

# Week Seven of the Russian Intervention in Syria against Daesh: Dramatic Surge in Intensity

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Global Research, November 22, 2015

[The Unz Review](#) 20 November 2015

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia](#)  
and [FSU](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*This week was clearly dominated by two major events: the terrorist attacks in Paris and the Russian official declaration that Kogalymavia Flight 9268 was, indeed, destroyed by a bomb.*

First, I would notice that contrary to so many predictions that the Russians, Egyptians and other nations involved would lie and cover up this attack, this did not happen. Both the Russians and the Egyptians were open and honest about this attack from day 1. There is something to be learned here: while some politicians clearly have lost the ability to speak the truth even if they tried to, others did not. While lying is the standard operating procedure for most (all?) of “western” (Empire-run) states, this is still not the case everywhere else. It is simply wrong to assume that Russia is some kind of “anti-USA” and that the Kremlin has a policy of systematic deception like the White House. To the extent that Russia could be considered an “anti-USA” this ought to include categorically different methods and motives.

Second, and this might seem highly counter-intuitive, it is undeniable that Daesh did everything in its power to invite retaliation: not only did Daesh immediately claim that it blew up Flight 9268, it also claimed the credit for the Paris attacks and even threatened more such attacks, including against the USA. Again, this might seem outright bizarre, but Daesh appears to be doing everything it can to create a large, multi-national coalition to destroy it. We must keep this in mind every time we consider the retaliatory steps taken by Russia, France and others (see below).

Third, while it is too early to call the recent French attacks a “false flag” it is logical to at least consider that possibility as likely, if not highly likely. I personally do not like knee-jerk conclusions and I would prefer waiting for more info to come out. But at this point in time whether this was a “real” attack or a “false flag” really makes no difference. Why? Because whether the French ‘deep state’ was an accomplice/culprit or whether the regime is completely incompetent, the “action is in the reaction” - that is to say that the French are getting involved with their own military operation in Syria and they are doing so in coordination with the Russians. So, at this point in time, I suggest focusing on that.

But first, let’s look at the really important development this week.

Russia dramatically increases her anti-Daesh operations

While you can read my initial assessment [here](#), the dramatic surge in Russian strikes against Daesh is important enough to take a more detailed look at it.

First, in purely military terms, what the Russians did was both predictable (and I had predicted just that for several weeks now) and highly significant. The small Russian contingent at the Khmeimim air base in Latakia was, if amazingly skilled and outright heroic, simply too small to really hurt Daesh. Keep in mind that Russia does not have the kind of power projection capabilities the USA has and that regardless of that disadvantage, the Russian succeeded in creating a full airport capable of supporting the 24/7 night and day operation of about 50 aircraft in a record time.

And they did that without the Empire ever getting any good intelligence about what the Russians were up to. By the time the Empire understood what the Russians had done, it was way too late to stop them. In terms of organization and logistics, this was an absolutely brilliant operation and the folks who organized it most certainly deserve to get a medal and promotion for it. I mention that here because it was probably simply impossible to bring in a bigger force. Even right now the Khmeimim air base is over-saturated with flights and the extra aircraft flow in will make a very difficult situation even worse. This is why I predicted that the long-range aviation would have to be brought in at least as a stop-gap measure until either a “Khmeimim 2” airport is built near Latakia or another airfield(s) become(s) available (maybe in Iran). Bottom line is this: bombing or not bombing, the Russians had no choice but to bring in the long-range aviation.

Second, and this is significant, the Russians clearly decided to take advantage of the fact that the long-range aviation was not constrained by any logistical difficulties: the force they brought in this time around is a big and powerful one: not only will another 37 aircraft now join the Russian force in Syria (including the formidable SU-34: to the 4 already present in Syria another 8 will be added for a total force of 12), but 25 long-range bombers are now fully dedicated to the Russian effort, including Tu-22M3, Tu-95MC and Tu-160.

Now this is a “big stick”. Even the “old” Tu-95MC and Tu-22M3 are highly modernized versions of excellent airframes who can deliver plenty of very powerful and highly accurate munitions in any weather conditions, including gravity bombs and strategic cruise missiles. In other words, Russia has at least doubled her Syria-based capabilities and much more than doubled it if the Russia-based long-range bombers are included. From being a small force, the Russian air force contingent now dwarfs what the French will bring in on their Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier and what the Empire has been using until now.

