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“We’ll know that our information campaign is complete when absolutely everything the American people believe is false.”

CIA director, William Casey 1982¹

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US-Russian Opposition in Some Contemporary Military Conflicts: Who Russia Truly Fights?

Abstract

The article – dealing with US-Russian opposition in military conflicts – explores three main topics. In the first chapter we are witnessing a rapidly changing world order that is increasingly multipolar and unstable: the West is declining and the East is rising. It deeply affects US-Russian opposition, since it is part of the bigger picture. In the second chapter there is an analysis of the distortions of the Western threat perception, where even

¹ Vanessa Beeley: Canada’s NDP Supporting White Helmets for Nobel Prize is ‘Serious Mistake’ ~ Open Letter Written by John Ryan, Ph.D., *21st Century Wire*, 26 September 2016, <http://21stcenturywire.com/2016/09/26/canada-ndp-supporting-white-helmets-for-nobel-prize-is-a-serious-mistake-open-letter-written-by-john-ryan/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

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Western support of jihadist terrorists is acceptable to achieve geopolitical goals. Western and proxy involvement in support of international jihadist terrorism, especially ISIS, Al-Qaida etc. reveals who Russia truly fights in Syria,^{3 4 5 6 7} Lybia⁸ etc. In the last chapter there is an overview of some specific military conflicts, where US-Russian opposition exists.

³ «Без Израиля мы бы не выжили»: откровения исламистов, воюющих в Сирии (ФОТО), Rusvesna, 29 June 2017, <http://rusvesna.su/news/1498305283> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

⁴ MOORE Jack (2017): Israel Secretly Paying Salaries of Syrian Rebels on Golan Heights Border: Report, Newsweek, 19 June 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/israel-secretly-paying-salaries-syrian-rebels-golan-heights-627155> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

⁵ MCKERNAN, Bethan (2017): Israel 'giving secret aid to Syrian rebels', report says, Direct funding, food, fuel and medical supplies allegedly provided by Israeli state to keep Isis and Iranian-allied forces in neighbouring civil war at bay, The Independent, 19 June 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-giving-secret-aid-syrian-rebels-bashar-al-assad-golan-heights-hezbollah-fursan-al-joulan-a7797151.html> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

⁶ JONES, Rory – RAYDAN, Noam - MA'AYEH Suha (2017): Israel Gives Secret Aid to Syrian Rebels, Fighters near Golan Heights in Syria receive cash and humanitarian help, The Wall Street Journal, 18 June 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-gives-secret-aid-to-syrian-rebels-1497813430> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

⁷ Израиль потратил 17 миллионов долларов на лечение сирийских боевиков (ФОТО), Государство Израиль потратило 62 миллиона шекелей или 17 миллионов долларов на лечение 2200 сирийских боевиков, сообщают СМИ страны, Rusvesna, 2 March 2017, <http://rusvesna.su/news/1488389769> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

⁸ CLOUGHLEY, Brian (2017): Crimea, Afghanistan and Libya, Strategic Culture, 27 June 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/06/27/crimea-afghanistan-and-libya.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

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Introduction

There are several military conflicts in the world, where we can observe a collision of interest, antagonisms between the US and Russia. Such conflicts between the two great powers do not appear entirely independently: they are a part of conflicts between the West and the East. Before we start exploring the military conflicts that represent collisions of US and Russian interests, it is beneficial to summarise some of the attributes of the increasingly multipolar and unstable new world order in a general form. The nature and the rules of the new world order significantly influence the behaviour of the poles in military conflicts, especially that of the US and Russia.

I) The birth of a multipolar world order: rise of the East, decline of the West – unpredictability grows

The Obama administration inherited a legacy to Donald Trump that includes severe burdens, keeping in mind that previous administrations also contributed to several unsolved problems. The state-indebtedness of the US approximately doubled during the Obama administration, getting fairly close to 20 trillion USDs⁹ that is around 106 percent of the US annual GDP. The overall indebtedness of the US, that includes the state-, population-, and company-related debts, which is around 70 trillion USDs,¹⁰ roughly the equivalent of the entire value of all the national assets of the US, which are around 80 trillion USDs.¹¹ Any country in the world that is equally indebted to overall value

⁹ 20.000 billion USDs

¹⁰ 70.000 billion USDs

¹¹ 80.000 billion USDs

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of all assets available, is in a crisis of historic proportions, as a Hungarian economist, Prof. László Bogár put it.¹²

The privileged status of the US economy (i.e. the USD-based international trade of oil and other mechanisms) could so far positively shape the trends partially masking the severe problems of the indebtedness. However, it is questionable how the US economy would survive a new wave of economic crisis, if it becomes obvious, that the US indebtedness is not possible to be financed any longer. If the US indebtedness becomes unmanageable in case of an unstoppable financial meltdown, it would most likely lead to a lasting shift in world economy, where the US economy would lose most of its privileged status. In this case the multipolar nature of the new world order would become ever more obvious, even though it is currently still debatable.

The US infrastructure (roads, bridges, power plants etc.) suffer the consequences of decades of insufficient maintenance and require investment at a magnitude of a thousand billion USDs. Otherwise the crippling infrastructure would become a direct drag lowering US GDP, also slowing the overall growth of the economy. The imperial ambitions of the US show signs of being overstretched in both economic and military terms. While US multinational superstructures (big companies) earned a lot of money, the nation state US has increasingly payed the price. A good example of that is the impoverishment of certain layers of the American middle class that is necessary to maintain the American Dream, or the stagnation of hourly wages since the

¹² BOGÁR László (2017): Bűdzsé és birodalom. Aligha meglepetés, hogy az egész világ élénk érdeklődéssel kíséri az első olyan költségvetés megtárgyalását, amit már az új amerikai elnök terjesztett a kongresszus elé, *Magyar Hírlap*, 31 March 2017, http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/84089/Budzse_es_birodalom (Accessed: 17 April 2017)

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1970-s in a country where productivity grew significantly, including times of economic crisis. The global leadership of the US¹³ shows signs of a relative decline, while the global world order is becoming increasingly multipolar.¹⁴

A good example of the relative decline of the US is that China surpassed US GDP¹⁵ in purchasing power parity terms in 2014 that was mostly unnoticed by Western analysts and got few public attention due to political and emotional reasons.¹⁶ China¹⁷ also got ahead of the US in important aspects of information technology, namely in the development of supercomputers, using Chinese-developed hardware and software.¹⁸ ¹⁹ “*The*

¹³ The 2016 U.S.-Global Leadership Report. What people worldwide think of U.S. leadership, according to the largest global public opinion study on the topic, *Gallup*, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/services/191807/us-global-leadership-report-2016.aspx> (Accessed: 20 January 2017)

¹⁴ PIERACCINI, Federico (2017): Leading the Multipolar Revolution: How Russia and China Are Creating a New World Order, *Strategic Culture*, 20 June 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/06/20/leading-multipolar-revolution-how-russia-china-creating-new-world-order.html> (Accessed: 20 June 2017)

¹⁵ Eddig senki sem vette észre: Amerika a második helyre csúszott, *Portfolio*, 4 September 2014.

http://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/eddig_senki_sem_vette_eszre_amerika_a_masodik_helyre_csuzott.3.207455.html?utm_source=index_main&utm_medium=portfolio_box&utm_campaign=portfoliobox (Accessed: 11 January 2016)

¹⁶ JAMISON, Matthew (2017): The Chinese Century, *Strategic Culture*, 22 June 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/06/22/the-chinese-century.html> (Accessed: 22 June 2017)

¹⁷ See more: KASZNÁR Attila (2017): National Security Aspects of the Chinese Headway. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*. 2017. különszám. pp. 76-81.

¹⁸ THIBODEAU, Patrick (2016): China builds world's fastest supercomputer without U.S. chips. China's massive system runs real applications and is 'not just a stunt machine,' says top U.S. supercomputing researcher, *Computerworld*, 20 June 2016.

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*performance of the Chinese industry is a determining factor anywhere in the world, and it will become more and more relevant for the national economies as well as in global processes.*²⁰ It is safe to conclude that in case of China can get ahead of the US in the fields of GDP and supercomputers, then Chinese leadership is possible in any sectors, including even the defence industry.

The GDP of the EU also exceeds that of the US,²¹ not only in purchasing power parity terms. However, we need to note, that the EU is not a nation state, like the US, Russia or China, but a formation incorporating several nation states. I have no intention to criticise the purchase power parity system, to the contrary: I find it fairer than measuring GDP in any currency since it omits the consequences of cheap or expensive price systems.

<http://www.computerworld.com/article/3085483/high-performance-computing/china-builds-world-s-fastest-supercomputer-without-u-s-chips.html>
(Accessed: 23 April 2017)

¹⁹ THIBODEAU Patrick (2016): China claims exascale by 2020, three years before U.S. Speed is one thing, energy efficiency another, *Computerworld*, 16 June 2016, http://www.computerworld.com/article/3084698/high-performance-computing/china-claims-exascale-by-2020-three-years-before-us.html#tk.drr_mlt
(Accessed: 23 April 2017)

²⁰ KASZNÁR Attila (2016): The Chinese Culture and Hungary. Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe. Vol. 36. Iss. 3. pp. 15-24.

