

Deflating Empire: The Syrian Threat to the United States

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September 9, 2013, 11:43pm – The morning on this side of the Atlantic started with John Kerry's hoarse voice on the radio, addressing journalists in London and bellowing that the U.S. was not talking about going to war when it talked about military aggression against a state that never attacked the U.S.

Acts of war, apparently, are never committed by the U.S., only against the U.S., even if the latter is totally imaginary and the former is completely factual. But the insane live stream of rhetorical bankruptcy was not quite over, for then this illustrious Secretary of State – a former pretender for the presidency in 2004 who back then promoted the idea of a “global test” to approve U.S. interventions – decided to continue his bluster.

Now he said that the only way that Syria could avoid a U.S. attack was to turn over all of its chemical weapons to international authorities, with the ridiculous addendum that it all be done within a week (presumably it must then be a tiny stockpile at best). This is at the same time that conservative forecasts saw Congress' debate transpiring sometime beyond two weeks from now. Kerry's fumble thus also signalled a regime that was impatient with democratic pretense, and intended to march to war regardless. Just in case anyone thought Kerry was being serious about his offer, his staff immediately rushed out to do damage control, saying he was merely being rhetorical, not a serious offer, because anyway Syria would never agree. Too late.

Now the “credibility” of U.S. empire was up for grabs. Anyone could take that credibility and do whatever they liked with it: roll it up into little balls and spit it through a straw; stick it under the chair in front of you; use it as a wet wipe; feed it to a stray cat; stick it in a paper bag, light it on fire, and leave it on your neighbour's doorstep; or put it right back in the little glass pipe it came from and blaze it up.

Too late. Russia, and somehow the U.S.' ever faithful ally in the UN – Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon – were both on the same page and almost simultaneously announced by early afternoon that they would instead take up Kerry's non-offer of an offer. Kerry would now be put to his beloved global test. The invigilator for this test? None other than Russia, long accused – mostly falsely – of being an obstructionist at the UN (hand any state an illegal offer of regime change, and one-sided intervention in a civil war, and reasonable ones tend to refuse). Now it was up to the U.S.: either continue with its desperate quest for a war that would violate international law, or with threats that also violate international law, or at least try to feign some interest in seeking alternative actions, diplomatic and peaceful ones for example.

Too bad also for some of the leading Canadian advocates of R2P (the “responsibility to protect”) who touted war even if it meant violating international law, even if it meant no R2P at all because this requires all options to be pursued, and via the UN Security Council at that. How sad for them too, that they should suddenly forget international law, these former foreign ministers, parliamentarians and university presidents, who were always so proud of their work in international fora that they now abruptly dismissed without even a glimmer of thought for peaceful alternatives. Thus once more, [as with Libya](#), they betrayed themselves as mere ideological regime-changers, for whom “human rights” is merely face paint for battle, part of an incessant cry for donor funds, respectability, and reputability.

Late in the afternoon, with Kerry flying back from London, Obama was back home preparing for a grand tour of the major media to which he invited himself for “interviews.” Obama would now officially be merely the second U.S. official to speak about this proposal. He was hardly the leader – he was following Kerry.

We will not know, if ever, the conversation that might have followed between the two and how many expletives it might have contained. Obama had to play cheerful, you know, like it was his idea all along. Obama would claim in an “interview” with Wolf Blitzer that he had discussed this same idea during last week’s G20 summit – false. He had dismissed a similar proposal then completely out of hand. Maybe if dismissal is discussion, then yes, Obama “discussed” it. Anyway, he now badly needed some of Kerry’s credibility, which shows you just how bad things had become. Then Obama would tell Blitzer that, first, Syria posed a threat to U.S. national security, but when asked about Assad’s threat of retaliation for any U.S. attack, he then asserted that Syria posed no credible threat.

So which is it? This same line, of a state that is a non-threatening threat to the U.S., was also used by George W. Bush against Iraq. But not since *In the Loop*, when the UK’s International Development Secretary blundered that war was “evitable,” followed later by a backtrack – “we are climbing the mountain of conflict” – have I seen anything so funny pertaining to international relations, except that today’s show was supposedly real.

Too late for Obama as he ran out of oxygen for war, turned upside down, and began to float up in his oval fish bowl. From the Pope to the Dalai Lama, from London to La Paz, from Washington to Moscow, there were outright protests against any U.S. military intervention in Syria. The majority of Americans, in overwhelming numbers, opposed any military intervention, as did the citizens of most NATO states. The U.S.’ stout allies, whether in NATO or the EU (with the exception of France, of course, France is as “exceptional” as the U.S.) strangely made some angry noises against Syria but none said they would join the U.S. in any attack. Not even the Arab League would directly support a military attack.

