

The Syrian “Show” Must Go On. US-led Strikes against Syria: A Carefully “Choreographed” Dance between US and Russia

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“The Dance”

What just happened this morning in Syria was nothing more than a carefully “choreographed” dance between the US and Russia that allowed both rivals to “save face” and avoid further escalating the situation.

The US launched over 100 cruise missiles at Syria together with its French and British allies, although the Russian Ministry of Defense reported that 71 of them were intercepted by the targeted country’s Soviet-era air-defense systems.

“Superficial” vs. “Substantial”

As predicted, the strike was mostly “superficial” and lacked the “substance” needed to escalate tensions further between the West and Russia over their Syrian proxy war, but so too was the response somewhat “superficial” as well.

It’s difficult to imagine how such decades-old defense systems downed so many state-of-the-art cruise missiles, especially when considering that Iraq’s similar systems were largely ineffective during the 2003 “shock and awe” campaign against comparatively more dated munitions.

It was widely reported in the run-up to this strike that the US intended to target certain facilities in Syria, and this “leak” was deliberately planned in order to “telegraph” the locations to Russia and its on-the-ground partners.

In addition, it has also been confirmed that the US and Russia were communicating this entire time through the so-called “deconfliction channel,” so it’s very possible that Washington warned Moscow in advance of the exact targets that it planned to hit and maybe even when.

This would explain why Syria’s Soviet-era air-defense systems were surprisingly more effective against modern-day cruise missiles than Iraq’s exact same ones were 15 years earlier against much more dated weapons at the time.

“Military Statecraft”

Not only that, but this “choreographed” exercise of “military statecraft” allowed both Great Powers to “save face”, with the US being able to prove that it delivered on its threats while Russia can say that its Soviet-era systems indirectly defended Syria.

None of this is untrue either, and each party can therefore claim “victory” while defending themselves from their rival’s accusations that they actually suffered a crushing “soft power defeat” by dismissing such claims as nothing more than “propaganda”, a defense that’s very convincing to their respective publics given the New Cold War tensions and resultant distrust between both sides.

Taking this “show” of “military statecraft” even further, Russia has now suggested that it might sell S-300 missiles to Syria, which on the surface might sound like a “game-changing” development but upon further examination it can be argued that this is just another “soft power” move.

After all, if Syria’s Soviet-era air defenses were already so effective, then Damascus would have little need for anything more advanced, nor would many other countries in the world who have relatively newer defense systems.

The S-300 announcement should therefore be taken very cautiously since it implies that this morning’s events were just a “show” and that Syria’s old defense weapons are in practice pretty ineffective unless the military knows in advance what the targets will be (as is now proven) and potentially (as is speculated) when they’ll be hit.

Preserving The “Balance Of Power” With “Israel”

This sobering realization nevertheless is the reason why so many countries are still interested in Russia’s S-400 air-defense systems precisely because they promise to be exponentially more effective than their decades-older Soviet counterparts.

That said, Russia is reluctant to sell these units to Syria because it doesn’t want to upset the “balance of power” between the Arab Republic and Moscow’s “Israeli” ally, as that would undermine the 21st-century “balancing” act that forms the basis of Russia’s grand strategy by providing much too effective of a deterrent to any future “Israeli” strikes.

In redirecting the Syrian public’s attention away from this “politically inconvenient” — and arguably from Damascus’ perspective, “unpopular” — fact, it can be expected that Russia will resort to hard-hitting but eloquent rhetoric at the UN in denouncing the US’ naked and illegal aggression against a sovereign state that’s doing its utmost to fight terrorism on humanity’s behalf, though these moving words will be ineffective in getting the globalist body to do anything of tangible significance because of the certainty that the US will veto any Security Council resolution.

“Victory” For Everyone

Altogether, the “choreographed” dance that occurred this morning will be seen as more of a “victory” for Russia and Syria than for the US, though none of this means that the American-led aggression will stop anytime soon because the driving reason behind it still hasn’t been addressed.

The US and its allies want Iran & Hezbollah removed from Syria, and they can be expected

to continue staging false flag chemical weapons and other provocations in order to invent the pretext for carrying out more “surgical strikes” in pressuring Damascus to request their “phased withdrawal”.

Russia has already proven and officially said through its diplomatic and military representatives that it will not intervene unless its troops are endangered, which is unlikely to ever happen so long as the “deconfliction channels” continue to function as effectively as they have in ensuring that this tripwire for action isn’t triggered.

The Coming “Suggestions” For Compromise

Regardless of the public’s personal feelings on this matter, Russia will not sacrifice its servicemen just for the sake of keeping Iran & Hezbollah in Syria when its military mandate has always strictly been to carry out anti-terrorist missions and never to protect either of those two or the Syrian Arab Army (SAA).

Now that President Putin declared on several occasions that Daesh has been militarily defeated, Russia sees no reason to continue committing its military to Syria on the same scale as before, hence the large-scale withdrawal in December of last year and Moscow’s dedicated focus on advancing a so-called “political solution” to the conflict.

To that end, while the US and its allies’ strikes were totally uncoordinated with Russia despite Moscow being made indirectly (and possibly directly via the “deconfliction channel”) aware of where these missiles would hit and speculatively even when, there’s a chance that this morning’s events might actually advance Russia’s peacemaking objectives if they serve to pressure Damascus into “compromising” on its hitherto “obstinate” position in refusing to seriously countenance any of the proposals set forth in the Russian-written “draft constitution” that was first unveiled 18 months ago.

From the author’s personal interpretation of Russia’s developing attitude towards the peace process, Damascus’ “dilly dallying” risks unraveling the elaborating “balancing” act that Moscow is attempting as it seeks to “manage” the Mideast in the wake of the “vacuum” that was left by the US’ “Pivot to Asia”, so it may cynically hope that America’s aggression backfires on it by inadvertently stimulating the Russian-led peace process.

Even so, a “solution” would have to inevitably be found in removing the “trigger” for external aggression against Syria, which has always been predicated on “containing” Iran, but with the SAA and its Iranian & Hezbollah allies unable to conventionally (key word) counter and ultimately put a stop to US-led attacks while Russia & Turkey sit on the sidelines and refuse to get dragged into this dimension of the conflict, Moscow will more than likely “suggest” behind closed doors that Damascus “compromise” on this issue as well unless it “wants” the war to indefinitely drag on.

Concluding Thoughts

At this point there’s no telling whether the uncoordinated combination of US-led multilateral aggression and Russian “suggestions” about various “compromises” will succeed in changing Damascus’ calculations towards the “Resistance”, but all that’s known so far is that the Syrian “show” that’s evidently on display will continue to go on, with the ball being in President Assad’s court over how much longer the world will have to watch this multisided “military statecraft”.

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Michel Chossudovsky

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