²¹ BRYAN, Bob (2015): Europe is bigger than the US, *Business Insider*, 30 June 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/charts-eu-economy-is-bigger-than-the-us-2015-6> (Accessed: 26 January 2017)

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II) The two main forms of distorted Western threat perception**a) A false Western threat perception: Russia and China**

The Cold War against Russia did not end with the exemption of a short period right after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. NATO that took most of the Warsaw Pact countries outside the external borders of the former Soviet Union, however the Alliance was still not satisfied with the achievements of the Eastern expansion. NATO struggles to enter traditional Russian spheres interest even today, while officially denies that spheres of interest exist. It becomes ever more obvious that the “NATO enlargement equals to more security” mantra is unsustainable, even though it is not officially acknowledged by the Alliance.

A false, distorted, upside-down threat perception was developed and adopted under the Obama administration that was applied by not only the US, but most of the Western world. According to this threat perception the number one challenge to peace and security is the “aggressive”, “expansive”, and “ever more self-assertive” Russia. The second biggest threat was China – another absurdity, but at least China is far from European borders. Russia and China are permanent members of the UN Security Council and they are unavoidable in political, economic and military terms. Branding them as leading sources of threat endangers the operability of the entire global security system.

While China is an Asian country, Russia is partly European, partly Asian. Based on its European attributes, Russia could even be part of a Western military alliance. However, Moscow is firmly unwilling to be a junior partner of the West, which means subordination to a certain degree. The West – even

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though it is officially unadmitted – is not able, not willing to treat Russia as an equal partner, with the appropriate respect, acknowledging and accepting the different nature of the Russian model. The West is unwilling to accept that Russia insists to have an independent foreign policy, adheres to its spheres of interest, especially in the post-Soviet region: the territory of the former Soviet Union.²²

According to the threat assessment of the Obama administration, Russia and China²³ are the greatest security concern, followed by Iran, North Korea, and then – but only then – comes international terrorism. It is obviously an upside-down threat list, since international terrorism should be on the top of the list, not great powers. Officially international terrorism is on the top of the list now, during the Trump administration, however, certain realities make it questionable. Good examples are military actions of the US administration against the Syrian Government, which inevitably benefit jihadist forces. In other words current US policies in Syria suggest that the US is not accepting the fact that Russia and Assad are the lesser evil in comparison to jihadist victory.

It is a quite interesting experiment to reshape the question and see how it works: instead of calling the list a „threat assessment” we might call it „list of those who pose a threat to global US hegemony”. Not surprisingly, the same list becomes perfectly adequate and correct. Russia and China must be on the top of the list. Russia is on the top, because Russian threat is much easier to capitalise from in NATO, since Russia is partially a European state and China is far from Europe. Furthermore,

²² With the exception of the NATO member Baltic States.

²³ As Attila Kasznár said: „china's global expansion also entails national security risk”. KASZNÁR Attila (2017): National Security Aspects of the Chinese Headway. Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle. 2017. különszám. pp. 76-81.

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Russian military capabilities surpass that of China and are the second strongest after the US, that is a powerful argument. There is also more hope on the side of the US and Western world in general, that the West can break Russia easier than China.

We can argue whether Iran or North-Korea is a more significant challenge, but that is an issue of no real significance. Iran has a huge influence in the Middle-East, but does not have nuclear weapons. North-Korea has a few nuclear weapons, but the country is much more isolated, than Iran. None of these two countries have a military strength comparable to that of the US.

International terrorism is a moderate challenge for the imperial ambitions of the US, if we ignore the possibility, when ISIS might grow as big as it used to visualize its future. If recent trends continue, we have reasons to ignore that possibility.

Trump promised to put terrorism on the top of the “threat list”. However, as we will see, this policy change is not really convincing or coming to effect, to the contrary.

**b) The most unethical Western threat perception:
international terrorism as a tool**

This topic is important to understand who Russia really fights in Syria, Libya etc. We must be aware of hidden or denied alliances between various forces shaping the battlefields of our interest.

The relationship between the US and its Western allies to international terrorism is a very important, sensitive and also disturbing issue. Officially the US and the entire Western world is value-based, committed to democracy and therefore oppose and fight all forms of international terrorism, that includes ISIS. However, this „politically correct” statement does not reflect realities. Yes, the US and the Western world do oppose and fight terrorism, but not as a universal rule. The West fights terrorism when the terrorists hurt Western interests. But what happens,

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when terrorists fight governments that are rivals or enemies of the US and the Western world? In this case the Western world can not officially admit that they support terrorists as a geopolitical instrument to fight opponents of the West, since it is morally unacceptable for the public opinion of most of mankind.

The rise of ISIS and their activities in Iraq, Syria, Libya and lately the Philippines allows us to ask tough questions concerning Western attitudes towards the ultimate, most brutal terrorist state in the 21st century. The first question is whether such a terrorist state could fight a war for years since its inception without substantial help of other states, such as weapon and ammunition supply, financial support, training, supply of combatants etc. The answer is clearly “no”. The ISIS would have run out of the mentioned resources unless there is substantial support from abroad. Even if ISIS tries hard to produce their own weapons and ammunition etc., they have to get the factories and the technology from somewhere that also means support of other states. Furthermore, if the US-led coalition truly fights ISIS in order to destroy the terrorist state, such weapon and ammunition factories are easy targets for destruction since it is impossible to hide them from various forms of intelligence. A few bombs dropped by the Air Force of the US-led coalition are enough for their destruction. The destruction of weapon and ammunition factories would disrupt production as long as the US lead coalition wants to maintain the disruption.

The reality is that the ISIS does not have weapon and ammunition factories, hidden from the US-led coalition, but instead they have weapon and ammunition supply from other states and the terrorist state has storage facilities. When Russia got to war in Syria in support of president Assad, they accused Turkey and other states of supporting terrorists. Russia provided endless evidence, mainly satellite images that showed plenty of images of ISIS oil infrastructure including production, storage, transportation etc. It was not possible to hide hundreds or

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thousands of trucks from satellite reconnaissance that were used to transport ISIS oil to Turkey. Turkish authorities flatly denied Russian accusations without providing any credible explanation or evidence of the contrary.²⁴ To make the situation worse, The Financial Times and other influential Western newspapers widely published what Western governments officially denied: the details of how Turkey did business with ISIS thus providing the terrorist state various forms of supply, including weapons, ammunition, finances etc.^{25 26 27 28 29}

One might suggest that the US is unaware of Turkey's dirty businesses with the ISIS. It is simply not true. Activities at

²⁴ HENDERSON, Emma (2015): Russia accuses Turkish President Erdogan's son-in-law of being 'linked to Isis oil trade', *The Independent*, 5 December 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-accuses-president-erdogans-son-in-law-of-being-linked-to-isis-oil-trade-a6761436.html> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

²⁵ SOLOMON Erika – KWONG, Robin – BERNARD, Steven (2015): Inside Isis Inc: The journey of a barrel of oil, *The Financial Times*, 14 October 2015, <http://f.ft.com/sites/2015/isis-oil/> (Accessed: 1 January 2016)

²⁶ SOLOMON, Erika – CHAZAN, Guy – JONES, Sam (2015): Isis Inc: How oil fuels the jihadi terrorist, *The Financial Times*, 14 October 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/b8234932-719b-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a.html#axzz3sh2k8y00> (Accessed: 1 January 2016)

²⁷ STEPHENS Philip (2014): The fatal flaw in the west's fight against Isis, *The Financial Times*, 2 October 2014, http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/1cef76e2-48c1-11e4-9f63-00144feab7de.html#axzz3t9j7TuQn__ (Accessed: 1 January 2016)

²⁸ JONES Sam – ZALEWSKI, Piotr – SOLOMON Erika (2014): Isis sells smuggled oil to Turkey and Iraqi Kurds, says US Treasury, *The Financial Times*, 23 October 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6c269c4e-5ace-11e4-b449-00144feab7de.html#axzz3sh2k8y00> (Accessed: 8 December 2015)

²⁹ BARKER Anne (2015): Is Turkey buying oil smuggled by Islamic State? *ABC*, 7 December 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-01/is-turkey-is-buying-oil-smuggled-by-islamic-state/6991526> (Accessed: 7 January 2016)

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that scale are impossible to hide. Turkey even got official accusations from the US. “*The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, known as Isis, is earning as much as \$1m a day through the sale of oil to some of its biggest enemies: middlemen from Turkey, Iraq’s Kurdish community and the regime of Bashar al-Assad, according to the US Treasury. The remarks ... (were – the auth.) made in a speech to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on Thursday by David Cohen, the undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence...*”³⁰ Such a statement of the US undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence should be taken seriously by anyone who believes that the US foreign policies genuinely and consequently fight international terrorism, in our case the most brutal and powerful terrorist organisation of the 21st century that is ISIS. This statement proves that the US was well aware of the realities and failed to implement any significant actions against such practices in foreign policy terms.

