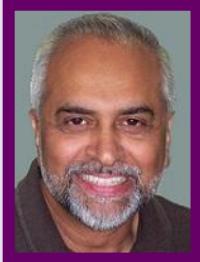


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A Confused America Pulls Back In Syria



Challenged by recent decisive Russian military involvement from the opposing side, and with everything going wrong with its campaign in Syria, a confused and hesitant United States pulls back from its plans, and hands Putin and Russia an easy strategic win, and an important geo-political propaganda victory. After the gauntlet was thrown down by Putin, the World watched, and America blinked and backed away.

In London, U.S. Defense Secretary Aston Carter, and British Secretary of State of Defense, Michael Fallon, announced America's decision to pull back from its US\$500 Million plan to train rebels to fight Islamic State (IS), and Bashar Al-Assad's regime in Syria. The reason given for the pull-back was the program had barely any recruits to train. One of America's top Generals, Lloyd Austin III (*U.S. Central Command Commander*), was forced to admit at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing lately, that there were barely 4 to 5 trainees in the program. And, rather than the hoped-for 5,000 fighters trained under the program by now, to fight IS, there were next to none. Fighting Islamic State was apparently the prime purpose for which the program was funded and implemented. And as if the results weren't embarrassing enough, which were achieved after spending hundreds of millions from the US\$500 Million budget, to make matters worse, the General admitted that at least 25% of the weapons supplied to the trainees, ended up in the hands of the enemy (*the number - 25%, is probably low*).

The American CIA and the other intelligence and armed forces agencies involved were barely able to recruit anyone to train and fight IS, after spending huge amounts of money. This type of recurring performance of the U.S., where it enters wars with high minded rhetoric, giddy euphoria and chest thumping machismo, and a pyrotechnic show of its 'shock and awe' capability, but inevitably deteriorates into a muddled outcome, with an uncertain victory, a resurgent enemy, billions if not trillions of dollars spent,

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tens of thousands American - hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties, recriminations at home and abroad, is de rigueur of American adventurism in its post Second World War armed interventions.

Post Second World War, the majority of the World wanted the U.S. to be the 'global policeman' after its exemplary role in helping defeat a 'global evil'. But since then, its interventions and incursions into global conflicts, whether started by someone else, or started by them, have become increasingly unjustifiable, inept, cringe-worthy, and embarrassingly predictable in their eventual outcome.

This latest fiasco in Syria, with all its mind-numbing waste in terms of excessive capital (*US\$500 Million to train and equip some 5,000 fighters?*) and the extravagant fumbles and stumbles worthy of a hilarious slapstick vaudevillian act from its entertainment past, would be thigh-slappingly funny if it wasn't so costly in terms of human lives and misery. Geo-politically, reputationally and credibility-wise, the U.S. plan in Syria has been a disaster, and it adds to all its other recent military and geo-political disasters.



The program was called "a total failure" by the infuriated law makers at the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, and angry allegations were leveled against the intelligence agencies, of upwardly revising and falsifying reports regarding progress against Islamic State in Syria (*surprise, surprise!*).

General Lloyd Austin III, as is the case with such things, promised action upon investigation. The skepticism and cynicism attached to such stock statements and promises does not confine itself to the aggrieved U.S. Senators, officials and the public, but unfortunately permeates all countries (*friendly and unfriendly*) watching the decades long, most public deterioration

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of U.S. politics, institutions, tactical and strategic capability, of shaping favourable geo-political events, at home, and on the world stage.



The U.S. Administration is now stopping the training program altogether in favour of supplying the rebels with *regular weapons only*, in fear of the more lethal weapons, such as anti-tank weapons (*not exactly high-tech in this day and age*) falling into the enemy hands. When one cannot even trust its ‘trainees’ with as common place a weapon, as an anti-tank gun, then one has to question whether one has even a modicum of credibility in being there.

The real problem for the U.S. led allies, from the very beginning, in its fight against IS, has been that of all the factions fighting in the region, purportedly on their side, the Americans and the Western allies have had no idea who they could really trust and back. This revelation, of the extent of the latest fiasco in Syria, has only confirmed that the U.S. is hopelessly mired in a region where people have little faith in its capability to successfully manage and bring under control, a prolonged and messy geo-political, religious and sectarian war(s), which it no longer controls or understands. Its allies on the ground are uncertain, shifting in their loyalty, and untrusting of the U.S., and are equally distrusted by the U.S.

Its enemies on the other hand are focused, united and committed, with no ambiguities regarding the identities and loyalties of the coalitions in opposition to the United States, and its Western partners.

For the rebels, now fighting a re-invigorated Assad, Iran and Hezbollah force on the ground, backed fully by Russia’s air power, *and fighting IS*, America’s pull-back couldn’t have come at a worse time.

In the face of an aggressive and bold Russia that is now fully militarily engaged, and not hesitant to sell sophisticated weaponry to its allies be it

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Assad's government or Iran, or use its sophisticated tactical weapons, air and missile strikes, more against the rebels in Syria than the IS fighters, any sort of capitulation by the U.S. and its allies spells real disaster for the rebels. And yet, that is exactly what has happened. When the rebels needed America to step up and confront and push back Russia and its allies, it capitulated and instead pulled back, leaving them stranded and exposed, and their opposition much encouraged, better backed, and further emboldened.

This latest capitulation is dramatic and ill-timed. Apart from further encouraging its enemies, who have always felt that one has to only survive the initial "Shock and Awe" from the Americans, and then by dragging them into the deep waters of a prolonged conflict, their will to fight will erode, and their competence dramatically deteriorate (*shades of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan*), the Americans just reinforced the truth of such impressions.

More importantly, in the timing of the announcement of their very public withdrawal, days after President Putin threw down the gauntlet for the second time regarding the outcome of the civil war in Syria, the Americans handed him a very claimable public victory, further strengthening his image in Russia and abroad, and predictably further emboldening him.

Putin's latest challenge to America's long standing global hegemony was successful, and one can be certain that China and others will be watching and assessing this new dynamic very carefully.

