

FEDERAL STATE AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
“MOSCOW STATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
(UNIVERSITY) OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION”

*Manuscript*

**HADDAD Hamsa Riad**

**U.S. POLICY IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT**

Specialty: 23.00.04 – Political Problems of International Relations, Global and  
Regional Development

THESIS

For the Degree of the Candidate of Political Science

Scientific supervisor:

Tatiana A. Shakleina

Doctor of Political Science

Professor

Moscow

2019

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
CHAPTER I.....	19
EVOLUTION OF THE US FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 .....	19
1.1. Theoretical Foundations of the American National Security Strategy and US Mideast policy.....	19
1.2 Conceptualization of the American Mideast Strategy .....	26
CHAPTER 2 .....	38
US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IN SYRIAN CONFLICT.....	38
2.1. From “Greater Middle East Initiative” to "Arab Spring".....	38
2.2 American Policy Towards Syria .....	58
CHAPTER 3 .....	91
POLITICAL CRISIS IN SYRIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION...	91
3.1. Activities of the United States and NATO in Syria.....	91
3.2. Federalization plan for Syria: American approach .....	113
CONCLUSION.....	136
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	142

## INTRODUCTION

**Research relevance.** Process of the 21st century world order formation has been an important trend of contemporary development, and everything that has been occurring in the world, various regions and countries have been under direct or indirect influence of this trend. The United States, being a superpower, and a revisionist power, in its global strategy declared as a priority establishment of the liberal world order on the basis of Western values and institutions. Implementation of this strategy started almost immediately after the end of the Cold War. One of the main working conceptions was the conception of “regime change” and “democratization”. The Middle East became one of the main objects of this transforming policy. An unprecedented reconfiguration of intraregional relations has been taking place in the Middle East. The ongoing processes in one way or another can be explained by the consequences of the American policy, the central component of which has become the war in Syria. This process of changing local political regimes gradually transformed into a large scale crisis, causing, on the one hand, an unprecedented wave of migration to Europe, and, on the other, the emergence of the notorious terrorist organization Islamic State<sup>1</sup>.

The scale and geography of the US military presence in the Middle East changed as a result of the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq and the turn to Asia (both events occurred during the presidency of B.H. Obama). But the United States will never completely leave the region due to its economic and geostrategic importance, and will continue to realize its strategy. During the Obama administration American goals remained the same but were differently formulated in the changing world situation. The war in Syria was to become an important part of the series of “color revolutions” called the “Arab Spring”. If the United States succeeded in changing regimes in the key countries of the Middle East bringing the

---

<sup>1</sup> The organization is prohibited in Russia.

pro-Western forces to power, this would signify a new era of American domination in the region.

The United States did not achieve its original goal of overthrowing governments during unprecedented wave of political instability and “color revolutions” that swept the Middle East in 2011. So, the United States resorted to non-traditional methods of warfare. One of its elements was arming rebel groups and supporting Islamist militants. However, in Syria, this strategy encountered with the resistance of the Syrian people to external aggression. In addition, the assistance provided to the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR) by the Russian Air and Space Forces had a crucial impact on the situation. As a result, the war in Syria has stalled, and some negative consequences emerged, among them, the problem of refugees, and the growth of terrorist threat. It was also important that the evolution of the situation in the Middle East and in Syria, to a great extent as a result of the American policy, opened an opportunity for Russia to return to the Middle East as one of the most important non-regional political forces competing with the US in the region, and in the Syrian Arab Republic. The dynamics of the situation in the Middle East and in Syria, the importance of the processes in the region, their impact on regional and global politics, and relations between great powers, Russia and the United States in particular, make the dissertation research highly relevant.

**Literature Review.** The US foreign policy strategy is being elaborated by representatives of different political and analytical groups. In order to arrive to a more realistic description and estimation of the situation in Syria it was necessary to apply to works of both neoliberals, and neoconservatives, to a lesser extent to constructivist writers. There are several groups of scientific literature used to comprehensively analyze the problems stated, accomplish research according to aim and tasks formulated, and prove the suggested hypothesis.

The first group of literature covers general issues of international relations, world order formation, including theoretical works of representatives of three main schools of thought used in the dissertation. Among them there are works by E. Batalov, A. Bogaturov, Th. Barnett, F. Fukuyama, G. Friedman, R. Haass, H.

Kissinger, G. Ikenberry, P. Khanna, R. Keohane, A. Kostin, D. Lake, N. Lebow, G. Mearsheimer, T. Paul, S. Reich, T. Shackleina, K. Waltz, I. Wallerstein, A. Wendt, etc.<sup>2</sup>

It was very important to analyze different views on the issue of the evolving world order, role of great powers, the United States in particular, in the process of changing balance of power, transformation of centers of power, role of different players besides leading world powers. Each of the books gave an original and comprehensive view of this trend, suggested possible scenarios of the distribution of powers and outlined perspectives for the main actors in the international process. Monographs and articles by A. Bogaturov, T. Barnett, S. Huntington, G. Mearsheimer, T. Shackleina, G. Ikenberry, T. Paul, N. Lebow, C. Nation, S. Reich, F. Voitlovskiy turned to be most valuable for analyzing and understanding general trends of the world development, and of the regional ones since everything is to a certain extent interconnected. The events in the Middle East demonstrate not only behavior and strategies of great powers, but also emergence and consolidation of non-state actors, like Daesh in Syria.

---

<sup>2</sup> Баталов Э.Я. Проблема демократии в американской политической мысли XX века. М.: Прогресс-Традиция, 2010. 376 с.; Богатуров А.Д. Международные отношения и внешняя политика России. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. 480 с.; Войтоловский Ф. Нестабильность в мировой системе. // Международные процессы. – 2009. С. 4-16. <http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/69/Voitlovskiy-19.pdf>; Кризис цивилизации в контексте политических процессов XXI века / Под ред. А.И. Костина. М.: Издательство Московского университета, 2016. 304 с.; Шаклеина Т.А. Россия и США в новом мировом порядке. М.: Институт США и Канады РАН, 2002. 443 с.; Шаклеина Т.А. Россия и США в мировой политике. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. 336 с.; Barnett T. The Pentagon's New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004. 448 p.; Challenge and Change. Global Threats and the State in Twenty-first Century International Politics. Norma C. Noonan, Vidya Nadkarni (Eds.) N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 287 p.; Emerging Powers in a Comparative Perspective. The Political and Economic Rise of the BRIC Countries. Ed. by Vidya Nadkarni and Norma C. Noonan. N.Y.: Bloomsbury, 2013. 241 p.; Fukuyama F. The End of History and the Last Man. 1992. 464 p.; Friedman G. The Next 100 years. A Forecast for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. N.Y: Anchor Books, 2010. - 252 p.; Haass R. The World in Disarray. American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order. N.Y.: Penguin Press, 2017. 340 p.; Ikenberry G. J. After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. 320 p.; Ikenberry G. J. Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order. Princeton, 2011. 392 p.; Kant I. Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch. New York: Liberal Arts, 1957. 114 p.; Keohane R.O. After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984. 320 p.; Khanna P. The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order. New York: Random House, 2008. 496 p.; Kissinger H. World Order. N.Y., 2014. 432 p.; Lake D. A. Hierarchy in International Relations. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011. 248 p.; Mearsheimer G. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014. 592 p.; Reich S., Lebow R. Good-bye Hegemony! Power and Influence in the Global System. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. 208 p.; Paul T. V., Accommodating Rising Powers. Past, Present, and Future. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 335 p.; Wallerstein I. The Modern World-System. New York: Academic, 1974. 442 p.; Waltz K. Theory of International Politics. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1979. 256 p.; Waltz K.N. Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1959. 263 p.; Wendt A. Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 447 p.

The second group of works includes monographs on the American global strategy and its Middle East direction. American strategy and actions during Bush and Obama administrations were analyzed in the works by A. Bacevich, E. Batalov, A. Bogaturov, S. Brooks, Zb. Brzezinski, C. Dueck, Elridge A., R. Haass, D. Hendrickson, S. Huntington, B. Jones, V. Indik, R. Kagan, H. Kissinger, R. Kaufman, Ch. Layne, J. Lieber, J. Mann, C. Nation, S. Rogov, T. Shakleina, A. Sushentsov, D. Trenin, W. Wohlforce<sup>3</sup>.

American policy in the Middle East and in Syria has been under way, the processes of transformation are still unfinished so the majority of publications are journal articles and analytical papers or internet publications which reflected actions and events in the Middle East and Syria. The situation was analyzed in the works by V. Akhmedov, Y. Barmin, M. Braterskiy, A. Demchenko, B. Dolgov, M. O'Hanlon, V. Kuznetsov, D. Lesch, A. Malashenko, D. Malishev, V. Naumkin, R.

---

<sup>3</sup> Баталов Э.Я. Проблема демократии в американской политической мысли XX века. М.: Прогресс-Традиция, 2010. 376 с.; Богатуров А.Д. Международные отношения и внешняя политика России. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2018. 480 с.; Внешнеполитический процесс на Востоке. Под ред. Д.В. Стрельцова. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. 336 с.; Кризис цивилизаций в контексте политических процессов XXI века. Под ред. А.И. Костина. М.: Издательство Московского университета, 2011. 304 с.; Сушенцов А.А. Малые войны США: Политическая стратегия США в конфликтах в Афганистане и Ираке в 2000-2010-х годах. М.: ЗАО Издательство Аспект Пресс, 2014. 272 с.; Сушенцов А.А. Очерки политики США в региональных конфликтах 2000-х годов. М.: МГИМО-Университет, 2014. 249 с.; Шаклеина Т.А. Россия и США в новом мировом порядке. М.: Институт США и Канады РАН, 2002. 443 с.; Шаклеина Т.А. Россия и США в мировой политике. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. 336 с.; Bacevich A. Washington Rules. America's Path to Permanent War. N.Y.: Metropolitan Books, 2010. 304 p.; Bogaturov A. The Syndrome of Absorption in International Politics / Russian Foreign Policy in Transition. Concepts and Realities. Ed. by A. Melville and T. Shakleina. N.Y.-Budapest: CEU Press, 2005. P. 291-310; Dueck C. The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today. Oxford UP. 2015. 336 p.; Brzezinski Zb. Second Chance. N.Y.: Basic Books, 2009. 240 p.; Brzezinski Zb. and Scowcroft B. America and the World. Conversations of the Future of American Foreign Policy. N.Y.: Basic Books, 2008. 304 p.; Brzezinski Z. The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York: Basic, 1997. 240 p.; Jones B. Still Ours to Lead. America, Rising Powers, and the Tension Between Rivalry and Restraint. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press, 2014. 263 p.; Hendrickson D. Republic in Peril. American Empire and the Liberal Tradition. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2018. 304 p.; Huntington S.P. The Lonely Superpower // Foreign Affairs. 1999 (March/April). - Vol. 78. - No. 2. pp.35-49; Indik V.S., Lieberthal K.G., O'Hanlon M.E. Bending History. Barack Obama's Foreign Policy. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012. 342 p.; Kagan R., Kristol W. Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy. San Francisco, CA: Encounter, 2000. 392 p.; Kagan R. The Return of History and the End of Dreams. New York: Knopf, 2008. 128 p.; Kaufman R. G. In Defense of the Bush Doctrine. Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky, 2007. 264 p.; Layne C. The Peace of Illusions. American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present. Ithaca, 2006. 304 p.; Lieber J.R. Retreat and Its Consequences. American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 152 p.; Mann J. Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2004. 464 p.; Mann J. The Obamians. The Struggle inside the White House to Redefine American Power. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2012. 416 p.; Pillar P.L. Why America Misunderstands the World. National Experience and Roots of Misperception. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2016. 224 p.; Russia and the United States in the Evolving World Order. Ed. by A. Torkunov, N. Noonan, T. Shakleina. M.: MGIMO University, 2018. 414 p.

Peters, V. Popov, M. Sapronova, D. Stuster, A. Shumilin, M. Suchkov, D. Trenin, I. Zvyagelskaya and others <sup>4</sup>.

It was also necessary to study works devoted to so called “Hybrid wars” and methods of preparing “color revolutions”. Most famous are works by G. Sharp and A. Korybko, as well J. Larsen, A. Manoylo<sup>5</sup>.

The Syrian crisis as an unresolved conflict remaining in its development, and changing policies of the countries involved in the Syrian situation, made it necessary to use analytical works prepared in the American and Russian think tanks, such as the Council on Foreign Relations; Center for Strategic and International Studies; The new analytical center "Katehon" in Moscow, the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies; Russian Council on International Affairs; Brookings Institution, Moscow Carnegie center et al.

---

<sup>4</sup> Арабский кризис и его международные последствия / Под общ. ред. А. М. Васильева. – М.: ЛЕНАНД, 2014. 256 с.; Ахмедов В. М. Сирия при Башаре Асаде. Региональный опыт модернизации в условиях внешней нестабильности. М.: ИВ РАН, 2005. 189 с.; Ближний Восток, арабское пробуждение и Россия: что дальше? / Отв. ред. В.В. Наумкин, В.В. Попов, В.А. Кузнецов. М.: ИВ РАН, 2012. 297 с.; Братерский М.В. США и проблемные страны Азии: обоснование, выработка и реализация политики в 1990-2005 гг. М.: Московский общественный научный фонд; Институт США и Канады РАН, 2005. 179 с.; Внешнеполитический процесс на Востоке. Под ред. Д.В. Стрельцова. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2018. 352 с.; Внешняя политика России. 1991-2016. Под общей редакцией А.В. Торкунова. М.: Издательство МГИМО-Университет, 2017. 538с.; Возможен ли мир на Ближнем Востоке? / Отв. ред.: В.В. Наумкин, В.В. Попов. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2010. 204 с.; Долгов Б.В. Феномен Арабской весны 2011-2016 гг.: Причины, развитие, перспективы. Тунис, Египет, Ливия, Сирия, Алжир. – М.: ЛЕНАНД, 2017. 200 с.; Звягельская И.Д. Ближневосточный клинч: Конфликты на Ближнем Востоке и политика России. М.: Издательство Аспект Пресс, 2017. 208 с.; Звягельская И.Д. Специфика этнополитических конфликтов и подходы к их урегулированию: Учебное пособие. – М.: Навона, 2008. 160 с.; Конфликты и войны XXI века (Ближний Восток и Северная Африка). М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2015. 503 с.; Сушенцов А.А. Малые войны США: Политическая стратегия США в конфликтах в Афганистане и Ираке в 2000-2010-х годах. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2014. 272 с.; Шумилин А. Политика США на Ближнем Востоке в контексте Арабской весны. М.: Международные отношения, 2015. 336 с.; Perthes V. Syria under Bashar al-Asad: modernization and the limits of change. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 120 p.; Lesch D. W. Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East. Westview Press, 1992. 242 p.

Воробьева Д.А. Политическое поведение Башара Асада как причина гражданской войны в Сирии и влияние выступления президента 30 марта 2011г. на ее начало // Общество и цивилизация. 2015. Т. 1. С. 84-96; Звягельская И., Кузнецов В. Государство на Ближнем Востоке. Будущее началось вчера // Международные процессы. – 2017. - т. 15. - № 4. С. 6-19; Наумкин В. Кризис государств-наций на Ближнем Востоке // Международные процессы. - 2017. - т. 15. - № 2. С. 27-43.

<sup>5</sup> Манойло А.В. Сирийский тупик Арабской весны // Вестник Московского университета. Сер. 12. Политические науки. – 2013. - № 6. С. 49-56; Манойло А.В. Убить котенка, или как действуют технологии конфликтной мобилизации в социальных сетях // Конфликтология / Note Bene. - 2015. - №2. С. 104-107; Kasapoglu C. Russia's Renewed Military Thinking: Non-Linear Warfare And Reflexive Control. // NATO Defense College. - Nov. 2015. 26 May 2016. [http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/Articles/russia's\\_renewed\\_Military\\_Thinking.pdf](http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/Articles/russia's_renewed_Military_Thinking.pdf); Larsen J. A. Breedlove Ph. M., Lasconjarias G. NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats. Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015; Korybko A. Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change. Moscow: People's Friendship University, 2015. 132 p.; Sharp G. Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Two: The Methods of Nonviolent Action. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973. 368 p.; Sharp G. From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation. 4 ed. East Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2010. 160 p.; Sharp G. There Are Realistic Alternatives. Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003. 54 p.

Of great importance were publications in the Russian and American journals, magazines and some newspapers: The National Interest, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, World Economy and International Relations, International life, Russia in global politics, International processes, Contours of global transformations, Kommersant, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Washington Post, New York Times, etc. As well materials of various internet sources: RT<sup>6</sup>, Sputnik<sup>7</sup>, Vesti.ru<sup>8</sup>, Asian Vector<sup>9</sup>, and others. These materials were valuable as it was necessary to take into account to almost every day changing situation in Syria.

A great amount of valuable information was gathered from materials of the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) - official news agency of the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>10</sup>, Arab news channels (Qatari Al Jazeera<sup>11</sup>, Saudi Al Arabiya and AlMonitor<sup>12</sup>), as well as from the American CNN<sup>13</sup>; Iranian media, such as Press TV<sup>14</sup> and Fars News Agency<sup>15</sup>.

**Official Sources.** In order to gain an in-depth understanding of US policy in the Middle East region, it was necessary to turn to a number of documents such as National Security strategies of the American administrations, first of all, the Bush-Jr. and Obama administrations<sup>16</sup>. These documents presented general guidelines of the American global policy demonstrating a great degree of continuity between Republican and Democratic governments. The most important thing was that both

---

<sup>6</sup><https://russian.rt.com>

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.sputnik.ru>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.vesti.ru>

<sup>9</sup> <http://asiavector.ru>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sana.sy/ru>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/country/qatar.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://english.alarabiya.net>

<sup>13</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.presstv.com>

<sup>15</sup> <http://en.farsnews.com>

<sup>16</sup> The United States of America. The President of the United States. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. 17 Sept. 2002. Web. 26 May 2017. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2002.pdf>; The United States of America. The President of The United States. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. 16 Mar. 2006. Web. 26 May 2017. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf>; The United States of America. The President of the United States. National Security Strategy May 2010. 27 May 2010. Web. 26 May 2017. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf>; The United States of America. The President of the United States. National Security Strategy February 2015. 6 Feb. 2015. Web. 26 May 2017. <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>; The United States of America. The President of the United States. National Security Strategy. February 2017. Web. 26 May 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

Democratic neoliberals and Republican neoconservatives declared adherence to sustaining American global leadership based on military supremacy and use of force, and also did not give up the idea of “democratization” on the basis of Western (American) values. Policy started by the Clinton administration was followed by the Afghanistan and Iraq operations during Bush time, and then by a wave of color revolutions in the Arabic countries during the Obama administration. Analysis of the official strategies explains a lot when we turn to the Syrian operation and the way it was started.

It was also very important to refer to some official speeches of the Russian and Syrian Presidents – B. Al-Assad and V. Putin, and Russian and Syrian Foreign ministers; to the UN resolutions on the Responsibility to Protect and Resolution 2254 (2015) that endorsed road map for peace process in Syria; to speeches of President Trump to see how his doctrine overlaps with the previous strategies. A number of State Department, Department of Defense and CIA documents were also useful for understanding the situation with the American actions in Syria. Memoires of M. Albright gave an insight into the decision making in Washington, including Middle East direction<sup>17</sup>.

**Theoretical and methodological basis of the study.** The theoretical basis of the study are works of political scientists who represent the main schools of

---

<sup>17</sup> Al-Assad B. President Bashar Al-Assad’s Speech At The People’s Assembly. 30 Mar. 2011. [http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=305:president-bashar-al-assad-s-a-speech-at-the-people-s-assembly-march-30-2011&catid=117&Itemid=496](http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=305:president-bashar-al-assad-s-a-speech-at-the-people-s-assembly-march-30-2011&catid=117&Itemid=496); Albright M. Madam Secretary: A Biography. N.Y.: Harper Perennial, 2003. 592 p.; Background Information on the Responsibility to Protect. United Nations, 2013. <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgresponsibility.shtm>; Bringing Real Muscle to Bear Against Syria. Central Intelligence Agency. 14 Sept. 1983. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88B00443R001404090133-0.pdf>; Clinton H. America’s Pacific Century. US Department Of State, 11 October, 2011. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/10/175215.htm>; Department of Defense Information Report. Judicial Watch. 12 Aug. 2012. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pg.-291-Pgs.-287-293-JW-v-DOD-and-State-14-812-DOD-Release-2015-04-10-final-version11.pdf>; Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey on agreed steps to revitalize the political process to end the Syrian conflict, Moscow, 20 December 2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489); Joint Statement by the President of the United States and the President of the Russian Federation. US Department Of State, 11 Nov. 2017, [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm); President Assad 2000 inauguration speech (July 17, 2000). [http://www.presidentassad.net/speeches/bashar\\_assad\\_2000\\_inauguration\\_speech.htm](http://www.presidentassad.net/speeches/bashar_assad_2000_inauguration_speech.htm) President Donald J. Trump Is Protecting the United States from Terrorism // <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-protecting-america-terrorism>

thought in the United States and Russia: neorealism (structural and offensive realism), neoliberalism, first of all, liberal interventionism and institutionalism, and constructivism. In the dissertation the author relied both on classical works, and contemporary theoretical publications. Among neorealists it is necessary to mention such authors as Kenneth Waltz<sup>18</sup>, Richard Haass, C. Layne; J. Mearsheimer, W. Wohlforce, A. Bogaturov, T. Shakleina, A. Torkunov<sup>19</sup>. It was necessary to apply ideas and assumptions of the old school authors (classical works in realism) and new interpretations presented by contemporary writers in the framework of structural and offensive realism. These authors made a visible input into the development of the world order theory and gave a detailed analysis and conceptualized the ideas of new centers of power and new rise and role of great powers. Their ideas help to better understand the situation in the world, in different regions and countries.