We have to face a nasty reality: we have a NATO member, Turkey who supported – more precisely: still supports – international terrorism. This NATO ally is not put on a “blacklist”, there are no Western ultimatums against such policies of the country’s leadership, no economic and other sanctions against Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey is clearly not the only state that supported and still supports ISIS. Saudi-Arabia – a US ally in the Middle East, the second after Israel – also supports the ISIS. Qatar has recently been accused of supporting international terrorism however, “value-based” US policies do not prohibit

³⁰ JONES Sam – ZALEWSKI, Piotr – SOLOMON Erika (2014): Isis sells smuggled oil to Turkey and Iraqi Kurds, says US Treasury, *The Financial Times*, 23 October 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6c269c4e-5ace-11e4-b449-00144feab7de.html#axzz3sh2k8y00> (Accessed: 8 December 2015)

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selling powerful US weapon systems to Qatar,³¹ even after the US accusations of supporting terrorism became official against Qatar.

The previous example is of course not the only case demonstrating that the US political elite shamelessly sides with jihadist terrorist organisations and/or countries that support terrorism, if US geopolitical interests coincide with the goals of the terrorists. Ron Paul, a former member of the US Congress, analysed how Gen. David Petraeus offered a “solution” in Syria: “... we see the disgraced General David Petraeus in the news ... offering his solution to the problem in Syria: make an alliance with al-Qaeda against ISIS! Petraeus was head of the CIA when the US launched its covert regime-change policy in Syria, and he was in charge of the “surge” in Iraq that contributed to the creation of al-Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The idea that the US can salvage its disastrous Syria policy by making an alliance with al-Qaeda is horrific. Does anyone think the refugee problem in Syria will not be worse if either al-Qaeda or ISIS takes over the country?”³²

If US and Western policies against international terrorism and in this case against ISIS were credible, there would be a “black list” of countries supporting terrorism, there would be ultimatums, economic sanctions and all forms of putting pressure on pro-terrorist countries. The issue of supporting international terrorism would have been seriously raised at the UN Security

³¹ NYT Editorial Board: Fighting, While Funding, Extremists, *The New York Times*, 19 June 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-qatar-isis-terrorism.html> (Accessed: 24 June 2017)

³² RON, Paul (2015): The Real Refugee Problem – and How to Solve It, *The New American*. (2015, September 6). <http://www.thenewamerican.com/reviews/opinion/item/21533-the-real-refugee-problem-and-how-to-solve-it> (Accessed: 11 January 2016)

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Council. Embarrassingly for the Obama administration and the Western world, the key threats for the West – Russia and China – would most probably support a genuine fight and sanctions etc. against terrorist supporter countries. Since the US and the Western world fails to put pressure on terrorist supporter countries, furthermore such countries are neither expelled from NATO, such as Turkey, nor from an alliance with the US in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, it is safe to conclude that the Western world does not genuinely fight international terrorism. The West rather uses international terrorism as an instrument to achieve its own geopolitical goals, when such geopolitical goals coincide with those of the terrorists. This is a conclusion of grave concern. It leads us to a discovery, that if terrorists fight the Syrian government and Russia, geopolitical goals of the US and the Western world coincide and therefore terrorist organisations receive direct and/or indirect support from the West.

Thomas L. Friedman, a columnist of The New York Times, shamelessly, but at least honestly questions the rationale of Trump's fighting of ISIS in Syria and argues that ISIS should be allowed to remain the problem of Iran, Russia, Hezbollah and Assad, but most importantly: not the problem of the Western world eager to get rid of president Assad: *"We could dramatically increase our military aid to anti-Assad rebels, giving them sufficient anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to threaten Russian, Iranian, Hezbollah and Syrian helicopters and fighter jets and make them bleed, maybe enough to want to open negotiations..."*

What else? We could simply back off fighting territorial ISIS in Syria and make it entirely a problem for Iran, Russia, Hezbollah and Assad. After all, they're the ones overextended in Syria, not us. Make them fight a two-front war — the moderate rebels on one side and ISIS on the other. If we defeat territorial ISIS in Syria now, we will only reduce the pressure on Assad, Iran, Russia and Hezbollah and enable them to devote all their resources to crushing the last moderate rebels in Idlib, not

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sharing power with them."³³ Credit for The New York Times for outlining the unadmitted and/or actively denied, but real foreign policy goals of the US, ultimately the Western world in Syria when siding with ISIS. One might argue that such an opinion is solely that of the author, Thomas L. Friedman. However, it is very hard to believe that such a "genuine" opinion of the author could be published in The New York Times without sharing cornerstones with powerful policy makers within the US political elite. Should such views not be shared by major policy makers or significant layers of public opinion, they would result in an outrage if published, which is not the case.

In order to provide cover for false and harmful reality of aligning with terrorists, the idea of supporting "moderate" opposition in Syria was invented in the West. *"In Libya, the West simply called the rebels "rebels" and did not see the need to label them as anything else. Now, rebels being supported in Syria are "moderates," but that does not mean that they are secularists, nor does it mean that their vision for Syria is plural or democratic. They are staunch Islamists, no different from the Islamists that are running amok in Libya, armed to the teeth with enough weapons to wage an endless war against one another and the fragile Libyan state they helped create. For almost fifteen years, the interventionist policies of the War on Terror has produced a world that is more unstable than the one in which we lived the day before the September 11 attacks.*"³⁴ We will see more details

³³ FRIEDMAN, Thomas L. (2017): Why Is Trump Fighting ISIS in Syria?, *The New York Times*, 12 April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/12/opinion/why-is-trump-fighting-isis-in-syria.html?_r=0 (Accessed: 23 April 2017)

³⁴ DEKKI, Christopher C. (2016, February 9). An Islamist Is Still an Islamist: An Analysis of the "Moderate" Opposition in Syria, *Al Masdar News*, <http://www.almasdarnews.com/article/27951/> (Accessed: 10 February 2016)

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of Western siding with terrorism against the Government of Syria and Russia in the Syria chapter.

One might wonder why there are no division lines in NATO in order to oppose US policies that are at least tacitly complicit to supporting ISIS by third states. The sad reality is that the Western countries in NATO are in the same boat with the US – that is the unquestionable leader of the alliance – and they act as junior partners at best, failing to have genuine foreign policies to efficiently resist international terrorism. Should they had a genuine understanding of the dangers of international terrorism, especially the ISIS there should have been an enormous scandal³⁵ in NATO that could lead as far as the dissolution of the Alliance. We are unable to witness such a scandal and it is highly unlikely that such a hypothetical collision course could be perfectly hidden in classified documents or behind closed doors.

It is not possible to support ISIS and keep it a secret, for a simple reason: that is the scale of the support.³⁶ There is evidence that proves the involvement of the US,^{37 38 39 40 41 42 43}

³⁵ BLANKENSHIP, Brad (2017): Is Europe pursuing an independent foreign policy direction?, *AMN*, 25 June 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/is-europe-pursuing-an-independent-foreign-policy/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

³⁶ Who Supports The Islamic State (ISIS)? Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, Israel, UK, France, USA, Infographics By Prof. Tim Anderson Global Research, *Global Research*, 20 November 2015, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/who-supports-the-islamic-state-isis-saudi-arabia-turkey-qatar-uk-france-usa/5490271> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

³⁷ Tehran to Release Evidence of US Backing of Daesh Terrorists - Iranian Official, Iran is planning to publish evidence of US actions supporting Daesh, media adviser to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRIGC) commander-in-chief told the RT broadcaster in an interview, *Sputnik News*, 22 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201706221054872380-tehran-evience-us-support-terrorists/> (Accessed: 22 June 2017)

³⁸ Russia awaits West's reaction to 'unidentified aircraft' supporting IS in Afghanistan, An Afghan MP earlier stated that these unidentified military

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Israel,^{44 45 46 47 48 49 50} Saudi-Arabia,^{51 52} Turkey,^{53 54 55} Qatar^{56 57} and other countries supporting ISIS and affiliates in multiple

helicopters might belong to the US, TASS, 22 June 2017, <http://tass.com/politics/952790> (Accessed: 22 June 2017)

³⁹ Afghanistan's ex-president calls Islamic State group 'US product',

The US must explain routine flights of unmarked helicopters "dropping supplies to the terror faction on the Pakistan and Afghanistan border," said Hamid Karzai, TASS, 5 May 2017, <http://tass.com/world/944720> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁴⁰ МИД обратил внимание западных СМИ на неопознанные вертолеты в Афганистане, *Voенkor*, 22 June 2017, <http://voenkor.info/content/18344> (Accessed: 22 June 2017)