We can now expect the Daesh logistics, communications and infrastructure to suffer a major degradation. And just to make sure that it hurts were it counts, the Russians began their long-range attacks with strikes on oil processing and distribution networks, including depots, trucks, fueling stations, etc. The Russian long-range bombers will not make a big difference to the Daesh frontline fighters, but their attacks on the Daesh infrastructure will free the Russian helicopters and Su-25s to finally provide close air support to the Syrian forces (so far, this task was mostly limited to the Syrian Air force which cannot fly at night). I also believe that the current SU-24 and SU-34 force will also be given much more frontline attack missions to provide the Syrians with much needed firepower. Bottom line: the Russians have brought in a “big stick” and this time Daesh will really hurt. But, remember, Daesh wanted exactly that (see above).

Third. The Kremlin did an excellent job of “selling” this dramatic increase of the pace and intensity of Russian operations in Syria. Polls show that most Russians fully approve. However, from personal contacts in Russia, I am told that they approve but are getting very uncomfortable. *There is no denying that Russia has now suffered from what I like to call a*

*“mandate creep”*: from going in to support the Syrians and fighting the Takfiri crazies away from home rather than at home, Russia is now promising retribution for the murder of her citizens. Putin made that absolutely clear when he said that military forces and special services will be used to hunt down the perpetrators of this atrocity. [He said](#):

We will find and punish these criminals. We will do this with no limitation period. We will find out all their names. We will hunt them down everywhere, regardless of where they are hiding. We will find them in any location on the planet and we will punish them. (...).

He even added a “Dubya” -like warning that anybody supporting or protecting them will be fully responsible for the consequences of doing so.

All those who might try to render assistance to these criminals must know that the consequences for such a protection will lie entirely upon them.

Keep in mind that the last time Putin issued such a warning was in 1999 when he promised that Russia would hunt down the Chechen Wahabi terrorist everywhere, “even in toilets”, and kill every one of them. At this occasion Putin used a colorful Russian slang idiom “мочить” which can very roughly be translated as “off them off” (or even to “f\*\*king blast them”). What is less remembered is that the Russians did just that: they killed *every single Takfiri insurgency leader* including Baraev, Dudaev, Maskhadov, landarbiev, Hattab, Raduev, Basaev and many others. Some of these executions were botched (landarbiev) some were superb (Dudaev, Hattab). But Putin got *every single one of them*. Every one. Putin has just made exactly the same threat, though in more diplomatic terms. And while most Russians agree with Putin, and while they know that he does not make empty threats, they also realize that suddenly a small and local military operation has turned into a potentially worldwide chase for terrorists. Considering how poorly the USA did just that after 9/11 there are plenty of good reasons to be worried.

But I would also immediately add that most Russians also realize that Putin and Dubya are in different leagues and that while the USA seems to be chronically unable to do anything right “Russia does not start wars – she ends them” (as the expression goes in Russia). Bottom line: I believe that the Russians will not repeat the mistakes made by the clueless US Neocons and that the hunt for Daesh leaders is now on.

Fourth. There is an uncanny political dimension to this about which I am frankly very unsure. Everybody in Russia knows that Qatar is the prime sponsor of terrorism in Syria and in Egypt. How will the Kremlin square that knowledge with the publicly made promise to punish every person guilty for the murder of 224 Russian citizens in anybody’s guess. Since Qatar is basically one giant US base, there is no way to strike at Qatar without hitting the CENTCOM. Alternatively, the Russians could decide to hunt down and kill specific Qatari officials in various “accidents”. What is certain is that the Russian foreign intelligence service – SVR – has teams capable of such actions (Zaslou, Vympel), as does the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff – GRU – which has Spetsnaz GRU officer teams and special operation forces SSO units capable of such operations. For better deniability (assuming that is a goal), the Russians might also use their deep connections inside the Russian mob (quite a few of whom are ex-secret services, especially in the middle-ranks) to “subcontract” such an operation.