Neoliberal theoretical works were necessary to explain the basics of the American behavior in the process of world order formation clarifying and revealing real incentives and aims in the policy of world transformation. Among theoretical works it is necessary to mention the following publications by representatives of neoliberal school: “International Relations: One World, Many Theories” by Stephen M. Walt; “The Return of History and the End of a Dream” by Robert Kagan; “After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Deterrence and Building Order after Major Wars”, “Liberal Order and Imperial Ambitions: An Essay on

---

<sup>18</sup>Waltz K. N. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1979. 256 p.; Waltz K. N. *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1959. 263 p.

<sup>19</sup> Шаклеина Т.А. *Россия и США в мировой политике*. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. 336 с.; Богатуров А.Д. *Великие державы на Тихом океане. История и теория международных отношений в Восточной Азии после Второй мировой войны. 1945-1995*. М.: Конверт-Сюита, 1997. 342 с.; Barnett T. *The Pentagon's New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004. 448 p.; Brooks S., Wohlforth W. *America Abroad. The United States' Global Role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2016. 288 p.; Haass R. *The World in Disarray. American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*. N.Y.: Penguin Press, 2017. 340 p.; Layne Ch., Bradley A. Thayer. *American Empire: A Debate*. New York: Routledge, 2007. 166 p.; Mearsheimer G. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014. 592 p.; *Russia and the United States in the Evolving World Order*. Ed. by A. Torkuniv, N. Noonan, T. Shakleina. M.: MGIMO University, 2018. 414 p.

American Power and World Politics”, “Liberal Leviathan: Origins, Crisis and Transformation of the American World Order” by G. John Ikenberry<sup>20</sup>.

The constructivist approach is most vividly illustrated by Alexander Wendt's constructivist theory<sup>21</sup>, and by the monograph “The Clash of Civilizations” by Samuel Huntington<sup>22</sup>. It was also necessary to use theories of hybrid wars though they are not accepted by all; scholars in Russia<sup>23</sup>.

Among the methods applied in the dissertation for the analysis of the development of the situation in the Middle East in the context of the American global strategy the author used the historic approach. With the help of the historic approach the dissertation identified various stages and time frames of the problem, described specific political situations and their manifestations. The principle of historicism has helped not only to comprehensively highlight the subject of research, but also to reveal its broader political parameters. The comparative analysis was applied by the author when considering the similarities and differences between the politicians of the two American presidents - G. Bush Jr. and B. Obama. When describing the evolution of the situation in Syria and around it from the point of view of the policy of the United States, Russia and the proposed federalization of Syria, a system approach was used.

**Chronological framework of the dissertation research** covers mainly the period 2001-2018. The starting point is the attacks of September 11, 2001, which marked the beginning of a large-scale US policy in the Middle East region. To make a complete picture of the evolution of the situation in the Middle East and Syria a brief insight into the history of the issue was given. In particular, it was

---

<sup>20</sup>Ikenberry G. J. *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*. Princeton, 2011. 392 p.; Ikenberry G. J. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001. 320 p.; Ikenberry G. J. *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics*. Cambridge: Polity, 2006. 312 p.; Kagan R., Kristol W. *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*. San Francisco, CA: Encounter, 2000. 392 p.; Kagan R. *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*. New York: Knopf, 2008. 128 p.; Walt S. M. *International Relations: One World, Many Theories*. // *Foreign Policy*. – 1998. - No.110, pp. 29-46.

<sup>21</sup> Wendt A. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999. 447 p.

<sup>22</sup>Huntington S. P., Ajami F., Kishore M., Bartley R. L., Binyan L., Kirkpatrick J. J., Weeks A. L., Piel G. *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate*. New York, NY: Foreign Affairs, 1996. 68 p.

<sup>23</sup> Korybko A. *Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change*. Moscow: People's Friendship University, 2015. 157 p.; Larsen J. A. Breedlove Ph. M., Lasconjarias G. *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats*. Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015. 372 p.

necessary to analyze the factors that formed the basis for the formation of the American strategy towards the states of the Middle East after the end of the bipolar confrontation period on a global scale. The dissertation research concludes with the year 2018, when a turning point occurred in the regional war that lasted from 2011 in Syria, in which the United States took an active part. They failed to fully implement their strategic plans, and the results require from the United States certain adaption to the conditions created in Syria by the Russian diplomatic and military efforts. A new situation may cause dramatic changes in the American behavior which are not quite clear yet.

**The scientific novelty of the research** lies in the synthesis and systematization of existing knowledge about the latest stage of US policy in Syria. In the thesis, a comprehensive analysis of the US diplomatic and military efforts in the Syrian conflict zone was conducted; documents and materials introducing new directions of the US Middle East strategy and the US administration's policy regarding Syria are introduced into the scientific circulation. Revealed insufficiently studied yet the approaches of the Syrian government to US policy in the region of the Middle East. It was also new to make not a pure regional but a complex interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the Syrian crisis using the ideas and interpretations of three theoretical schools.

**The hypothesis** of the study is that the American national strategy is to a certain extent aimed at destabilizing the countries and regions of the Middle East and the entire Eurasian continent in order to establish political control over local governments and the resources of the states of the region.

**The aim** of the dissertation is to study the US policy in relation to the Syrian conflict, to identify its essential characteristics and impact on the regional development and even global situation in relations between the United States, Russia, and some other growing powers. This goal determines the setting of the following tasks:

- 1) to analyze the concepts used for the formation of American politics in the twenty-first century, including in the Middle and Near East;

2) to study and systematize both the concept of a “hybrid war” developed by the United States, including for the implementation of policies in the Middle East in general and in Syria, in particular, and certain provisions of the theories of neorealism and neoliberalism;

3) to comprehensively study and evaluate the strategy of the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on the countries of the Middle East and Syria;

4) to identify the impact of the "color revolutions" practices on the events of the "Arab spring" in Syria and evaluate American policies regarding Syria in the context of the use of the "hybrid war" method by the United States in the Middle East region;

5) to analyze and assess the development of the situation in Syria and around it, paying particular attention to the role of the United States and Russia in the processes that are occurring in this Middle Eastern country at the present stage;

6) to formulate possible scenarios for the development of events in Syria.

**The object** of this dissertation research is the US strategy in the Middle East in the twenty-first century.

**The subject** of the study is the American strategy in relation to the Syrian conflict.

**The theoretical significance of the dissertation** research is that the identification of the main directions of US policy in Syria allows us to expand political knowledge about international relations in the Middle East and the regional development of individual states. An analysis of the Syrian vector of US foreign policy makes it possible to determine the relationship between the ideological and conceptual basis on which the American foreign policy doctrine is based, and US practical activities on the Syrian direction.

**The practical significance of the thesis** is determined by the possibility of using its basic conclusions and provisions in the information and analytical support of the policy of Russia and Syria towards the United States. The work is aimed at a detailed coverage of all aspects of the American strategy in Syria, which will be of

undoubted interest for Russian and Syrian researchers and politicians. This information can be used in the formation of the Russian foreign policy in the Middle East region. The analysis may also be useful for predicting the next steps for the United States, both in the Middle East region as a whole and in relation to Syria.

**Statements for the defense:**

1. The theories of liberalism, realism and constructivism are methods of analysis that explain the formation of US policy towards Syria, and it is these theories that show the essence of the US constant geostrategic goals in the Middle East region.

2. The events of the “Arab Spring” were an attempt to initiate “color revolution” aimed at changing regimes in Arabic countries, however in Syria it failed to achieve immediate results. In response, the United States took steps to change the government in the Syrian Arabic Republic by unconstitutional methods.

3. In Syria a “hybrid warfare” was unleashed. Its objectives were to fulfill geopolitical plans of the United States and its allies in the region, to promote “human rights” and “democracy” according to the Western model. US actions and the evolution of the situation in the country was accompanied by the so-called “conflict of identities” (Sunnis against Shiites and Alawites, Arabs against Kurds, etc.).

4. One of the results of the American Middle East policy was the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS, IG), which became one of the driving forces for the overthrow of the Syrian President B. Assad.

5. The United States did not expect the Russian Federation to launch an anti-terrorist operation against the IG in September 2015, which completely changed the distribution of power among various political forces in both the SAR and the Middle East. Since then, Russia has become a significant factor in resolving the military conflict in Syria and in general in solving problems in the Middle East.

**The structure of the dissertation** research is determined by its goal and specific tasks, by the subject of the study and its hypothesis. It consists of the Introduction, three chapters, the Conclusion and the list of sources and literature used.

*In the introduction*, the relevance of the research topic is substantiated, the object and subject are defined, the research hypothesis is formulated, the goal and specific tasks of the dissertation are defined, the theoretical basis and methodology are presented, the practical significance of the research is outlined, the statements to be defended are formulated.

*The first chapter* “The Evolution of the US Foreign Policy Strategy after September 11, 2001” is devoted to analyzing theoretical approaches to this problem, characterizing the applicability of neorealist, neoliberal and constructivist theories in US global politics, as well as with respect to the Middle East and Syria.

*In the second chapter* “US policy in the Middle East and the Syrian conflict” special attention is paid to the manifestations of American policy in the Middle East, from the period of the Cold War to the present. It also analyzes the US policy and strategy in Syria until the end of 2017.

*The third chapter* “The political crisis in Syria and its international dimension” is an analysis of the actions of the US / NATO in the Syrian conflict, as well as the strategy of Russia, which has been carrying out a military operation in Syria since September 2015.

*In conclusion*, the main scientific results of the study are presented.

**Approbation of research results.** The thesis was discussed and approved at a meeting of the Department for Applied Analysis of International Problems of the MGIMO University of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and recommended for defense.

**The degree of certainty.** The reliability and validity of scientific statements, conclusions and recommendations formulated by the author, is determined by a significant number of sources and literature on the research topic,

as well as by the fact that the author was able to successfully combine an analytical approach using the methodological framework. It was also important that certain ideas, conclusions and generalizations of the research were monitored and examined during diplomatic work as an employee of the Syrian Embassy in Russia.

**Compliance of the contents of the thesis to the passport of scientific specialty.**

Specialty 23.00.04 - Political problems of international relations, global and regional development.

The thesis fully complies with the specialty passport 23.00.04 - Political problems of international relations, global and regional development in terms of studying the essence, content and focus of international relations processes, the main areas of activity of subjects and objects of world politics of global and regional scale, individual states and their unions. The objects of research in this specialty are international relations, problems of global and regional development.

The results of the dissertation research correspond to the following passport items of specialty 23.00.04 - Political problems of international relations, global and regional development:

1. International relations: the essence, the history of formation, the main areas, the dynamics of development. The essence and content of foreign policy activities of subjects of international relations. Foreign policy doctrines and foreign policy strategies of subjects of international relations.

8. Foreign policy activities of subjects of international relations in the field of national, regional and global security. Subjects of international relations. Problems of national security in international relations. Systems of regional and global security.

11. Foreign policy activities of states, international organizations, public and political movements and other subjects of world politics.

**The correspondence of the dissertation to the list of main scientific research areas of MGIMO.** The thesis corresponds to paragraph 41.06.01

“Political science and regional studies” of the priority areas of scientific research of the MGIMO University of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Publications in the journals included into the list of scientific journals of the Russian Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation:

1. Haddad, H., IR Theory and the “New Middle East” //Международная жизнь (International Affairs). 8 August, 2017. ISSN: 0130-9625. (1,5 п.л.). / <http://en.interaffairs.ru/events/655-ir-theory-and-the-new-middle-east.html>

The article analyzes the US policy in the Middle East, shows how the US actions differ before and after the terrorist attacks of 2001. Describes how the theories of neorealism, neoliberalism and constructivism influenced the formation of the US strategy, in particular, the development of the concept of “regime change” and "color" revolutions. It is concluded that Syria has become one of the objects of the use of American concepts and plans for the reconstruction of the Middle East, which the author defines as a “failed neorealist-constructivist project”.

2. Хаддад Х. Энергетическая дипломатия России на Ближнем Востоке // Социальные коммуникации. № 2, 2018, С. 97-107. ISSN: 2221-6073. (1 п.л.).

The article notes that Russia's actions in the energy sector in the Middle East are important driving forces for its regional strategy. Russian energy diplomacy in the region does not attract much attention, since it is not of a conflict nature, as is the case with the EU countries, where the West is trying to politicize relations and position Russia as a threat. In the Middle East, Russia does not supply, but exploits natural resources, so there is no “dependency” relationship that exists with European countries. It is noted that this vector of the grand strategy of the Russian Federation is decisive for establishing the country as a great power and its formation as a real competitor of the United States in regional and world politics.

3. Хаддад Х. Каким образом национализм, супранационализм и глобализм участвуют в создании новой системы международных отношений // Социальные коммуникации. № 2. 2018. С. 85-96. ISSN: 2221-6073. (1 п.л.).

In the article, the author is trying to understand how such important events in world politics, as the UK exit from the European Union and D. Trump's victory in the 2016 elections in the USA, as well as the rise of Russia and China, influence the formation of the world order. It is noted that not enough attention is paid to how new trends in international relations are influenced by civilizational changes within the framework of the Western world. The key to understanding these processes can be a consideration of how nationalism, supranationalism and globalism affect world processes, and the rejection of the scheme according to which the development of international relations goes from tribalism to globalism.

4. Korybko A., Haddad H. Chaos Theory, Global Systemic Change, And Hybrid Wars // Сравнительная политика (Comparative Politics). 2016. 7 (25)). Pp. 25-35 / ISSN: 2221-3279. (0,5 п.л.) [https://doi.org/10.18611/2221-3279-2016-7-4\(25\)-25-35](https://doi.org/10.18611/2221-3279-2016-7-4(25)-25-35). <https://www.comparativepolitics.org/jour/article/view/696>

In the article, the authors note that in the world there is a clash between two projects of the organization of the world system: unipolar and multipolar. To explain what is happening, the authors turn to chaos theory and try to apply it to contemporary international relations, and also use a systematic approach in analyzing global changes that are taking place. The article discusses the theory of "hybrid wars", which, according to the authors, is aimed at promoting a new cold war.

## CHAPTER I

### EVOLUTION OF THE US FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

#### **1.1. Theoretical Foundations of the American National Security Strategy and US Mideast policy**

The American contemporary strategy is based on the ideas of the two main theoretical schools: neorealism and neoliberalism. Both theories played an impactful role in influencing the conduct of American foreign policy towards the Mideast, and especially Syria, which is why it's necessary to explain them in depth. Constructivism, as first elucidated by Alexander Wendt in his 1999 book about the "Social Theory of International Politics"<sup>24</sup>, is also an important component constituting Washington's strategic tool set, but it doesn't have as much of an effect on the US as the other two ideas.

Professor MGIMO T. Alekseeva accentuating the importance of values and identity, wrote that "postmodernism helped international relations specialists to distinguish the cultural factor in international processes, but they couldn't make it a really substantial alternative to other theoretical schools, or to suggest any constructive theoretical compromise with them"<sup>25</sup>.

These factors explain the Mideast Muslims' predisposition to sectarianism, which would end up being exploited by the US during and after the "Arab Spring" events, yet they don't account for why the US sought to take advantage of this in the first place nor what ends it sought to achieve by doing so, ergo the need for exploring the fundamentals of the neorealist and neoliberal theories.

Neorealism ideas had played an outsized role in influencing the formation of US policy towards the Mideast. The godfather of this method of analysis is Kenneth Waltz, a famous US political scientist who published the groundbreaking

---

<sup>24</sup>Wendt A. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999, p. 447.

<sup>25</sup>Алексеева Т.А. Химеры страны Оз: культурный поворот в теории международных отношений // *Международные процессы*. Том 10. № 3-4. 2012. С. 17.

book “Theory of International Politics”<sup>26</sup> in 1979. This book is universally regarded as one of the most important pieces of literature ever released in the field of international relations, and it resulted in K. Waltz being recognized as the founder of this theory. Neorealists adopt a structural approach to international relations, in that they first examine how the international system functions and then proceed to analyze everything else from there. K. Waltz wrote that the world is defined by the state of anarchy, meaning that there is no ultimate deciding force that’s keeping everything together and enforcing rules. He says that this is a self-help system and that states can only depend on themselves to defend their interests. Therefore, he concludes, anarchy is the ordering principle of the international system, which thus makes it the defining feature of international relations.

Proceeding from this fundamental understanding, K. Waltz infers that while anarchy indeed impacts on every form of international behavior, that there are still certain patterns and sets of constraining conditions that lead to the formation of some vague semblance of order. One of the most relevant of these is the concept of hierarchy. David A. Lake wrote in his book “Hierarchy In International Relations” that this means that powerful states take advantage of weaker ones, and that this has been happening for millennia already, whether it was carried out through empires, tributary systems, hegemonic orders, spheres of influence, or any other sort of construction<sup>27</sup>. In the modern day system of international relations, D. Lake says that this makes some states subordinate to the United States while others resist its power. Ultimately, he summarizes that hierarchy is a voluntary system of contacts between states, but one which is still fully influenced by the systemic constant of international anarchy. To refer back to Waltz and his pioneering “Theory of International Politics” treatise, hierarchy is affected by the distrust that states feel towards one another - a condition emblematic of international anarchy – and that larger states balance while others bandwagon.

---

<sup>26</sup>Waltz K. N. Theory of International Politics. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1979, p. 256.

<sup>27</sup>Lake D. A. Hierarchy in International Relations. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011, pp. 45-93, 175-191.

Balancing, Waltz believes, occurs when states modify their domestic and international policies in order to compete with one another, while bandwagoning is typically exemplified by smaller states teaming up with larger ones in order to ensure their security. The inadvertently spiraling distrust that balancing and bandwagoning produces in states leads to what is termed as the security dilemma, which can be concisely described as the unintentional escalation of distrust and competition that occurs between states when one takes actions that it believes to be defensive but which are perceived by their international peers as offensive, thus catalyzing a cycle of more balancing and bandwagoning. The reason why states behave this way is because they crave power and see this as irreplaceable in guaranteeing their survival, which is what all states' most basic interest is. Every state, Waltz writes, behaves in a rational way, and that while there are veritably other actors that partake in influencing international affairs, that states are the only ones that really matter because they're the most powerful. He then logically postulates that if all state are rational, then they will always pursue what they believe to be their national interests, which is a subjectively defined term that varies from state to state. The contradiction between national interests results in rivalry, which in turn inspires states to make moves against the other in correcting the perceived imbalance between them.

The complicated maneuvering between states when they engage in balancing and bandwagoning could interestingly result in a sort of normalcy and stability in the international system, which is regarded by scholars as being the Balance of Power Theory. Russian specialist Alexei Zobnin writes that strong states will both internally and externally balance against their perceived rivals in order to maximize their power in the anarchic international system and preempt any possible threats against them<sup>28</sup>. Although this is theorized as bringing balance to the global order, A.Zobnin disagrees, citing various contradictions which he argues disprove this assertion. Despite that, the Balance of Power principle is popularly

---

<sup>28</sup>Зобнин А. К определению принципа баланса сил. Опыт неоинституционального подхода к международной среде. // Международные процессы, т. 12, № 3 (38), июль-сентябрь 2014. С. 55-69.

regarded as one of the main anchors of neorealist theory and is generally very accurate in making sense of the actions that Great Powers engage in most of the time. Professor John Mearsheimer, a well-known specialist in IR studies, writes that states engage in either offensive or defensive realism<sup>29</sup>. He describes the first as essentially being ‘power for the sake of it’ and the only perceived means with which the state believes that it can guarantee its own security, which aptly sums up why aspiring hegemons behave the way that they do. As for the second form of realism, this accounts for the bandwagoning which was just described.

In speaking about the back-and-forth dynamics between different groups and categories of states, when there are multiple centers of power, the international system can be said to be multipolar and unpredictable, but when there are two like during the Cold War, for example, then it becomes bipolar and stable. This is yet another theoretical supposition related to neorealism. The most radical manifestation of this school of international relations comes from those who ascribe to the Hegemonic Stability Theory, which states that unipolarity – the international condition in which a single hegemon exerts predominant power all across the world – is the most stable and preferable type of ordering system for preserving peace in an anarchic system. The neoconservative faction of the American elite, a mainstay of the US’ permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies who gained widespread prominence during the Bush administration, pertinently adhere to this dogma. David Skidmore cites the Hegemonic Stability Theory in his 2010 book declaring that it “suggests that the hegemon should embrace multilateralism during its period of ascendance but shift toward unilateralism as relative decline sets in”<sup>30</sup>. This is an accurate depiction of the US’ 1990s unipolar moment during which it sought to multilaterally engage as many partners as possible in pursuit of its ends, and it also describes the post-9/11 unilateralism of the Bush administration very well too.

---

<sup>29</sup>Mearsheimer J. Structural Realism. In: Dunne T., Kurki M., Smith S., eds. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 3rd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 77-93.

<sup>30</sup>Skidmore D. *The Unilateralist Temptation in American Foreign Policy*. Routledge, 2010, p. 8.

The issues of world order polarity/centricity and role of states are being actively discussed until present time. Russian and American scholars who write on these very important and challenging issues suggest various explanations and visions of the evolution of structural trend in world politics: distribution of power and influence between modern great powers, formation of partners and allies around them (bandwagoning)<sup>31</sup>. Ongoing structural transformation is very well reflected in the situation in Syria where interests of several great powers collide (the United States and NATO countries, Russia, Turkey, Iran). The formation of the American strategic documents has been also influenced by the intention to keep US decisive influence in the region and in the settlement of the Syrian situation. Critics like J. Mearsheimer are overplayed by neoliberal and neorealist experts who do not support “retrenchment in American policy and encourage actions against Russia in Syria (and in general)<sup>32</sup>. So, debate between representatives of both schools of thought continue, and as a result, American global strategy is a combination of neorealist and neoliberal ideas, though the National Security Strategy of the Trump administration is defined as realist<sup>33</sup>.

