PUTIN IS FINDING OUT WHAT MAGA MEANS

You may have noticed that Vladimir Putin is distinctly annoyed with us, and he is right to be.

For we have deprived him of his great dream to join, and perhaps even lead, the ranks of the world's most important leaders. Today, following the attack on the Syrian air base, Putin is just one more dictator.

During the Obama years, the Russian tyrant had grown accustomed to getting his way most everywhere. Invade Crimea? Fine. Grab slices of eastern Ukraine? No problem. Open military bases in Syria and Libya? You bet. We wouldn't challenge him.

Along with these actions was a kind of implied Brezhnev Doctrine (according to which, once a country joined the Soviet bloc, it would never leave it): If you allied with Putin, he'd protect you. Nobody would invade, and Russian antiaircraft missiles would defend against air attack.

As Richard Perle noted last week (4/11), Putin's Russia is not a major military power.

> "The appearance that Vladimir Putin is strong is largely the result of weakness displayed by the United States in the [Barack] Obama years. Russia is not a very strong country.
>
> Its military is relatively weak and ineffective, even though they spend a lot of money. It's true they have nuclear weapons, but no one can quite imagine those being brought to play."

So Putin's posture as the leader of a major power was blown up in Syria, along with the airplanes and jet fuel storage tanks, and you can be sure that the Russian antiaircraft systems do not seem to have functioned at all.

Thus, all those pundits who belittled the Tomahawk attack have missed a very important point.

Over the past eight years, Russia's effective power in the world had grown far beyond its real power. That has now changed, and you can expect our actual and would-be allies, and our global enemies, to change their recent tunes.

When America moves decisively, the whole world changes. It is now more likely that countries like Egypt, which had taken out insurance against American weakness by buying Russian weapons and permitting Russian special forces to operate on Cairo's side of the Egyptian/Libyan border, will find it easier to support the United States.

And you can see the same effect in recent declarations from NATO, bragging about the increases in defense spending throughout the alliance.

On the other side of the global war, the Iranians have of course enlisted in Putin's disinformation campaign, accusing Trump of falsifying the evidence of Syrian chemical weapons, and thumping their chests, warning of dire consequences if the United States dares to move against Tehran.

But if you think Russia's not a credible military threat to us, Iran is much more toothless, and Khamenei faces a far greater internal threat than Putin does.

All Iranians understand that if Trump is willing to strike Syria, he is likely willing to strike Iran, without whose fighters and weapons the Syrian dictatorship would be doomed.

They are also impressed with the deployment of the Mother Of All Bombs in Afghanistan. That sort of thing resonates with the Persians. If they had such power, they'd certainly use that sort of language. Thankfully, they don't have the power, and so they resort to fantasies.

Exciting times, and not nearly so bad as the old Chinese curse would have you believe. With Trump, we're in the midst of a paradigm shift. America's effective power in coming into balance with its real power, while Russia's imbalance is being exposed.

Certainly, that's part of MAGA means, yes?

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