Strange too that Obama did not see that coming: after all he is spying on all of them. Instead there was even more embarrassment for both Obama, and Kerry too who by now loves being the centre of attention even if in the role of butt of the joke. Germany’s foreign intelligence services not only found the exact opposite of evidence tying Assad to a chemical attack, they also severely disputed and reversed Kerry’s Senate testimony about Al Qaeda’s diminished role in Syria. In any event, Kerry’s sole source for that – Elizabeth O’Bagy – is a paid lobbyist for the rebels.

Evidence – a persistent sore point for Obama and his fellow executives – was never made public, not a single tiny shred, not even three weeks after the purported chemical attack.

Instead, here, watch some death porn on a DVD prepared courtesy of the White House. Show it to all your friends. Sickened yet? Who needs evidence when you can have emotion, and social media to prime that emotion – a consistent feature of the U.S.’ Arab Spring illusions. Never mind that when it comes to our enemy’s enemy, our duty is that represented by the principle of automated solidarity with others we do not know and who do not care if we know them. But we have YouTube, so that should suffice as an alternative to the real political legwork that used to underpin genuine solidarity. We are meant to imagine that they are all good people, freedom fighters, the shifting fantasy projection of whomever, whether of neocons, neoliberals, anarchists, or other badly degenerated Western leftists living their senility as the new cheerleaders of their own sunset-state’s military might.

A *priori* belief in official truths is now mandatory, even if it makes zero political or strategic sense for the Syrian government to have used chemical weapons, in a war it has turned around, and right when UN inspectors are in Damascus itself. Assad has “slaughtered over 100,000 people” – never mind that almost half of that estimate consists of Syrian troops and pro-government civilians. Assad is “killing his own people” – but one can never say, “the rebels are killing their own people.” Maybe it’s best not to, for “own people” means absolutely nothing outside of ethnocentric politics, and besides: many of the rebels are not even Syrian.

By the dominant logic, since Abraham Lincoln also killed vast numbers of his own people, he should have been overthrown by an international coalition of enemy states. But only Americans can have a civil war, or history: others are meant only to follow our dictates. That the “Assad regime” might be protecting its loyal civilians from murder by foreign jihadists, never registers as “protection” for the R2P crowd. Protection is apparently a racket that is the monopoly of Western states now.

The “evidence,” as Kerry said (seriously, as unbelievable as it sounds), “speaks for itself.” Evidence never performs such a feat. Leaving aside the silly anthropomorphosis of unseen data, Kerry’s crude positivism makes for more comedy, especially as he never provided this evidence. The unseen was mute. Merely a couple of days ago, the White House itself already admitted it had no direct evidence linking Assad to an alleged chemical weapon attack, as the Office of the Director of National Intelligence had also concluded at the end of August – so whatever the evidence was saying, it was saying it suggestively, like some lewd stranger at a bar. The White House had to say that there was no actual direct link: a steady stream of congressional representatives emerged from classified briefings, either underwhelmed, or utterly green in the face and more convinced than ever that there was no case for war.

Too late, Obama was all revved up for war nonetheless, or not “war,” but rather a police action from a power that, according to Kerry, is not the world policeman. Not the world policeman, because the illegal use of violence in the selective defense of international “norms,” unilaterally determined, really makes you rather more of a vigilante. Just as U.S. leaders spare no hyperbole when demonizing others, so do they endlessly euphemize their own atrocities.

In this particular battle, Syria has won, and Obama has been defeated. Syria has effectively “dismantled, disrupted, and defeated” the ability of U.S. leaders to make any credible case or to even sound as if they possess the capacity to reason. Instead they lurch for a “global outrage” that was instead a global outrage against the moral obscenity of a desperate, excessively militarized, and overly aggressive state that would practice terror by holding us all in mortal suspense, as they discussed planned military strikes as if it were mere sports

talk.

When your credibility amounts to nothing more than an ability to detonate massive explosives, you effectively have none. The U.S.' global dictatorship, Syria reminds us, ought to be the first target of any real liberation struggle. In that sense, Assad is nothing. We have had enough of this so-called "civilized world," with its "civilized" weapons that seek to "civilize" weak others with their "barbarous" weapons. It's time for U.S. leaders to outgrow the 1492 complex.

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