

U.S. Neocons Call to “Bomb Assad”, No Reason Given

By [Alexander Mercouris](#)

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The famous (and misunderstood) aphorism of Karl von Clausewitz, the great German military theorist, that “war is a mere continuation of politics by other means” is meeting its absolute negation in some of the commentary that is starting to appear in the US in relation to the Syrian war.

A succession of essays and articles has recently appeared, produced by US think-tanks and the US media, once again calling for the US to bomb the Syrian military (“bomb Assad”). This [article](#) in The New York Times is just one of many.

What is really quite extraordinary about this article and many others like it is that whilst calling for bombing Syria it gives no coherent reason for doing it. The nearest it comes to is saying that the bombing would be “punishment” for the Syrian government’s alleged violation of the truce that was agreed in February by the US and Russia.

That wars should never be waged to exact “punishment” but only in self-defence or with the authorisation of the UN Security Council is mentioned nowhere in the article. Nor of course is there any recognition that waging war for such a reason is actually illegal. Nor does the article say what the US should do if it were the rebels as opposed to the Syrian government who were violating the truce. Is the US supposed in that case to bomb the rebels as well? I doubt there is a single human being on earth who thinks the authors of the article would support that.

More to the point however is that nowhere in the article is there any clear explanation of what the bombing is supposed to achieve. Its utter detachment from reality is shown by its fantastic suggestions that such bombing would force the Russians “to make Assad behave” and that the US should only bomb “the Syrian military’s airfields, bases and artillery positions where no Russian troops are present”.

That trying to force someone to force someone else to behave by bombing that other person is not a credible way to fight a war ought to be obvious. How do the authors suppose the American and European publics would react to a bombing campaign launched to achieve such a nebulous objective? Besides how do the authors know how the Russians would react?

What if “bombing Assad” does not “force” the Russians “to make Assad behave”? What if the Russians instead take steps to intercept the cruise missiles and drones which are carrying out the bombing – as it is fully within their technical competence to do, and as they are surely far more likely to do? What do the authors propose the US do in that case?

Do they propose the US escalate the bombing to overcome the Russian defences or do they say that in that case the bombing should be called off? What is to prevent the Russians from sending Russian military observers to all “the Syrian military’s airfields, bases and artillery positions” that the US is intending to bomb? Would the authors, following the line set out in their article, say that in that case the bombing should be called off? Or would they in fact be far more likely to say that in that case the US should bomb the Russian troops as well?

Reading articles like this it is impossible to avoid the feeling that for some people in the US bombing Syria has now become an overwhelming obsession and an end in itself, so much so that they no longer even bother to justify or explain it in any half-ways rational way, and that they are prepared to take the most appalling risks in order to do it.

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