⁴¹ Christoph Hörstel, Federal Chairman of the new political force in Germany: "Syria has been the victim of international terrorism instigated by Washington policies and carried out by proxies...", *Syrian Free Press*, 26 June 2017, <https://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/2017/06/26/christoph-horstel-federal-chairman-of-the-new-political-force-in-germany-syria-has-been-the-victim-of-international-terrorism-instigated-by-washington-policies-and-carried-out-by-proxies/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁴² США заигрывают с терроризмом, а не борются с ним, считают в Иране, RIA, 27 June 2017, <https://ria.ru/world/20170627/1497340542.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁴³ AL-HUSAINI, Nahed (2017): Trump to Lavrov: US will put ISIS in Damascus whatever the cost, *Veterans Today*, 15 May 2017, <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2017/05/15/trump-to-lavrov-us-will-put-isis-in-damascus-whatever-the-cost/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁴⁴ AHREN Raphael (2015): Israel acknowledges it is helping Syrian rebel fighters, Defense minister says Jerusalem assists insurgents in exchange for promise Druze will be kept out of harm's way, *Times of Israel*, 29 June 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/yaalon-syrian-rebels-keeping-druze-safe-in-exchange-for-israeli-aid/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁴⁵ AHT Staff: Moshe Ya'alon Admits Tacit Israel-ISIS Alliance: Report, Israel's former minister of military affairs Moshe Ya'alon has admitted to a tacit alliance with ISIS, saying the group had "immediately apologized" to Tel Aviv after firing "once" into Israel, *The American Herald Tribune*, 24 April 2017, <http://ahtribune.com/world/north-africa-south-west-asia/1633-moshe-yaalon.html> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

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⁴⁶ ALEXIS, Jonas E. (2017): Benjamin Netanyahu threatens Iran for attacking ISIS, *Veterans Today*, 20 June 2017, <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2017/06/20/benjamin-netanyahu-threatens-iran-for-attacking-isis/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁴⁷ MOORE Jack (2016): Israeli Defense Minister: I Prefer ISIS to Iran on Our Borders, *Newsweek*, 20 January 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/israeli-defense-minister-i-prefer-isis-iran-our-borders-417726> WORLD (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁴⁸ FADEL, Leith (2017): Israeli airstrikes fail to propel Al-Qaeda forces in the Golan Heights, *AMN*, 27 June 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/israeli-airstrikes-fail-propel-al-qaeda-forces-golan-heights/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁴⁹ Israel's fire support for its al-Qaeda mercenaries started three years ago [...and long before even...], *Syrian Free Press*, 26 June 2017, <https://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/2017/06/26/zog-support-al-qaeda/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁵⁰ Syrian Arab Army enters East Dayr El-Zor, crushes Nusra-Zionist attack on Golan, separates East Der'ah from the West, *Syrian Free Press*, 25 June 2017, <https://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/type/gallery/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁵¹ LUSHER Adam (2017): Senior US official reduced to very awkward silence when asked about Saudi Arabia's attitude to democracy, Acting Assistant Secretary of State Stuart Jones' 20-second hesitation before answering has been described as the longest pause ever seen from a US official, *The Independent*, 31 May 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/stuart-jones-state-department-saudi-arabia-democracy-iran-awkward-embarrassing-agonising-pause-most-a7764961.html> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁵² NYT Editorial Board: Fighting, While Funding, Extremists, *The New York Times*, 19 June 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-qatar-isis-terrorism.html> (Accessed: 24 June 2017)

⁵³ SOLOMON, Erika – KWONG, Robin – BERNARD, Steven (2015): Inside Isis Inc: The journey of a barrel of oil, *The Financial Times*, 14 October 2015, <http://ft.com/sites/2015/isis-oil/> (Accessed: 1 January 2016)

⁵⁴ SOLOMON, Erika - CHAZAN Guy - JONES Sam (2015): Isis Inc: how oil fuels the jihadi terrorist, *The Financial Times*, 14 October 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/b8234932-719b-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a.html#axzz3sh2k8y00> (Accessed: 1 January 2016)

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ways, both directly and indirectly: *“This is the reality that we are living in. If you or I were to go and provide money, weapons or support to a group like al Qaeda or ISIS, we’d be thrown in jail. However, the U.S. Government has been providing money, weapons, intel, assistance and other types of support through the CIA directly to these groups that are working with and are affiliated with al Qaeda and ISIS.”*⁵⁸

“Washington created and supports ISIS, along with other anti-government terrorists in Syria and elsewhere. NATO, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other regional rogue states supply them with weapons and other material support. So does Israel. ... Israel provides hospital treatment for hundreds, maybe thousands, of terrorist fighters, calling it “humanitarian assistance,” according to Ya’alon,⁵⁹ adding it’s “not in their interest” to publicize Israeli aid –

⁵⁵ BARKER, Anne (2015): Is Turkey buying oil smuggled by Islamic State? ABC, 7 December 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-01/is-turkey-is-buying-oil-smuggled-by-islamic-state/6991526> (Accessed: 7 January 2016)

⁵⁶ NORTON, Ben (2016): Leaked Hillary Clinton emails show U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar supported ISIS, Emails released by WikiLeaks add to the growing body of evidence that Gulf regimes have backed the Islamic State, *Salon*, 12 October 2016, <http://www.salon.com/2016/10/11/leaked-hillary-clinton-emails-show-u-s-allies-saudi-arabia-and-qatar-supported-isis/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁵⁷ NYT Editorial Board: Fighting, While Funding, Extremists, *The New York Times*, 19 June 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-qatar-isis-terrorism.html> (Accessed: 24 June 2017)

⁵⁸ NOBLE S. (2016): Democrat Congresswoman Says US Is Directly Funding ISIS, Al Qaeda, *Independent Sentinel*, 8 December 2016, <http://www.independentsentinel.com/democrat-congresswoman-says-us-is-directly-funding-isis-al-qaeda/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁵⁹ **Moshe Ya’alon, former Israeli defence minister**

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*including weapons and munitions supplied, along with Israeli air strikes, he failed to explain.*⁶⁰

Aligning with terrorists and providing support for them is nothing new in US and Western foreign policies. The Taliban was no less terrorist, extremist, jihadist, violent, oppressive, medieval minded, barbaric etc., than today, when they fought the “Evil Empire”, the Soviet Union. The US provided several forms of support to the Taliban, including financing, weaponry etc.^{61 62 63}
^{64 65} It is clear, that the social system of the “Evil Empire”, the Soviet Union was far better than that of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but that was not the point. The main idea of such US

⁶⁰ LENDMAN, Stephen (2017):_Alliance of Convenience: Israel Supports Syria's ISIS Terror Group, *Global Research*, 27 April 2017, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/alliance-of-convenience-israel-supports-syrias-isis-terror-group/5587203> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁶¹ COLL, Steve: Ghost Wars: How Reagan Armed the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan, *Democracy Now*, 10 June 2004, https://www.democracynow.org/2004/6/10/ghost_wars_how_reagan_armed_the (Accessed: 22 June 2017)

⁶² How The CIA Helped Create Osama Bin Laden, News One, 2011, <https://newsone.com/1205745/cia-osama-bin-laden-al-qaeda/> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁶³ FITCHETT, Joseph (2001): What About the Taliban's Stingers?, *The New York Times*, 26 September 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/26/news/what-about-the-talibans-stingers.html> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁶⁴ THAROOR, Ishaan (2014): The Taliban indoctrinates kids with jihadist textbooks paid for by the U.S., *The Washington Post*, 8 December 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/12/08/the-taliban-indoctrinates-kids-with-jihadist-textbooks-paid-for-by-the-u-s/?utm_term=.83cc23841fcd (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

⁶⁵ BURKE, Jason (1999): Frankenstein the CIA created, Mujahideen trained and funded by the US are among its deadliest foes, *The Guardian*, 17 January 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/jan/17/yemen.islam> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

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and Western policies was to align with anyone, maybe with the devil himself, in order to drag the Soviet Union into a war it cannot win and cause as much harm, as possible. In other words: to create “a Vietnam” for the Soviet Union, where the “Evil Empire” would be disgracefully defeated. The fate of the Soviet soldiers just like the Afghan people, as human beings, was a secondary consideration, if it was considered at all.

The problem of US and Western alignment with forms of international terrorism is not limited to acts, when already existing terrorist organisations get some form of tacit or active support. Failed examples of US/Western democracy export leading to wars and chaos in the Middle East and elsewhere that proved to be a fertile ground for the rise of various terrorist organisations, such as the ISIS in Iraq, Syria, Libya and lately in the Philippines. Iraq is the ultimate example of the failure of Western style practices under the pretext of “exporting democracy” or “nation building”. One might recall that the original arguments to go to war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq – the threat of weapons of mass destruction and suggested collaboration with Al-Qaida – have proved to be groundless.

III) US-Russian military opposition in the mirror of some contemporary conflicts

In the next few chapters there is a brief analysis of some military conflicts that are based on US-Russian opposition. The focus is on contemporary issues when Trump is in power, rather than the past.

a) Georgia

It is very hard to find a sober rationale when analysing the decision of the Saakashvili administration when they attempted to conquer the South-Ossetia, starting with the so called “capital city”: Chinvali. Tbilisi could not hope that Russia would abstain

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from the war since the Georgian leadership was officially warned by Moscow several times. It was also crazy to assume that the US, maybe the entire NATO would go to war against Russia in order to allow Tbilisi to regain control of South-Ossetia or Abkhazia. There is a simple reason why great nuclear powers avoid entering large scale, direct military confrontation: such a war would inevitably lead to disastrous destruction endangering the survival of the entire humanity that is in nobody's interest. Georgia lost the war against Russia in South-Ossetia and Abkhazia in a matter of few days, as it could be foreseen even without a professional and detailed analysis of the capabilities of the opposing forces. Since that time the Russian State Duma officially acknowledged the two breakaway regions as independent states. Their independence is guaranteed by Russian military power, where the interstate contracts are valid for 50 years. Russia also has military bases on the territory of the two states, unacknowledged by International Law.

