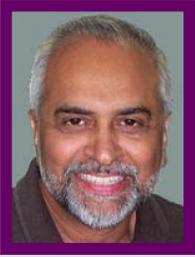


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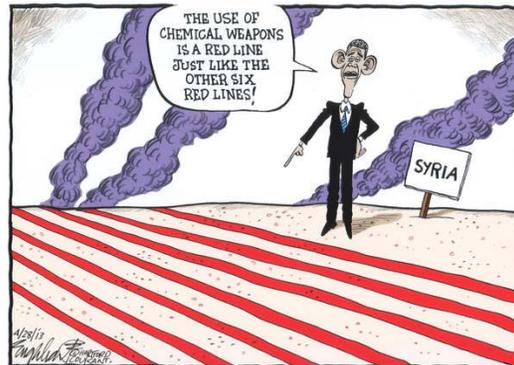
Ashok Dhillon has 40 years of front-line business experience in Canada and International markets. Mr. Dhillon's extensive experience in securing and negotiating multi-hundred million and billion dollar mandates in power project development, gives him in-depth knowledge and intuitive insights into macro and micro, national and international, geo-political and economic realities and trends. He has been invited to speak on international business at various forums, including as an expert witness for the Standing Senate Committee, Government of Canada, on "The Rise of Russia, China and India".

## To Strike OR Not To Strike – That Is The Question

The G20 summit meeting in Russia seemed to have been somewhat hi-jacked by the question of what the world should do about Syria. Predictably, the major economic powers split into two camps, one led by the United States, pushing for a "targeted" military strike, and the other led by a resurgent Russia, proposing a "diplomatic solution". This time, the American camp seemed to be a lot weaker in resolve and global political clout to carry the day, and the 'nay to the strike' camp was larger and more cohesive in its resolve.



A strike is probably still in the cards. The reasons are many, some obvious, and others not so much. The obvious ones are ...



America (*President Obama*) drew a line in the sand regarding the use of chemical weapons, and apparently that line was crossed. Even though the 'evidence' is extremely thin, by any standards, as to who actually perpetrated the crime against the innocent people, including children, the action traps the Americans by their own words. Not being able to carry through with a strike now would mean a serious loss of face and further erosion of global clout.



The other factor playing out now is the open challenge by a resurgent Russia to the undisputed global leadership of the United States. Much was made of the mutual dislike of the two leaders for each other at the G20 meeting, and President Putin's leadership against any military action. The prevention of any military action would be a high profile victory for President Putin and a public setback for President Obama. (*We don't think that the Americans are willing to accept that outcome.*)

Then there are the different global agendas of the two camps in-and-of-themselves.

There is the traditional Western power group, albeit this time not so united, headed by the U.S., U.K., Western Europe, Israel and Saudi Arabia, on one side, and the increasingly assertive Russia, China and Iran on the other, when it comes to the question of Syria.

This time the western European countries are not at all committed to the need for military intervention, Italy being opposed, Germany being cautious, and Britain's Prime Minister being hung out to dry by his own Parliament when it overwhelmingly voted for abstaining from military intervention, which leaves the U.S. with France, Turkey, Canada, Israel and the Saudis as the supporters. Their agenda is the removal of the Assad regime, the continuing destabilizing of the dictatorships in the Middle East and North Africa (*for democracy?*); hence the destabilization of the region, and therefore the increasing chances of enhanced control. Weak and internally strife ridden Islamic regimes are less of a threat to Israel, and less of a challenge to the U.S./Saudi oil petrodollar supremacy.

# To Strike OR Not To Strike – That Is The Question

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While, Russia, China and Iran are the usual “outliers”, this time around they have significant support from other major countries such as India, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Indonesia, and most importantly from the Secretary General of the United Nation who stressed the need for a diplomatic solution, which puts the U.S. and its backers in a very difficult position indeed.

To exacerbate matters there is the latest video showing Syrian rebels executing Syrian soldiers in cold blood. This type of proof that neither side is innocent of atrocities, nor therefore is there a clear cut “good side”, is not going to make the case for a strike any easier to sell to anyone.

Russia, China and Iran are long term supporters of the Assad regime and conduct meaningful business with it. Syria is also their proxy presence in the Middle East, a powerful nation in the region that allows the three powers, Russia, China and Iran to exert their influence, for different reasons, in a volatile but critical part of the world. The other obvious commonality is that the methods of the authoritarian regime of Syria, that rules through intimidation and fear, mirror Russia’s, China’s and Iran’s, and a threat to the entrenched power in Syria or elsewhere, is viewed as an indirect but eventual threat to their own authoritarian power based regimes. banking system. He had to immediately reopen the cash tap to prevent a sharp escalating crash. That confirmed the severity of the problem.

The sad part of these ongoing political power struggles is that the innocent citizens of these countries are the least in the overall consideration, be it an incumbent ruler under siege, or global powers with vested interests maneuvering for their own gain. Everyone talks about the poor innocents, but as in Syria today, over a 100,000 innocent people have died and millions have been displaced, their lives shattered and destroyed while the powerful posture, debate and play “the great game”. If the great powers, of all stripes, were truly concerned about innocent lives, action would be taken to prevent the tragedy, and that would be sincere and meaningful action, rather than the usual

after-the-fact hand wringing and sermonizing that leaves no one convinced that anyone really cares, for by that time tens of thousands of innocent people are dead and millions of lives have already been destroyed.

This sorry, predictable, and reprehensible behavior of countries and global institutions is much too often on display to give any comfort that it will change any time soon (*Rwanda and too many other such examples comes to mind*).



To strike or not to strike?

Regardless of which side of the question the G20 participants were, this is an academic question to those who have already lost everything to cold, calculating and callous powers that never act to prevent tragedies, but rather grandstand and posture to make the relentless ongoing human tragedy a political point making, economic or military victory, for themselves or their own side. Leaving in their wake shattered lives and broken economies and countries. But then chaos can be so beneficial for those that know how to profit by it (*Halliburton comes to mind*).

