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Russian War Games send a Strong Message against NATO Intervention in Syria?

By Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya
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there a connection between events in Syria (maybe even US tension with North Korea) and Russia's impromptu Black Sea war games that started on March 28, 2013?

While on his way from Durban in South Africa, where the BRICS — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — announced they were forming a new development bank to challenge the IMF and World Bank, Russia's Vladimir Putin gave the go ahead for unscheduled war games in the Black Sea. By themselves the games mean little, but in a global context they mean a lot.

According to the Kremlin, the war games involved about 7,000 Russian servicemen; Russian Special Forces, Russian Marines, and airborne rapid deployment troops. All of Russia's different services were involved and used the exercises to test their interoperability. Over thirty Russian warships based out of the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol in the Crimean Peninsula and the Russian port of Novorossiysk in Krasnodar Krai will be participating. The objective of the games are to show that Russia could mobilize for any event at a moments notice.



A ship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet during large-scale military exercises Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered while flying back from the South African Republic to Moscow. (Screen shot of a video of Zvezda TV channel).(RIA Novosti)

The war games surprised the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Who even complained the Russian war games started in the Black Sea without prior notice. In fact, NATO asked Russia to be more open about its moves and give NATO Headquarters in Brussels notice of its military movements in the future. Alexander Vershbow, the American Deputy Secretary General of NATO, even demanded “maximum transparency” from Russia. One may ask, why the rattled bones?

Russian response to war plans against the Syrians?

Is it mere coincidence that Russia is flexing its muscles after NATO revealed it was developing contingency plans for a Libya-style intervention in Syria on March 20? Two days later, Israel and Turkey ended their diplomatic row through a timely agreement that was supposedly brokered by US President Barack Obama in twenty minutes while he was visiting Israel. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that with Obama’s help a deal was made with Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Erdogan to end the diplomatic rift over the Israeli attack on the Mavi Marmara in 2010.

Days later, this event was followed by the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) — a phoney opposition organization constructed by the US, UK, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey — being ceremoniously given Syria’s seat at the Arab League. In what appears to be an attempt at repeating the Libya scenario, the SNC is being recognized as the government of Syria. At the Arab League summit, the SNC’s leader Moaz Al-Khatib immediately called for NATO military intervention in coordination with Qatar’s call for regime change and military intervention in Damascus on March 26.



Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib.(AFP Photo / Karim Sahib)

In a stage-managed move, the puppet SNC has asked the US, UK, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and NATO to enforce a no-fly zone with the aim of creating a SNC-controlled emirate or enclave in northern Syria. Al-Khatib has announced that he has talked to US Secretary of State John Kerry to use the NATO Patriot Missiles stationed in Turkey to create the no-fly zone over northern Syria. Effectively what he is talking about is the balkanization of Syria. Kerry seems to be on top of it. Victoria Nuland, the spokeswoman of the US Department of State, said the US is considering the request about imposing a no-fly zone. Even earlier, Kerry made a surprise visit to Baghdad and threatened the federal government in Iraq to fall into line with Washington's regime change plans against Syria. He said he wanted the Iraqis to check Iranian passenger planes heading to Syria for weapons, but much more was said.

The American Empire's satraps are all on the move. Qatar and Saudi Arabia no longer hide the fact that they are arming and funding the insurgents in Syria. In February, the UK and France lobbied the rest of the European Union to lift its Syrian arms embargo, so that they can openly arm the anti-government foreign fighters and militias that are trying to topple the Syrian government. Israel and Turkey have been forced to mend fences for the sake of the Empire's war on the Syrians.

Obama realigns Israel and Turkey against Syria

The Israeli and Turkish rapprochement conveniently fits the aligning chessboard. Obama's visit to Israel was about imperial politics to maintain the American Empire. As two hostile neighbours of Syria, Tel Aviv and Ankara will have deeper cooperation in the Empire's objectives to topple the Syrian government. All of a sudden, the governments in both countries started complaining in line with one another about how the humanitarian situation in Syria was threatening them. In reality, Israel is not hosting any Syrian refugees (and oppresses Syrians under its occupation in the Golan) whereas Turkey has actually neglected many of its legal and financial obligations to the Syrian refugees it hosts on its territory and has tried to whitewash this by labeling them as foreign "guests."