The rival school of neorealist interpretation is neoliberalism, the origins of which are also nearly four decades old. Robert Keohane is credited with introducing this theory to the world in his 1984 book “After Hegemony”, which has gone on to be cited as the main neoliberal text<sup>34</sup>. Just like K.Waltz and the neorealists, Keohane recognizes that anarchy is pervasive in the international system, but his divergence with their ideas begins when he proposes that it is possible to maintain a sort of order amidst this chaos if states join the same

---

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance: Мегатренды. Основные траектории эволюции мирового порядка XXI века. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2014. С. 19-53; 69-84, 283-298; Шапленна Т.А. Россия и США в мировой политике. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2018. С. 20-65; Brooks S. G., Wohlforth W. C. America Abroad. The United States' Global Role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 48-72; 73-87.

<sup>32</sup> Mearsheimer J., Walt S. The Case of Offshore Balancing. A superior U.S. Strategy // Foreign Affairs. - Vol. 95. - No. 4. P. 70-84; Hendrickson D. Republic in Peril. American Empire and the Liberal Tradition. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2018. 304 p.; Lieber J.R. Retreat and Its Consequences. American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 152 p.

Зобнин А. К определению принципа баланса сил. Опыт неоинституционального подхода к международной среде. // Международные процессы. - Т. 12. - № 3 (38). С. 55-69.

<sup>33</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America. December 2017 / <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>

<sup>34</sup>Keohane R. O. After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton, 1984, pp. 49-110.

international regimes. Institutions, R.Keohane writes, are the key to preserving peace in the anarchic world, arguing that the shared self-interests that unite each of the members reinforce their desire to cooperate with one another. Institutions are so important because they have clearly established rules, commitments, and stakes that each party must abide by in order to collectively attain their self-interests. Modern-day theorists have expanded on this point to posit that democracy could serve as an ends in and of itself by being its own institutional form dedicated to peace. Proponents of this ideology advocate the spreading of democracy all across the world out of the belief that democratic states don't go to war against one another, which is central tenet of the Democratic Peace Theory.

The neoliberals emphasize the role that national policies, concessions, and deal-making play in moderating anarchy, but they seem to neglect the importance of power and national interests when analyzing international relations. This shortcoming is a common criticism of neoliberals, who are sometimes accused of being too utopian in their viewpoints. On the other hand, their system of analysis is useful in filling in the blind spots that neorealism fails to address, which is why Waltz's work came first and was followed by Keohane's, and not vice-versa. Looking at the applicability of neoliberalism to the formation of the US' foreign policy towards the Mideast, it's clear to see how influential this strain of thought was in shaping strategists' thinking. After all, one can convincingly argue that the origins of "democracy promotion" rest with Keohane, and that the neoconservatives adopted some of these ideas into their worldview. Taking this even further, it almost looks like the neoconservatives believe that the Hegemonic Stability Theory could best be served by promoting the Democratic Peace Theory, or in other words, that they believe that unipolarity could be upheld by a combination of neorealism and neoliberalism. This conclusive point will be elaborated on in the final section of this chapter, but it's being introduced at this moment in order for the reader to keep it in mind when reviewing the rest of the neoliberal theory.

More insight needs to be given about the specifics of the Democratic Peace Theory and the influence that it's had on neoliberal thought, so it's appropriate to cite 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Immanuel Kant's 1795 "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" in tracing the roots of this idea<sup>35</sup>. E.Kant is regarded as the godfather of liberalism and he advocated a community of democratic nations as the most surefire guarantee of global peace, which obviously is the Democratic Peace Theory in everything but name. Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee attempted to prove the validity of this theory by analyzing the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century in their book "The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century"<sup>36</sup>. This lengthy work references numerous data points and a plethora of case studies in striving to prove that the theory is reputable and does in fact account for prolonged periods of peace between democracies.

The Democratic Peace Theory isn't infallible though, and it obviously remains a theory and not a political law because it can't be conclusively proven as a determinant of system behavior. Toni Ann Pazienza worked hard to expose the limits of this idea in his work "Challenging the Democratic Peace Theory - The Role of US-China Relationship"<sup>37</sup>. The researcher writes that there are serious questions about the frame of reference that constitutes a "democracy", as well as what is meant by "war" or "conflict", pointing out that "democracies" might actually be more violent than non-democracies in that they often go to war against the latter. Moreover, the Democratic Peace Theory doesn't provide for modern-day forms of non-traditional aggressions such as information and economic wars, and this, the realistic critics claim, proves that it's impossible to indefinitely sustain a lasting peace between any two states.

The most radical expression of neoliberal theory is probably the modern-day ideologues who obsess over the idea of militant "democracy promotion",

---

<sup>35</sup>Kant I. Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch. New York: Liberal Arts, 1957, pp. 8-14.

<sup>36</sup>Huth P. K., Allee T. L. The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1-34, 277-298.

<sup>37</sup>Pazienza T. Challenging the Democratic Peace Theory - The Role of US-China Relationship. // Scholar Commons. Graduate Theses and Dissertations. University of South Florida, 25 Mar. 2014. Web. 26 May 2017. <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/5098>.

“humanitarian interventionism”, and “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P). It’s clear to see the connection between the Democratic Peace Theory and Bush’s “democracy promotion” in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Obama’s clandestine support of this during the “Arab Spring” theater-wide “Color Revolutions”, so this doesn’t necessarily need any further elaboration. As for the latter two, it’s useful to point out that they’re the cusp of this ideology in the present day and serve as its operational motivation in certain cases. In 2002 US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power released a highly influential publication about “humanitarian interventionism” called “A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide”, in which she makes the case that the US – as the unipolar global hegemon that it is – has a moral duty to intervene in foreign conflicts in order to stop genocide and ease the humanitarian suffering on the civilian population<sup>38</sup>. According to the UN’s official website, R2P grew out of the 1990s concept of “humanitarian interventionism”, and it can be defined as responsibility that the international community has to stop genocide or the threat thereof<sup>39</sup>. Understandably, it’s inferred that the promotion of “democracy” in the targeted state would follow the encouraged military intervention, thus connecting these two theories to their neoliberal Democratic Peace Theory roots.

American policy in the Middle East and in Syria is part of the US global strategy, so it is necessary to see how general and specific aims of the US strategy were interconnected, especially in the Middle East.

## **1.2 Conceptualization of the American Mideast Strategy**

The doctrinal origins of neorealism in American post-Cold War foreign policy towards the Mideast lie with the Wolfowitz Doctrine of 1992<sup>40</sup>, in which the then-Secretary of State inexplicably stated that the US will take whatever actions

---

<sup>38</sup>Power S. *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic, 2002. 656 p.

<sup>39</sup> Background Information on the Responsibility to Protect. United Nations, 2013. Web. 26 May 2016. <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgresponsibility.shtml>.

<sup>40</sup>Taylor P. E. 1992 Wolfowitz U.S. Strategy Plan Document. // *The New York Times*, 8 Mar. 1992. Web. 28 June 2017. <http://work.colum.edu/~amiller/wolfowitz1992.htm>.

are necessary to preempt the rise of any potential rivaling power anywhere in the world. This pronouncement was made not even a year after the end of the Gulf War and just a few months following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The US had just assembled a global coalition to expel Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, which Washington had said was a threat to worldwide stability. The removal of the Soviet Union from the strategic equation transformed the bipolar system into one of unipolarity, and with the US having just demonstrated that it's more than capable of leading dozens of nations to war in the Middle East, it became overly emboldened and set out to proactively take whatever steps it subjectively felt necessary to indefinitely secure its hegemony. Although not formally stated by P.Wolfowitz, his doctrine essentially advocates the Hegemonic Stability Theory.

The years preceding the 9/11 terrorist attacks saw the rise of the neoconservative movement. Government and academic figures who were hardcore neorealists came together to form the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) think tank in 1997. This organization is best known for publishing the September 2000 document "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century"<sup>41</sup>. This work was perhaps the clearest and most prescient blueprint of what observers could later come to expect from the Bush White House, where many members of the PNAC were later employed or had an advisory influence. In relevance to the dissertation, the document articulated why the US feels that it must attack Iraq. The authors framed Saddam Hussein and his country in such a way, as to make them out to be the greatest supposed threat to international security, so keeping with the tenets of neorealism, the Wolfowitz Doctrine, and the Hegemonic Stability Theory, the neoconservatives that would later enter into the US Presidential Administration after the election of George H. W. Bush were compelled to seek his overthrow through a future muscle-flexing

---

<sup>41</sup>Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century. Project for the New American Century. Washington, Sept. 2000. Web. 26 June 2017. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>.

conventional invasion that would show off America's prestige and power to the rest of the world<sup>42</sup>.

There were already earlier signs that the neorealists-neoconservatives were aiming for this objective. Prominent foreign policy thinker, former Director of Policy Planning for the Bush White House, and current President of the Council on Foreign Relations Richard Haass published a 1997 book titled "The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War"<sup>43</sup>. He wrote in it that the US needs a balanced and middle-ground approach that could be embodied by a doctrine of regulation. R.Haass expands on this idea by explaining that the US should embrace economic multilateralism but aim for security unilateralism whenever it's necessary for Washington to take the lead in promoting international stability, or in other words, be the "sheriff" punishing the unipolar rule-breakers. If the United Nations Security Council won't approve US military action against what Washington says to be an international transgressor, then the Pentagon would just have to assemble a coalition of the willing instead.

Co-founders of the PNAC William Kristol and Robert Kagan came out with their 2000 joint publication "Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in America's Foreign and Defense Policy"<sup>44</sup>. This was a collection of 21<sup>st</sup>-century forward-looking policy essays that were designed to influence decision makers and reflect establishment viewpoints. The authors preached that the US should practice "benevolent global hegemony" by embracing unipolarity in order to recoup the losses from what they feel was the 1990s "decade of squandered opportunity". They refuted Haass' principle of the 'reluctant sheriff' and said that the US should actively promote "liberal-democracy" all across the world and not be ashamed of using the military to take out Saddam. In fact, one of the chapters in their book is

---

<sup>42</sup> The American scholar R. Pillar wrote that demonization of enemies is deep in the American political culture. There was belief that the moment you remove the threat the liberal order will automatically emerge. This mistaken assumption led to many surprises and dissatisfaction with the results of regime change operations. See: Pillar P.L. Why America Misunderstands the World. National Experience and Roots of Misperception. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 158-159.

<sup>43</sup> Haass R. N. The Reluctant Sheriff. The United States after the Cold War. N.Y.: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997, pp. 21-78.

<sup>44</sup> Kagan R., Kristol W.. Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy. San Francisco: Encounter, 2000, pp. 3-47, 9-111.

titled “Iraq: Saddam Unbound” and fear mongers about the threat that he supposedly presents to the rest of the world, obviously with the intent of inspiring America’s leaders to take unilateral action against him.

There are countless examples of neorealism implemented in practice after 9/11, with the most obvious being the conventional Wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, and the unconventional one in Syria, for example, but keeping with the focus of this dissertation and the particular chapter of the work, this subsection will only address two era-defining pieces of literature. The first one is R. Craig Nation’s “Russian Security Strategy Under Putin: U.S. And Russian Perspectives - U.S. Interests In The New Eurasia - Russia's Threat Perception And Strategic Posture”. Although geared mostly towards addressing Russia, some very important lessons in IR neorealist thought can be acquired from this 2007 work which are directly applicable for explaining American policy towards the Middle East as well. Nation references the geopolitical theory of Halfred Mackinder<sup>45</sup> in arguing that the “Heartland” is the Eurasian pivot space, and that the US must maintain stability here and in its surroundings in order to prevent the creation of an Arc of Instability. In pursuit of this grand strategy, the US must “promote democracy”, “advance social equality”, “encourage good governance”, “invest in modernization projects”, and “fight against transnational crime, drug, and terrorist syndicates”. Therefore, Nation concludes, the US needs to focus its Eurasian policy on the Mideast.

As was already evidenced by that time, the US was already following Nation’s and many other neoconservatives’ advice as part of what has been called the Bush Doctrine. Professor Robert Kaufman from the neoconservative Heritage Foundation think tank released a book, “In Defense of the Bush Doctrine”, the same year that R. Nation did. He said that everything that the US did after 9/11 is founded on the National Security Strategy of 2002<sup>46</sup>, which he analyzes as

---

<sup>45</sup> Mackinder H. The Geographical Pivot of History. The Royal Geographical Society, Apr. 1904. Web. 16 May 2016. <http://stoa.usp.br/danilousp/files/-1/16432/Geographical+Pivot+at+History+%28Mackinder%29.pdf>

<sup>46</sup>The United States of America. The President of the United States. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. 17 Sept. 2002. Web. 6 May 2017. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2002.pdf>.

practicing “moral democratic realism” and which preceded the later National Security Strategy of 2006<sup>47</sup> that expanded upon the neoconservatives’ core ideas. Kaufman continues by expounding on what he has identified as the US’ two foreign policy determinants. The first one is to support what amounts to the Western conception of “human rights” (“liberalism”) and the American-controlled capitalist system, while the second is more like cautionary advice in that he suggests that prudence must be maintained at all times<sup>48</sup>. It will later be argued in the dissertation that not much has changed in the Obama Administration, and that several examples from literature prove that there is an undeniable policy continuum between Presidents Bush and Obama. This could be taken to mean that the influence of neorealism and that of its neoconservative acolytes is strongly embedded in the US’ permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies<sup>49</sup>.

The most infamous example of neoliberalism in IR pre-9/11 literature was Francis Fukuyama’s 1992 book “The End of History and the Last Man”<sup>50</sup>. Fukuyama interpreted the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union as confirmation that the rest of the world would thenceforth from that point eventually adopt the Western liberal-democratic model of governance. Because of this, he said, it’s less likely that any large-scale conflicts could break out on par with what the world had experienced in the past, since never before in history had the entire globe embraced one singular governing model. This is the core essence of the “end of history”, namely that the sorts of divisions that characterized human history would no longer be applicable, and instead a whole new paradigm would begin.

---

<sup>47</sup>The United States of America. The President of The United States. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. 16 Mar. 2006. Web. 8 January 2017. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup>Kaufman R. G. In *Defense of the Bush Doctrine*. Lexington, 2007, pp. 87-101.

<sup>49</sup> The thought about this kind of ideational symbiosis was expressed in the book: Hendrickson D. *Republic in Peril. American Empire and the Liberal Tradition*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 53-104.

<sup>50</sup>Fukuyama F. *The End of History and the Last Man*. N.Y.: The Free Press, 1992. 418 p.

His prediction was a bold one and was articulated just months after the beginning of what Charles Krauthammer later termed the “unipolar moment”<sup>51</sup>, but the facts prove that history itself did not indeed end like Fukuyama forecasted that it would, and that most of the world today does not practice Western liberal-democracy. Although this book was widely discussed at the time, and likely played a huge part in confirming American decision makers’ self-confidence in their governing model and the need to militantly promote it abroad in line with the Democratic Peace Theory’s precepts, Fukuyama’s work was totally debunked with time and revealed in hindsight to have been nothing more than the wishful optimism of a well-known ideologue.

Neoconservative thinker Robert Kagan took a slightly different approach in his 2008 book “The Return of History and the End of Dreams” by dismissing Fukuyama’s thesis about the “end of history” but incorporating the longstanding neoliberal idea of “democracy” to proclaim that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be defined by the opposition between this governing model and “authoritarianism”<sup>52</sup>. Though F. Fukuyama’s and R. Kagan’s views have been criticized from both theoretical schools, they quite visibly influenced formation of grand and regional strategies, and the idea of liberal order establishment stayed on the agenda of American policy with all administrations.

Before that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who served under the Clinton Administration from 1997-2001, began to put neoliberal strategies into practice. M. Albright’s tenure eventually became known as representing the height of the US’ neoliberal grand strategy<sup>53</sup>. She fully embraced the neoliberal concept of “humanitarian interventionism” and used this as the pretext for launching the 1999 NATO War on Yugoslavia. M. Albright is considered America’s first female “hawk” and would later be followed by her neoliberal spiritual successors - Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice, and Samantha Power during the Obama Administration who

---

<sup>51</sup>Krauthammer C. The Unipolar Moment. // Foreign Affairs. - 1990. - Vol. 70. - No. 1. Web. 26 May 2017. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1991-02-01/unipolar-moment>.

<sup>52</sup>Kagan R. The Return of History and the End of Dreams. New York: Knopf, 2008, pp. 3-12; 102-105.

<sup>53</sup> Albright M. Madam Secretary: A Biography. Harper Perennial, 2003. 592 p.

convinced the President to carry out a “humanitarian intervention” in North Africa against Libya<sup>54</sup>.

Prior to the Obama Presidency, the most comprehensive descriptions of neoliberalism in the transforming world order come from international relations theorist G. John Ikenberry who released very important works during the Bush Administration. His first popularly acclaimed release “After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars”, came out in early 2001 and right before the terrorist attacks, but it had strong ramifications for the course of US strategic thought around that time<sup>55</sup>. G.J.Ikenberry wrote that there is a need for the US to transform the international system, and that institutions are crucial to post-war success if the victor wants to establish a sustainable order. Strong states maintain stability in these institutions while weak ones receive security by joining, so Ikenberry believes that this is a win-win solution for everybody. Institutions, he stated, foster order in the anarchic world by creating a measure of shared values, voluntary limits on power, and being difficult to change. Moreover, he assumed that the victorious institution-creating state that exerts the most influence on the anarchic international system essentially becomes a hegemon. Ikenberry tried to address the neorealist issue of power in international relations through a modified neoliberal theory, and instead of advocating the dominance and direct control of the hegemon, he suggested how the systemic leader could apply a softer indirect approach instead through the leverage of international institutions.

Later G.J.Ikenberry criticized the Bush Administration policy saying that the President’s use of militant unilateralism was a violation of national sovereignty<sup>56</sup>. He described how the US constructed a durable international order after the end of World War II, but that 9/11 and the War on Terror led to an upheaval of this

---

<sup>54</sup> Mann J. *Obamians. The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power*. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2012. 416 p.

<sup>55</sup>Ikenberry G. J. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton, 2001. 320 p.

<sup>56</sup>Ikenberry G. J. *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics*. Cambridge: Polity, 2006, pp. 21-51, 175-186, 197-245.

model. Even so, Ikenberry believes that the US is still incentivized to save the liberal rules-based system that it created, but that it must confront the neoconservatives and other aggressive pro-military forces within its decision-making establishment first. The liberals and neoconservatives were faced with a choice after 9/11, and it's their subsequent reaction to this watershed event that's determining the future course of American foreign policy. Ikenberry thinks that the neoconservatives wanted to advance the Balance of Power and security rivalry paradigms, while the neoliberals were in favor of greater engagement and more accommodation with the US' partners. In a sense, a superficial analysis of the Obama Administration's earliest years would suggest that the neoliberals finally succeeded in their power struggle against the neoconservatives, since it would have been unimaginable, for example, for anyone that Bush would address Muslims in Cairo like Obama did in 2009. Though soon it was evident that the 44<sup>th</sup> US President continued the policies of his predecessor while hiding behind more friendly rhetoric<sup>57</sup>.

Ikenberry's last contribution to neoliberal theory came out in 2011 and was called "Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American System"<sup>58</sup>. As he's already established in his previous two works, Ikenberry reaffirms that the US is the world's liberal hegemon (hence the title), but it is under severe strain, partially due to mistakes of the Bush administration that weakened the liberal characteristics of the US-built international system and strengthened its imperial ones instead. The removal of previously self-imposed restraints and the subsequent predisposition to engage in dangerous risk-taking endeavors exposed the US' system to destabilization. The only way to save the Liberal Leviathan, as seen by Ikenberry, was return to diplomatic internationalism. The US needed to strengthen its commitment to rules and norms, he said, otherwise it'll take even longer for the system that the US built to recover and evolve. Despite the setbacks the system has experienced since 9/11, Ikenberry

---

<sup>57</sup> Шаклеина Т.А. Россия и США в мировой политике. М., 2017. С. 120-177.

<sup>58</sup>Ikenberry G. John. Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order. Princeton, 2011, pp. 1-33, 279-333.

mentions, he remains confident that it will not be destroyed or replaced by any competitor. It would be an exaggeration to say that Ikenberry is one of the most influential international relations thinkers of the present era, but one can't objectively dismiss the accuracy with which he described American grand strategy. It's certainly true that the US built the post-Cold War international system, and that this hegemonic structure is under threat from a combination of American miscalculations and the rapid rise of non-Western powers such as Russia, China, and others.

Russian expert Tatiana Shakleina analyzing neoconservative writings and official documents at the beginning of the Bush administration predicted that the neoconservative unilateral strategy wouldn't be successful. She stated that most active critics of the imperial character of the American international strategy rightly claimed that empires are non-democratic and encourage opposition from other countries<sup>59</sup>.

Developing her conception of the structural transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, T. Shakleina mentioned that emergence of a larger number of contemporary leading world powers made the issue of accommodation between the US and China, Russia, Brazil, India and others rather urgent for the stable development of international relations.

Her idea and suggested three possible scenarios of the governing core in the future order were to a certain extent similar to conceptions of American IR experts who criticized neoconservatives in general, and tried to develop more constructive variants of the American international behavior. There were hopes that the Obama administration will listen to Bush administration critics and change its policy making it less militant. However Obama Democrats after very promising

---

<sup>59</sup> Шаклеина Т. А. Идейное обеспечение внешней политики администрации Буша. М.: Институт США и Канады РАН, 2003. 38 с.; Шаклеина Т. А. Эволюция глобальной стратегии США (2001-2011) // Вестник Московского университета. Сер. 25 Международные отношения и мировая политика, 2011, № 3. С. 35-58.

declarations started to act within the same paradigm, and the Middle East remained in the focus of American policy of regime change<sup>60</sup>.

At the same time, though, and in spite of the US' failures and the opposition that it was receiving from the rising great powers, the US still tried to spread its institutional web far and wide. This can be evidenced by the never-ending expansion of NATO and the attempted promulgation of two American-centric trade blocs, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). While behaving unilaterally during the Bush years, the US sought to moderately re-embrace limited multilateralism during Obama's tenure, so Ikenberry's ideas remained definitely relevant.

