

Dashed Hopes for Trump's Foreign Policy

President Trump's missile attack on Syria – without waiting for an investigation of Syria's alleged role in a poison-gas attack – has dashed hopes that he might take U.S. foreign policy in a less warlike direction, writes Gilbert Doctorow.

By Gilbert Doctorow

My days of hoping for the best from Donald Trump – and at least appreciating the fact that he was not the neocon/liberal hawk that Hillary Clinton is – are over along with my hopes that he might implement his campaign promise and take U.S. foreign policy in a more positive, less warlike, direction.

From being possibly part of the solution, President Trump has become an integral part of the problem. And with his bigger-than-life ego, petulance and stubbornness, Commander-in-Chief Trump is potentially a greater threat to world peace than his weak-willed predecessor Barack Obama.

This week, Trump ignored Russian calls for an investigation into Tuesday's alleged chemical gas attack in Idlib province before issuing hasty conclusions on culpability. Instead he accepted a narrative of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's guilt despite indications that the incident may have been either an accident (the release of poison gas at a damaged rebel warehouse) or a false-flag operation designed by Al Qaeda-affiliated rebels in Syria.

The Assad-did-it storyline was disseminated by the White Helmets and other phony NGOs that are financed by Washington and London, and that narrative was accepted by the White House. Without waiting for any comprehensive review, Trump ordered the firing of 50 or more Tomahawk missiles against a Syrian military air base in Homs province, thereby crossing all Russian "red lines" in Syria.

Until this point, the Kremlin had chosen not to react to signs coming from Washington that Trump's determination to change course on Russia and U.S. global hegemony was failing. The wait-and-see posture antedated Trump's accession to power when Russian President Vladimir Putin overruled the dictates of protocol and did not respond to Obama's final salvo, the seizure of Russian diplomatic property in the U.S. and the eviction of Russian diplomats.

The Russians also looked the other way when the new administration continued the same neocon rhetoric from the tribune of the United Nations Security Council and during trips to Europe by Vice President Mike Pence, Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Tillerson.

But the missile attack in Syria is a game-changer. The pressure on Putin to

respond in some serious way will be immense. Putin has a cool mind and we may anticipate that the Russian response will come at a time of his choosing and in a manner that is appropriate to the seriousness of the U.S. offense. Look for a response by the end of the month.

In the meantime, we who have been hoping for a change of direction – for the rooting out of the neocons and liberal hawks at the heart of the Deep State – should recognize the dangers and the challenges ahead. One way or another, the White House must be told that arranging foreign policy moves out of purely domestic calculations, such as likely happened on Thursday, puts the nation's very existence at risk.

Acting tough by striking out at Russia and its allies is not the way to form a coalition to pass a Republican tax bill or revive the repeal plans on Obamacare or divert attention from the Democrats' obsessive investigations into Russia-gate. The same may be said of an alternative reading of the missile attack: that it was intended as a message to visiting Chinese President Xi that should there be no joint action to restrain North Korea, the United States will act alone and with total disregard for international law.

Either logic in the end is a formula for global suicide.

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