Whatever options the Kremlin chooses, I would not sleep well if I was a Qatari official involved in this atrocity. Bottom line: Putin has publicly made it a point of personal honor to get every single one of those responsible, regardless of where or who they are, and I strongly believe that he will deliver on that promise.

Fifth. There are other nations besides Qatar who are also very much co-sponsors of Daesh. They include Turkey (and, by extension, NATO), the KSA and even the Ukraine (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Potentially, all of them can become targets of Russian retaliation (whatever form it takes). Finally, there are all the western financial institutions which are providing crucial services for Daesh, including many involving the export of oil from Daesh controlled territory and the import of modern weapon (primarily US-made) into Daesh territory. The list is long and the fact that the Russians have now openly threatened a long list of powerful entities is certainly a dramatic increase in the scope of the Russian involvement in this war.

Sixth. As with any escalation the stakes and the risks for Russia have now sharply increased. The timeframe has now officially changed from “about three months” to “as long as needed”, the size and nature of the force committed now fully engages the Russian political prestige and all of the above makes Russia a prime target for Daesh retaliation, both inside and outside Russia. Now that Putin has officially declared that Russian special services are tasked with the elimination of those who blew up the Russian aircraft, the use of some kind of “boots on the ground”, even if these are “special boots”, becomes much more likely. For somebody like myself who has always been very reluctant about the use of military force it is disturbing to see how rapidly *Russia is getting pulled-in* into the war in Syria with no exit strategy I can discern, at least not in the foreseeable future. I personally do not believe that the Russians will send in boots, but I cannot say that I am categorically certain that this will not happen. Currently unpredictable events might well force them to.

The attacks in Paris

Tragic and horrible as these attacks were, the first thing that comes to my mind is the obscene difference in which the western media and zombified public treated 129 (provisional figure) murdered French and 224 murdered Russians. We had the “Je Suis Charlie” [abomination](#) and now we have the “Je Suis Paris” collective (planetary!) grief-fest. I don’t recall any “Je Suis Russie”, or “Je Suis Donbass” grief-fests? Or any “Je Suis Aleppo” or even “Je Suis Iraq”.

Apparently, Russian or Arab lives matter a hell of a lot less than US or French lives (even if only in Iraq the body count is well over a million!). This is disgusting, unworthy of respect, utterly dishonest and terminally stupid. This is no “homage” to any victims, but your *garden variety media-induced hysteria*. The West ought to be ashamed of such pathetic lack of simple courage and maturity. Truly, did they really believe that they can play at such “terrorist games” and not eventually get hurt themselves (by a false flag or otherwise)?! Did not Putin warn the West of exactly that when [he said](#):

I’m urged to ask those who created this situation: do you at least realize now what you’ve done? But I’m afraid that this question will remain unanswered, because they have never abandoned their policy, which is based on arrogance, exceptionalism and impunity. (...) In fact, the Islamic State itself did not come out of nowhere. It was initially developed as a weapon against undesirable secular regimes. (...) The situation is extremely dangerous. In these

circumstances, it is hypocritical and irresponsible to make declarations about the threat of terrorism and at the same time turn a blind eye to the channels used to finance and support terrorists, including revenues from drug trafficking, the illegal oil trade and the arms trade. It is equally irresponsible to manipulate extremist groups and use them to achieve your political goals, hoping that later you'll find a way to get rid of them or somehow eliminate them. I'd like to tell those who engage in this: Gentlemen, the people you are dealing with are cruel but they are not dumb. They are as smart as you are. So, it's a big question: who's playing who here? The recent incident where the most "moderate" opposition group handed over their weapons to terrorists is a vivid example of that. We consider that any attempts to flirt with terrorists, let alone arm them, are short-sighted and extremely dangerous. This may make the global terrorist threat much worse, spreading it to new regions around the globe, especially since there are fighters from many different countries, including European ones, gaining combat experience with Islamic State. Unfortunately, Russia is no exception. Now that those thugs have tasted blood, we can't allow them to return home and continue with their criminal activities. Nobody wants that, right?