One of the most enduring theoretical constants throughout American foreign policy in general has been its consistency in misunderstanding the world, regardless of which decision makers and strategists are in power or whatever policies they end up executing under realist or liberal pretenses. Paul R. Pillar, a nearly three-decade-long veteran of the CIA and non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, attempted to answer the question of "Why America Misunderstands The World", writing that everything essentially comes down to misperceptions. While not overtly saying as much, his book reads like an explanation of constructivism in practice, which might be the key conceptual element for understanding the US' foreign policy in the moment of its application, whether it ultimately takes realist or liberal manifestations. Pillar's book is filled with subsections with such titles as "Blaming Bad Guys with Bad Ideas", "The Monolithic View of Terrorism", "Personalizing the Enemy", "A Bifurcated View of the World", and "Demonization", which are all buzzwords for perception and therefore the constructivist theory of International Relations<sup>61</sup>.

---

<sup>60</sup> Шаклеина Т. А. Россия и США в мировой политике. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. 336 с.; Shakleina T. A Russian Perspective on the Twenty-First Century Challenges / Challenge and Change. Global Threats and the State in Twenty-First Century International Politics. N.C. Noonan, V. Nadkarni, eds. N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 39-69, Водопьянов К. Г. Страдающий Левиафан: что спасет современное государство // Полис. Политические исследования. - 2018. - №3. С.182-191.

<sup>61</sup> Pillar P. R. Why America Misunderstands the World: National Experience and Roots of Misperception. Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 51, 128, 132, 164, 140.

Whether it's from America's founding days during the Revolutionary War and its misunderstanding of King George III or the modern-day War on Syria, constructivist thought – whether formally recognized as such or not – has permeated America's decision-making and strategic culture due to bureaucratic and cultural reasons, namely those stemming from groupthink and the unwavering belief in American Exceptionalism. These in turn contribute to the formation of a militant mindset that predisposes the US to warfare, but almost somewhat paradoxically leads to it underestimating supposed threats before they manifest themselves and then overreacting to them afterwards, at least according to his explanation of this phenomenon. Pillar raises very thought-provoking questions in this book that can't be easily answered by standard academics who are regularly accustomed to trying to neatly fit every foreign policy action into one of the two main theories, but it's precisely because of the explanative flexibility that he provides through channeling constructivist thought that his work is essential to read in understanding the implementation of American grand strategy in practice especially as it relates to the Mideast.

\*\*\*

By the end of the Obama administration there were doubts that America's policy in the Middle East can bring any constructive solution and settlement of political, socio-economic and security problems. Final stage of Democrats' activities was marked by the aggravation of migration situation for the European countries, and entry of Russia into Syrian conflict. Russia was defined as a threat to the United States, and it was not clear how America and Russia will manage to coexist in Syria having their very diverse views of the situation and its settlement. One could hear statements that neoliberal and constructivist views of American strategy aimed at establishing liberal world order failed. During 2016 presidential elections and after Trump victory some IR scholars declared about the “crisis of

the liberal world order”<sup>62</sup>. The new strategic document introduced in December 2017 stated that American policy will be pure realist, will be directed to establish favorable for the US and its allies balance of power. BUT: it was also stated that American policy will be based on the American values that will inspire, revive and elevate, and will remain the decisive force in the world forever<sup>63</sup>. Further actions of the Trump administration practically continued the main tracks of the Obama policy, the situation in the Middle East and in Syria demonstrated collision between the United States and Russia, and some big regional players, like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran. One could say that still the official American ideology was neoconservative but with elements of ‘*real politic*’ based on the military might and superpower domination, and neoliberal ideas of American values and institutes promotion.

---

<sup>62</sup> Mearsheimer J. *The Great Delusion. Liberal Dreams and International Realities*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. 328 p.; Walt S. *The Hell of Good Intentions. American Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of US primacy*. N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018. 400 p.

<sup>63</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America. December 2017. Pp. 1-2. Web. 1 December 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov>

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IN SYRIAN CONFLICT**

#### **2.1. From “Greater Middle East Initiative” to “Arab Spring”**

This second chapter of the dissertation focuses on the evolution of American policy towards the Middle East and Syria, beginning with a discussion of the US grand strategy and then transitioning to its general application in the Mideast prior to describing the specific way that it’s been practiced towards Syria from the Cold War up until the present day. American grand strategy incorporates neorealist and neoliberal thought in order to introduce a brand-new paradigm that more accurately describes the present-day state of the world before talking about the concepts that formed US policies towards this region throughout and between the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations.

Whether the reader adheres to the neorealist idea that it was the Hegemonic Stability Theory which retained a semblance of global order since the end of the Cold War or the neoliberal one that it was the Democratic Peace Theory which did this instead, it’s clear that whatever presumption of relative stability that had previously defined the international system is giving way to a renewed period of global disorder. It’s important to set the appropriate context of the present-day state of international relations in order for the subsequent sections about the US policy towards Syria to make proper sense to the reader, which is why the first part of this subsection will discuss the global transition from order to disorder, the nature and influence of the Obama Doctrine, and the structural fusion between neorealism and neoliberalism.

One of the most original ways to reconceptualize international relations is through the world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, who proposed in his 1974 book “The Modern World-System” that the all states can be divided into one

of three categories – the core, semi-periphery, or periphery<sup>64</sup>. His understanding of the international system was heavily influenced by Marxist theory, but the influence of his work has continued to resonate even after the end of the Cold War because of its relevancy in describing the spread of Western-modeled globalization in the 1990s and 2000s. The sudden evolution of bipolarity to unipolarity left a gaping hole in the international structure which the US and its allies sought to fill through their institutions and soft power, working first to integrate what Wallerstein had defined as the semi-periphery before moving along to the actual periphery. Prominent Russian expert Alexei Bogaturov, writing in his article “The Syndrome of “Absorption” in International Politics”, remarks that the world order is unreliably balanced between unipolarity and multipolarity, and that the West hasn’t yet fully succeeded in expanding its “world society” (to rephrase classic British IR scholar Hedley Bull’s famous term “world international society”) into all parts of the world, a process which he defines as “absorption”<sup>65</sup>.

Former Pentagon strategic planner and author Thomas P. M. Barnett built upon these ideas in his 2004 work about “The Pentagon’s New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century”<sup>66</sup>. Barnett theorizes that the world can be split up into what he terms the “functioning core” and the “non-integrated gap”, with the former being subdivided into the “old core” of the US and its Western allies and the “new core” of BRICS and others. Both cores, he says, are trying to – if one will employ Bogaturov’s phraseology – “absorb” the non-integrated gap, with the US being the most capable of any actor in the world to do this. As part of this historic-structural mission, Barnett says that the US must behave as both a “Leviathan” and a “System Administrator”, or if classic International Relations parlance is used, then the neorealist hegemon and the neoliberal institutional organizer.

---

<sup>64</sup> Wallerstein I. *The Modern World-System*. New York: Academic, 1974, p. 442.

<sup>65</sup> Shakleina T., Melville A. *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and Realities*. N.Y.: Central European University Press, 2005, pp. 291-310.

<sup>66</sup> Barnett T. *The Pentagon’s New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2004, pp. 191-247.

Russian scholar Alexei Bogdanov seems to agree with Barnett to a large extent when he wrote that the US is still strong despite its hegemonic-systemic weaknesses because of its reliance on global and regional institutions and the paramount role that the US plays as the chief integrator in bringing other states into the “neo-liberal bloc”, which he characterizes as being marked by neo-liberal values such as the market economy, “democracy”, and the Western conception of “human rights”<sup>67</sup>.

The act of Great Powers spreading their influence, institutions, and soft power across the world and especially into neighboring countries, particularly those that constitute the “second world”, the “periphery” and the “non-integrated core”, was described by T. Shakleina in her publications on such issues as world order formation, structural trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> international relations, great powers’ accommodation”<sup>68</sup>. She states that one of the megatrends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the establishment of a new world order through territorial reconfiguration, of which regional integration and spheres of influence are a key part. The Great Powers function as the integrational cores while the neighboring states are relative peripheries to it, and this pattern of influence aggrandizement is evidenced all across the world, whether in the post-Soviet territories, the Mideast, or Southeast Asia, for example.

While this process could help to retain some sort of order in the international system amidst the transformational period that it’s presently in, it could also provoke fierce competition between the Great Powers (integrational cores) over their peripheries (overlapping claims to regional subsystems), like what happened with Russia and the West over Ukraine from 2013 onwards. Academic Feodor Voitlovsky wrote about “Instability in the World System” drawing attention to

---

<sup>67</sup> Богданов А. Американская гегемония и факторы системной нестабильности в XXI веке. // Международные процессы. - 2014. - Т. 12. - № 3. С. 8-22.

<sup>68</sup>Shakleina T. A Russian Perspective on the Twenty-First Century Challenges / Challenge and Change. Global Threats and the State in Twenty-First Century International Politics. N.C. Noonan, V. Nadkarni, eds. Macmillan, 2016, pp. 39-69; Shakleina T. Russia in the New Distribution of Power / Emerging Powers in a Comparative Perspective. The Political and Economic Rise of the BRIC Countries. Ed. by Vidya Nadkarni and Norma Noonan. N.Y.: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 163-188.

some of the factors that were driving the transformation of the world order and threatening to upend it<sup>69</sup>. Another Russian expert, Eduard Batalov, wrote that the collapse of the Yalta world order amidst the continued march of globalization has led to a crisis of global leadership, which was occurring at the same time as multidimensional momentum was shifting from the West (the US and its allies) to the East (the BRICS countries). All of this was contributing to the reformation of the world order, he concluded<sup>70</sup>.

In accordance with the global megatrends that were just described, it shouldn't be surprising that observers impartially describe the US' unipolar hegemony as being under threat. Two of the most constructive commentators writing about this process are Richard Ned Lebow and Simon Reich, who explored all of this in depth for their book "Good-Bye Hegemony!: Power and Influence in the Global System"<sup>71</sup>. The authors confirm the observations of their predecessors and take an even more critical route by proclaiming that the US' hegemony was never real to begin with and was just a deceptive trick of perception carried out by the US' military-industrial complex. Since American power is waning, they say, the US should embrace multilateralism and internationalism in order to more peacefully and stably transition from Washington's fading global order into the new one that is yet to come but is presently being built. Instead of hard power, the US should focus more on soft and indirect means of promoting its influence.

This correlates a lot with what T. V. Paul wrote in his book about "Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future"<sup>72</sup>. The Canadian IR scholar believes that the present times are ultra-sensitive and that the US, as the challenged (and some could even say, declining) global hegemon must be very careful not to provoke or be tricked into a war by some of the rising powers, since

---

<sup>69</sup> Войтоловский Ф.Г. Нестабильность в мировой системе // Международные процессы. - 2009. - Т. 16. - № 4. С. 4-16.

<sup>70</sup> Баталов Э. Современные глобальные тренды и новое сознание // Международные процессы. - 2012. - Т. 10. - № 1. С. 4-17.

<sup>71</sup> Simon R., Lebow R. Good-bye Hegemony! Power and Influence in the Global System. Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 15-50.

<sup>72</sup> Paul T. V. Accommodating Rising Powers Past, Present, and Future. Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 3-28; 293-313.

this could be unprecedentedly destructive given the high degree of interconnection all across the world. T. Paul relies on many historical examples in showing how this could peacefully be done, but also in highlighting the pitfalls that have occurred in the past when war broke out as a result of the “Thucydides Trap”. Overall, his work can be summarized as a call for accommodation and not violent competition (hence the name of his book), but he’s also wise enough to know that this is easier said than done, and that history is replete with numerous examples of the difficulties that this entails.

This theoretical backdrop is crucial to remember at all times because it forms the conceptual basis on which the “New Middle East”, “Greater Middle East”, and “New Greater Middle East” strategies were formed.

In April 2004, the US unveiled a strategy called the Greater Middle East, which amounted to the incorporation of all of North Africa, the entire traditional Middle East and Central Asia, and parts of South Asia Initiative<sup>73</sup>. The Brookings Institute wrote at the time that this region “stretches from Morocco to Pakistan”. The purpose behind expanding the definition of the Mideast was ostensibly to promote region-wide democratization, according to the report. The expansion of the region’s defined scope is important because it will set the stage for the US’ theater-wide strategy, including the regime change “Arab Spring” events.

This observation therefore suggests that the “Axis of Evil” moniker and its expanded Syria-Iraq-Iran concept which sits at the geographic fulcrum of the “Greater Middle East Initiative” wasn’t based solely on Bush’s “values” in seeking to “democratize” and “rein in” so-called “rogue states”, but had a clear-cut Neorealist agenda behind it of promoting American geopolitical power. This twisted fusion of Neorealism and Neoliberalism was termed the “Bush Doctrine”, and the strategy that it embodied was articulated in the National Security Strategies

---

<sup>73</sup>Wittes T. The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation. The Brookings Institution, 10 May 2018. Web. 1 July 2018. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2004/05/10middleeast-wittes>.

of 2002<sup>74</sup> and 2006<sup>75</sup>, as well as being glowingly elaborated on at length in Robert Gordan Kaufman's "In Defense of the Bush Doctrine"<sup>76</sup>.

The author applauded what he termed as the President's "moral democratic realism" and attempted to rebuke the unpopular leader's many critics by disguising Bush's naked power pursuit as a "moral" proselytization of "democracy", though regrettably coming off no different than the 19<sup>th</sup>-century colonialists who preached the need to "civilize" "backwards" peoples. It also didn't help any that Bush himself proclaimed in 2005: "I am driven with a mission from God'. God would tell me, 'George go and fight these terrorists in Afghanistan'. And I did. And then God would tell me 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq'. And I did."<sup>77</sup> Bearing this infamous phrase in mind, it's a legitimate point to wonder whether Bush and his PNAC neoconservative "deep state" backers were influenced to a large degree by Christian fundamentalism, which may have contributed to their wanton militancy in the Mideast and the inadvertent promotion of Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" narrative among the global mainstream audience.

Apart from the possible religious-civilizational influences on the Bush Doctrine's formation, one less controversial observation about it is that this policy embraces the concept of preemptive military action. A famous specialist on American military policy wrote that "it was only in June 2002 that President Bush proclaimed outright an expansive policy of pre-emptive military action, which moved towards the preventive or even precautionary use of force, as a response to the threat of weapons of mass destruction associated with international terrorism", proving that the focus on preemption became so obsessive that it crossed the line into the trigger-happy mindset of a so-called "precautionary use of force", understood as being a severe overreaction and the paranoid imagining of latent

---

<sup>74</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. September 2002. Web. 1 December 2017. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>

<sup>75</sup> The National Security Strategy. The White House. March 16, 2006. Web. 1 December 2017. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006.html>

<sup>76</sup> Kaufman R. G. In Defense of the Bush Doctrine. Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky, 2007, pp. 87-101.

<sup>77</sup> MacAskill E. George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq'. The Guardian. 7 Oct. 2005. Web. 1 December 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa>.

threatening scenarios everywhere across the world<sup>78</sup>. In pertinence, and remembering the neoconservatives' years-long plan to have the US invade Iraq, it's only expected then that they'd concentrate their attention in this respect on that Mideast country. The prevailing theme expressed by R. Allison in respect to the Bush Doctrine demonstrated similarity to the views expressed later by P. Pillar. It means that there is visible ideational and strategic (and tactic) continuity in American international behavior<sup>79</sup>. The Bush Doctrine's preemption actions can be seen not only through its conventional military operations against Afghanistan and especially Iraq, but also through its clandestine unconventional ones in eventually paving the way for the "Arab Spring".

In 2005, the "Cedar Revolution" occurred in Lebanon, resulting in a change of government and a drastic change in relations with Syria. The pretence for this de-facto Mideast Colour Revolution (proto-"Arab Spring" rehearsal) was that the Syrian government had allegedly been behind the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. The result of this mass mobilization movement was the expulsion of the Syrian military from Lebanon, where they had been positioned since 1976 to try to maintain the peace during and after the Lebanese Civil War<sup>80</sup>, and a weakening of Damascus' regional influence and ability to protect itself from a possible conventional Israeli attack.

The situation is not as clear-cut as it was presented to the global audience, however. The investigative online journal *CounterPunch* examined all aspects of the "Cedar Revolution" to conclude that the Syrian government most likely had nothing to do with the assassination, and that the pro-Western and Western-funded NGOs active in Lebanon had carried out a Colour Revolution to serve foreign interests<sup>81</sup>. This marks the first active American phase of the campaign against Syria. The objective was to sever ties between Lebanon from Syria (which it had

---

<sup>78</sup>Allison R. *Russia, the West, and Military Intervention*. Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 100-101.

<sup>79</sup>Pillar P. R. *Why America Misunderstands the World: National Experience and Roots of Misperception*. Op. cit.

<sup>80</sup>Pan E. *Middle East: Syria and Lebanon*. // Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 18 Feb. 2005. Web. 1 December 2017. <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-syria-lebanon/p7851>.

<sup>81</sup>Schuh T. *Faking the Case Against Syria*. *CounterPunch*, 18 Nov. 2005. Web. 1 December 2017. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2005/11/18/faking-the-case-against-syria/>.

formerly been a cultural and civilizational part of for centuries until the French dislodged it during their post-World War I occupation) in order to roll back and weaken Damascus prior to an even more intense destabilization designed to break it.

UK-based academic and RT analyst Sharmine Narwani made a convincing case in her 2015 article “Ten years on, Lebanon's 'Cedar Revolution’” that there was foreign involvement in this Color Revolution, though conceding that it originally did have a natural and spontaneous basis<sup>82</sup>. Her research revealed that the Serbian-based *CANVAS group* was involved in organizing and subsequently guiding events on the ground, thereby suggesting a chain of links which ultimately reached back to Color Revolution masterminded by Gene Sharp. *CANVAS* was created with the public mission of implementing Sharp’s regime change ideas into practice all across the world, so the connection between the two isn’t baseless. Moreover, G. Sharp worked closely with *CANVAS*, thereby linking the two together and by extension making the case that the “Cedar Revolution” was the first-ever Mideast Color Revolution.

In order to fully understand the argument being presented, we need to be acquainted with G. Sharp and his famous publications. This academic is credited with being the strategic godfather of Color Revolutions because of the influential techniques which he proposed in his world-renowned “From Dictatorship to Democracy”<sup>83</sup>, “There Are Realistic Alternatives”<sup>84</sup>, and “198 Methods of Non-Violent Action”<sup>85</sup> books. The novelty behind his strategies has earned Sharp the moniker “the Machiavelli of non-violence”<sup>86</sup>, and he’s also been credited for

---

<sup>82</sup>Narwani S. Ten years on, Lebanon's 'Cedar Revolution' RT. 13 Mar. 2013. Web. 16 December 2017. <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/240365-lebanon-revolution-anniversary-cedar-2005/>.

<sup>83</sup>Sharp G. *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*. 4 ed. East Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2010, p. 93.

<sup>84</sup>Sharp G. *There Are Realistic Alternatives*. Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003, p. 53.

<sup>85</sup>Sharp G. *Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Two: The Methods of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973, p. 336.

<sup>86</sup>Flintoff J.-P. Gene Sharp: The Machiavelli of non-violence . *New Statesman*, 3 Jan. 2013. Web. 1 January 2017. <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/your-democracy/2013/01/gene-sharp-machiavelli-non-violence>.

allegedly inspiring the Arab Spring<sup>87</sup>. Venezuelan journalist Eva Golinger has written extensively about how the US foments and employs Color Revolutionary tactics all across the world, and believes that they constitute a new and much more ‘efficient’ regime change strategy than conventional military invasions such as the Iraqi and Libyan ones<sup>88</sup>.

The first Color Revolution was the 2000 “Bulldozer Revolution” in Serbia while President Clinton was still in office. This was the initial testing ground for the strategy, which was later deployed throughout the former Soviet states of Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) under Bush’s Presidency. During Obama tenure, the EuroMaidan movement, labelled a Color Revolution by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov<sup>89</sup>, overthrew President Yanukovich in 2014. Alexey Malashenko of the Carnegie Endowment wrote that “many in Russia saw in the (Arab Spring) protests an echo of the ‘color revolutions’ against the governments in former Soviet republics that were believed to have been encouraged by Western powers. He stated that all the Arab revolutions “are very similar to the scenarios of the color revolutions”<sup>90</sup>. Russian scholar Andrei Sushentsov takes a different view, writing that the US was not behind the “Arab Spring” and actually risked losing influence in Egypt and Tunisia, though he nevertheless recognizes the important role that Western NGOs played during that time in spreading “democracy” in accordance with the mission that was first officially promulgated in the US 2002 National Security Strategy<sup>91</sup>.

---

<sup>87</sup> Gray L., Gene S.: How to Start a Revolution. Telegraph Media Group Limited, 10 Oct. 2011. Web. 1 February 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmmakersonfilm/8841546/Gene-Sharp-How-to-Start-a-Revolution.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Golinger E. Colored Revolutions: A New Form of Regime Change, Made in the USA. Global Research, 10 Feb. 2011. Web. 19 December 2017. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/colored-revolutions-a-new-form-of-regime-change-made-in-the-usa/27061>.

<sup>89</sup> West Tried to Stage Another Color Revolution in Ukraine – Lavrov. RIA Novosti, 24 Apr. 2014. Web. 17 December 2017. <http://en.ria.ru/world/20140424/189342116/West-Tried-to-Stage-Another-Color-Revolution-in-Ukraine--Lavrov.html>.

<sup>90</sup> Malashenko A. Russia and the Arab Spring. Carnegie Moscow Center, 1 Oct. 2013. Web. 1 December 2017. [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/russia\\_arab\\_spring2013.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/russia_arab_spring2013.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> Сушенцов А.А. Очерки политики США в региональных конфликтах 2000-х годов. М.: МГИМО-Университет, 2014. Web. 1 May 2018. <https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/49e/49ea11ae1a464d93f90030c2792f12ae.pdf>.

