not the United Nations General Assembly could decide who should represent the Syrian opposition. She failed to see how the resolution aimed to improve conditions that would enable the parties to negotiate a positive outcome for a possible conference that moved beyond the Geneva Action Group Initiative last year.”

The Ambassador of India stated his abstention, declaring that “Although terrorist groups including Al-Qaeda had entrenched themselves in Syria, posing serious national, regional and international consequences, representation was for the Syrian people to decide, and not the United Nations General Assembly, which ran the risk of appearing

as a facilitator of regime change.”

Syrian Ambassador Bashar Ja’afari stated:

“This text sought to escalate violence by legitimizing the provision of weapons to terrorists in Syria...Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists, due to the involvement of intelligence agencies of well-known States are operating in Syria and committing unprecedented savage crimes....States claiming to work for democracy in Syria are the same ones preventing Syrians from choosing their own representatives and leadership...a certain group created in Doha has been pushed as the Syrian people’s ‘sole representative.’ Even the UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi had warned of the risks that such a path posed to dialogue and negotiation.”

Russian Ambassador Alexander Pankin described the draft resolution as

‘harmful and destructive...the opposition had been reflected in the draft as the only representative of the Syrian people. That could be seen as encouraging the opposition to continue its armed fight...in spite of obvious facts recognized by the international community, there was not mention of external armed support...The conflict in Syria is a serious internal conflict, with the Government fighting terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda. The draft is irresponsible and counterproductive, especially at a time when the United States and Russia held a meeting based on the Geneva Accords. ‘We don’t need destruction initiatives here at the UN’ he said.”

Obama Supports the Rebels with Weapons

Thursday, June 13, President Obama announced his decision to supply the Syrian rebel forces with weapons, claiming that chemical weapons have been used by Assad’s troops. According to The New York Times:

“A flurry of high-level meetings in Washington this week...were hastily arranged after Mr. Assad’s troops, joined by thousands of fighters from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah claimed the strategic city of Qusayr and raised fears in Washington that large parts of the rebellion could be on the verge of collapse.”

Friday morning, June 14, Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, spoke at a Security Council stakeout, repeatedly asserting that “multiple streams of information” confirm that the Assad government had used chemical weapons, causing the deaths of at least 100-150 persons in Syria,” (out of 90,000 deaths), and that this prompted President Obama’s decision to send weapons to the Syrian opposition.

However, the authenticity and veracity of these “multiple streams of information” is dubious, prompting Yuri Ushakov, adviser to Russian President Putin to state: “Frankly, we thought the American intelligence is not convincing. We wouldn’t like to invoke references to the famous lab tubes that (former US) Secretary of State Colin Powell showed, but the facts don’t look too convincing in our eyes.” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that the United States’ information fails to meet the standard of proof required by the independent organization for implementing the 1997 International Chemical Weapons Convention. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons requires that samples taken from blood, urine and clothing can be considered reliable evidence only if

supervised by Organization experts from the time they are taken up to delivery to a laboratory.

At a press stake-out that same June 14 morning, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was asked:

Question: "Mr. Secretary-General, what do you believe is the impact on the peace process of the US decision to send military aid to Syria , and have you made any progress on getting the rebels to the Geneva proposed negotiations?"

Secretary-General: "The United Nations, and in particular I, have been making it consistently clear that providing arms to either side would not address this current situation. There is no such military solution. Only a political solution can address this issue sustainably; therefore increasing the flow of arms to either side would not be helpful. We are still working very hard with the concerned parties to facilitate this U.S.-Russia initiative to have a peace conference - the Geneva II conference - in Geneva as soon as possible. Another tri-lateral meeting will be held, as you know, on 25 June, and we will see; in between, we are continuing to discuss and consult with the parties concerned. "

Interestingly, according to The New York Times, June 15, Obama's mentor, Zbigniew Brzezinski stated that he is 'baffled' by Mr. Obama's decision to become more deeply involved. "What exactly is our objective," he asked. "It's not clear to me that every nondemocratic government in the world has to be removed by force. The Syria war is a struggle for power, not democracy. Is that something we should be engaged in?" Of course, Brzezinski may be concerned about the prospect of the United States being drawn into a proxy war with Iran . He has his own reasons for wanting to avoid the United States ' further antagonizing and alienating Iran .

Although Obama's June 13 decision may well be prelude to escalation of just such a proxy war, a proxy war which could ultimately spiral out of control and ignite a world war in one of the most unstable and combustible areas of the world, there are multiple possible explanations for such brinksmanship. Although it has been suggested that Obama's decision has been triggered to divert attention away from the multiple scandals recently besetting his administration, scandals revealing anti-democratic policies in violation of the United States Constitution, there is another possible explanation for the bellicose thrust of this policy.

In the famous mantra of President Clinton's campaign war room, prior to his election in 1992, it was constantly repeated: "It's the economy, stupid!" And in the current case, as in previous eras, war is a profitable exit from economic crisis, regardless of the enormous number of human deaths inevitable in war. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs recently published the "2013 World Economic Situation and Prospects," which states:

"The world economy is on the brink of another major downturn. As foreseen in last year's issue of this report, the world economy weakened considerably in 2012. A growing number of developed economies, especially in Europe , have already fallen into a double-dip recession, while those facing sovereign debt distress moved even deeper into recession. Many developed economies are caught in downward spiralling dynamics from high unemployment, weak aggregate demand compounded by fiscal austerity, high public debt burdens,

and financial fragility. The economic woes of the developed countries are spilling over to developing countries and economies in transition through weaker demand for their exports and heightened volatility in capital flows and commodity prices.”

The US-NATO countries fiercely urging military action against the Assad government of Syria are precisely those Western capitalist governments currently facing economic crisis and violently repressing their citizens’ resistance to the brutal and anti-democratic austerity measures they are forcing upon the majority of their populations. The “highest” stage of monopoly capitalism is fascism, which could account for the trend toward total surveillance and ultimate control over the citizens of the United States , recently revealed programs violating the privacy of US citizens, violating freedom of the press, and potentially crippling most of the institutions of civil society.

As the current crisis of capitalism grips Western Europe (not incidentally dragging down the global economy, as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ 2013 report describes) nazism is spreading in an ominous reprise of the events spawned by the great depression of the 1930’s.

The New York Times editorial on June 15 is entitled:

“After Arming the Rebels, Then What?” and concludes: “Like most Americans, we are deeply uneasy about getting pulled into yet another war in the middle east. Those urging stronger action seemed to have learned nothing from the past decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq , which has sapped the United States and has produced results that are ambiguous at best.”

With all due respect to its wisdom, this New York Times editorial seems to be ignoring the engine which is fuelling the “past decade of war.”

“It’s the economy, stupid!”

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