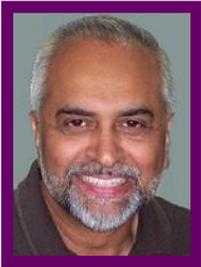


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Russia Capitalizes On Middle East Chaos



America, with its willing, partially willing and at times downright recalcitrant 'Allies and Coalitions', have destroyed regimes, countries, and stability in the Middle East and North Africa. As a result of their hopeless and often tragic foreign policy misadventures of the past decades, they have created utter chaos and multiple leaderless States in the region. And into this massive geo-political breach has stepped a willing and grateful Russia that desperately needed to recapture its lost international position and stature, as a weakened but albeit still bonafide global power. The opportunity was provided by a long fumbling and flailing America that after World War II, enters wars so efficiently and readily, and yet leaves so messily.

The recently created mess now stretches from Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, to Libya, Tunisia, Algiers, Somalia, and of course now Syria. Fertile ground indeed for a past Super-power such as Russia to step in and put to use its underused military, diplomatic and intelligence systems, and once more start playing the 'Great Game'.

President Putin, an obvious master opportunist, internally and externally, moved decisively to enter the arena through its old and only ally Syria, when America dithered and left an opening. The Syrian conflict gave Putin and Russia its international centre stage (*far more prominent than Ukraine*) to showcase its geo-political maneuvering skills, and its formidable and effective firepower, which it has put to good use, in helping to recapture most of Syria for Bashar Al-Assad; another dictator that the U.S. and its allies wanted to remove but couldn't really commit to, this time.

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At the same time a committed Russia's effectiveness in supporting Al-Assad's regime, relentlessly pounded the rebel strongholds into submission, and forced a conflicted America, and it's equally recalcitrant allies, to sue for a humiliating truce on less less-than-perfect terms.

A week from now, when the supposed truce kicks in, if it kicks in, Assad's forces and its Russian led allies would have done a lot more damage (*as one can bet they will redouble their efforts during the intervening week*) and would have possibly recaptured the important city of Aleppo, dealing the rebel cause and the America/NATO assisted opposition a further significant damaging blow.



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Russia's success in Syria has gained it 'street creds' as it now being wooed by other hapless and war-ravaged States such as Iraq, which was gutted and left to descend into the hell of endless terrorist and sectarian violence, and war.

We are sure that more will follow, as the shattered regions, which have been the centuries old war-games, conquer and divide playground of the old Colonial Powers of Great Brittan and Europe, and now, in the more recent decades, of the U.S. and its allies, continues to be bombed and burned in the aftermath of the American led 'shock and awe' treatment.

At the advent of 'Desert Storm' or the 'Conquest of Iraq', America went in with all the noble causes. It was to find and destroy 'weapons of mass destruction' – remove a despotic and cruel dictator – bring freedom, democracy, equality and justice to the people – and finally bring peace and prosperity to the people of Iraq. And so it was, more or less, with all the other countries that subsequently or previously had felt the liberating influence of American intervention on their behalf. But somehow it didn't quite work out that way. Not in most of them. The shock and awe treatment was indeed meted out very effectively, but the 'noble causes', if not proven false from the start, were more or less abandoned shortly after the intervention. What was usually left behind were countries bereft of leadership and effective governments, shattered institutions and infrastructure, anarchy and chaos, into which stepped in the worst of the local and foreign actors.

Now, there are a number of countries in the region that are disaffected by America's generally short term liberating zeal, that usually leaves the countries and the people in a bigger mess than when they got 'liberated'. And those countries are now providing a ready and fertile ground for Putin to re-establish Russia's former global prominence and eventually, perhaps, pre-eminence in this most important economic and historic region. The U.S. and its allies are definitely on the back foot.

Russia's only ally in the Middle East was Syria, as we have mentioned, and now with Russia's decisive and effective assistance to defeat the rebellion and push back the Western powers, including America, one can be certain that Syria's current regime will be most grateful and loyal for as long as they are in power. But more importantly, other countries and their governments would have noted Russia's swift and effective intervention, and their lethal capabilities in the war arena against the rebels and ISIS.

Iran was already on side as an ally in the fight for Bashar Al-Assad's Syria. As more of Syria is brought under Assad's control, Russia's position there is also secured. Now as Russia contemplates entering Iraq, it has an opportunity to consolidate three of the largest countries in the Middle East as its allies. Upon that happening it will have Syria, Iran and possibly Iraq under its sphere of influence.



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Of course neither America nor its allies are happy about the success of Russia in Syria, nor of the possibility of its active expansion into Iraq, where it's other ally in Syria, Iran, is already operating. But they have no one to blame but themselves. Removing out-of-favour dictators and their government structures, at their own whim, destroying their economies and looting their assets through their own favoured companies and contractors is one thing. But to do all that, and then leave them more or less leaderless and broken to fend for themselves, is to invite anarchy that results in millions of displaced and war ravaged innocent people trying desperately to escape the ensuing hell, as refugees, is to create and invite trouble, and is simply wrong.

The results of this type of callus interventions and actions of war, isn't exactly going to engender confidence or love in the people for you as a liberator, or credibly promote the true Western values. This chaotic environment, created by the Western allies in the Middle East and North Africa, provides Russia with myriad delicious opportunities to enter to try and bring some semblance of order, and ultimately peace, to dysfunctional States and war ravaged people. Even in just trying, because the current situation in these countries is so bad and the suffering of the public so excruciating, it does not even have to succeed entirely, to succeed.

The only dark cloud over Russia at this time is the low price of oil, which is ravaging its economy and its currency. But the current and future hardships will be borne stoically by Russians, as they have amply proven in the past. Plus, Putin will negotiate with the West, to slow down his interventions, for ease of trade and greater economic ties with the West, to alleviate the worst of the low oil price hit. And then there are his newly acquired Middle Eastern allies that will be more than willing to help him and Mother Russia, for their military assistance and fire power.

By stepping boldly in the chaotic mess created by the West, Putin and Russia will find willing and welcoming potential allies, and grateful future countries. That will of course allow Russia to once again, one-up America, and its mostly European allies, and gain lots of brownie points at home and abroad.

For Russian this is a win-win situation and it is ready to fully capitalize on the chaos.