It's beyond the scope of this dissertation to elaborate on any more of the organizational or conceptual details behind this broad-based strategy, as the primary point in making the case that the "Cedar Revolution" was a precedent for the "Arab Spring" in Syria has already been accomplished, but it is necessary to analyze at least some of the publications on this topic which could greatly enhance understanding of these carefully engineered processes.

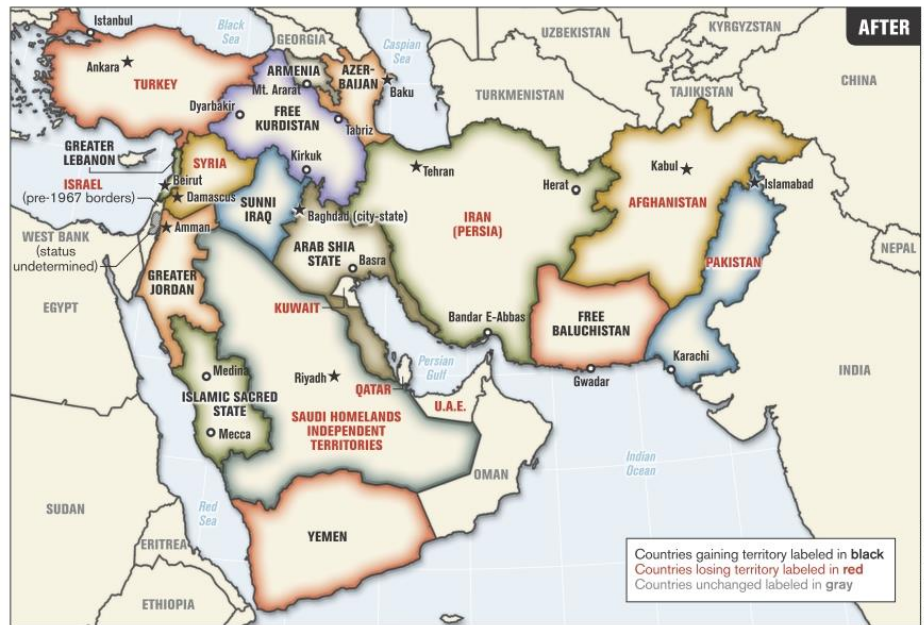
The next phase of the US' reconceptualization of the Middle East and the strategic evolution of its policy towards Syria was the characterization of a "new Middle East" by Bush's Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in July 2006 when she was addressing the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. She said: "What we're seeing here, in a sense, is the growing -- the birth pangs of a new Middle East. And whatever we do, we have to be certain that we are pushing forward to the new Middle East, not going back to the old one"<sup>92</sup>. This statement proved that the US had designs for a new Mideast political arrangement and that it also had an interested stake in this outcome. Combining this "New Middle East" reconceptualization of the region together with the previously mentioned "Greater Middle East" one proposed by the Brookings Institution, one can see a patterned US approach towards the region. First, the US delineated the scope of its politically transformative activities (the "Greater Mideast"), and then it set about working with its allies (in this context, Israel) to change the facts on the ground and bring about its intended changes (the "New Middle East").

This "New Greater Mideast" (an amalgam of the two conceptions) is envisioned as being radically different from the old one. In June 2006, Army Lt. Col. Ralph Peters hypothesized "How a better Middle East would look" in Armed Forces Journal article "Blood Borders"<sup>93</sup>. He proposed a complete restructuring of the region, with almost every country experiencing either an addition or a loss of territory. His map is below:

---

<sup>92</sup> Secretary Rice Holds a News Conference. The Washington Post, 21 July 2006. Web. 1 December 2017. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/21/AR2006072100889.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Peters R. Blood borders. Armed Forces Journal, 1 June 2006. Web. 1 June 2017. <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/blood-borders/>.



<http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/peters-blood-borders-map/>

It can be seen that this is likely what Condoleezza Rice had in mind when she referred to the “New Middle East”. Whether by coincidence or not, she evoked that term one month after Peters’ article was published. Pertaining to Syria, it is planned that the country loses its Kurdish part (mostly Al-Hasakah Governorate) to “Free Kurdistan” and that Latakia and Tarus Governorates be incorporated into a “Greater Lebanon”. Therefore, not only is regime change on the table for Syria, but so too is dismemberment. The US had a specific vision in mind for this “New Greater Middle East”, and it would have to resort to the strategy of geopolitical engineering by means of manufactured identity conflict in order to achieve this. What this translates to in theory is the utilization of Constructivism to provoke the said conflicts which would then be fought on Neoliberal grounds (i.e. “democracy”, “spreading values”) in order to advance Neorealist outcomes (a new geopolitical reality in the Mideast).

It will be proven that this objective is the pinnacle of the US grand strategy in the Mideast and that regime change plays an integral role in reaching it.

Reviewing the US strategy towards the Mideast, its purpose is to dramatically reengineer the geopolitics of West Asia as part of the “New Greater Middle East” policy, which owes its conceptual underpinnings to the writings of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former National Security Advisor to President Carter and

a regular political advisor to successive presidents since then, who wrote “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives” in 1997. In an allusion to the Wolfowitz Doctrine application in the Eurasian landmass, he stated: “If the middle space can be drawn increasingly into the expanding orbit of the West (where America preponderates), if the southern region is not subjected to domination by a single player, and if the East is not unified in a manner that prompts the expulsion of America from its offshore bases, America can then be said to prevail. But if the middle space rebuffs the West, becomes an assertive single entity, and either gains control over the South or forms an alliance with the major Eastern actor, then America's primacy in Eurasia shrinks dramatically”<sup>94</sup>.

Although Brzezinski's geopolitical recommendations bring into doubt whether or not the United States is opposed to the emergence of a “vacuum” for strategic reasons, nevertheless, the idea of stultifying regional hegemony and “convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests” (even if military, covert, or regime change means must be used to achieve this) have remained the hallmarks of American foreign policy. Z. Brzezinski was a strong proponent of the US domineering role in world politics and hegemonic strategy after the end of the Cold War. Slightly different view was presented by a famous scholar Samuel Huntington<sup>95</sup>. But both prominent scholars accepted that challenges will assuredly arise to American hegemony, and that the rise of multipolarity might end up being inevitable. Therefore, they proposed that the US take proactive measures in order to indefinitely safeguard its global position for as long as possible, though accepting that this will ultimately be a difficult task contingent on many factors.

---

<sup>94</sup> Brzezinski Z. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1997. 240 p.

<sup>95</sup> Huntington S. also wrote about the perspective of America's dominant role in the post-cold war period. But he declared that the United States cannot solve all the global problems unilaterally, and suggested accommodation with other great powers including Russia and China. See: Huntington S. P. *The Lonely Superpower // Foreign Affairs*. - 1999. - Vol. 78. - No. 2, pp. 35-49. Later the same idea was expressed by Christopher Layne in his book: Layne Ch. *The Peace of Illusions. American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*. Ithaca, 2006. 304 p.

Mentioned above T. Barnett was motivated by a similar self-interested desire to preserve America's post-Cold War primacy, though he fundamentally reconceptualized the world in a way which deals less with geopolitics and more with "networks". His "functioning core" and "non-integrating gap" (which includes the Mideast) required that the Pentagon rely on non-military means such as demography, economy, immigration and others in order to complement its conventional capabilities in fighting this century's war. He evaluated the US War on Iraq as being designed to trigger a "Big Bang" of "positive military-political developments" in the region, and presciently forecast that the long-term consequences would reverberate against Syria and ultimately Iran (the latter of which is the main target)<sup>96</sup>.

R. Craig Nation who was writing on American policy in Eurasia, was more geopolitically minded than T. Barnett, though he also echoes some of his ideas about how the US can retain the regional order in Eurasia. C. Nation's references to Halford's Heartland theory, Brzezinski, and Mackinder's conception of the "world island" show how he understands the importance of CENTCOM's sphere of operations in the Mideast and Central Asia. He argues, just like Brzezinski does, that the US must prevent the emergence of the "Eurasia" idea, both in Russia and elsewhere in the supercontinent, because it poses a serious threat to American leadership. C. Nation identifies American enduring interests in Eurasia as being the need to secure his country's access to its resources, managing the rise of China, fighting terrorism in the Mideast, and assisting Russia with its "democratic transition". According to his concept these objectives can be promoted through strengthening energy security, waging the Global War on Terrorism, and the US efforts to promote its envisioned regional order. C. Nation also suggested that NATO active policy and "democracy promotion" could greatly aid Washington in controlling Eurasia. His ideas align with what Russian academic Alexei Bogaturov wrote about American conduct. Bogaturov made an assumption that one of the

---

<sup>96</sup>Barnett T. *The Pentagon's New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004, pp. 191-247.

three zones of US interests “encompasses the oil-producing regions of the Middle East and the Caspian Sea with outreaches into Central Asia”. This perfectly overlaps with CENTCOM’s boundaries and represents the geostrategic pivot space of Afro-Eurasia (essentially the entire Eastern Hemisphere). Bogaturov theorizes that the US always acts according to its own interests and that this has powerful repercussions such as driving its proselytizing quest to “democratize” and “liberate” the whole world<sup>97</sup>. Similar idea about evangelical character of American international behaviour was also expressed by Hendrickson<sup>98</sup>.

Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya from the Strategic Culture Foundation wrote about the US plans in the Mideast, linking together Condoleezza Rice’s “New Middle East” strategy, Ralph Peters’ “Blood Borders”, and Zbigniew Brzezinski’s “The Grand Chessboard” in order to prove that the US is in fact pursuing a multifaceted destabilization campaign against the Middle East in order to geopolitically engineer the region<sup>99</sup>. His work is very comprehensive and presents a holistic view of American strategy. It wonderfully incorporates the aforementioned works together in providing a concise and summarized assessment of what the United States is aiming for in the Mideast and why.

The Obama administration continued policy of the previous administrations though he promised that he would reverse all of the disastrous policies of his predecessor. Upon taking office, a strong case could be made that the US had by that point officially become an empire. Well-known authors Christopher Layne and Bradley A. Thayer discussed this issue and agreed that America is indeed an empire and that it doesn’t admit this for public relations and soft power purposes, but they differ of what sort of imperial rule it wields<sup>100</sup>. On the one hand, the

---

<sup>97</sup> Bogaturov A. The Sources of American Conduct // Russia in Global Affairs. 9 Feb. 2005. Web. 08 March 2018. [https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_4426](https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_4426).

<sup>98</sup> Hendrickson D.C. Republic in Peril. American Empire and the Liberal Tradition. N.Y.: Oxford University Press. 2018. 304 p.

<sup>99</sup> Nazemroaya M. D. Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a New Middle East. Global Research.ca, 14 June 2014. Web. 27 January 2018. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/plans-for-redrawing-the-middle-east-the-project-for-a-new-middle-east/3882>.

The same idea about this destabilizing purpose of the United States was presented by George Friedman in his famous book *The Next 100 years. A Forecast for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (N.Y: Anchor Books, 2010), pp. 5, 40-46.

<sup>100</sup> Layne Ch., Bradley A. Thayer. *American Empire: A Debate*. New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 166.

argument is presented that the US is a formal empire in terms of its military and economic power, but this is contrasted with its cultural and ideological sway to persuade the reader that American might actually be a non-traditional empire instead. Debates on the question whether the United States is an empire took place in 1990s and in 2000s. They came back already in 2016-2018 after D. Trump came to power, however opinions still differ and the discussion will continue<sup>101</sup>.

The reality is likely somewhere in between, since it's true that the US directly exercises exorbitant military and economic power, but it also indirectly uses its culture and ideology to progressively enact social change within targeted societies. Both methods, though, share the common denominator of working to install and maintain friendly regimes all across the world. As for the main difference between the two authors, this comes down to Layne's support of "offshore balancing" and Thayer's advocacy for "offensive realism". The first policy is pretty much a synonym for the Balance of Power and relies more on diplomacy just like the earlier-referenced 'reluctant sheriff' concept expressed by R. Haass, while the second one is akin to the Democratic Peace Theory and favors a more aggressive approach that carries strong shades of liberal interventionist thought. Altogether, the question no longer becomes whether Obama inherited an empire, but should more aptly be reframed as asking what sort of empire Bush handed down to him and how flexibly could it change?

Speaking of Haass, it is necessary to mention his book (together with Martin Indyk) "Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President"<sup>102</sup>. This political work was a collection of essays that spoke about the sort of international challenges that Bush's successor would have to deal with. Whoever the 44<sup>th</sup> President was going to be, the two writers wanted to warn them that

---

<sup>101</sup> See, for instance: Kagan R. *The Benevolent Empire* // *Foreign Policy*. – 1998. - No. 111, pp. 24-35; Encarnacion O. *The Follies of Democratic Imperialism* // *World Policy Journal*. – 2005. - Vol. XXII. - No. 1, pp. 47-60; Friedman G. *The Next 100 years. A Forecast for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. N.Y.: Anchor Books, 2010. 253 p.; Hendrickson D.C. *Republic in Peril. American Empire and the Liberal Tradition*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2018. 304 p.; Pillar P.L. *Why America Misunderstands the World. National Experience and Roots of Misperception*. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2016. 224 p.

<sup>102</sup>Haass R., Indyk M. *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the next President*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008, pp. 27-93, 199-200.

Bush's policies of regime change and "democratization" and Clinton's policy of "peacemaking" and "containment" were no longer as suitable for dealing with the changed international conditions that they would have to confront. Some of the most relevant ones were the need for a strategic framework in handling an ever-sectarian Iraq, the Iranian nuclear energy issue (deliberately and inaccurately described as a "nuclear weapons" problem), and the failing Lebanese government. The most crucially urgent issue addressed in this book, however, was obviously the need for a balanced military withdrawal from Iraq, which occupied center stage during the 2008 election and ended up being one of the defining events of Obama Presidency, no matter how misleading this "withdrawal" was in practice when he partially backtracked on his decision from 2014 onwards during the War on Daesh.

The most forward-looking idea presented in that book, however, was that the US must rely on supercharged diplomacy in shifting its focus from Iraq to a reprioritized Iran, hence the need for a balanced withdrawal from the occupied country. As part of the Iranian-centric Mideast policy that Haass and Indyk were proposing, they said that the next president should promote a Syrian-Israeli peace accord in order that Damascus could then be divided from Tehran and subsequently used as a staging ground for the dissimulation of more pro-American influence in the region. The overriding idea is that the US wouldn't have to resort to military means against Iran like it did with Iraq, but that it could neutralize the purported 'Iranian threat' through diplomatic means in eventually isolating and pressuring it into conforming to the US dictates. This multi-step process incorporates such varied but interconnected elements as the stabilization of the failing Lebanese government, the de-escalation of tensions in Palestine, and the encouragement of a Syrian-Israeli peace agreement, but with the end objective behind each of these foci being to weaken Iran's strategic position in the Mideast. It will be examined in depth later on in the upcoming subsection how the Obama Administration came to deal with the Syrian component of this grand strategy.

The Obama Doctrine was analyzed in detail by Colin Dueck in his book “The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today”<sup>103</sup>. He says that President Obama was so concentrated on pursuing his domestic agenda that he paid little attention to foreign affairs during his entire presidency, which explains why he never took any clear or decisive action, nor engaged in what Dueck says were any risky international military engagements like Bush did. He’s of the opinion that Obama cut back the US military presence abroad and accommodated international rivalries. Some significant episodes from his two terms lend credit to this observation.

It’s true that the US did conventionally withdraw most of its military forces from Iraq, and it’s equally true that it initiated the failed “reset” with Russia during this time. Also, the US diplomatically took steps to bring Iran, Cuba, and Myanmar ‘in from the cold’, though it never succeeded in its G2 proposal of jointly managing global affairs with China. However, there’s a lot that Dueck gets wrong in his book, such as not identifying the 2011 NATO War on Libya as a Bush-like military disaster. He also questions whether the US drawdown in conventional international military commitments under Obama might have contributed to global destabilization, not countenancing that this might have been partially the point all along in Iraq, for example. Additionally, even speaking in such terms as describing Obama’s foreign policy as a retrenchment of military power abroad is startlingly inaccurate because it displays ignorance of the scale and scope of the US so-called “Pivot to Asia”.

Academic Alyssa Eldridge disagrees with Dueck’s conclusions and doesn’t think that there’s really much of a difference between the Obama and Bush Doctrines. Eldridge explains how the US never stopped focusing on the Mideast since the beginning of the Cold War. Though President Obama promised to change the Bush Doctrine, he only ended up strengthening it. This is attributable to the continuity of national interests, foreign policy ideologies, and political players in the US permanent decision-making bureaucracy. For example, these include

---

<sup>103</sup>Dueck C. *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today*. Oxford UP. 2015, pp. 13-33.

securing unrestricted access to the region's oil reserves, the US-Israeli partnership, American military power, "democracy promotion" and "human rights", and the post-Cold War influence of the neoconservatives. The Bush and Obama Doctrines weren't a departure from general American foreign policy in the Mideast, but rather its natural evolution.

A. Eldridge explains that the Cold War saw the US practice a policy of "dual containment" in turning Iraq and Iran against each other in order to divide and rule them. 9/11 then gave the neoconservatives the excuse for invading Iraq. Vice President R. Cheney unveiled the so-called "one percent doctrine" to argue that the US is warranted in militarily acting if there was even a one percent chance that terrorists had a chance to acquire weapons of mass destruction. This was abused, as expected, to manufacture intelligence in justifying the preplanned War on Iraq, a conflict which was partially due to the US national interest in lessening its dependency on Saudi oil supplies by forcibly acquiring access to Iraq's reserves instead. Regime change in Iraq was intentioned help to Israel against Iran through the instigation of a "domino effect" that would weaken Tehran's regional standing, though this didn't occur until later and only then during the CIA-orchestrated theater-wide Color Revolution referred to as the "Arab Spring". Just as Bush foreign policy was a logical outgrowth of his predecessors', so too was Obama's, such as through his escalation of drone strikes and even the surge in Afghanistan, which Eldridge says was a Bush-like face-saving action. She doesn't think that this pattern will change anytime soon because it is impossible to alter the deeply ingrained neoconservative ideals that pervade the American establishment strategic thinking.

Andrew Bacevich who writes rather critically on the American international strategy, defining the United States as a "National security state", is equally pessimistic about America's future. He states that militarism is inscribed in the US collective consciousness and that the crusading idealism of "American Exceptionalism" will bring both itself and the rest of the world to instability and

conflict<sup>104</sup>. A. Bacevich focused on the history and evolution of the American national security ideology and practice. He describes a “sacred trinity” that upholds the country’s self-proclaimed exceptionalism. The American Credo includes: central role and influence of the national security institutions, American military superpower position in the world and its global projection; the US penchant for intervention. A. Bacevich brings us to the conclusion that anyone involved in political mainstream, including the President, cannot be free and has to act according to mainstream ideology. The same refers to the expert community and mass media working for the government<sup>105</sup>. He continued his critical observation of the American strategy concentrating of the Middle East trying to present a more realistic view of the American policy in the Middle East describing its evolution from the dawn of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran to the present day direction<sup>106</sup>. He defines it as “a combination of the “See-what-you-want-to-see-and-ignore-the-rest” approach. This pattern is clearly seen in American actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and even the Balkans, Bacevich argues. In explaining the relevance of this problem to the War on Syria, however, we can disagree with Bacevich when the author writes that the Obama Administration tried to stay away from the conflict as long as possible and was only pushed to act because of “humanitarian pressure” presumably in line with the neoliberal “Responsibility to Protect” dogma that pervaded his government at the time. Interestingly, Bacevich manages to connect the 1980s Afghan War to the one in Syria saying that the tactic of supplying military aid to Syria’s ‘moderate rebels’ is too reminiscent of the policy towards Afghanistan (which Bacevich discusses at length) when Afghan insurgents were receiving 470 million dollars in military aid from the US annually to fight Soviet troops. The subsequent rise of the Taliban and Al Qaeda is a bitter reminder of the fact that even a proxy war bears dangerous consequences. This powerful example demonstrates a continuity of American strategy across the

---

<sup>104</sup>Bacevich A. *Washington Rules. America’s Path to Permanent War*. N.Y.: A Metropolitan Book, 2010, pp. 19-49; 109-145.

<sup>105</sup> Drezner D.W. *The Ideas Industry*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2017. 360 p.

<sup>106</sup> Bacevich A. *America’s War Against Itself for the Greater Middle East* N.Y.: Random House, 2017. 453 p.

decades in the “Greater Middle East” and further drives home the idea that US has practiced similar policies throughout this space.

The neoconservatives are and remain the main driving force behind all of this, and their neorealist perspective on international relations was hardwired into the US establishment after the Bush’s election brought them to the pinnacle of power and enabled them to force the permanent decision-making bureaucracy to operate according to their precepts. That isn’t to say that US only practices neorealism and interprets international events accordingly, however, since there are also strong undercurrents of neoliberalism that are present in policies. Take for example the expansion of NATO and the EU, the latter of which pretty much serves as Washington’s proxy governing institution for Europe. Although the US and EU share most of the same values, this isn’t a prerequisite to fruitful cooperation between institutions, since the Pentagon and Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have very close and trusted relations with one another despite having almost nothing in common on the socio-cultural front. The reason that they work so well together is because of the shared neorealist objective that they have in balancing against and aggressively destabilizing other states such as Iran and Syria which don’t conform to their foreign policy (power) dictates.

The example of the US and Saudi Arabia’s institutional cooperation in spite of their divergent socio-cultural values proves that the neoliberal foundation of international relations – institutions – could be repurposed to pursue militant neorealist goals such as the Hegemonic Stability Theory of indefinitely prolonging the “unipolar moment”, with the Saudis and others voluntarily supporting the US because their leaders feel that they have a profitable stake in sustaining this system. This excitedly opens up the research topic of “neorealist institutions”, which should in principle be an oxymoron if one abides by ‘orthodox’ international relations theory, but which are empirically present in NATO, the GCC, and other such similar institutions that cooperate in pursuit of shared power objectives vis-à-vis such powers as Russia, China, and Iran. While the Bush Doctrine arguably favored neorealist strategies, the Obama Doctrine attempted to fuse the

institutional legacy that it inherited from its predecessor with neoliberal ideals such as multilateralism and an emphasis on promoting the universality of the West's civilizational values, which aligns with Samuel P. Huntington's thesis that he elaborated on in his 1996 work "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order"<sup>107</sup>.

