

Job done: Russia saved Syria from US regime change... now it's over to diplomacy

By Finian CUNNINGHAM

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Five years of war, five months of Russian military intervention, and now peace talks are underway. It's as simple as that.

However, rather than acknowledging a successful Russian mission, Western media outlets immediately began speculating that President Putin's surprise announcement to withdraw Russian forces from Syria indicates a "rift" between Moscow and Damascus.

This is just more of the same Western media weapon of mass distraction that has obscured the real nature of the five-year war.

The sovereignty of Syria is the central principle officially underpinning peace talks that resumed in Geneva this week. Without Russia's military intervention, Syria would not have the chance to pursue a political settlement on a such solid footing.

By contrast, after nearly two years of US-led military intervention allegedly to "defeat terrorism", the Syrian state was on the brink of collapse from a largely foreign-backed terrorist assault. Until, that is, Russia intervened at the end of September last year.

The touchstone is that Russia from the outset was motivated by supporting the Syrian nation and supplanting the terror threat. While the US and its allies were ultimately the source of the threat.

Western media in hock to their governments' political line still strain the implausible narrative of a "popular uprising" in Syria that somehow descended into a "global proxy war".

But to the rest of the world, US-led illegal regime-change is the obvious, and damning, story. This should be the focus, not speculation about Putin's alleged ulterior motives to withdraw militarily now from Syria.

US Secretary of State John Kerry speaking in Paris last weekend alongside European counterparts appeared to highlight Syria as a priority for peace efforts.

It is rather galling that Kerry should lecture Russia about making "clear choices" in Syria or elsewhere, when the only plausible explanation for the violence in the Arab country can be traced to the criminal interference of Washington and its partners, in flagrant violation of international law and thereby unleashing mayhem that destroyed millions of lives.

As opposition parties gather for tentative talks in Geneva, the New York Times informed its readers that it coincides with the “fifth anniversary of the beginning of the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, which morphed into civil war and then a regional and global proxy war.”

This is a typical sample of Western distortion on Syria that persists in contradiction to the abundant evidence. That Western narrative is based on the dubious premise that the violence was instigated after the Syrian state crushed a genuine pro-democracy uprising. Secondly, the narrative blandly portrays that the conflict then escalated into a proxy war between foreign governments, as if the latter scenario is unrelated to the initial “uprising”.

However, thanks to alternative news media in the West and also internationally, such as channels like RT and Press TV, there is a substantial body of information that challenges the Western mainstream narrative. Not only challenges, but exposes it as willful deception.

For a start, substantive reports in the alternative media convincingly show that the initial, small-scale protests in Syria during March 2011 were infiltrated by armed provocateurs who fired on civilians and state security forces alike in order to incite large-scale violence. One of the best investigations on these crucial events was carried out by Sharmine Narwani for RT.

Secondly, we must bear in mind the well-documented long-term objective of regime change against the government of Syria authored by Washington, London and Paris. We know, for instance, from the disclosure in 2007 by US General Wesley Clark, the former NATO supreme commander, that Syria was in the Pentagon’s crosshairs for regime change as far back as 2001, along with Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, among others.

Another important reference to this criminal agenda is the testimony of former French foreign minister Roland Dumas who revealed in 2013 that he was approached by British officials two years before the Syrian conflict erupted with a covert plan to topple the Assad government.

We also know from the revelations of former US intelligence chief Lt General Michael Flynn that the administration of President Barack Obama deliberately fomented the infiltration of “jihadist” terror groups as far back as 2012 with the calculation that these mercenaries would destabilize the Damascus government.

That’s why it is stomach-turning when John Kerry tells media in Paris at the weekend about how the “evil of Daesh [ISIS]” must be defeated.

Tellingly, from the outset of the conflict, Washington and its Western allies lost no time to make strident demands that President Assad “had to go”. These demands have become toned down of late as Washington endeavors to supposedly participate in the Geneva peace process. Nevertheless, the blatant objective of the Western governments remains, for the Damascus authorities to eventually step down after a “political process” – or, in other words, for “regime change”.

The other telling factor is the involvement of various regional despotic states in the Western chorus calling for Assad to stand down. Seriously: the regimes of Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the autocratic head-choppers in Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the side of a "pro-democracy uprising"?

The fact that these Western-backed regimes have poured billions of dollars into recruiting, training and weaponizing mercenaries from dozens of countries – including supplying chemical weapons – speaks of the reality of foreign-orchestrated regime change as the key determinant in the Syrian war.

Damningly, former UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi revealed in an interview at the weekend that the conflict in Syria could have been halted in 2012 – just over a year from its inception. Brahimi praised Russia for having "a much more realistic analysis of the situation" and that "everyone should have listened to the Russians a little bit more." Moscow has consistently said that the political future of Syria must be decided by the people of Syria and that no external preconditions, such as Assad standing down, can be imposed by Western powers or their regional proxies. The current Geneva talks underscore this principle.

Last Friday, John Kerry flew to Saudi Arabia seemingly to urge an end to conflict in Syria. Notably, the Saudi-backed Syrian opposition, the High Negotiations Committee, suddenly reversed its rejection of the Geneva dialogue and said that it would be attending talks this week after all. The HNC comprises Al Qaeda-linked terror groups, Jaish al-Islam and Arhrar al-Shams. However, the HNC stipulated that any negotiations must be predicated on Assad's removal.

Syria's war, death toll and destruction are patently a result of a US-led bid for regime change in that country. The background intrigue, the explosive escalation of violence over the past five years and the belated political attempts to prosecute regime change by alternative means are all clear evidence of a criminal foreign assault on Syria.

Russia's military intervention on behalf of the Syrian authorities, as designated by international law, has exposed the true nature of the conflict. The danger of US-backed covert war on Syria has been removed, and now it is over to diplomacy to resolve the peace. That is a stunning achievement.