Prophetic words by Putin indeed. But since the AngloZionists have a long and "distinguished" tradition of using death-squads, vicious dictatorships and, of course, terrorists, Putin's words were ignored. Heck, even after the Paris attacked the West is still supporting Nazis in the Ukraine! I suppose it will take some Nazi atrocity in London, Warsaw or Munich to wake up the zombified western general public to the simple reality that sponsoring and using terrorist is always a very dangerous policy. If not, then the West will continue on a neverending cycle of terrorism sponsoring and grief-fests, over and over again.

[Sidebar: I am often criticized for stating that Russia is not part of the West, ever was, and never will be. If you believe that I am wrong, ask yourself a simple question: why is it that Russian victims of atrocities (including Western sponsored atrocities!) are treated just like Black or Brown people and not like the other putatively "civilized" Whites? QED.]

Oh how much I wish most people in the West could understand Russian read the Russians newspapers, watch Russian talkshows or listen to Russian conferences! They would see something which they have been conditioned to consider impossible: far from fearing the West, most Russians find it crippled with narrow-minded consumerism, devoid from any real moral or ethical values, fantastically ignorant and provincial and suffering from terminal infantilism.

Even the tiny pro-Western minority has now given up on defending the West and, at most, it retorts against the typical tsunami of anti-western arguments something like "what about us - are we not as bad?" or even "let's not sink down to their level!". It is quite amazing to see that happening in a country which used to almost worship anything western just 20-30 years ago! I should add that if the most despised and ridiculed country must, of course, be Poland, France is not far behind in the list of "most pathetic", As for the USA, it is the least despised adversary simply because most Russian respect the US for defending whatever it perceives has its national interests and for making Europe it's "bitch". The Russians always say that to get something done one must talk to the USA and not waste time with its European colony.

If we look beyond all that rather shameful display of narcissistic self-pity, the real question is what is France going to do about it? Here again, there are two dimensions:

First, in purely military terms France will now commit the Charles de Gaulle with its wing of Rafales to the strikes on Daesh. Good, but compared to what the Russians are bringing to the fight, it's really irrelevant.

Second, in purely political terms, the French just might do something very interesting: apparently they have agreed with the Russians that the Russian forces in Syria will provide "cover" for the French. I am not really sure why a Rafale would need "cover" but whatever – what matters here is that the French have *de-facto* entered into an alliance with Russia over Syria and that, in turn, could open the door for other western countries.

In other words, we just might (finally!) see a multi-national Russian-lead alliance take on the fight with Daesh and that, in turn, means that these countries would *de-facto* find themselves allied with Damascus. If northern Europe walks in lockstep with Uncle Sam, countries of southern Europe (Italy? Greece?) might decide to assist the Russians, as might Egypt or Jordan. I am not sure that such a coalition will happen, but at least now it might and that, by itself, is also an interesting development. This being said, Hollande is about to meet Obama in the US and he will probably be told in no uncertain terms that he must not "play ally" with Russia. Considering how abjectly subservient Hollande has been to the USA, I am not optimistic at all about the French meaningfully joining forces with Russia.

Third, there is no doubt in my mind, but many others do disagree, that the pro-Zionist regime in power in Paris is making the maximal use of all these events to stir up an anti-Muslim hysteria in France. And I am not talking about [the stupidity of insisting to serve a non-halal meal with wine to an Iranian leader who also happens to be a cleric](#), or the now "old" anti-*hijab* harassment in French schools.

What I am talking about is the openly declared idea that traditional Islam is incompatible with the secular French Republic and that it therefore represents a danger to society. Conversely, the only "good" form of Islam is one of abject collaborationism with the Zionist regime typified by the infamous [Hassen Chalghoumi](#), Imam of the mosque in Drancy. The message is clear: the only "good Muslim" is a Zionist Muslim. All others are potential or actual, terrorists and shall be treated as such. That, in turn, makes it easier for Takfiri recruiters to find more volunteers for their terrorist operations which, in turn, make it possible to the regime to pass even more draconian laws, including laws against free speech or Internet freedom. Being a real, pious and practicing, Muslim in France will become very, very hard in the near future. It certainly appears to me that the warnings of Sheikh Imran Hosein are coming true.