## 2.2 American Policy Towards Syria

Lost amidst the never-ending series of Cold War crises and overshadowed by much more geopolitically important incidences during this period, the Syrian Crisis of 1957 greatly influenced the trajectory of the US forthcoming policies towards Syria. It occurred right between the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis and 1958 Lebanon Crisis, and therefore received less attention than both of them by historians. There were exaggerated suspicions in the US that Syria was on the verge of a secret communist takeover, one which could only be prevented through a military intervention or coup. Given that this occurred right after the Korean War, the United States was already frightened by the so-called "communist menace" and speculated that the "fall of Syria" might trigger a "domino effect"<sup>108</sup> throughout the Mideast<sup>109</sup>.

Consequently, this was predicted to make the Afro-Eurasian tri-continental juncture point of West Asia the USSR's newest staging ground for spreading its ideology all throughout the Eastern Hemisphere, and hence was conceived of as an imminent national security threat for American interests. This aligns with the Neorealist ideas about the balance of power and security dilemma.

Another pressing strategic consideration for the US at the time was support for its Israeli ally. Syria and Israel never signed a peace treaty to end the 1948 War, not at that time nor ever, so from the perspective of American decision makers and

---

<sup>107</sup>Huntington S., Ajami F., Mahbubani K., Bartley R., Liu B., Kirkpatrick J., Weeks A., Piel G. *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate*. New York, NY: Foreign Affairs, 1996. 68 p.

<sup>108</sup>Eisenhower D. Eisenhower gives famous domino theory speech. The History Channel. 7 Apr. 1954. Web. 6 February 2018. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/eisenhower-gives-famous-domino-theory-speech>.

<sup>109</sup>Pearson I. The Syrian Crisis of 1957, the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship' and the 1958 Landings in Jordan and Lebanon. *Middle Eastern Studies* 43.1 (2007): 45-64. JSTOR. Web. 6 February. 2018. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00263200601079625>.

strategists, Damascus constituted a threat to Tel Aviv. Furthermore, this threat was thought to become even greater if Syria obtained an even larger degree of support from the USSR by formally “defecting” to the communist camp. This basic consideration – that Syria’s partnership with a major out-of-regional actor could shift the balance of power against Israel – would eventually come back into focus after the Cold War when the neoconservatives feared that Iran could displace a struggling Russia in this role, both in Syria and the Mideast in general, and therefore needed to be stopped via preemptive measures which later turned into the theater-wide “Arab Spring” Color Revolutions and subsequent war on Syria.

The United States expanded its influence in this region after the end of the Second World War. Before that, practically till the middle of 1940s, the Middle East was the sphere of Great Britain’s exclusive influence. America used the same strategies for governing the region as Britain did, relying on the “balance of power” principle. The American government manipulated with differences of interests and competitive character of relations between regional powers trying to get as many dividends as it could. This approach gave the US an opportunity to stay outside while contradictions between different regional actors were growing, and to interfere into the situation at the moment most beneficial for the US, playing together with the regional actor whose aims and policy were in the stream with American interests.

In 1957 Syrian Crisis the United States worked together with its Turkish NATO ally to put severe pressure on Syria, eerily foreshadowing what would later happen after the “Arab Spring”. Turkish academics Onurİşçi and Barın Kayaoğlu noted how closely these two crises resembled one another. They stressed the point that Turkey believes that the Syrian government “threatens” both the U.S. and Turkish national interests. However there are also certain (even severe) contradictions in their interests and plans. They remind us of the Turkish-Syrian crisis of 1957 seeing many parallels between the events of 1957, their aftermath,

and the current state of U.S.-Turkish relations. The authors suggest that Washington and Ankara have a rocky road ahead in the region and in Syria<sup>110</sup>.

The 1957 Syrian Crisis was not ‘naturally occurring’, it’s appropriate to refer to David W. Lesch’s 1992 book. It was mentioned that for a long time, practically till the time of the new Syrian crisis, the American role in this affair was treated as a “deep secret”, but finally it became clear that the United States was drawn into a plan to destabilize the Syrian government, in league with Britain, Iraq, and Turkey, during 1955-56<sup>111</sup>. It should be noted that we can see direct relevance between the events of 1957 and policy of “regime change” in the Middle East and in Syria in particular. Russia’s decisive diplomatic intervention put a stop to their plans. In many ways, this pattern is exactly what transpired from 2011 onwards<sup>112</sup>.

The next major event which shaped US policy towards Syria in the Cold War period was the 1982 Muslim Brotherhood Crisis which occurred when the terrorist group – which is outlawed in Syria, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE – seized control of the strategically positioned city of Hama in central-western Syria. This group has popularly been regarded as the largest and most widespread Islamic “revolutionary” (terrorist) group for decades. Many countries, especially those in the West, saw it as a collection of “Muslim freedom fighters” which had been endeavoring to overthrow colonialists and then “dictators” ever since the 1920s<sup>113</sup>. That narrative isn’t accurate, but is capitalized upon by the US in order to ‘legitimize’ its close strategic relations with the organization. In reality, the Muslim Brotherhood is a collection of radical Islamists which aspire to overthrow

---

<sup>110</sup>İşçi O., Kayaoğlu B. Turkey and America: 1957 All Over Again? // The National Interest. 10 Apr. 2014. Web. 11 October 2017. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/turkey-america-1957-all-over-again-10224>.

<sup>111</sup> Lesch D. W. Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East. Westview Press, 1992, p. 242.

See also on the subject: Quandt W. B. Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East. Council on Foreign Relations. Nov. 7 dec. 1994 Web. 11 October 2017.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1994-11-01/syria-and-united-states-eisenhowers-cold-war-middle-east>.

<sup>112</sup> Fenton B. Macmillan backed Syria assassination plot. The Guardian. 27 Sept. 2003. Web. 11 October 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/sep/27/uk.syria1>.

<sup>113</sup> Brooke S. U.S. Policy and the Muslim Brotherhood. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Mar. 2013. Web. 11 October 2017.

[http://www.fpri.org/docs/chapters/201303.west\\_and\\_the\\_muslim\\_brotherhood\\_after\\_the\\_arab\\_spring.chapter1.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/docs/chapters/201303.west_and_the_muslim_brotherhood_after_the_arab_spring.chapter1.pdf).

national governments and replace them with a Salafist-inspired system. Because of its broad geographic reach and embedded nature in some societies, however, it's understandably an important asset of the US and other hostile forces intent on overthrowing secular Mideast governments.

The relationship between the US and the Muslim Brotherhood was publicly revealed through Washington's open support of its regional surrogates' "Arab Spring" chaos and overthrow of one-time American ally Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. It then transitioned the focus of its support to this terrorist organization's Syrian branch, which had also begun a Color Revolution around the same time in 2011. This insurgency only became fiercer and deadlier following the fall of Mubarak and the commencement of the NATO War on Libya. These events are relevant to bring up at this moment in order for the reader to recognize that the "Arab Spring" and War on Syria are just as connected to the 1982 Muslim Brotherhood Crisis in Hama as they are to the 1957 Syrian Crisis.

The brief Muslim Brotherhood takeover of Hama prompted a forceful response from former President Hafez Assad, and in an interesting sign of how Western 'values' are relative to their geopolitical utility, the US and its allies popularly blamed the Syrian leader for this event and not the terrorist group which he successfully dislodged from the city. Known as the "Hama Massacre" to many in the Western audience, the West exploited the failed terrorist insurgency of their surrogates in order to promote false information warfare narratives about Syria. These would later be recalled by the Mainstream Media all throughout the "Arab Spring" war on Syria in seeking to draw parallels between the supposed "anti-democratic brutality" of current President Bashar Assad and his father. What else is very important to learn from the 1982 Muslim Brotherhood Crisis in Hama is just how highly the US valued this terrorist organization, since it provides hints at what would come nearly three decades later during the "Arab Spring"<sup>114</sup>.

---

<sup>114</sup>A declassified Defense Intelligence Agency analysis from May 1982 titled Syria: Muslim Brotherhood Pressure Intensifies comprehensively chronicles the run-up to and eventual failure of the terrorist's efforts to seize the city. It provides readers with an in-depth understanding of how the group was able to launch its offensive, but also how the Syrian Arab Army managed to defeat this menace and liberate Hama. The agency concluded that the Muslim

The last important episode of the Cold War to be described in illustrating the strategic evolution of the US policy towards Syria is the 1983 effort to provoke Iraq to attack its Baathist neighbor. A declassified CIA document from September 1983 contains a detailed policy proposal outlining how and why this should happen. Although Iraq is presently no longer a conventional threat to Syria nor had been since the 2003 US invasion destroyed the country and turned it into a failed state, the geostrategic motivations behind this plot are still enduring and influenced American decision makers and planners for decades afterwards<sup>115</sup>.

One of the factors that determined American Mideast policy and policy toward Syria is energy. Syria's decision to shut down an Iraqi-originating pipeline through its territory, and decision not allow a Qatar pipeline to pass through Syria's territory was considered a "grave security threat". The common denominator in both cases was that Syria's geostrategic location makes it an integral player in the Mideast's pipeline politics. Building off of both the past and the present, Syria's high-level and strategic partnership with Iran is also viewed as a "threat" to Western and Israeli interests.

It should go without saying that all US foreign policy maneuvers and plots in the Mideast in one way or another are predicated with the intent of promoting Israeli interests, but what's special about this one is that it attempts – whether by coincidence or design – to apply Israeli scholar Oded Yinon's plan. Popularly known as the "Yinon Plan" in the decades after its conception, this academic proposed a far-sighted and Machiavellian strategy which sought to encourage interstate and civil warfare between Israeli's Arab neighbors as the best possible course of action for perpetually ensuring Tel Aviv's security. "A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties", which is what the document was officially called when it

---

Brotherhood will remain a threat for years to come in spite of having been mostly extinguished from Hama (which was previously a hotbed of its activity, according to the document).

Syria: Muslim Brotherhood Pressure Intensifies. Defense Intelligence Agency. Nov. 2013. Web. 6 February. 2018. <https://syria360.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/dia-syria-muslimbrotherhoodpressureintensifies-2.pdf>.

<sup>115</sup>Bringing Real Muscle To Bear Against Syria. Central Intelligence Agency. 14 Sept. 1983. Web. 6 February. 2018. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88B00443R001404090133-0.pdf>.

was published in the Hebrew journal “Kivunim” in 1982<sup>116</sup>, could also be called a strategy for Israel for the indefinite future, as its principle concept of externally provoked divide-and-rule conflict all around Israel’s periphery would become a reality in the aftermath of the “Arab Spring”. Concerning international relations theory, the Yinon Plan and “Arab Spring” can be viewed in the framework of Constructivism through promotion of identity conflict between states and also their constituent demographics.

The declassified CIA document also speaks on the need to distract Syria from focusing on its intervention in Lebanon, with it being forecast that an interstate war between itself and Iraq would inevitably lead to Damascus drawing down some attention or troops from its western theater, which – as could be predicted – would work out to Israel’s benefit. The parallel that this has with recent events is clear when considering the 2005 “Cedar Revolution” in Lebanon. This Color Revolution resulted in the withdrawal of Syria’s post-civil war military contingent in the country, though it wouldn’t be until the 2011 “Arab Spring” and its aftermath that Damascus lost most of its ability to influence its smaller and civilizationally aligned neighbor. Again, it must be reiterated that Syria’s involvement and influence in Lebanon was viewed as a “threat” to Israel, which explains why Tel Aviv and its Washington ally conspired to find a way to mitigate this.

Finally, the last topic of contemporary pertinence from the CIA proposal is how the agency implicitly suggested a de-facto indirect regional coalition of Turkey, Iraq, and Israel coordinated by the US, a plan which was obviously influenced by the 1957 Syrian Crisis proposal and would later expand to global proportions during the War on Syria. The internationalization of the US destabilization plans against Syria is a decades-long constant, as is Washington’s desire to use regional surrogates in carrying out such operations on its behalf. The US wanted to avoid getting trapped in a Mideast quagmire and also seems

---

<sup>116</sup>Yinon O. A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties. Information Clearinghouse. 1982. Web. 6 February 2018. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/The%20Zionist%20Plan%20for%20the%20Middle%20East.pdf>.

cognizant of the risk of military overstretch, though it ironically fell into both traps during the 2003 War on Iraq. However, it might be precisely because of this series of large-scale mistakes that the US “learned its lesson” and opted to be more ‘cautious’ in outsourcing the bulk of its destabilization efforts to the anti-Syrian coalition of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel, and others.

While not overly significant in and of itself, it’s worthwhile to include in the context of this chapter that the 1986 CIA document which was ultimately declassified in January 2017 outlined what would have to happen in order to trigger regime change against the late President Hafez Assad<sup>117</sup>. Importantly, and which will be directly relevant to events 25 years later, the Agency concluded that Muslim Brotherhood-triggered sectarian violence is the key to overthrowing the government in Syria. It took a quarter of a century, but the US would eventually opt to turn this plan into policy through the “Arab Spring” theater-wide Color Revolutions and subsequent Muslim Brotherhood terrorist insurgency.

One more fact which shaped American foreign policy towards Syria prior to 9/11 came after the end of the Cold War and with the rise of the neoconservative faction. Former Vice President Dick Cheney, prior to assuming his famous role under G.Bush Jr. but after having served as Secretary of Defense for Bush Sr., founded the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) think tank in 1997 which aimed to influence the US permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies, or “deep state”.

As noted by Democratic grassroots organization “Move On” in a special investigative report bulletin released in 2003, PNAC exercised enormous influence over the Bush Administration not least through the inclusion of some of its members into the administration (J.Bolton, R.Cheney, D.Rumsfeld, P.Wolfowitz)<sup>118</sup>. It is alleged that they played a disproportionate role over influencing the Iraq War. In fact, this group of individuals had actually been

---

<sup>117</sup>US Plans to Topple Assad Family Go Back Six Presidents, CIA Doc Reveals. Sputnik. N.p., 10 Apr. 2017. Web. 11 January. 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201704101052502201-cia-syria-assessment-1986/>.

<sup>118</sup>Winer N. The Project for the New American Century. MoveOn.org, 4 May 2003. Web. 26 January 2017. <http://www.moveon.org/moveonbulletin/bulletin13.html>.

pushing for a war in Iraq since 1998 trying to lobby for regime change there prior to the punitive Operation Desert Fox<sup>119</sup>. It also became known that a few of the PNAC members listed participated in a Foreign Policy in Focus Forum about Syria's role in Lebanon. The participants all signed a statement where it was recommended that the US begin planning for military action against Syria because "if there is to be decisive action, it will have to be sooner than later"<sup>120</sup>. This will be a crucial fact to keep in mind because many of PNAC's members would later come to occupy premier decision-making roles in the G.W.Bush administration, and openly expressed a desire for destabilizing Syria.

James Mann in his famous book "Rise of the Vulcans" argues that the neoconservative movement had been conspiring for approximately three decades in its quest to ultimately seize supreme power in the US. He writes that its origins can actually be found in the members of the Republican Party who opposed Democratic President Jimmy Carter's détente with the Soviet Union. As the years passed, they coalesced together by creating think tanks and other such institutions as platforms for organizing what would eventually be their successful path to power, and the author argues that they always intended to be a "war cabinet"<sup>121</sup>. Therefore, it's no surprise that the Bush Administration would behave so aggressively in the Middle East, both in overt and clandestine forms in launching the War on Iraq but also paving the way for the "Arab Spring", respectively.

The same neoconservative foreign policy train of thought which influenced President Bush Jr. also had strong effect on the Obama administration, although it competed with the neoliberal interventionists. Nevertheless, regardless of whether it was the neoconservatives or the neoliberals which ultimately gained Obama's ear at any given moment of time, the end result was the same – PNAC's plans for destabilizing Syria ultimately came to fruition because all of these strategies were

---

<sup>119</sup> Weiner B. A PNAC Primer: How We Got Into This Mess. AntiWar.com, 2 June 2003. Web. 26 January 2017. <http://www.antiwar.com/orig/weiner6.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Ending Syria's Occupation of Lebanon: The U.S. Role. The Middle East Forum, May 2000. Web. 26 January 2017. <http://www.meforum.org/research/lsg.php>.

<sup>121</sup> Mann J. Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 56-79, 112-127, 261-277, 311-332.

used to that end. Above mentioned J. Mann described how eventually democrats moved to the same mode of behaviour, fusing neorealist and neoliberal ideas<sup>122</sup>.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks provided the justification for the US' Global War on Terror. To adapt to this military reality, a reconceptualization of the Mideast occurred among the US foreign policy planners. The ideological and academic basis for reinventing American strategy lies in the theoretical and neoconservative works referenced earlier in the dissertation. It's noteworthy that many PNAC members eventually joined the Bush Administration, and they accordingly took their ideas with them into the realm of policy planning. What had at one time been a relatively fringe group of ideologues were all of a sudden placed front and center in the American "deep state", thereby giving them the capabilities that they needed to retool the US military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies in accordance with their vision. This meant in practice that neoconservative thinkers such as Robert Kagan, Richard Haass, and William Kristol became some of the key drivers of American strategy in the Middle East.

The first significant decision that the 43<sup>rd</sup> President made which would have direct consequences for Syria was the promulgation of the so-called "Axis of Evil" during his 2002 State of the Union address<sup>123</sup>. The inclusion of Iraq onto this list was alarming enough for Syrian national security because it indicated that the US was openly targeting it for regime change and war, something which it would eventually deliver on in 2003 on the grounds of fabricated "Weapons of Mass Destruction" allegations. A few months after the State of the Union in May 2002, however, the "Axis of Evil" was expanded by then-US Under Secretary of State John Bolton to include Cuba, Libya, and Syria<sup>124</sup>. Not coincidentally, it was PNAC member J. Bolton, who made the announcement that de-facto placed Syria on the official regime change agenda<sup>125</sup>. It is appropriate at this point to recall that some

---

<sup>122</sup> Mann J. *The Obamians. The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power*. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2012. 416 p.

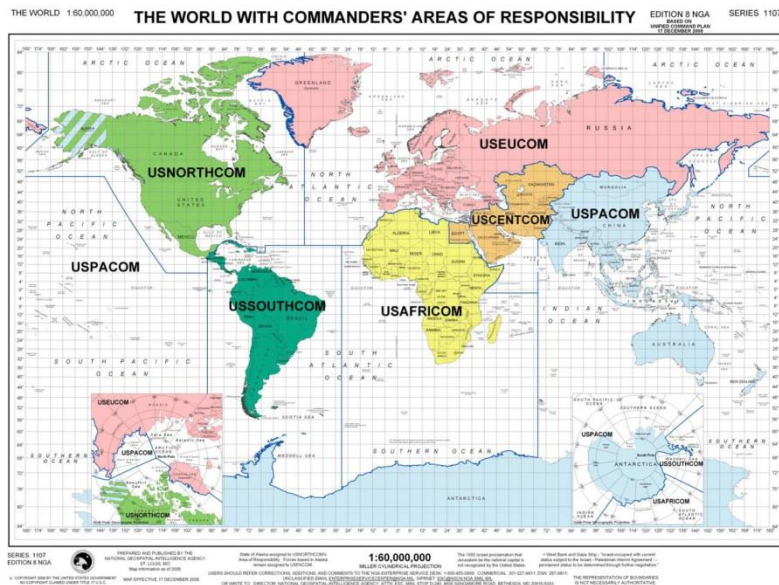
<sup>123</sup> Bush G. W. Bush State of the Union address. CNN. N.p., 29 Jan. 2002. Web. 10 February. 2018. <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/>.

<sup>124</sup> US expands 'axis of evil'. BBC, 6 May 2002. Web. 25 January 2018. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1971852.stm>.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*.

PNAC members had signed a statement advocating military force against Syria after a forum on the topic in 2000. This shows that the plan of the Syrian operation can directly be traced back to that point, even if it was not official American policy at the time.

Speaking of the expanded Axis of Evil, it serves a certain military-political purpose for decision makers. US Central Command (CENTCOM) is the Department of Defense entity tasked with overseeing military operations in part of the Greater Mideast (see the map).



<http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom-en>

As can be seen from the above map, the “Axis of Evil” linkage between Syria, Iraq, and Iran forms a clear-cut contiguous line perfectly dividing CENTCOM in half. This means that the US may have found it convenient to target all three countries for regime change because this would allow its military command (CENTCOM) to multiply its force potential in its highlighted regional theatre.

When President B. Obama came to the White House there were hopes that relations between the United States and Syria will improve. B. Obama during his election campaign end earlier in his first term declared his desire (and promise) to make the American foreign policy more peaceful becoming the Nobel Prize winner

for his promises<sup>126</sup>. Though Washington did not like that the Syrian government supported HAMAS and Hezbollah, criticized alleged “violation of human rights” in Syria and “slow democratization”, the countries were interested in cooperation fighting terrorism and preventing further escalation of crisis in Iraq. In 2008-2009 there were negotiations at the government level<sup>127</sup>.

Analyzing American policy in the Middle East Russian scholar Andrey Sushentsov writes that there are three key philosophical directions that influenced the formation of American foreign policy, namely idealism (ex: pacifism), pragmatism, and radicalism (ex: neoconservatism). Neoconservatives were clearly in charge of Bush’s race to war with Iraq being the first and only one of the three which suffered a conventional military invasion by the US, one which Sushentsov characterized as a “small war”. But A.Sushentsov believes that the US nevertheless had rational motives, though it lacked a long-term strategy and constantly changed its policy goals throughout the years, to say nothing of between the Bush and Obama Administrations<sup>128</sup>.