A child watches a woman washing a basin at the Syrian refugee camp 5km from Diyarbakir, on the way between Diyarbakir and Mardin, after snowfall, on January 9, 2013.(AFP Photo / Stringer)

According to Agence France-Presse, the Israelis have even opened a military field hospital to help the insurgents topple the Syrian government. The military facility is located in an area named Fortification 105 in Syria's Israeli-occupied Golan Heights (originally referred to as the Syrian Heights in Israel). It is essentially a support base for anti-government forces and only the tip of the iceberg in regards to Israeli involvement in Syria. Israel's January strikes on Syria were the fruits of the cooperation between the Israelis and insurgent militias.

Sensing the suspicious eyes gazing at the Turkish government and perhaps getting unnerved by the Kremlin's muscle flexing, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has rejected the claims that Tel Aviv and Ankara were closing ranks against Syria. Davutoglu must have been unaware of what was said in Israel about their rapprochement. Even though Netanyahu vowed never to apologize for the killing of Turkey's citizens on the Mavi Marmara, Tel Aviv's apology to Turkey was publicly justified by the Israeli government on the basis of addressing Syria through coordination with Turkey. Many of the suspicious eyes that turned to look at Erdogan's government over the deal with Israel are Turkish. Davutoglu actually lied for domestic consumption, knowing full well that the Turkish public would be outraged to know that Prime Minister Erdogan was really normalizing ties with Israel to topple the Syrian government.

The message(s) of the Russian war games

The American Empire is arranging the geopolitical chessboard with its satraps in its ongoing war on Syria. Perhaps it plans on using Israel to do a re-play of the Suez Crisis. In 1956, after Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, the UK and France drew a plan with Israel to annex the Suez Canal by getting Israel to attack Egypt and then claiming to intervene militarily as concerned parties who wanted to keep the Suez Canal safe and open for international maritime traffic. A new assault against Syria under the banners of the Israelis is possible and could be used as an excuse

for a Turkish and NATO “humanitarian invasion” that could result in the creation of a northern humanitarian buffer zone (or a broader war).

A pattern can be depicted from all these events. At the start of 2013, Russia held major naval drills in the Eastern Mediterranean against a backdrop of tension between Moscow and the US-led NATO and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) coalition that has been destabilizing Syria. After the US and its anti-Syrian coalition threatened to intervene militarily and deployed Patriot missiles on Turkey’s southern border with Syria, a Russian naval flotilla was dispatched off the Syrian coast to send a strong message to Washington not to have any ideas of starting another war. In turn, the US and its allies tried to save face by spreading rumours that the Kremlin was preparing to evacuate Russian citizens from Syria, because the Syrian government was going to collapse and the situation was going to get critical.



A ship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet during large-scale military exercises Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered while flying back from the South African Republic to Moscow. (Screen shot of a video of Zvezda TV channel).(RIA Novosti)

Paralleling the Russian war games in the Black Sea, the Russian Air Force held long-range flights across Russia. This included flights by Russian nuclear strategic bombers. On the other end of Eurasia, China also conducted its own surprise naval war games in the South China Sea. While the US and its allies portrayed the Chinese moves as a threat to Vietnam over disputed territory in the South China Sea, the timing of the naval deployment could be linked to either Syria (or North Korea) and coordinated with Russia to warn the US to keep the international peace.

In a sign of the decline of the American Empire, just before the Russian war games in the Black Sea, all the increasingly assertive BRICS leaders warned the US against any adventurism in Syria and other countries. The Russian and Chinese muscle flexing are messages that tell Washington that Beijing and Moscow are serious and mean what they say. At the same time, these events can be read as signs that the world-system is coming under new management.