According to my analysis the military actions of the Georgian government were taken in order to provoke a war with Russia when Russia would occupy entire Georgia by military force and achieve a regime change, when installing a pro-Moscow, puppet government. The image of Russia was supposed to be damaged, economic sanctions were supposed to be installed against Moscow. Russia was supposed to spend a lot of resources to maintain the occupation and literally bleed because of the resistance. In order to ensure Russian military involvement the Georgians shelled a Russian base and killed about 50 Russian servicemen providing a perfect *casus belli*. However, a strategic mistake occurred on the Georgian and ultimately the US side: Russian Armed Forces advanced only to liberate the territory of the two breakaway regions where there is overwhelming public support of Russian military presence and autonomous statehood guaranteed by Russia. Georgian military actions proved to be disastrous for Tbilisi.

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According to an official US statement after the lost war the US tried to dissuade Georgia from going to war, but did not succeed. Let's assume that the official US position fairly reflects reality. In that case a very serious, but mostly unasked, rhetoric question arises: can we seriously consider the NATO membership of an aspirant country that goes to war with Russia even after the most powerful member of the Alliance – that is the US – officially tries to convince them not to do so?

The territorial conflict with Russia spoiled Georgian ambitions to join NATO since problems emerged that are not possible to resolve. The Alliance officially denies that third parties have a say when there is NATO enlargement. However, Georgia is a perfect example of the opposite. Russia de facto effectively halts NATO membership of Georgia since nobody wants to import an unresolved territorial dispute to the Alliance, especially if Russia is an opponent. This case shows that the principle of NATO suggesting that there is no way third states can influence NATO enlargement is merely wishful thinking if Russia has a territorial dispute with the aspirant country.

b) Ukraine

Ukraine is positioned between two tectonic plates that are the West and Russia. The authentic national interests of the country require good relationship with both. Ukraine could prefer one tectonic plate to another that is not against the authentic national interests. However, the current leadership of Ukraine does not act according to such principles. It is definitely not a genuine national interest of Ukraine to side with one tectonic plate against another and try to win a war against a tectonic plate, mainly on her own. This is precisely what is happening right now, when Ukraine is stuck in an armed conflict with Russian-backed rebel forces in Eastern Ukraine and has a territorial dispute with Russia in case of Crimea.

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We can endlessly argue whether Crimea that is mostly populated with people of Russian identity^{66 67} could or could not decide on self-determination depending on our views concerning boundaries of self-determination.⁶⁸ According to my opinion, the universally accepted limits of self-determination, according to which any minority must respect the constitution and the laws of the majority, intend to avoid any serious self-determination. Some legal experts suggest that major states want to avoid losing territories and that is why self-determination is limited to virtually zero. In case of Crimea, Russia successfully supported self-determination avoiding a war that would definitely have been waged by the Ukrainian majority.

For sober analysts it is clear, that Ukraine cannot win a war against Russian backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine, unless there is a ground-breaking, ultra-liberal “colored revolution” in Russia that is highly unlikely in a short or medium term.

Trump’s election victory was bad news for Kiev, since it appeared during the election campaign that there was a political will to normalise US-Russian relationship. Kiev views such attempts dangerous because such a trend could easily lead to weakened support for Ukraine confronting Moscow. For such considerations Kiev made an attempt to renew fighting in Eastern Ukraine that was definitely not in the interest of Moscow awaiting

⁶⁶ FRIZELL, Sam (2014): Crimea Votes to Leave Ukraine for Russia, *Time*, 16 March 2014, <http://time.com/26537/crimea-ukraine-russia-referendum-results/> (Accessed: 26 June 2017)

⁶⁷ Crimea referendum: Voters 'back Russia union', *BBC*, 16 March 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26606097> (Accessed: 26 June 2017)

⁶⁸ TSUKANOVA, Arina (2017): How Ukraine Annexed Crimea. A Frank Conversation with Nikki Haley, *Strategic Culture*, 8 February 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/02/08/how-ukraine-annexed-crimea-frank-conversation-with-nikki-haley.html> (Accessed: 26 June 2017)

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normalisation of US-Russian relations. The renewal of fighting was confirmed by OSCE, however the methodology of collecting and analysing data obscured who initiated the renewal of fighting, or who violated cease fire more times etc. Moscow-backed separatist forces revenged after a delay, when it became obvious that the normalisation of US-Russian relations would not occur in a short run and escalation did not have a significant effect on US foreign policy.

It is obvious but unnoticed by Western countries that the deterioration of relations between Ukraine and Russia causes a relatively higher damage to Ukraine in economic terms. The coal blockade against the two separatist regions was initiated by Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and once the regime in Kiev realised that they are absolutely powerless against their own ultra-nationalists, they provided state support for the blockade.⁶⁹ The ultra-nationalists only needed to demonstrate that a new wave of civil war would be in Ukraine unless the regime in Kiev capitulates. The anthracite-blockade is perfect example of the self-destructing nature of Ukrainian nationalist policies, since (a) no matter where Ukraine would get the anthracite, that would be more expensive than purchasing it from Donetsk and Lugansk, (b) the anthracite was originally mined and sold by a Ukrainian oligarch, Akhmetov, who also paid taxes for Kiev. As a result of the blockade the mines and factories of Akhmetov were nationalised and the economic cooperation between the

⁶⁹ PETRO, Nicolai N. – COHEN, Josh (2017): The Bizarre Reason Ukraine Could Be Facing a Legitimacy Crisis. A blockade has revealed the government's unwillingness to enforce state authority against unsanctioned vigilantism, *Strategic Culture*, 18 March 2017, <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/03/18/bizarre-reason-ukraine-could-be-facing-legitimacy-crisis.html> (Accessed: 23 April 2017)

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separatist regions and Russia developed to unprecedented levels.

It was indeed a very strange war between the Kiev regime and the separatists when Akhmetov's business was unharmed and his mines and factories could even pay taxes to Kiev. Russian backed separatists and ultimately Moscow had "steel nerves" when they decided to allow it. Akhmetov had 3 years to decide whether to back the Kiev regime or not. He made the wrong choice resulting in massive loss of his property. Some Russian journalists suggested that those who supported the anthracite-blockade⁷⁰ in the Ukrainian Rada should have gotten on their skies in order to obtain the highest level state decorations in the Kremlin.

Kiev is quite successful when there is a need to produce destructive economic tendencies for themselves. Hooligan actions against Russian banks consciously "unnoticed" by police, later on mutual economic restrictions of the Ukrainian Rada and the Russian State Duma brought their toll: Kiev lost 75 percent of direct foreign capital investment. Furthermore, the unlawful actions on the side of the Kiev regime will most likely result in Russian lawsuits and Kiev will likely be forced to compensate Russian banks.

There is a quite widely accepted view amongst Western and Russian politicians, that there is no alternative to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This view serves great power interests, but fails to acknowledge that there is a lot of wishful thinking. Full implementation of the Minsk agreements would require the dissolution of all illegal military formations in

⁷⁰ Власть возглавила блокаду Донбасса: Киев официально приостановил транспортное сообщение с регионом, *Antifashist*, 15 March 2017, <http://antifashist.com/item/ukraina-oficialno-priostanovila-transportnoe-soobshhenie-s-donbassom.html> (Accessed: 23 April 2017)

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Eastern Ukraine and handing over control of the Eastern border to Kiev. This equals to the capitulation of Russian backed separatists and ultimately Moscow. The nationalist government in Kiev does not want to allow the separatist fighters, especially their leaders get away unpunished, as it is suggested in the Minsk-2 agreement. Kiev does not want to decentralise power in favour of self-determination in Ukraine. Antagonisms between opposing forces make the Minsk agreements dead, even when they are officially still in effect. The more time passes without the full implementation the more obvious it becomes, that they would not be implemented and we have a frozen conflict, a sort of a stalemate in Eastern Ukraine.

In spite of the decision of NATO in Bucharest in 2008 according to which Ukraine and Georgia “will become members of NATO,”⁷¹ the reality is that the two aspirants are trapped in a territorial dispute with Russia where no solution is in sight. The absence of solution of the territorial conflict with Russia equals failure to achieve NATO membership, since nobody is interested to fight a major war with Russia. Besides that the Ukrainian economic reform is not providing the results expected by the West, while EU is busy with their own problems such as Brexit etc. A country of a magnitude of Ukraine having its own grave problems is clearly unfit to achieve EU membership in the foreseeable future.