The unknown "breaking point" of Daesh

After six weeks of very hard fighting Russia has brought in the big stick, but those who expect Daesh to collapse under Russian air operations should not rejoice too soon. Breaking Daesh will probably take a much bigger effort. But let me explain why I am saying "probably".

For the first time in many weeks and months Daesh is truly in a difficult situation, not a desperate one yet, but a difficult one. Unless something changes in the current dynamic, time is now beginning to run against Daesh. Still, the resilience of Daesh in the current conditions is close to impossible to predict, at least without some very good information from the frontlines and that is something which most analysts, including myself, don't have. When a force is put under pressure the way Daesh has been, there is a breaking point

somewhere in the future at which point the force collapses really fast. The problem is that it is extremely difficult to estimate how far away in time such a (wholly theoretical) breaking point might be because it really depends on the morale and determination of the Daesh fighters on the ground. All we can say at this point in time is that such a breaking point exists in a theoretical future and that we hope that it will be reached soon. But we also have to be aware that this might not be the case at all. Not only that, but we have to take a long hard look at the most puzzling issue of them all: why did Daesh deliberately place itself in such a position. Here are a few hypotheses I can come up with:

1) Daesh leaders are crazed lunatics. They are in such a hurry to get to heaven that all they want is to die in combat against the infidels. Alternatively, they are so deluded about their power that they think that they can take on the entire planet and prevail. While I cannot discount this hypothesis completely, I find it highly unlikely simply because even if the rank-and-file Takfiri is an ignorant goat herder, the middle and top level commanders are clearly sophisticated and well-educated.

2) Daesh has outlived its utility for the AngloZionist Empire and now it is sent into a battle it cannot win, but which will kill off thousands of now useless liver-eating sociopaths. Maybe. I don't know where any evidence to support this hypothesis could be found, but this one at least make sense to me.

3) The real purpose for Daesh has always been the same: to inflict such damage to the entire Middle-East that, by comparison, an Israeli occupation would appear as a liberation to the few lucky ones who would survive the medieval horrors meted out by Daesh on a daily basis on all the territories it controls. So the bigger and the bloodier the fight, the better for the Israelis who have taken a relatively strong state controlled by relatively strong Baathist leaders - Assad *père et fils* - and who have now turned it into a heap of smoldering ruins. The problem with this theory is that unless something changes Daesh will not win, but lose, and that Assad will come out not weaker, but much stronger. And I won't even mention the fact that Syria now has a small, but battle hardened military whereas the putatively "invincible" Tsahal only is experienced at shooting unarmed civilians. So if there was an Israeli plan to prepare for a future "Grand Israel" it backfired pretty badly.

Frankly, I find none of the hypotheses above really convincing and that makes me nervous. The question which always haunts all analysts is "what am I missing" and, in this case, it also haunts me. I honestly cannot imagine that the Daesh leaders would sincerely believe that they can win the kind of "war against everybody" they apparently are determined to fight. I would hope that somebody with better understanding of Daesh, fluent in Arabic and well-versed in Takfiri literature would give us all the reply to this apparently simple question: what does Daesh really want? I will gladly admit that I have no idea. And that worries me a lot.

### The Resistance and its options

Seven weeks into the Russian intervention, the Resistance to the Empire is doing well and it still has the potential to intensify its struggle. First and foremost, what is most needed at this point in time are more combatants on the ground. I still believe that the Russians are not going to provide ground troops for Syria. My guess is that Hezbollah is pretty close to being maxed out. Unless I am missing something, this means that the only party capable of providing many more combatants on the ground is Iran. Right now, the official line out of

Moscow, is that one of the goals of the Russian intervention is to give the Syrians enough time to reorganize and field a much bigger force. Maybe. I hope that they can do that soon enough to fully use the momentum created by the Russian intervention.

