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Russia will do nothing in response to the West's latest provocation.

Of all the displays of bravado in which the Kiev regime and its Western sponsors have indulged these past three years of war—drone and rocket attacks on Russian cities and infrastructure, the Kursk invasion last summer, and so on down a considerable list—the coordinated drone attacks on five Russian airfields last Sunday are surely the most extravagant. This was a daring, well-planned, and carefully timed operation—let there be no question of this.

What will the Russians do in response? This is our question, and it is a good one. The world now awaits Moscow's next move with bated breath, one reads more or less everywhere.

Let us continue breathing at our normal rate, I propose.

The Russian Federation is entirely accustomed to the West's incessant provocations, and the drone attacks last weekend are but another. Moscow understands these occasions as such and is well-practiced in judging where lie its best, long-term interests. In this case, I go to an old Buddhist and Taoist notion, as subtle as it is effective. This is the principle of *nā karna* in Hindi, *wu wei* in Mandarin. In either tradition it means “actively doing nothing.” And this is what we already see from the Russians—the reaction of no-reaction.

President Putin made it clear in a telephone call with President Trump this week that he has no choice but to reply to the drone operation. This will have to do as much with domestic pressures coming over his, Putin's, right shoulder as much as anything else. When Russia's comes it will be measured, not inflammatory, the outcome of a sober judgment, not a theatrical display of retribution.

Ukrainian accounts of these simultaneous operations have it that 117 drones were smuggled into Russia on trucks and destroyed or damaged more than forty nuclear-capable bombers; the S.B.U., the Ukrainian intelligence service, puts the value of these losses at \$7 billion. But Kiev's assessments of this operation— "Absolutely brilliant!" Volodymyr Zelensky exalted afterward—are per usual exaggerated to the point they are of little use.

So are the predictable assessments carried in major Western media. The Russian president has "flipped the script"—this odious American phrase—on the Russians, *The New York Times* told its readers. The attacks have "changed Vladimir Putin's calculus," and Russia, startled and frightened, will now come anxiously to the negotiating table.

Let us consider a little more of this. The Russian president now has but two options, a writer named John Wight asserted in a comment headlined, "[Russia at a Crossroads](#)," published the day after the attacks: He can proceed to start a new global conflict or he must accept he has been defeated. "World War III is the only road to victory that lies open to him," this John Wight wrote.

And [this](#), from a journal called *The Conversation*, a gathering of scholars and journalists, none appearing to be of any great account:

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Ukraine's success once again demonstrates that its armed forces and intelligence services are the modern masters of battlefield innovation and operational security.

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I reproduce passages in these two pieces on the thought readers may not otherwise believe such things have been said this past week.

These sorts of analyses are precisely what last Sunday's attacks, essentially theatrical in their intent, were meant to provoke. Foolishness begets foolishness at this stage in the wayward West's decline.

By the Russian Defense Ministry's account, Ukrainian drones attacked airfields in five regions stretching across five time zones all the way to Siberia: Murmansk, Irkutsk, Ivanovo, Ryazan, and Amur. The ministry acknowledged that several aircraft had been damaged—there is drone footage of this—but beyond this there is little certainty at this early moment. Some number of Tu-95 and Tu-22 bombers—10 to 13 is the range the more sober news reports now suggest—were destroyed and some unknown number damaged. This the extent of what we know now.

Tu-95s and Tu-22s are strategic aircraft, essential parts of Russia's nuclear-security structure. In round numbers, the fleet is comprised of 50 of the former and 55 of the latter. This means the gravity of the attack is beyond dispute. So is the operation's sophistication: The drones deployed, however many, were transported by truck to locations near each base. At the planned time they were then fired by remote control.

And so we come to two pertinent realities, and I am absolutely struck to note there is no mention of either in mainstream media anywhere in the West.

One, an operation of this complexity—planned, we read, over 18 months—is wholly beyond the Ukrainians' military and intelligence capabilities. The record makes this very clear. We also read—and this seems a case of the propagandists' taking things too far, as they frequently do—that Volodymyr Zelensky personally oversaw this planning.

Let us cast a colder eye on this operation. As various commentators well-versed in military affairs and covert intelligence operations have persuasively asserted, these attacks were clearly planned and to one or another extent executed by Western intelligence. The prime candidate here is MI-6, the British having long experience in this kind of work and an abiding case of Russophobia. It is perfectly plausible the C.I.A. played a role; some of these analysts suggest Mossad may have, too.

Two, we read all about how Kiev has “exposed Russia’s vulnerability,” as *The New York Times* put it, and demonstrated the weakness of its air defense systems. How much of this self-serving, self-deceiving nonsense must we read? I am not the first to point out that Russia’s nuclear-capable fleet of bombers was exposed to attack in conformity with arms-control treaties with provisions for routine satellite inspections.

What happened last Sunday, then, amounts to a monstrous act of opportunistic betrayal. As an American commentator named Simius Cognitionis reminds me, the Russians have a saying for this. The people who run U.S. imperium and its trans-Atlantic appendages are “agreement incapable.”

Putin has had more than his fair share of these kinds of transgressions. He personally negotiated the two Minsk Protocols, in September 2014 and February 2015, and invested heavily in them as a promising solution to the divisions evident in Ukraine after the U.S.-cultivated coup in Kiev in February 2014. Then he discovered neither Ukraine nor the Western powers who served as guarantors of these accords, France and Germany, ever had any intention of implementing them.

For weeks before the first round of Russian-Ukrainian talks opened in Istanbul late last month, Zelensky and various of his cabinet ministers bleated that the Russians’ refusal to enter into an ad hoc ceasefire was proof Moscow had no intention of

ending the war by way of a negotiated settlement. And now we read that Zelensky himself was all along plotting extensive attacks on Russian air assets? How can one be expected to take these people any more seriously than Moscow does?

In the same line, why did last Sunday's operation come one day before a scheduled second round of talks in Istanbul? Was Kiev's intent to focus Russian minds, as we read? It is too much of a stretch. It is perfectly obvious that there is no chance the drone attacks, whatever the extent of the damage, will change the course of the war. All sides know this. The Western powers knew this when planning and executing the operation.

No, neither London nor Paris nor Berlin nor Kiev want this war to end because—allow me a paradox—they have already lost it but will not accept a settlement that recognizes the “root causes” Moscow—rightfully, sensibly—insists must be addressed. This is the reality with which we are left. Provoking Russia into a rash response on the eve of a negotiation is an act of desperation, but desperate Ukraine and its sponsors are at this point.

Having been in Berlin recently, it is clear to me the Merz government's announced intent to increase its military support for Ukraine is proving a provocation in its own right. Talk of the German chancellor authorizing shipments of the highly potent Taurus missile has Moscow in a modest uproar. Numerous voices are raised advocating a vigorous response to any such turn; some well-connected defense analysts have argued for a second deployment of Russia's hypersonic, immensely powerful Oreshnik missile if Germany send the Taurus to Ukraine and Kiev launches it against Russian targets.

No such assertions are coming out of the Kremlin, however. I am advised to read them as unofficial warnings, usefully conjured atmospherics, and not much more.

I anticipate Moscow's response to the indisputably dramatic attacks on its bomber fleet against this background. I imagine the Kremlin is deeply discouraged to find that, once again, there is no taking either the Western powers or their proxy in Kiev seriously. At the same time, President Putin has no evident reason to stage any kind of vigorous counterattack in response to last Sunday's events. He has won the war, and if this must be made clear on the ground rather than at a mahogany table in Istanbul, there is nothing Russia need do differently: It seems a matter of doing nothing very actively.

Torrington, 6 June 2025.