A.Sushentsov expands more on the US reasons for invading Iraq and its shifting objectives there speaking on the conceptual and psychological bases for this decision<sup>129</sup>. He says that the United States came to believe that it must “spread democracy” throughout the world, a mission which was to a large degree influenced by neoconservative thought. The 9/11 terrorist attacks had a powerful political-psychological effect on America and provided a new impulse to “democracy proselytization” under the pretext of fighting terrorists and “terror states”. The US tried to leverage this for international legal and moral-ethical purpose in the run-up to its invasion of Iraq, which it claimed was arming terrorists with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) that could target both Israel and the American homeland.

---

<sup>126</sup> Шаклеина Т. А. Россия и США в мировой политике. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2017. С. 120-142.

<sup>127</sup> Lesch D.W. The Fall of the House of Assad. - Yale: Yale University Press, 2012, p. 48.

<sup>128</sup> Сушенцов А. А. Малые войны США. М.: Аспект Пресс, 2014. 272 с.

<sup>129</sup> Сушенцов А. А. Очерки политики США в региональных конфликтах 2000-х годов. М.: НОФМО, 2014. 234 с.

As for the psychological reasons, A. Sushentsov says that the decision was already made in early 2002 and that the Bush Administration began to frame everything in a binary “good vs. evil” approach in order to appeal to its domestic and international audiences’ emotions in cultivating support for the impending war. President Bush delegated a lot of responsibility to his Cabinet. Of those individuals, Bush was closest to R.Cheney, who took the lead in making decisions about Iraq and which provided the neoconservative gateway to other likeminded thinkers like P.Wolfowitz who had been plotting this campaign for years already.

A.Sushentsov describes the evolution of American priorities during the Iraq War, which, he writes, included the transition from regime change for “anti-terrorist” reasons to “nation-building” for supposedly democratic ones. As for the more specific ones inherent with each of the two, he remarks that they were largely determined at times by internal partisan politics, thus explaining their constantly changing goalposts. The Republican strategy switched from a War on Terror to a “War on Tyranny”, as Sushentsov puts it, which itself gave rise to the “nation-building” task under Paul Bremer and later the tactical partnership of the Obama Administration after it announced its withdrawal for what could be argued were mostly domestic political reasons related to fulfilling a campaign pledge.

The same shifting goals will later be observed in the War on Syria, proving Sushentsov’s point that the US is regularly changing its objectives after initiating a conflict, regardless of whether it’s a conventional or unconventional one. Interestingly, in the case of Syria was different: the initial motivations were to carry out regime change, and only afterwards once Daesh began to become a regional and later on a global problem did the US change its motivation to fighting terrorism, or at least “officially”. A comparison of the US original reasons for conventionally invading Iraq and unconventionally supporting regime change elements in Syria results in the curious observation that they ultimately ended up pursuing the opposite of one another’s initial objectives, namely the “anti-terror” war in Iraq turned into “democracy promotion” just like the “democracy promotion” one in Syria eventually morphed into an “anti-terrorist” campaign.

Nevertheless, there were more motivations for each war than the US publicly admitted at each time, but the conclusion is still thought-provoking, especially since these two states are neighbors.

Famed American military leader, the commander who oversaw the War on Yugoslavia, and the former Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO General Wesley Clark published his memoirs in 2007<sup>130</sup>. He recounts shocking details that prove that the US decided to implement regime change against a plethora of Muslim governments in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, likely indicating that they had been plotted long before that. W.Clark recalls how two weeks after 9/11, a “senior general” told him: “We’re going to attack Iraq. The decision has basically been made”. He wrote that this same general told him six weeks later: “Here’s the paper from the Office of the Secretary of Defense [then Donald Rumsfeld] outlining the strategy. We’re going to take out seven countries in five years. And he named them, starting with Iraq and Syria and ending with Iran”<sup>131</sup>. This confirms that the American government’s decision to illegally topple the legitimate Syrian leadership was long in the making, stretching back to at least this point of time in October 2001. It also lends enormous factual credence to the author’s previous assertion that one of the mainstays of US policy towards the Mideast has always been the destabilization of Syria, whether back in 1957 or in 2011.

Investigative and award-winning journalist Seymour Hersh put everything together and accurately revealed the making of the “Arab Spring” by documenting everything that the US was doing to foment sectarian strife in the region and “advance democracy”. He outlined the Bush Administration’s revised (or “redirected”) Mideast strategy culled from a wide variety of sources, summarizing that the US was already engaged in operations against Syria as a proxy towards weakening Iran’s regional influence. He asserted that the Muslim Brotherhood was to be used as a lever of destabilization and that the Saudis would provide financing

---

<sup>130</sup> Clark W. *A Time to Lead: For Duty, Honor and Country*. N.Y.: St Martin's Press. 2007. 231 p.

<sup>131</sup>Conason J. Seven countries in five years. Salon Media Group, Inc., 12 Oct. 2007. Web. 26 January 2018. [http://www.salon.com/2007/10/12/wesley\\_clark/](http://www.salon.com/2007/10/12/wesley_clark/).

and logistics<sup>132</sup>. All of this has since then transpired as fact, proving that US regime change operations against Syria began their active phase before it could be clearly seen and explained. According to Hersh, the US was closely cooperating with Saudi Arabia – particularly through their shared contact point of Prince Bandar, the then-National Security Advisor to the Kingdom and Riyadh’s former decades-long Ambassador to the US – in order to resist what they believed was the spread of Iranian influence in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Their proactive and covert joint measures to undermine the rise of a prospective American regional rival seemed to be directly influenced by the strategic tenets laid out in the Wolfowitz Doctrine which was a combination of Constructivism means (identity/sectarian conflict) to promote Neorealist ends (geopolitical dividends) under the cover of Neoliberal (“democracy”, “values”) rhetoric.

The US had already taken part in clandestine operations against Syria on the pretext that the Arab Republic was “destabilizing” the region through its “support” for “terrorists” fighting against American occupation of Iraq. A by-product of [the covert operations against Iran and Syria] had been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espoused a militant vision of Islam and were hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda. These Al Qaeda-aligned groups were actually the forerunners of ISIS/ISIL/Daesh, and the US did nothing to discourage them from committing terrorism. The roots of the “Arab Spring” began with Bush, not Obama, but took years for the CIA’s covert destabilization activities to finally develop to the point of a triggering a series of theater-wide Color Revolutions on command. It’s important to understand the fact that the “Arab Spring” was not a spontaneous “democratic revolution”, but a long-planned plot to overthrow a series of governments in the Mideast. When the initial plan failed, as it did in Syria, the vanguard of the Color Revolution movement transitioned their regime change efforts into fighting an Unconventional War, with this phased process being

---

<sup>132</sup>Hersh S. The Redirection. The New Yorker, 5 Mar. 2007. Web. 10 February 2018. [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa\\_fact\\_hersh?currentPage=all](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa_fact_hersh?currentPage=all).

referred to as Hybrid War<sup>133</sup>. Out of this Hybrid War emerged Daesh, the most dangerous terrorist group in human history, but it too wasn't a spontaneous manifestation and it'll later be proven how a declassified document from the Defense Intelligence Agency proves that the US government not only knew that this sort of threat was forming in northeast Syria, but encouraged it as a beneficial development which could tip the scales of war against Damascus and therefore promote regime change much more swiftly<sup>134</sup>.

Syria was a special case for the United States. Bashar Assad came to power in 2000 after death of his father Hafez Assad who was in office since 1971. Syria was a country with a well-developed highly centralized political system which exerted strong influence over all spheres of social, economic and political life of the country<sup>135</sup>. B. Assad was well incorporated into political, military and economic elites. They considered him as a representative of a new generation of leaders who will keep old privileges and will be able to rule the country in the new international situation. B. Assad got his education in London, and many people in Syria and in the West hoped that he will bring reforms in the country. He was viewed in the country as “the hope” for Syria<sup>136</sup>. In his first inauguration speech he spoke about the necessity of social and economic reforms<sup>137</sup>. By 2003 Assad changed 75% of political, military leaders and administrative staff, local and Mass Media leaders<sup>138</sup>. New generation of people, many of them got education in the West, came to power structures and guaranteed support to Assad<sup>139</sup>.

President Assad began reforms in 2000 but he had to stop them in fear of inadvertently destabilizing the state if they proceeded too fast and were left

---

<sup>133</sup>Korybko A. Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change. Moscow: People's Friendship University, 2015. 157 p.

<sup>134</sup>Department Of Defense Information Report.Judicial Watch. 12 Aug. 2012. Web. 15 January 2018. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pg.-291-Pgs.-287-293-JW-v-DOD-and-State-14-812-DOD-Release-2015-04-10-final-version11.pdf>.

<sup>135</sup>Perthes V. Syria under Bashar al-Asad: modernization and the limits of change. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 28.

<sup>136</sup>Leverett F. Inheriting Syria: Bashar's trial by fire. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2005, p. 57.

<sup>137</sup>President Assad 2000 inauguration speech (July 17, 2000). Web. 15 January 2018. [http://www.presidentassad.net/SPEECHES/BASHAR\\_ASSAD\\_2000\\_INAUGURATION\\_SPEECH.htm](http://www.presidentassad.net/SPEECHES/BASHAR_ASSAD_2000_INAUGURATION_SPEECH.htm).

<sup>138</sup>Perthes V. Syria under Bashar al-Asad: modernization and the limits of change. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 95.

<sup>139</sup>Lesch D.W. The fall of the house of Assad. Yale: Yale University Press, 2012, p. 87.

unchecked, and further growth of dangerous opposition movement. However there were some results of the reforms: it was allowed to open private banks, more liberal rules and laws for investments and cooperation with foreign countries were introduced, free trade zone was established, it was allowed to sell some foreign products, tourism was developing, etc. Mass media were given more freedom, struggle with corruption started (though not successful).<sup>140</sup>

However the situation in Syria eventually spiraled out of control as the war went on over the years. Bloody fights were taking place with different forces participating: Syrian army and security forces, Hezbollah brigades, and the Popular Mobilization units from Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan with the support of Russia and Iran; IGIL and Jabhat an Nusra terrorists getting direct and indirect support from Western and regional powers; Kurdish troops supported by the United States and some members of its coalition; different groups of opposition supported by the US, Turkey and some countries of the Arab Gulf region. The government was also supported by some people's volunteers corps, which were incorporated into the Syrian army<sup>141</sup>.

Sunni monarchies of the Arab Gulf which considered Iran a threat since the revolution of 1979, supported Syrian opposition. Saudi Arabia and Qatar not only supported armed anti-government forces and terrorist groups but also encouraged foreign military interference into Syria. Interests of these regional powers matched plans of NATO. However some of the member-states of the League of Arabic countries – Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen – supported the Syrian government<sup>142</sup>.

Till 2003 the United States Middle Eastern policy was based on the principle of “balance of power”. But after 2003 the US started to conduct direct interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan destroying previously existed balance: Iraq – Iran, Pakistan – India. There was also growing role in the Middle East of such countries as Russia and China. Russia's active policy started with the Syrian crisis.

---

<sup>140</sup>Ajami F. The Syrian rebellion. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2012, p. 63.

<sup>141</sup>Наумкин В. В. Кризис государств-наций на Ближнем Востоке // Международные процессы - Т. 15. - № 2. - 2017. С. 27-43.

<sup>142</sup> Долгов Б. Сирийский конфликт. Конфликты и войны XXI века (Ближний Восток и Северная Африка) / Институт востоковедения РАН. – М.: ИВ РАН, 2015. С. 419.

But the Chinese expansion was of economic character, and already by 2011, when the Arab Spring started its scale was threatening Western interests. China's interest was really great in this region as the source of oil supplies for its growing industry, and American military campaigns complicated the situation in energy sphere.

Various actors had different interests and stakes in Syria: among non-regional powers - the United States and EU, Russia and China; among regional players – Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran and Israel; in Syria – Salafist, Muslim Brotherhood (Islamic fundamentalists). War in Syria could be impossible without active financial and military support from other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar: by 2014 armed anti-government and terrorist groups got 5 billion dollars from Saudi Arabia and 3 billion dollars from Qatar<sup>143</sup>. Their support was highly approved by the US. Washington supported Syrian organizations which acted against the official government before and after 2011 which is another proof that Washington planned destabilization of the Syrian government. It was also evident that Arab Gulf countries were also supportive of this plan. Nevertheless, analysis of the international and regional situation at the beginning of 2011, of political and strategic interests of many world and Middle Eastern regional powers, social and political situation in Syria itself before and immediately after the demonstrations in the country, made one researcher conclude that the destabilization of Syria at the moment was not in the interests of the majority of external and internal actors<sup>144</sup>.

It has been the widely held Western conception that the Color Revolution against the authorities began after the arrest of anti-government graffiti-spraying teenagers in Daraa<sup>145</sup>. This is not entirely true. Global Research's founder, Michel Chossudovsky, compared news reporting from *Associated Press*, *The Guardian*, Israel, and Lebanon from around that time to conclude that the media was being purposely deceptive by omitting important information about the nature of the

---

<sup>143</sup> Крылов А. Сирия будет фрагментирована по конфессиональному принципу. [www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document246193.pdf](http://www.mgimo.ru/news/experts/document246193.pdf).

<sup>144</sup> Воробьева Д.А. Политическое поведение Башара Асада как причина гражданской войны в Сирии и влияние выступления президента 30 марта 2011г. на ее начало // *Общество и цивилизация*. - 2015. - Т. 1. С. 84-96.

<sup>145</sup> Sterling J. Daraa: The spark that lit the Syrian flame. Cable News Network, 1 Mar. 2012. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/01/world/meast/syria-crisis-beginnings/>.

“peaceful” anti-government protests<sup>146</sup>. In reality, they were not peaceful at all and several police officers were killed. This is the reason for the government’s crackdown against these “demonstrations” – regular civilians were being used as de-facto human shields and cover for violent insurgents intent on overthrowing the government<sup>147</sup>.

The Syrian government took the Color Revolution coup attempt very seriously from the beginning. President Assad, in an address to the Syrian people that was also broadcast internationally, implored the population not allow themselves to be misled by “saboteurs” who “wanted to stir chaos and destroy the national fabric”<sup>148</sup>. He said that Syria was facing a great conspiracy whose tentacles extended to some nearby countries and far-away countries, and that this conspiracy depended, in its timing not in its form, on what was happening in other Arab countries. In June of that year he continued to assert: “We have to distinguish between those who have legitimate demands and saboteurs. The saboteurs are a small group that tried to exploit the kind majority of the Syrian people to carry out their many schemes”<sup>149</sup>. This demonstrates that the Syrian government was well aware that the events taking place were not a popular “revolution” but orchestrated chaos by a small group of saboteurs pursuing the interests of foreign governments.

The whole purpose of staging a Color Revolution in Syria was to overthrow the government and replace it with a compliant pro-Western regime. Foreign governments started making their regime change objectives clear during the middle of 2011. Israeli President Shimon Peres was the first foreign leader to call for

---

<sup>146</sup>Chossudovsky M. Media Disinformation: The Protest Movement in Syria. Global Research. GlobalResearch.ca, 28 Mar. 2011. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/media-disinformation-the-protest-movement-in-syria/24016>.

<sup>147</sup>It was also later revealed by RT that there was a massacre of 60 government soldiers by anti-government terrorists during that time There were killings of soldiers all across the country after that event. When one looks at the soldier massacre and the killing of police officers and military servicemen during the early days of the Color Revolution, it becomes clear that violence was being used as a tool by the anti-government forces in order to provoke them into a crackdown that could embolden the coup plotters and lead to regime change. All Western media reporting about the start of the anti-government movement in Syria has purposely neglected to mention its murderous origins. See: Narwani S. Syria: The Hidden Massacre. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 7 May 2014. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://rt.com/op-edge/157412-syria-hidden-massacre-2011/>.

<sup>148</sup>al-Assad B. Syria: Speech by Bashar al-Assad. Al-Bab, 30 Mar. 2011. Web. 28 January 2018. [http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/syria/bashar\\_assad\\_speech\\_110330.htm](http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/syria/bashar_assad_speech_110330.htm).

<sup>149</sup>Karouny M., Yara B. Assad blames unrest on saboteurs, pledges reforms. Thomson Reuters, 20 June 2011. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/20/us-syria-idUSTRE75J0AV20110620>.

President Assad to leave office in July of that year<sup>150</sup>. This was followed one month later by the United States, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the EU in August<sup>151</sup>, which symbolized the solidarity of the Western governments in their pursuit of regime change in Syria.

In November 2011, the leaders of Jordan<sup>152</sup> and Turkey<sup>153</sup> joined in the West's chorus of regime change. Their public support of the government's overthrow is exceptionally important because they would be used as the main conduits for funnelling material, weapons, money, and fighters into Syria. Therefore, by making it their official policy to support the anti-government movement in Syria, these countries were then able to cooperate with the US and others who held the same goal. This means that the end of 2011 marked the formalization of the international coalition dedicated towards removing President Assad.

For various reasons, the US cannot do everything itself (let alone directly), and it becomes important for it to operate in a multilateral framework with its partners. The US works with its traditional military allies through NATO or on a bilateral basis. With the evolution of the regime change attempt in Syria, however, it became necessary for it to bridge the gap between these two categories of states and include the entire anti-Syrian coalition into one organization. Thus, the "Friends of Syria" organization was born<sup>154</sup>.

Originally this group comprised 114 countries and a handful of NGOs that were against the Syrian government. In December 2012, they all agreed that President Assad must no longer govern Syria and that the "opposition" was the

---

<sup>150</sup> Israel president Shimon Peres calls on Syria's Bashar al-Assad to resign. Guardian News and Media, 27 July 2011. Web. 28 January 2017. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/26/shimon-peres-syria-bashar-assad>.

<sup>151</sup> Labott E, Silverleib A., Sterling J. U.S., Europe call for Syrian leader al-Assad to step down. Cable News Network, 19 Aug. 2011. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/08/18/us.syria/>.

<sup>152</sup> Jordan calls on Assad to resign. BBC, 14 Nov. 2011. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15723023>.

<sup>153</sup> Burch J. Turkey tells Syria's Assad: Step down! Thomson Reuters, 22 Nov. 2011. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/22/us-syria-idUSL5E7MD0GZ20111122>.

<sup>154</sup> Peterson S. 'Friends of Syria' conference demands Assad open humanitarian aid corridors. The Christian Science Monitor, 24 Feb. 2012. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0224/Friends-of-Syria-conference-demands-Assad-open-humanitarian-aid-corridors>.

“legitimate government” instead<sup>155</sup>. Despite its political rhetoric, it was too large of an organization to collectively do anything to promote its regime change policies. Therefore, out of this larger group emerged a core one of the countries most dedicated to overthrowing the Syrian government. The British Government officially calls this group the “London 11”<sup>156</sup>, and its most prominent members are the United States, the UK, France, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. These countries and a few others form the international network managing what President Assad had accurately termed an “external war” against Syria<sup>157</sup>, and there is a clear division of labor between each constituent member.

The US is the mastermind of the regime change operation in Syria. It is also its strongest supporter, providing funding, material and logistical support, arms, and training. America’s role in the London 11 group is to coordinate and supervise the Unconventional War in Syria. It provides the leadership that is necessary to keep its diverse partners working together for such a prolonged period of time, per its position in this Lead From Behind coalition. The following subsections will detail the activities of America’s regime change partners in the Middle East.

The Syrian government at one time used to have very positive relations with all of its neighbors besides Israel, but the regime change operation that began in 2011 changed all of that. Three out of Syria’s five neighbors performed the most destabilizing activities through their support of anti-government fighters in the country. Israel has never been a friend of Syria, so it is not surprising that it would engage in hostile activity against it. The situation with Turkey and Jordan is treacherous, however, as Syria had been part of the “Levant Quartet” that Dr. Bishku called “the EU of the Middle East”<sup>158</sup>. The relations between these countries were supposed to be exceptionally high and friendly. A probable

---

<sup>155</sup> Friends of Syria' recognise opposition. - Middle East. Al Jazeera, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212124541767116.html>.

<sup>156</sup> Press release: 'London 11' meeting on Syria. Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 22 Oct. 2013. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-11-meeting-on-syria>.

<sup>157</sup> Assad says Syria fighting 'external war'. The Voice of Russia, 6 Jan. 2013. Web. 28 January 2018. [http://voiceofrussia.com/2013\\_01\\_06/Assad-says-Syria-fighting-external-war/](http://voiceofrussia.com/2013_01_06/Assad-says-Syria-fighting-external-war/).

<sup>158</sup> Bishku M. Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Checkered History. Middle East Policy Council. Middle East Policy Council, Fall 2012. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/turkish-syrian-relations-checkered-history>.

explanation for why this occurred would be that both countries share a very strong security relationship with the US (Turkey is in NATO and Jordan is a major non-NATO ally<sup>159</sup>), and their relations with the United States and their own ambitions (especially with Turkey) overrode each country's own national interests in dealing with Syria<sup>160</sup>.

Israel and Turkey have worked together to take out what amounts to a joint limited direct intervention against Syria. In July 2013, RT reported that Israel carried out a strike against Syria from a base in Turkey<sup>161</sup>. The use of Turkish territory by Israeli jets in bombing Syria proves that a military-strategic relationship existed at the time between the two states. It also showed that the US military allies can work together in carrying out joint military objectives in the context of this campaign.

Jordan fulfilled a role similar to that of Turkey for most of the war. It provided insurgent training<sup>162</sup> and infiltration into Syria, but it didn't partake in limited direct intervention there. Despite this, it does not mean that Jordan's role is benign. Jordan also occupies a prime location for destabilizing the Syrian capital. Although Turkish support to the war effect dwarfs that of Israel and Jordan, the latter two actors' position is what makes them equally as important. With Turkey's continued involvement in aiding the insurgents, Damascus is perennially threatened and the conflict can continue indefinitely.

---

<sup>159</sup> TEXT: DAVIES STATEMENT, JORDAN DESIGNATED MAJOR NON-NATO ALLY (Underscores strategic relationship between the U.S. and Jordan). U.S. Department of State, 14 Nov. 1996. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/state/archive/november/sd21115.htm>.