As for the Russians, they are also coming close to being maxed out. In terms of air force, they could have allocated even more aircraft, but they did not do so simply because they know that there is only that much any air force can do when intervening in a civil war. Still, this time around the Russians really “mean business”: [According to the latest figures](#), the latest Russian strikes was formidable: ten ships from the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean coordinated strategic cruise missile strikes on Daesh targets (18 cruise missiles were fired by only four ships the Caspian Sea flotilla see footage here: [https://youtu.be/yf2SZ\\_gjtA0](https://youtu.be/yf2SZ_gjtA0)). According to official figures, in just four days, the Russian air force have conducted 522 sorties, deploying more than 100 cruise missiles and 1,400 tons of bombs of various types. Just one cruise missile strike in Deir ez-Zor had killed more than 600 militants. Clearly, Daesh is taking a formidable beating (the “pretend airstrikes” of the US-lead “pretend coalition” probably gave them a false sense of security of what an angry superpower can \*really\* do when it means it).

I am quite certain that Russia can keep up this pace of operations for a long while: while the stocks of the latest “Kalibr-NK” are reportedly low, Russia is now using a lot of her immense Cold War arsenal where there stocks of cruise missiles and gravity bombs are plentiful. Russia will run out of targets long before she runs out of these strategic weapons. This is no joke, by the way: it makes no sense to fire multi-million Ruble cruise missiles at non-lucrative, secondary or even tactical targets. The situation is better with relatively cheaper gravity bombs, but the biggest problem is that Daesh targets will eventually split into two groups: destroyed ones and well hidden ones.

At this point the Russian intervention will not become useless, but it will reach a point of diminishing marginal returns, both in a financial and in a strategic sense. This happened to the USA and NATO in Kosovo and it happened to Israel in Lebanon. Of course, the AngloZionists then switched their attention to what they call “infrastructure” and “support” target destruction, but which are basically terror strikes against the civilian population. Russia will not engage in such systematic policy of war crimes and thus the option of bombing Raqqa into oblivion is not something we will see the Russians do (the US, in contrast, probably will). This leaves only the naval component of the Russian task force.

The main task of the Russian naval task force has been to protect the Russian logistics and to provide air defenses to the newly built airbase with Latakia. Apparently, Russian denial notwithstanding, there are S-400s in Khmeimim, but if not, we can assume that S-300s are there. So the air-defense task for the Russian naval task force is now been replaced by a role of support for the Russian logistical effort which I expect to not only continue, but even to also sharply increase. This is where the Russians can do the most good and where they are not maxed out: help the Syrians reequip, reassemble, reorganize, retrain and \*finally\* provide them with relatively modern equipment (at least on par with what Daesh has). My guess is that after 4 years of war the Syrians need literally \*everything\* and this is where the Russians can play a crucial role.

The current Russian naval task force allocated to Syria is far from being trivial, see for yourself:





This is by no means a small force. Still, there have been some speculations that the Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov might join the naval task force off the Syrian coast. I find that rather unlikely. Unlike the US aircraft carriers, the Admiral Kuznetsov was designed from day 1 to be primarily an anti-aircraft platform (primarily to protect the Russian submarine bastions) and not as a landstrike aircraft carrier. The Russians are currently reconsidering this role, but for the time being the Kuznetsov has very limited landstrike capabilities. Of course, if needed, the Kuznetsov could be used to strengthen the air-defense capabilities of Syria or the Russian contingent in Syria, but that is not something which will directly affect Daesh. Still, I would not count out the Kuznetsov either: according to the latest reports, she will be sent to a patrolling area off the Kola Peninsula, but that is not set in stone.

In terms of direct attack support, a possible Russian option would be to use submarine-based cruise missiles, but with 25 long-range strategic bombers already allocated to this task, this would not be a game changer either. My feeling is that the Russians are now as strongly committed as they can be. The only thing they could do now would be to increase the flow of modern weapons to Syria and to provide the technical personnel to train the Syrians. In my opinion this, along with an energetic political campaign to force the West to accept the facts on the ground, is the most likely Russian strategy for the future: continue to pound Daesh, while re-building the Syrian military and “engaging” Russia’s western “partners”.

Frankly, I will conclude by saying that I find this Russian strategy as militarily sound as it is morally correct. Russia cannot win this war “for” the Syrians. The best thing Russian can do is to provide meaningful help, and that she is very much doing.