The reality is that Ukraine is stuck in a variety of problems such as a low intensity war, unresolved negative trends of the economy, negative demographic trends, overwhelming

⁷¹ Bucharest Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008, NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/in/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm (Accessed: 26 June 2017)

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corruption, and the impoverishment of the population etc. with no hope of meaningful Western integration. According to the data of the World Bank, Ukraine managed to produce the worst trends in the world between 1990 and 2015 (!),⁷² since the GDP of the country declined in a quarter century. Only the post-Kaddafi Libya or South-Sudan had similarly disastrous economic trends making them comparable with Ukraine. However, we lack sufficient data on Libya and South-Sudan to properly compare their economic trends with that of Ukraine.

c) Syria

An alleged chemical attack took place in Khan Sheikhoun⁷³ on 4 April 2017 that claimed the life of some 80 people. There is no much more “evidence” than some video footage where “White Helmets” are shown when “rescuing” the casualties. “White Helmets” are notorious for actively cooperating with jihadist militants,^{74 75 76 77} Al-Qaida,^{78 79} and they also have a history of

⁷² GDP, PPP (current international \$), World Bank, International Comparison Program database. *The World Bank*, 2017, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?end=2015&locations=UA&start=2015&view=map> (Accessed: 23 April 2017)

⁷³ Chemical Weapons Incident in Syria's Idlib Province, *Sputnik News*, April 2017, https://sputniknews.com/trend/idlib_chemical_incident_2017/ (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁷⁴ BEELEY, Vanessa (2016): Exclusive: The REAL Syria Civil Defence Exposes Fake 'White Helmets' as Terrorist-Linked Imposters, *21st Century Wire*, 23 September 2016, <http://21stcenturywire.com/2016/09/23/exclusive-the-real-syria-civil-defence-expose-natos-white-helmets-as-terrorist-linked-imposters/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁷⁵ RITTER Scott (2016): The 'White Helmets' and the Inherent Contradiction of America's Syria Policy, *Truth Dig*, 5 October 2016, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/white_helmets_inherent_contradiction_american_syria_policy_20161005 (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

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falsifications.^{80 81} In our case the “White Helmets” performed their life saving effort in suspicious conditions: most importantly with no sufficient gear. Should there be a serious chemical incident lack of sufficient protective gear would have resulted in a case where the rescuers themselves would also have become victims. The Trump administration made a very fast judgement blaming the

⁷⁶ BEELEY, Vanessa (2016): Canada’s NDP Supporting White Helmets for Nobel Prize is ‘Serious Mistake’ ~ Open Letter Written by John Ryan, Ph.D, *21st Century Wire*, 26 September 2016, <http://21stcenturywire.com/2016/09/26/canada-ndp-supporting-white-helmets-for-nobel-prize-is-a-serious-mistake-open-letter-written-by-john-ryan/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁷⁷ White Helmets member caught on camera disposing of Syrian soldiers’ mutilated bodies (WARNING: GRAPHIC VIDEO), *Syrian Free Press*, 25 June 2017, <https://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/2017/06/25/white-helmets-graphic/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁷⁸ BEELEY Vanessa (2017): “Stay Strong London Firefighters, Al-Qaeda Supports You”: Channel 4 Promoting Terrorism, White Helmets in Daraa, The same “team” of White Helmets in Daraa were filmed on 20th June 2017 standing on the slaughtered bodies of SAA soldiers, piled into the back of a pick-up truck, while extremists parade the soldiers severed heads as trophies. The same team of White Helmets in Daraa were filmed cheering and mopping up after an extremist extra judicial execution in Daraa on the 16th May 2017. Channel 4 have showcased this team of terrorists, displaying “solidarity” with the firefighters tackling the tragic blaze at Grenfell Tower, *Syrian Free Press*, 26 June 2017, <https://syrianfreepress.wordpress.com/2017/06/26/al-qaeda-white-helmets/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁷⁹ Al-Qaeda In Syria Praises The White Helmets, *Youtube*, 21 Mach 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvTAi0MXY6w> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁸⁰ TURBEVILLE, Brandon (2016): White Helmets Video and Supporters’ Demonstrations Confirm Lack of Credibility, *Activist Post*, 30 November 2016, <http://www.activistpost.com/2016/11/white-helmets-video-supporters-demonstrations-lack-credibility.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁸¹ HENNINGSEN, Patrick (2016): A NOBEL LIE: CNN’s Claim That ‘White Helmets Center in Damascus’ Was Hit by a Barrel Bomb, *21st Century Wire*, 8 October 2016, <http://21stcenturywire.com/2016/10/08/more-lies-cnn-claim-white-helmets-center-hit-by-barrel-bomb-in-damascus/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

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Syrian Air Force for the incident, ignoring US intelligence data or any inquiry by the UN etc. *„On April 6, United States President Donald Trump authorized an early morning Tomahawk missile strike on Shayrat Air Base in central Syria in retaliation for what he said was a deadly nerve agent attack carried out by the Syrian government two days earlier in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun. Trump issued the order despite having been warned by the U.S. intelligence community that it had found no evidence that the Syrians had used a chemical weapon.*

The available intelligence made clear that the Syrians had targeted a jihadist meeting site on April 4 using a Russian-supplied guided bomb equipped with conventional explosives. Details of the attack, including information on its so-called high-value targets, had been provided by the Russians days in advance to American and allied military officials in Doha, whose mission is to coordinate all U.S., allied, Syrian and Russian Air Force operations in the region.

Some American military and intelligence officials were especially distressed by the president's determination to ignore the evidence. "None of this makes any sense," one officer told colleagues upon learning of the decision to bomb. "We KNOW that there was no chemical attack ... the Russians are furious. Claiming we have the real intel and know the truth ... I guess it didn't matter whether we elected Clinton or Trump."

Within hours of the April 4 bombing, the world's media was saturated with photographs and videos from Khan Sheikhoun. Pictures of dead and dying victims, allegedly suffering from the symptoms of nerve gas poisoning, were uploaded to social media by local activists, including the White Helmets, a first responder

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*group known for its close association with the Syrian opposition.”*⁸²

The decision of the US president to bomb the Syrian airbase is not only completely unjustified⁸³ but also entirely illegal, since there is no authorisation of the UN Security Council to bomb Syrian Government objects. The allegedly free Western mainstream media resorted to a complicit hysteria, and the US strikes in Syria got full support of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in an official statement on 7 April 2017, making this support an official policy of the Alliance.⁸⁴

The most acceptable and credible investigation of the alleged chemical attack could have theoretically been performed by the UN-OPCW⁸⁵ but such a proposal was blocked by powerful Western nations with no coherent explanation.⁸⁶ Blocking an independent investigation by itself is a confession of a criminal policy. It suggests that the West is determined to get rid of both Assad and the Russians in Syria where there are no moral considerations. In this case False Flag Operations by the West are entirely justified. The West applied double standards when

⁸² HERSH, Seymour M. (2017): Trump's Red Line, *Die Welt*, 25 June 2017, <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article165905578/Trump-s-Red-Line.html> (Accessed: 26 June 2017)

⁸³ Химический фейк в Идлибе — факты и разъяснения (ФОТО), *Rusvesna*, 13 April 2017, <http://rusvesna.su/news/1491993821> (Accessed: 17 April 2017)

⁸⁴ Statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on US strikes in Syria, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, 7 April 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_143082.htm?selectedLocale=en (Accessed: 26 June 2017)

⁸⁵ Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

⁸⁶ Blocking of Russian OPCW Proposal on Idlib Aims to Push for Regime Change, *Sputnik News*, 21 April 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201704211052834914-russian-opcw-block-syria-regime-change/> (Accessed: 23 April 2017)

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remained silent about the chemical attack of the ISIS in Mosul in April 2017, because such news would have raised doubts concerning Syrian Government involvement in the chemical attack on Khain Sheikhoun.⁸⁷

The Syrian and Russian governments did not only vehemently denied that the chemical attack was their responsibility, but also invited the so called “international community” to get to Shayrat Air Base and find the remains of the chemical agents after the Tomahawk cruise missile strike, since the presence of chemical agents is not possible to hide from expert investigation, even if the chemical weapons had been removed from the area. The so called “international community” did not accept the invitation, since it was blocked by powerful Western countries also members of the UN Security Council,⁸⁸ nor the allegations of the Syrian Government involvement in the chemical attack were withdrawn.

