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## The Lie of “Limited” War Against Syria Obama's Bush Moment

by SHAMUS COOKE

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The rats are jumping ship. Obama's strongest allies can't stomach the stench of lies that are the foundation of the war effort against Syria. Even England, whose entire foreign policy is reduced to asking “how high?” when the U.S. says “jump,” opted to stay grounded for Obama's war drive.

The Arab League, too, having long been considered a puppet show by U.S. foreign policy, has cut its strings. The UN Security Council — after having learned not to trust Obama in Libya — also refuses to give permission for an attack. Which leaves France — the former colonial master of Syria — to fill England's shoes as the token “important” European nation to give the attack a thin coat of “international” support. But England's insolence will surely make an impression on the French public, who voted in a “socialist” president, presumably not to act as a warmonger.

Obama has offered zero evidence that the Syrian government is responsible for the most recent chemical weapons attack. UN investigator Carla Del Ponte blamed the U.S.-backed rebels for a previous chemical weapons attack, so if one were to presume guilt, it would flow towards the rebels.

While foreign nations instantly recognized Obama's war song as a plagiarism of President Bush's lyrics used to attack Iraq, sections of the American public have been fooled by Obama's mellowing tone. The soft, reassuring sound of "limited strikes" that will last "hours, not days" has a calming effect on the nerves of the American public, who are essentially being told that Syria needs a light slap on the wrist for being "bad," after which everything will return to normal; no U.S. troops need die. No big deal, really.

But, of course, any military action in the Middle East is a big deal. With each new war the U.S. wages in the region tensions rise, self defense preparations are made, and regional alliances are readied to act as deterrents. The nations not aligned with U.S. foreign policy — and there are many — are desperate to stop the U.S.' bloody march across the Middle East. Americans don't understand how the Iraq war fundamentally changed the Middle East. The U.S. Government is deeply hated by the vast majority of people in the region for having destroyed Iraq, once viewed by many as a proud Arab nation. Attacking another nation in the heart of the Middle East — that millions of Arabs have an equally strong affinity for — will create massive "blowback."

No matter how "limited" the strike, bombing a foreign nation is a major act of war. In fact, after WWII the Nuremberg trial concluded that the Nazis' "supreme international crime" was not genocide or holocaust, but waging aggressive war, since all other war crimes were spawned from this original sin. Of course, Obama's aggressive war plans involve more than tossing a couple of missiles at some Syrian tanks. That is why he's moved five Navy destroyers into the region.

It is also presumably why — as reported by the French daily Le Figaro — hundreds U.S. Special Forces and "trained militant fighters" entered Syria on August 17.

It has widely been speculated that the real intention of attacking Syria is to prop up Obama's ailing rebels, who have received massive U.S. support in the form of guns, training, and money, for —according to The New York Times — almost two years now, and possibly longer. It's an undisputed fact that Islamic extremists militias are the most powerful fighting forces in the opposition to Assad; if he falls then they will be in power.

If only a tiny bombing campaign is launched, then it's certain that more bombings will take place at a later date because the U.S.-backed extremist rebels need much more assistance than that to have any hope of beating Assad. To change the balance of forces between Obama's essentially beaten rebels and the Syrian government will require a massive bombing campaign, along the lines of Libya.

One shouldn't forget the chain of events in Libya: After the U.S.-backed Libyan rebels were facing defeat, Obama exploited the UN's "naivety" by claiming that "immediate action" had to be taken to prevent the slaughter of thousands of Libyans. The UN stupidly agreed to a vague resolution about "protecting civilians," which Obama immediately used as a pretext to wage aggressive war and regime change, dropping thousands of bombs on Libya via fighter jets that

attacked both military and civilian targets, tearing apart the nation's seams in the process. Vijay Prashad's excellent book, "Arab Spring, Libyan Winter" covers the conflict in depth.

After the Libyan example, the UN is immune to Obama's lies. So now the hardest part about waging war against Syria is starting it. And after the war foot is in the door, the logic of war immediately takes over, which instantly creates new, unforeseen dynamics, usually in the direction of expansion. It's very possible that this "unforeseen" element of war is exactly what Obama is planning on.

For example, any sane military analyst expects Syria to defend itself. And Syria is much more capable of doing so than Libya or Iraq were. The American public isn't prepared for this, since it essentially has been told that Syria would submissively accept its punishment, perhaps after throwing a loud tantrum.

But Syria has advanced weapons systems, and it would be perfectly legal and reasonable for Syria to defend itself by — for example, by bombing a U.S. Navy destroyer, or perhaps targeting Israel, who will certainly be involved in the assault on some level, and therefore is a legitimate military target. Israel has bombed Syria several times in the last six months.

It's very possible that Obama is trying to provoke a strong reaction from Syria to give the U.S. public a "real" reason to escalate the war. Any attack on Syria also has the possibility of bringing Iran into the conflict, since Iran and Syria have a mutual defense pact. And this may be the ultimate goal: to provoke Iran into getting involved militarily, so that the U.S. would have a justification to expand the war into Iran, which has been in the U.S. crosshairs for years.

If international and domestic pressure force Obama to merely launch a "symbolic" strike that Syria doesn't retaliate against, then it will be a historic humiliation for US foreign policy, showing the decline of US international power. But even a "surgical" strike sets a very dangerous precedent, opening the door wider to future strikes which will inevitably be re-opened in the near future. A weak war effort this time will make the Obama Administration all the more war hungry next time, since empires don't simply fade away into oblivion.

If Obama attacks Syria at this point, he'll have fewer allies than did Bush in Iraq. Obama, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, had the audacity to soil the ground where Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke 50 years earlier at the 1963 March on Washington; Obama sang the praises of the great peacemaker as he planned war against Syria.

Obama has very quickly ruined his integrity in Bush-like fashion. He's jailed whistle-blowers like Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning — whose only crime was exposing war crimes — while now preparing an even bigger war crime against Syria. His presidency is going down in flames with impressive speed, and has the potential to drag down the rest of the country. On Saturday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, there is an international day of protest against a war with Syria. A large anti-war showing in the U.S. will convince more pro-war rats to jump ship, and an especially large showing could possibly sink the war ship in one shot.