With Hezbollah probably maxed-out, the big unknown is Iran: will the Iranians dare to bring in a much larger contingent of ground-forces to take the pressure off the Syrians? I hope not – because that would mean that the Syrian could do well even without such aid, but I still consider an Iranian surge as very likely.

As for the Syrians, Assad [has just declared](#) that he would not leave power before the defeat of Daesh. In other words, Assad has just turned the tables on the West and declared that the “departure” (i.e. elimination) of Daesh is now a pre-condition of his departure. Only time will show whether this is grandstanding or true confidence.

What about the “Indispensable Nation”:

I realize that bashing the USA is always a popular exercise, but for all my hostility to the AngloZionist Empire I also have to admit that the US is in a very bad and complicated position: it has created a bloody mess (literally), then it painted itself into a political corner, and all of its so-called ‘regional allies’ are, I believe, inherently disloyal and pursue their own interests. If you look at the relationship between the USA, on one hand, and countries like Turkey, Qatar, the KSA or Israel on the other, it really is hard to establish who uses whom and whether what we are seeing is a case of a tail wagging the dog. Take Qatar: there is no doubt that the presence of CENTCOM in Qatar gave the Qatari a strong sense of impunity which, in turn, bred arrogance and, frankly, irresponsibility.

The Qatari wanted Assad “out” so they could get their gas to the Mediterranean, but now

they are directly involved in the bombing of a Russian airliner. As for their much wanted pipeline, they can forget it for at least a decade now. How smart was that? More relevantly: is Qatar a good ally for the USA? What about Turkey which is actively supporting, financing, equipping and training Daesh (and al-Qaeda - same difference!) under the convenient protection of NATO. They apparently cannot decide which is worse: Assad or the Kurds, and since they fear them both, they end up in bed with liver-eating sociopaths. Is that a good ally for the USA? I won't even go into the Israeli issue - we all know that AIPAC runs Congress and the Neocons try run the White House. None of which elicits any big love or loyalty from the Israelis who are constantly looking at the "Russian option" (partnering up with Russia) to get things done in the Middle-East. Besides, since the slow-mo genocide of Palestinians by the Ziocrazies currently in power is continuing, being allied to the Israelis means being hated by everybody else. Still, at least and unlike the other "regional allies" of the USA, the Israeli regime itself is stable, fairly predictable and can unleash an immense amount of violence. So compared to the Saudis, the Israelis look outright attractive. Still, at the end of the day, the USA has to try to get out of this mess without alienating its allies too much, but also without being manipulated by them.

Some seem to believe that the correct policy for the USA would be to work together with Russia. While this would undoubtedly make sense for the USA *as a country*, it would make no sense at all for the USA *as an Empire*. For the US (AngloZionist) Empire and the "deep state" forces which run it Russia is, indeed, a far bigger threat because Russia directly threatens the imperial status of the USA. The USA can either be the "Indispensable Nation" and world hegemon, or a "normal country" part of a civilized and multipolar world system ruled by the rule of law. It cannot be (or do) both. So when the US "deep state" is categorical in its refusal to do anything meaningful with Russia, it does act logically, at least from its point of view. As any other Empire, the USA sees its relationship with any competitor (actual or possible) as a zero-sum game which means that anything good for Russia is bad for the USA and vice-versa. Yes, this is sick and sociopathic, but this is how all Empires function. Hence the current US policies: the only good coalition is a US-lead one, any anti-Russian force must be supported, there will be no negotiations with Russia - only demands and ultimatums, etc. Add to this the apparently total lack of well-educated and competent diplomats (Americans get killed in every single negotiation they have conducted with the Russians), and you will see why the US is so averse to any notion of being anything other than hostile and confrontational with Russia.

The USA is in a terrible mess, the upcoming elections are only making matters worse and that makes the USA highly unpredictable. Yes, there is, I suppose, a small chance that the French might set a precedent for collaboration with Russia, but I am not holding my breath here. Maybe if another massacre is committed in Europe, especially Germany, but even that is a long shot. Still, there have been cases in history when a slave gave some good advice to his master and maybe this will happen this time around. I sure hope so.

Addendum: was I wrong about my predictions about the Russian intervention in Syria?