The execution of a chemical attack against the opposition fighters in Syria would have been an absolutely unjustifiable, stupid and suicidal move by the Syrian Government. It is also needless from the military point of view because Assad is winning the war in Syria with substantial Russian military support. The more time passes without a credible UN-OPCW investigation, the more unlikely there will be a universally accepted version of the incident. The failure to impartially investigate the incident only

⁸⁷ Валерия Маслова: Ирак вам не Сирия: почему западные журналисты обходят вниманием химатаку в Мосуле, *Russia Today*, 19 April 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/380472-irak-siriya-smi-khimoruzhie-asad-ig> (Accessed: 23 April 2017)

⁸⁸ UNSC Partners' Evasion of Claimed Syria Chemical Attack Probe Worrying – Lavrov, *Sputnik News*, 13 April 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201704131052597395-syria-chemical-attack-probe-evasion/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

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weakens the credibility of the West, since blocking such an investigation is an indirect confession of criminal policies. Since that time, accusing the Syrian Government of plotting new chemical attacks became a routine procedure of the US.^{89 90 91 92} According to Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN: *“Any further attacks done to the people of Syria, will be blamed on Assad, but also on Russia & Iran who support him killing his*

⁸⁹ Kremlin Considers US' Threats Against Syrian Legitimate Leadership Unacceptable, *Sputnik News*, 27 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201706271055002138-kremlin-us-threats-syria/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹⁰ В Кремле прокомментировали заявления США о подготовке Асадом новой химатаки, *RIA*, 27 June 2017, <https://ria.ru/syria/20170627/1497362240.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹¹ US' Claims Assad Planning Chemical Attack in Syria Aimed to 'Justify Aggression', *Sputnik News*, 27 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201706271055001895-chemical-attack-assad-trump/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹² Анатолий Вассерман: Химическая атака в Сирии обязательно состоится — по закону Голливуда, *RIA*, 27 June 2017, <https://ria.ru/analytcs/20170627/1497358141.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹³ Lavrov Mocks Defected Syrian General's Claims About Hidden Chemical Weapons, *Sputnik News*, 15 April 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201704151052671030-lavrov-syrian-general-claims/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹⁴ Дмитрий Булгару: Химатака как предчувствие: в США просят применить против Сирии дополнительную военную силу, *Russia Today*, 27 June 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/403561-ssha-nastuplenie-siriya-himataka> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹⁵ Белый дом обвинил Асада в подготовке новой химической атаки, *RIA*, 27 June 2017, <https://ria.ru/syria/20170627/1497340374.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹⁶ Assad's 'Chemical Arms': US Has Long Record of Starting Wars on False Pretexts, *Sputnik News*, 28 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201706281055060144-us-syria-chemical-weapons/> (Accessed: 29 June 2017)

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*own people.*⁹⁷ This statement of the US ambassador appears to be honest. However, it is hard to find an expert suggesting that various jihadist gangs in Syria that also fight the Assad Government did or do not commit atrocities against the Syrian people on a regular basis. It also hard to suggest, that the US ambassador in the UN is unaware of the real meaning of her statement. Whatever she intended to suggest, she unveiled the real US policy. I'm not the only one concerned about such US policies. The Russian source quoting the US ambassador called her stance "a beacon of democracy" in the title of the article, clearly showing signs of deep frustration and sarcasm.

*"Just when I think the US could not sink any lower in its geopolitical demagoguery, I get blindsided by this incredible White House statement about the Assad government preparing a new chemical attack... Of course, no specifics were mentioned; and left out, as always, was any explanation as to WHY Assad would do something so stupid. He would be throwing away the hard-fought gains of his people against ISIS and the US coalition, with its own terrorist army operating in Syria. When we have a clear and unrepentant record of the US, Israel and the Gulf State terror hoodlums having mass-murdered Syrians and destroyed so much of Syria, why would Assad do such a stupid thing at this critical point? **The only feasible explanation is that segments of our own government have become a major national security risk to the rest of us.**"*⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Светоч демократии и цивилизованности: любую атаку в Сирии мы можем "повесить" на Асада, Россию или Иран, *Antifashist*, 27 June 2017, <http://antifashist.com/item/svetoch-demokratii-i-civilizovannosti-lyubuyu-ataku-v-sirii-my-mozhem-povesit-na-asada-rossiyu-ili-iran.html> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹⁸ DEAN, Jim W. (2017): Trump team is a major national security risk to the US, *Veterans Today*, 27 June 2017,

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The US Tomahawk strike against the Shayrat Air Base raises interesting questions. The US informed the Russians in advance, since possible Russian military casualties at the Air Base would lead to an escalation with consequences hard to predict. The Russians also warned the Syrian Government Forces which left the Air Base with very few exemptions, minimising the losses of the Syrian Air Force. From the Russian point of view such logic is still unacceptable that the US tells the strikes in advance and then strikes as many times as feels necessary. In this case the Syrian Arab Army will sooner or later cease to exist. The Russians cannot seriously consider strike US military targets as a retaliation, since that would lead to a US-Russian war. For such reasons, Russia might seem to be incapable to counteract to US strikes against Syrian Government Forces.

The Russians came up with a quite simple answer to the US challenge of probably repeated strikes against Syrian Government targets: they suspended the implementation of the Syrian Flight Safety Memorandum.⁹⁹ The Russians also dispositioned their forces increasingly close to Syrian Government Forces in order to make it very difficult if not impossible for the US to strike Syrian Government Forces without hitting the Russian Armed Forces. In case of a hypothetical US strike killing Russian troops would be a risk too high for the US to accept. The Russian response seemed to succeed: there were

<http://www.veteranstoday.com/2017/06/27/trump-team-is-a-major-national-security-risk-to-the-us/> (Accessed: 27 June 2017)

⁹⁹ Russia Restores Syria Flight Safety Memorandum With US at Tillerson's Request, *Sputnik News*, 25 April 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201704251052965996-russia-us-flight-safety-memorandum-restored/> (Accessed: 28 April 2017)

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no more US strikes against Syrian Government Forces in the short run.

Later on, following the meeting of Tillerson, Lavrov and Putin in Moscow,¹⁰⁰ the Russians resumed the implementation of the Syrian Flight Safety Memorandum, since the parties managed to agree that there would be no more US strikes against Syrian Government Forces. It is in line with the original policy of the Memorandum, which the parties reconfirmed.

Despite all promises and agreements, a US Air Force F/A-18E Super Hornet downed a Syrian Government fighter jet in Syrian airspace on 18 June 2017, resulting in the loss of the aircraft. The pilot¹⁰¹ was captured by terrorist forces and freed by a Syrian Arab Army Commando: *"Using modern technology, the exact location of the plane crash was tracked to territory controlled by terrorists. The special units of the Syrian Army carried out a successful rescue operation and the pilot's health is out of harm's way now,"* Syrian MP Ammar al-Asad said.¹⁰²

According to the Syrian Government, the fighter jet was performing military action against ISIS targets, when it was downed. The Syrian Government and the Russian mainstream

¹⁰⁰ SANGER David E. (2017): Tillerson and Putin Find Little More Than Disagreement in Meeting, *The New York Times*, 12 April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/12/world/europe/tillerson-putin-lavrov-russia-syria.html?_r=0 (Accessed: 28 April 2017)

¹⁰¹ Полина Духанова: «Откровенная агрессия»: западная коалиция сбита сирийский военный самолёт в районе Ракки, *Russia Today*, 19 June 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/401171-siriya-samolet-ssha> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

¹⁰² Ready for Revenge: How Syria Will Respond to US for Attack on Its Jet, *Sputnik News*, 20 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201706201054807836-syria-united-states-warplane-response/> (Accessed: 20 June 2017)

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media accused the US-led Western coalition of an act of war and provision of support to the terrorists fighting the Syrian Government Forces and Russia. The Syrian Government called the downing of their military aircraft “a cynical violation of the country’s sovereignty”. The press release of the US-led Coalition referred to an act of “self-defence of coalition partner forces”,¹⁰³ in this case the so called “Syrian Democratic Forces” controlling JaDin, a Syrian village South of Tabqah.

The downing of the Syrian military aircraft prompted Russia to suspend the implementation of the Flight Safety Memorandum (FSM) in Syria from the next day,¹⁰⁴ exactly as it happened after the Tomahawk strike.¹⁰⁵ Even though Russian military aircrafts were also in the airspace of the incident, the US failed to consult Russia that the Russian MoD views as a breach of the FSM. The Russian suspension of the implementation is a deliberate attempt to raise the risks of similar US actions in Syrian airspace, since there is not much Russia can do to avoid similar incidents in the future, assuming that downing manned US military planes is not an option at all, since it could easily lead to

¹⁰³ Combined Joint Task Force, Operation Inherent Resolve (Press release): Coalition Defends Partner Forces from Syrian Fighter Jet attacks, *Twitter*, 18 June 2017, https://twitter.com/ABCPolitics/status/876538619175022594/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Frussian.rt.com%2Fworld%2Farticle%2F401171-siriya-samolet-ssha (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

¹⁰⁴ Самолеты возглавляемой США коалиции станут целями ВКС России в Сирии, *Voенkor*, 19 June 2017, <http://voenkor.info/content/18296> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

¹⁰⁵ Russia suspends flight safety memorandum over Syria after US missile strike – Foreign Ministry, *Russia Today*, 7 April 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/383837-russia-syria-flight-safety/> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

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an escalation when we end up in a full scale US-Russia war¹⁰⁶ that is in nobody's interest.

Technically Russia could go further when “mixing” forces with the Syrian Arab Army, making it impossible or very difficult for the US-led coalition to hit Syrian targets without hitting Russian targets. Military bases could have both Syrian and Russian personnel everywhere, combined formations could be used by the Russian Airspace Forces and the Syrian Airforce, making it very difficult to down Syrian military aircraft without seriously endangering Russian aircrafts etc. Russia could even go further: the entire Syrian Airforce could be grounded and their missions could be carried out by Russian Airspace Forces aircrafts. In this case, the US-led coalition has to down Russian military aircrafts or do virtually nothing. It would be a very difficult dilemma and the Turkish downing of the Russian bomber showed that even though Russia did not start similar military actions by downing Turkish fighters, Russia enhanced air defence capabilities and credibly warned Turkey that similar actions would no longer be tolerated.

