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## The Obama Failure in Real Time

### How Edward Snowden and Syria Will Change Obama's Foreign Policy

by SHAMUS COOKE

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When the NSA spying scandal broke, so did the illusion that President Obama was significantly different than his predecessor, Bush Jr. Obama's meticulously crafted image was specifically created as an alternative to Bush: Obama campaigned as a peace candidate who loved civil liberties and wanted to work with the UN instead of unilaterally launching wars.

But now that the president has been fully exposed as an aspiring Bush III, will he retreat back into the sheep's clothing he wore as candidate Obama? Or will he shed any remaining pretense and fully adopt Bush's international recklessness? The answer is that both are likely true: Obama will continue to perform his stale routine as a "pragmatist" while in reality acting out an even more dangerous foreign policy than Bush.

This is because Edward Snowden, Russia, and Syria's President Bashar al-Assad have backed President Obama into a corner; all have exposed major weaknesses in the foreign power of the United States, and Obama will not allow himself — and more importantly "U.S. national [corporate] interests" — to appear weak while Iran, Russia and China are rising economically and/or politically. This dynamic will inevitably lead Obama to a more aggressive foreign policy, more Middle East wars, and more dangerous confrontations with Iran, Russia, and China.

Obama has never been so vulnerable to his domestic right wing, which has been successfully skewering him for the Snowden affair. The president's "I don't care" attitude is obviously an act, and is only further provoking his right-wing attackers, a good example of which comes from the Heritage Foundation:

“[China and Russia's] unwillingness to extradite...[Edward Snowden] is just the latest example of the waning of American global power and influence courtesy of Team Obama...The big question, naturally, is: With perceptions of [the United States'] plummeting power quite plausible, who might be the next to take pleasure in challenging our [U.S.] interests?”

This is not just the opinion of a right-wing pundit, but of the entire U.S. political establishment, Democrat and Republican alike. One need only remember that during the Obama-Romney debate on foreign policy in the last election, there was very little debating and much agreement on the need for U.S. “power” to be projected abroad.

To be fair to Obama, the right wing has been too hard on him for his “weak” foreign policy, since in reality Obama has acted incredibly hawkish internationally; the U.S. media simply did their best to hide his actions from criticism, as did the Republicans who he worked with in tandem.

For example, in Latin America Obama backed a military coup in Honduras against an elected government, and later backed a coup in Paraguay and funneled cash to the far right wing in Venezuela to undermine the Chavez government, while maintaining the cold war era embargo against Cuba. Consequently, Latin America now equates Obama's foreign policy with Bush's. The U.S. Republicans were in complete agreement with these policies of Obama.

The Middle East is another example of Obama already acting the scoundrel. His Bush-like “surge” tactic in Afghanistan extended a pointless war against the Taliban with whom he is now trying in vain to negotiate an “honorable” peace; Obama broke international law in Libya when he bombed the nation into regime change; in Syria Obama is continuing to escalate a devastating war by funneling even more guns and cash to a “rebel” group dominated by Islamic extremists, again without UN approval. Never mind his shameless support of Israel's criminal policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and his “strong alliance” with the Persian Gulf Monarchy dictatorships of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Up until now Obama has been able to implement these Bush-like policies with a nice guy label. But nice will no longer do — the international situation has changed. Edward Snowden and Syria's president have humiliated President Obama on key issues, and Obama must now bare his teeth, lest other nations exploit his weakness.

Syria, for example, is crucially important to Obama because he has invested massive U.S. diplomatic capital in assembling a Bush-like “coalition of the willing” to topple the Syrian president, and if Obama fails in his attempt at regime change his coalition of lackeys will not follow the U.S.'s lead in future endeavors, and may look instead to follow Iran or Russia. With each step deeper into the Syrian morass Obama will find himself unable to retreat; and at this

point a step backwards would significantly diminish U.S. power in the Middle East. When Obama said, “Assad must go,” he committed U.S. involvement to ensure that it happens.

More importantly, if Syria is able to defend itself from the U.S.-backed rebels — or possibly a direct U.S. invasion — other countries will no longer be scared into submission to accept U.S. foreign policy. This is crucial because as U.S. economic power wanes, its military becomes the foreign policy tactic of choice.

Obama would like his Syrian intervention to be as politically painless as Bill Clinton’s destruction of Yugoslavia, or Obama’s destruction of Libya. But Obama’s rebels are being crushed on the battle field, requiring that Obama become increasingly invested in directly toppling the Syrian president; Obama’s rebels are now to be directly armed with more sophisticated weaponry from the U.S., which will be funneled to them by the increasing amounts of U.S. troops on the Syria-Jordan border who are training the rebels, and where a sophisticated U.S. anti-aircraft missile system has been added “for defense.” Obama has already drawn up plans for an innocent sounding “no fly zone,” which in reality equals direct military invasion.

Obama now feels that he cannot back down in Syria, lest Russia and Iran advance. Geopolitics has reached a crescendo in the Middle East and the wider world, where one wrong step can equal a broader regional or even world war.

The ongoing global economic crisis is pushing U.S. corporations to demand that “their” political parties — Democrats and Republicans — act more “boldly” abroad to acquire new markets/consumers for corporate products, new vehicles for investment, and new sources of cheap raw materials and labor. Russia and China have similar aspirations.

Barely into his second term Obama’s corporate backers are demanding he bare his fangs and quit acting the lamb — U.S. “national” interests are at stake! In doing so Obama will expose the true nature of the U.S. two-party system, and thus funnel political activity into the streets and/or the creation of a new, mass party of working people to challenge the decrepit political status quo. The first black president was the last great hope of the American two-party system. His failure will herald a new era in U.S. politics.