I think that this is a good time to reply to those who have accused me of being wrong about the Russian intervention in Syria. I could have done that as soon as these accusations were made, but I concluded that to do so in the flag-waving "go Russia! go!" kind of atmosphere this was futile. Many at that time were sure that this was the "showdown of the century" (no less), a "game changer" and that it was all "over" for Daesh. Seven weeks into this intervention, I propose to revisit what I actually said.

First, I never said that no military intervention would take place. In fact, I repeated over and over again that I cannot prove a negative and that an intervention *might* take place, I even suggested one (limited to intelligence support, training and weapons). All I said that *the kind of intervention which was discussed 7-8 weeks ago* would not take place: no Russian boots, no MiG-31, no forces in Damascus, no Russian SSBNs, no Airborne Forces, etc. And, indeed, that kind of intervention did not happen. Furthermore, I also said that the notion that Russia could “protect” Syria from NATO is laughable. It still is! Does anybody still seriously believe that the Russian contingent in Syria really has that kind of capabilities?! If so, I got a bridge to sell them. Now, I will gladly admit that *I did not think* that Putin would agree to what I consider an extremely daring and risky option of sending a very small force into Syria, a force just barely big enough to (maybe) give enough relief for the Syrians to reorganize and counter-attack. That I did, indeed, miss. As did everybody else who predicted a *much* larger Russian intervention (with MiG-31s and all the rest of the nonsense). I will also admit that I am still amazed at the fact that the Russians, who are both intervention-averse and risk-averse, did go for such a risky move and I marvel at the superb way they executed their operation. But the way they actually did it is something which nobody predicted.

Second, I also got in trouble for raising the alarm about the limited capabilities inherent to any air operation and, specifically, to a rather small Russian one. Now that the Russians had to use their cruise missiles and strategic aviation (which I did predict, by the way) is there anybody who will deny that I was right about the limitation of using airpower against Daesh, especially with the low number of aircraft initially brought in?

Third, I did point out that the Russian law and general public are extremely foreign intervention averse. That is still very true and that is still limiting the Kremlin’s options. This is why Russian officials go out of their way to stress that the Russian intervention in Syria is primarily in Russia’s national interest.

I want to set the record straight today not because of some ruffled feathers or a hurt ego, but because I am sick and tired of having to reply to a toxic combo of *strawman accusations* and *ingoistic predictions*. High-fiving, flag waving and back-slapping are all very fine unless you are the one sent into combat. Then they become obscene.

There are those out there (quite a few, in fact), who accuse me of “pessimism” and of writing “defeatist” analyses when what is needed is “uplifting” and “inspiring” essays. If that is the accusation, then I plead “guilty as charged”. But I will also add that this is not how I see my role. My role is to write *truthful* and *honest* analyses regardless of whether they are received as “uplifting” or “pessimistic”. There are plenty of “inspiring” and “uplifting” blogs out there, so if that is what you are in to, you know where to find them.

Finally, I also got into trouble for saying early on that one ought to wait for facts before coming to conclusions about what happened to Flight 9268 and for saying that my personal working hypothesis was that it was a bomb. Then I was accused of being naïve when I said that I did not believe that the Russians would lie about it. I know that there are still those who believe that the Israelis did it or that some kind of directed energy weapon did it. Whatever. There never was a shred of evidence to support either one of these hypotheses and I very much doubt that the future will bring any. To which we will be told that “the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence”. Again – whatever. It is also possible that a swarm of subatomic UFOs did it. “Possible” is a very low standard since almost anything is possible. But is it “probable” or “likely”? As soon as the “evidentiary bar” is raised

just above the “possible” level all these theories instantly collapse. Again, while others are welcome to explore all sorts of “possible” hypotheses, I personally will stick to those who are *at least probable*.

*At the end of the day it is you - the reader - who gets to pick and chose whatever you like. There is a big and diverse blogosphere out there and that is a very good thing. I strive to present fact-based and logical analyses and I am not trying to win a popularity contest of “inspire” you (-: unless, of course, you find fact-based and logical analyses inspiring 😊*

*Having clarified this, I won't do that again the next time I am accused of writing what I never wrote or of failing to cheer on the good guys.*

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