I consulted a senior, unnamed Hungarian Air Defence Missile Forces officer, a Lieutenant Colonel, who assured me that for the new models of the Russian S-300 and S-400 it is no big deal to down any Turkish F-16-s from the technical point of view. At that time Russian defence minister Sergey Shoygu reported to the Russian president, Vladimir Putin that the strengthened Russian air defences were ready to destroy any targets endangering the safety of the military airplanes of the Russian Airspace Forces.

¹⁰⁶ AUKEN, Bill Van (2017): The US Escalation in Syria and the Threat of World War, *Global Research*, 21 June 2017, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-us-escalation-in-syria-and-the-threat-of-world-war/5595498> (Accessed: 21 June 2017)

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We can argue whether there are “democratic forces” actively fighting the Syrian Government at all. Even if “democratic forces” do exist in Syria, the question arises whether they are “democratic” in Western terms, or in Middle Eastern terms. Even the BBC acknowledges that: *“The armed rebellion has evolved significantly since its inception. Secular moderates are now outnumbered by Islamists and jihadists, whose brutal tactics have caused global outrage.”*¹⁰⁷ Assuming that the BBC is right, the so called “moderate” or “democratic” forces within the so called “opposition” of the Syrian Government are a minority, therefore they are a force unable to govern Syria, even if the US-led coalition helps them to a degree when they achieve military victory against the Syrian Government and Russian Forces in Syria, that is highly unlikely. Even in case of the highly unlikely scenario, when Putin’s Russia and Iran capitulates in Syria abandoning their former ally, the “democratic forces” would be unable to reconcile the country, provide security and stability, rebuild Syria and make it a flourishing country and at least as importantly secular as it was before the civil war.

The question arises: why the US-led coalition supports “democratic forces” who want to defeat the Syrian Government, Russia and Iran in Syria, but also unable to achieve victory and more importantly, to successfully govern Syria? Does the US-led coalition want to occupy Syria like they did in Afghanistan or Iraq, in an attempt to export democracy again? We might agree that US-led coalition cannot realistically expect neither “democratic forces” victory against the Syrian Government, nor good governance of their proxy forces, unless there is a ground-breaking political shift in Russia, when liberal, pro-Western forces

¹⁰⁷ RODGERS Lucy - GRITTEN David - OFFER James - ASARE Patrick (2017): Syria: The story of the conflict, *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

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might come to power. Given the popularity of president Putin in Russia and other factors, such as various forms of preparations of the Russian State to counter a hypothetical “colored revolution” in Russia, such a scenario is highly unlikely. The only credible answer is that the US-led coalition opposes the Syrian Government, Iran and ultimately Russia with no regard to the consequences other than a major war between the US and Russia. A major war between great powers – if it occurs – would most likely terminate mankind on Earth. According to such policies of the US-led coalition, it is fine if the jihadist majority opposing the president Assad would benefit from losses of the Syrian Government Forces, inflicted by the US-led coalition. The official statement of Gen. Sergey Rudskoy, according to which “the US Armed Forces are deliberately destroying civilian infrastructure in Syria,¹⁰⁸ shows that Russia is fully aware of the real nature of US-lead policies in Syria, even if Russia cannot be considered an independent an impartial actor in Syria, where Russia defends its interests, and at the same time her ally, based on the official invitation of the Syrian Government – unlike the US-led coalition forces: *“the US-led military coalition has no legal mandate whatsoever to be in Syria in the first place. Its forces are in breach of international law by operating on Syrian territory without the consent of the government in Damascus and without a mandate from the UN Security Council.”*^{109 110} There is a “fig-

¹⁰⁸ В ГШ ВС РФ обвинили ВВС США в целенаправленном разрушении гражданской инфраструктуры Сирии, *Voenkor*, 28 March 2017, <http://voenkor.info/content/17348> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

¹⁰⁹ Finian Cunningham: Self-Defense Is No Defense for US Acts of War in Syria, *Strategic Culture*, 20 June 2017, <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/06/20/self-defense-no-defense-for-us-acts-war-syria.html> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

¹¹⁰ Russia slams Syrian warplane’s downing as violation of international law, A Russian diplomat says twelve civilians were killed during the coalition’s

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leaf mandate” for the US-led coalition to fight ISIS in various countries, but that does not authorize the coalition to perform military actions or fight a full-scale war against the Government of Syria.

According to my judgement, the Russian lead peace-making and the secular Government of president Assad is still the lesser evil in comparison to the most probable alternative, that is jihadist victory, when bloodshed and destruction would not end and the “new Syria” would sooner or later be aligned with the second most important ally of the US in the Middle East that is Saudi Arabia.

This is not only a deeply mistaken, bad policy on the side of the US-led coalition, but also a very dangerous one. If the jihadists one day manage to take over Syria, that would be disastrous since it would also boost international terrorism.

If such US-led coalition practices will continue, that is highly likely, even under the Trump administration, it would continuously maintain the danger of a direct confrontation between the US and Russia. Russia recently insisted, that the Syrian Government Forces should get much more powerful air defences, right after the US Tomahawk strikes against the a Syrian Military Airbase. Powerful Syrian air defences would provide a temptation to retaliate US-led coalition strikes against Syrian Government Forces that could result in US-led coalition losses.

The Syrians have already downed an Israeli F-16 that was immediately denied by the Israeli Government. However, it was confirmed by the Syrian Government and Russia avoided to voice its own, official opinion and restricted itself to citing the official

airstrike on the positions of the Islamic State terrorist group on June 19, TASS, 22 June 2017, <http://tass.com/politics/952763> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

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position of the Syrian Government.¹¹¹ I personally did not give credit to the story until I met Col. (Ret.) István Kobolka, who is a military expert of the Middle East and a professor, teaching in various Hungarian universities, who confirmed the Syrian downing of the Israeli F-16. He also added that the Israeli Government denied the story with good reasons,¹¹² the F-16 fell on the Golan Heights etc. I would add that neither Israel, nor Russia or other members of the International Community are interested in declaring a full scale war between Israel and Syria, ultimately between Israel and Russia.

Similar incidents could occur between the Syrian Government Forces and the US Forces in Syria, when the US forces would probably retaliate. If state of the art Syrian Government air defences are operated by Russian crews, a retaliatory US airstrike could easily result in Russian military casualties and nobody knows how far the conflict could escalate, unless the great powers, namely the US and Russia would come to the conclusion that they must exercise restraint and must avoid direct military confrontation, preferably even avoiding proxy wars.

¹¹¹ Сирийский генерал Мухаммад Аббас: авиация Израиля в шоке от наших ПВО, *Warfiles*, 17 March 2017, <http://warfiles.ru/show-146876-siriyskiy-general-muhammad-abbas-aviaciya-izrailya-v-shoke-ot-nashih-pvo.html> (Accessed: 19 June 2017)

¹¹² The Israeli image as “a technically far superior military to anyone else in the Middle East” was at stake. The Israelis knew that there was no way to properly explain what they have done in terms of International Law. They have entered Syrian Airspace, bombed Syrian Government targets – or as Israel suggested – Hezbollah Units that are allies of the Syrian Government. After all these Israeli military actions were performed, the Syrian Government Air Defences opened fire at the Israeli jets, fully complying with International Law. Such Syrian Government actions require professional, advanced planning and “nerves of steel”. “Good nerves” are required to allow all harm that the Israeli military actions caused, in order to have a perfectly defensible position in terms of International Law, on the Syrian Government side.

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Conclusions

- The increasingly multipolar new world order brought instability and unpredictability, when the risk of unintended, direct military confrontation between the West and Russia reaches dangerous levels.
- Western-Russian military conflicts are based on a distorted Western threat perception.
- Russia is not a security threat to the West, but an obstacle of practicing US hegemony worldwide.
- The West would attempt overthrow Putin's power should a historic moment arise. However, it is unlikely to succeed in the short and medium term.
- It is evident, that jihadist terrorists cannot wage war in Syria against the government for years without massive external support.
- It is acceptable for the West to support jihadist terrorism Syria in case if they fight the Assad government or Russia itself.
- Western involvement in support of international terrorism can be proved both directly and indirectly. It can be proved indirectly because of the absence of sanctions against countries supporting international terrorism, i. e. in Syria. Direct proof of Western support to international terrorism is widespread due to the scale of both terrorism and the support.
- Russia fights international terrorism genuinely. The West pretends fighting all forms of terrorism, but in reality this fight is not universal.
- The West arms, funds, trains etc. jihadist terrorists directly and indirectly, when terrorists become a tool to achieve geopolitical goals of the West.
- Western support to international terrorism is illegal, immoral and unnecessary, no matter what geopolitical goals the West might want to achieve.

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- Western support for international terrorism is especially disturbing because of the moral high ground of Western policies advocating universal values such as democracy, human rights etc.
- Western support of terrorism is nothing new: the West supplied the Taliban against the Soviet Union to achieve geopolitical goals etc.
- The theme that the West supports truly “moderate” or “democratic” forces to overthrow the Syrian Government does not withstand any serious investigation and analysis.
- The Western world, especially the US opposes Russia by various means, including support of international terrorism that fights Russia.

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