<sup>160</sup> According to mass media publications, Israel assists the anti-government fighters providing medical help for them inside of Israel. This is very important because of the proximity of the Israeli border to the Syrian capital of Damascus. Turkey probably has the most important role in the Syrian case, defined as the nerve center of the regime change efforts. Turkey provides safe havens near the border for the insurgents to train before their deployment, partakes in limited direct intervention. Human Rights Watch cites witness testimony stating that Turkey aided and abetted the Al-Nusra terrorist group in its March 2014 offensive against Kasab. - Sherlock R. Turkey 'aided Islamist fighters' in attack on Syrian town. Telegraph Media Group Limited, 14 Apr. 2014. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/10765696/Turkey-aided-Islamist-fighters-in-attack-on-Syrian-town.html>.

<sup>161</sup> RT source: Israeli strike on Syria was carried out from Turkish base. - RT News. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 16 July 2013. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/israel-strike-syria-turkey-089/>.

<sup>162</sup>Sareen A. US Training Syrian Forces In Jordan: Report. The Huffington Post, 25 Mar. 2013. Web. 28 January 2018. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/25/us-training-syrian-forces\\_n\\_2952132.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/25/us-training-syrian-forces_n_2952132.html).

Altogether, the troika of Israel, Turkey, and Jordan plays an important role in the Syrian destabilization, due to their neighboring position to Syria, they provide direct access into (or in the case of “Israel”, out of) the country. Massive amounts of American-directed materials, weapons, and arms flow through Turkey and Jordan, making them indispensable allies in trying to overthrow President Assad. Israel’s multiple limited direct interventions have been very forceful and demonstrate Tel Aviv’s will to occasionally involve itself as it sees fit.

The oil-rich Gulf Kingdoms have been exceptionally active in their support of regime change in Syria and their strong contribution to the effort shows it. Saudi Arabia is perhaps the most active of the Gulf States in financing<sup>163</sup>, training<sup>164</sup>, and arming<sup>165</sup> the insurgents fighting against the people of Syria. Although Qatar had also been funding<sup>166</sup>, arming<sup>167</sup>, and training the fighters there, Saudi Arabia is reported to have beat its neighborly rival in gaining control and influence over them<sup>168</sup>. Tying everything together, Kuwait serves as the logistics hub of Gulf operations<sup>169</sup>.

Saudi Arabia also wields direct influence over the destabilization in Syria by supporting terrorists<sup>170</sup> and sending convicted murders, rapists, and drug dealers to fight against the government<sup>171</sup>. Not only that, but it also gave 300 million dollars to the so-called “transitional government” to help fund its operations<sup>172</sup>, de-facto

---

<sup>163</sup>Saudi Arabia and Qatar funding Syrian rebels. Thomson Reuters, 23 June 2012. Web. 29 June 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/23/us-syria-crisis-saudi-idUSBRE85M07820120623>.

<sup>164</sup> Blac I. Syria crisis: Saudi Arabia to spend millions to train new rebel force. Guardian News and Media, 8 Nov. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/07/syria-crisis-saudi-arabia-spend-millions-new-rebel-force>.

<sup>165</sup> Saudi Arabia to supply Syrian rebels with anti-aircraft missiles -- report. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 15 Feb. 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/saudis-new-weapons-syria-124/>.

<sup>166</sup> Saudi Arabia and Qatar funding Syrian rebels. Op. Cit.

<sup>167</sup>Doherty R., Amena B. Exclusive: Secret Turkish nerve center leads aid to Syria rebels. Op. Cit.

<sup>168</sup>Karouny M. Saudi edges Qatar to control Syrian rebel support. Thomson Reuters, 31 May 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/31/us-syria-crisis-saudi-insight-idUSBRE94U0ZV20130531>.

<sup>169</sup> Dickinson E. Kuwait, 'the back office of logistical support' for Syria's rebels. Op. Cit.

<sup>170</sup> Syria sends letters to UN on Saudi-backed terrorism - See more at: <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1560755#sthash.NIOheMUx.dpuf>. Al-Alam News Network, 30 Jan. 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1560755>.

<sup>171</sup> Winter M. Report: Saudis sent death-row inmates to fight Syria. USA TODAY, 21 Jan. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/01/21/saudi-inmates-fight-syria-commute-death-sentences/1852629/>.

<sup>172</sup>Saudi Arabia to finance Syrian opposition government. The Voice of Russia, 13 Nov. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013\\_11\\_13/Saudi-Arabia-to-finance-Syrian-opposition-government-1721/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013_11_13/Saudi-Arabia-to-finance-Syrian-opposition-government-1721/).

turning it into a Saudi proxy. The Kingdom is so active in Syria because it is intent on spreading its extreme Wahhabi version of Islam throughout the region, and it sees a perfect opportunity for doing that by supporting the religious radical terrorists in Syria<sup>173</sup>.

Libya has descended into such terror and anarchy after the 2011 NATO war that a US military contractor referred to it as a “scumbag Woodstock”<sup>174</sup>. This incubator of instability has been exporting weapons<sup>175</sup> and terrorists<sup>176</sup> to Syria ever since the fall of Gaddafi. These terrorists contributed to the pool of others active in Syria who have come from over 80 different countries. The inclusion of Libya into this covert network is very significant because it shows that a country’s entire policy can shift almost immediately after a regime change is successful there. Prior to the NATO war, Libya would never have gotten itself involved in overthrowing President Assad (let alone any other Arab leader), but with the change in government that occurred, the foreign policy also radically shifted. This shows that states which undergo a US-guided regime change can quickly become launching pads for other regime change operations in the region.

The foreign support that the terrorists receive in Syria allows them to continue fighting against the government and acts as a sort of lifeline for their operations. In fact, it is the only reason that the War on Syria has not been resolved yet. President Assad has stated that the fighting would be over in only two weeks if external support ceased<sup>177</sup>. Not only does this demonstrate the importance of foreign aid in prolonging the suffering in Syria, but it also proves that the destabilization there is entirely supported and directed from outside the country.

---

<sup>173</sup> Syria writes to world: Stop spread of Saudi-backed Wahhabism. Al-Alam News Network, 16 Dec. 2013. Web. 19 January 2017. <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1545075>.

<sup>174</sup>Lake E. So Many Jihadists Are Flocking to Libya, It's Becoming 'Scumbag Woodstock'. The Daily Beast Company LLC, 6 May 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/06/so-many-jihadists-are-flocking-to-libya-some-counter-terrorists-now-call-it-scumbag-woodstock.html>.

<sup>175</sup>Abouzeid R. Arming Syria's Rebellion: How Libyan Weapons and Know-How Reach Anti-Assad Fighters. Time Inc. 29 May 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://world.time.com/2013/05/29/libyans-arming-syrian-rebels/>.

<sup>176</sup>Bomb voyage: 600 Libyans 'already fighting in Syria'. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 29 Nov. 2011. Web. 9 January 2017. <http://rt.com/news/libya-syria-fighters-smuggled-475/>.

<sup>177</sup> With No Foreign Meddling, Syrian War Over in 2 Weeks - Assad. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 28 Jan. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://en.ria.ru/world/20130128/179090168/With-No-Foreign-Meddling-Syrian-War-Over-in-2-Weeks---Assad.html>.

The original American plan for Syria was for the government to be swiftly overthrown by the “Arab Spring” Color Revolution wave and to not have the crisis drag on for years. Despite this “optimistic thinking” on behalf of the US, the situation did not pan out as anticipated and the Color Revolution was rapidly exposed as a foreign conspiracy against Syria. Intent on pursuing this objective regardless of the obstacles, the US, in league with its regional allies launched an Unconventional War against Syria.

Unconventional Warfare is a type of war supported by special forces and/or non-uniformed units. A leaked US military training manual details how this is carried out, and it includes guerrilla attacks on infrastructure and state security personnel, among other methods<sup>178</sup>. NSNBC reported that it can basically be read as a how-to guide explaining the progression of the War on Syria<sup>179</sup>. This is most certainly the case, as Unconventional Warfare has come to define the majority of the militant engagements occurring inside Syria.

The insurgents continually interrupt and sabotage basic services being provided to Syrian civilians, such as electricity and water<sup>180</sup>. These types of attacks against the population are war crimes and crimes against humanity, yet the US and its allies still continue to support the perpetrators. This makes them complicit in all of the crimes that their protégés carry out, as it was already mentioned that the conflict would be over in two weeks if their support immediately ceased.

Through their actions, the international legions of terrorists fighting in Syria have declared an all-out war against the entire country. They wage a campaign of fear and terror by beheading the innocent<sup>181</sup> and cannibalizing their enemies<sup>182</sup>.

---

<sup>178</sup>TC 18-01 Special Forces Unconventional Warfare. NSNBC, 30 Nov. 2010. Web. 24 January 2018. <http://nsnbc.me/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/special-forces-uw-tc-18-01.pdf>.

<sup>179</sup>US-Military Logic behind Syrian Insurgency. The Special Forces Unconventional Warfare manual TC 18-01. NSNBC, 15 Feb. 2012. Web. 24 January 2018. <http://nsnbc.me/2012/02/15/us-military-logic-behind-syrian-insurgency-the-special-forces-uncon/>.

<sup>180</sup> Rebels seize Syria's largest dam, controlling water and electricity supplies to wide areas. FOX News Network, 12 Feb. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/02/12/rebels-seize-syria-largest-dam-controlling-water-and-electricity-supplies-to/>.

<sup>181</sup> Syrian rebels linked to al-Qaeda behead man using small knife in front of children. The Daily Mail, 2 Feb. 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2550504/Syrian-rebels-linked-al-Qaeda-behead-man-using-small-knife-chidren.html>.

They have purposely targeted Christians<sup>183</sup> and other religious minorities such as the Alawites<sup>184</sup> in order to enflame religious tensions and divide society. It is even more ironic that the US State Department places Syria on its list of state sponsors of terrorism<sup>185</sup> when it is Syria that is fighting against the terrorists that the US and its allies fully support. Besides terrorism and murder, the insurgents in Syria also regularly engage in rape<sup>186</sup>, sex trafficking<sup>187</sup>, and the use of child soldiers<sup>188</sup>. The violence against women is justified by Wahhabi clerics, and the child soldiers are misled into believing that the terrorist groups will pay for their education after the conflict.

The Syrian crisis has a long history which started with the State Department's plans presented in June 2006 by the then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. At that time relations between Israel and Lebanon entered a new crisis which later turned into the second Lebanese war. C. Rice came to Tel-Aviv to support allies. During the official meeting with the Israeli leaders she said that the events manifested emergence of a "New Middle East", and everything was being done for this purpose. However realization of American plans for restructuring the Middle East started much earlier – in Iraq. By that time S. Hussein had been in grave for three years already. After this speech Libyan leader M. Gaddafi told B. Assad: "Now they will go for us"<sup>189</sup>.

Overall, the Unconventional Warfare being waged by the US and the West in Syria is marked by terrorism, guerrilla tactics, and gross human rights crimes.

---

<sup>182</sup>Abdelaziz S., Alkhshali H. Video: Syrian rebel cuts out soldier's heart, eats it. Cable News Network, 14 May 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/14/world/meast/syria-eaten-heart/>.

<sup>183</sup>Snyder C. Syrian bishop: 'Christians are being targeted'. FOX News Network, 27 Jan. 2014. Web. 29 January 2019. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/01/27/syria-christians-on-front-lines-civil-war/>.

<sup>184</sup>Sectarian slaying: Syrian rebels attack Alawites, Christians - reports. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 8 Aug. 2012. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/syria-sectarian-violence-alawite-111/>.

<sup>185</sup>U.S. Relations With Syria. U.S. Department of State, 20 Mar. 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm>.

<sup>186</sup>Chumley C. Islamic cleric decrees it OK for Syrian rebels to rape women. The Washington Times, 3 Apr. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/apr/3/islamic-cleric-decrees-it-ok-syrian-rebels-rape-wo/>.

<sup>187</sup>'Sexual jihad': Tunisian women go to Syria to 'relieve' holy warriors, return pregnant. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 21 Sept. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/sexual-jihad-tunisia-syria-133/>.

<sup>188</sup>Trianni F. Watch: Syrian Children Talk About Life As Child Soldiers. Time Inc., 20 June 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://time.com/2902332/syria-child-soldiers/>.

<sup>189</sup>Новый Ближний Восток складывается не совсем по американским калькам // <http://topwar.ru/print:page,1,89349-novyuy-blizhniy-vostok-skladyvaetsya-ne-sovsem-po-amerikanskim-kalkam.html>

Civilians and religious minorities are purposely targeted in order to try to break the will of the people and psychologically traumatize the population. Financial networks are also being obscured in order to mask the true amount of money that has been invested by the West in these activities. On 21 August, 2013, a chemical weapon was used against the people living in the outskirts of Damascus in Ghouta, allegedly killing over a thousand people. The Western media was quick to blame the Syrian government for this, saying that it carried out the attack in order to kill the insurgents who were active in the area. In the flurry of international attention that followed, the true story about the event was intentionally covered up by the West.

Prior to Ghouta, the terrorists had already used chemical weapons on 19 March of that year. Russia had reached this conclusion after a six-month investigation into the matter<sup>190</sup>, and the UN also shared “concrete suspicions” that this was the case<sup>191</sup>. It can thus be confirmed that the terrorist forces were already in possession of chemical weapons prior to Ghouta and had the will to use them, further advancing the case that it was actually they who staged the attack on 21 August.

In the aftermath of the attack, Syria and Russia continually asserted that it was the terrorists who used chemical weapons, not the government forces. Syria even provided Russia with proof of this, which in turn was submitted to the UN<sup>192</sup>. A report that the UN released on 13 December found that chemical weapons were likely to have been used a couple other times against the Syrian Arab Army and civilians<sup>193</sup>. This fits the pattern of terrorism and fear that the anti-government forces have been carrying out for the past few years, as well as showing that they

---

<sup>190</sup> Russia releases key findings on chemical attack near Aleppo indicating similarity with rebel-made weapons. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 4 Sept. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/chemical-aleppo-findings-russia-417/>.

<sup>191</sup>UN notes 'concrete suspicions' that Syrian rebels used chemical weapons. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 6 May 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/un-syria-rebels-chemical-weapons-854/>.

<sup>192</sup>UN to get Syria evidence - Russia. BBC, 18 Sept. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24140475>.

<sup>193</sup>Stea C. Syria: UN Mission Report Confirms that Opposition Rebels Used Chemical Weapons against Civilians and Government Forces. GlobalResearch.ca, 31 Dec. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/syria-un-mission-report-confirms-that-opposition-rebels-used-chemical-weapons-against-civilians-and-government-forces/5363139>.

had begun normalizing the use of such dangerous weapons as part of their overall strategy. Additionally, a study released by MIT found that it would have been impossible for the Syrian military to have used chemical weapons that day, judging by the battle lines, their positions, and the short range of the rockets used<sup>194</sup>.

What has thus been established is that the anti-government insurgents expanded their terrorist operations and used chemical weapons against the Syrian Arab Army and civilians during the course of the conflict. The 21 August Ghouta chemical weapons attack was falsely blamed on the Syrian government by Western NGOs and media sources in order to advance the case for a Humanitarian Intervention and an invocation of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine. The US argued that the Syrian government had committed an “egregious crime against humanity” by using chemical weapons and that it must therefore be punished. From this logic, it then started talking about militarily disciplining Syria for using chemical weapons in the first place, which would have gone against an international agreement prohibiting their use. However, the role of America as the “world cop” and the enforcer of international law was not as attractive of an argument as “Humanitarian Intervention/Responsibility to Protect”.

The scenario unfolded differently, however, as over 90% of Americans were against a conventional war in Syria under such pretexts<sup>195</sup>. Additionally, the US was not able to secure the support of its traditional British allies in carrying out a joint strike against Syria, with the French standing as the only major American partners in favor of a military intervention<sup>196</sup>. The reaction of the American public and the international community largely showed that the fervour for “Humanitarian Intervention/Responsibility to Protect” had cooled after the War on Libya and that many people likely realized that they were being duped.

---

<sup>194</sup> MIT study of Ghouta chemical attack challenges US intelligence. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 19 Jan. 2014. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/study-challenges-syria-chemical-attack-681/>.

<sup>195</sup>Wroughton L. As Syria war escalates, Americans cool to U.S. intervention: Reuters/Ipsos poll. Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 24 Aug. 2013. Web. 25 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/25/us-syria-crisis-usa-poll-idUSBRE97O00E20130825>.

<sup>196</sup>Barzegar K. France emerges as key U.S. ally against Syria. USA TODAY, 2 Sept. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/09/02/france-syria-strikes/2754931/>.

Russia had been against any type of external intervention in Syria's domestic crisis since it began in early 2011, and its stance was no different during the US calls for war in September 2013. Moscow immediately cast doubts on Western claims that it was the Syrian government that used chemical weapons, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov even suggesting that it was a "provocation planned in advance" by the terrorists<sup>197</sup>. At this time, Russia was already well aware of the anti-government forces' use of chemical weapons in March, so it is reasonable that Moscow would immediately suspect them of repeating that crime in August.

On a larger level, Russia has a strong reason for why it is against regime change in Syria, namely that is always against outside-supported regime change in any country, no matter where it is located or what the circumstances are<sup>198</sup>. This is because Russia does not trust the US intentions and it feels that democracy and stability are not brought about via destabilization and war. Moscow's reasoning also perfectly coincides with its heralding of state sovereignty as an important element of international relations, which was explicitly declared in an article that President Putin authored in 2012<sup>199</sup>.

President Obama had earlier said that using chemical weapons during the Syrian conflict would be a "red line" that would warrant an official US response<sup>200</sup>. This placed him in a precarious political position when it came to dealing with the Ghouta incident. He had already established the *casus belli*, should he choose to intervene, and it would be difficult for him to walk back his comment if he changed his mind. Luckily, a gaffe by Secretary of State John Kerry would provide

---

<sup>197</sup> Russia suggests Syria 'chemical attack' was 'planned provocation' by rebels. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 22 Aug. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://rt.com/news/russia-syria-chemical-attack-801/>.

<sup>198</sup> Yan H, Castillo M., Shoichet C., Brumfield B., Sterling J.. Syria allies: Why Russia, Iran and China are standing by the regime. Cable News Network, 30 Aug. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/29/world/meast/syria-iran-china-russia-supporters/>.

<sup>199</sup> Putin V. Russia and the changing world.- RT Russian politics. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 27 Feb. 2012. Web. 29 January 2017. <http://rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>.

<sup>200</sup> Kessler G. President Obama and the 'red line' on Syria's chemical weapons. The Washington Post, 6 Sept. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/06/president-obama-and-the-red-line-on-syrias-chemical-weapons/>.

the perfect window of opportunity for Russian diplomacy to avert the looming war in Syria<sup>201</sup>.

John Kerry had spoken off the cuff and said that if Syria was willing to surrender its existing chemical weapons stockpile to international control, then the US would not have to engage in punitive military strikes against it. Right after saying this, he dismissed it in his next breath as an impossible idea that would never work, however, the proposal was not lost on S. Lavrov. Together with his Syrian counterpart, both actors quickly seized on the gaffe as a brilliant breakthrough that could stop America's drive to war.

The diplomatic wheels that were then set into motion continued to spin until a deal had been reached to dispose of all of Syria's chemical weapons, a goal which was finally met on 23 June, 2014<sup>202</sup>. As a result of the agreement, the US held off on striking Syria and a repeat of the Libyan scenario was avoided. In hindsight, Kerry's gaffe and Lavrov's adroit use of it can be credited as saving Syria from a direct US military intervention.

The Ghouta false flag chemical weapons attack is a pivotal moment not only in the War on Syria, but also in international politics as a whole. In the context of the US regime change plans against Syria, it shows the lengths that the US could go to pursue regime change across the world and how it aimed at transitioning from an unconventional war to a direct military intervention. Ghouta was monumental in the fact that it demonstrated the limits of American unipolarity. Of course, the US could theoretically have launched a war against Syria or performed drone strikes regardless of Russian diplomatic resistance, but the fact is that it chose not to. This indicates that the US had reservations about what it can or cannot do in this situation, especially owing to the strong Russian opposition to any American attack. In a way, it can be theorized that "Humanitarian

---

<sup>201</sup>Freedland J. John Kerry on Syria: how a gaffe could stop a war. Guardian News and Media, 10 Sept. 2013. Web. 29 January 2018. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/10/syria-gaffe-war-john-kerry>.

<sup>202</sup>Branigin W. Last of Syria's chemical weapons handed over for destruction, international body says. The Washington Post, 23 June 2014. Web. 19 January 2018. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/agency-last-of-syrias-chemical-weapons-handed-over-for-destruction/2014/06/23/4eb9a138-fad9-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/agency-last-of-syrias-chemical-weapons-handed-over-for-destruction/2014/06/23/4eb9a138-fad9-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1_story.html).

Intervention/Responsibility to Protect” wars can be warded off if a Great Power actively resists them. One can thus see the outlines of an emerging multipolar world in the aftermath of Ghouta and the recession of the unipolar moment in the US voluntarily pulling itself back from the brink of war.

The United States is not the only country in the regime change coalition that endeavoured to justify war in Syria by the events in Ghouta. A series of conversations was leaked in March 2014 where the Turkish Foreign Minister and high-ranking military individuals conspired to stage an attack on the Suleyman Shah Tomb<sup>203</sup>, a small sovereign piece of Turkish territory located inside of Syria. Thankfully, the Turkish conspiracy was exposed before it could happen. The Turkish government immediately banned social media in the country in an effort to kill the story, but it was too late and news of it reached the world. In the recording, it was mentioned that then-Prime Minister Erdogan would see the attack as an opportunity for launching a war in Syria and that everything must remain secret. The participants also spoke about how the terrorist groups in Syria can be manipulated into attacking the tomb in order to justify Turkey’s conventional participation in the War on Syria.

The entire incident proves some disturbing things. Firstly, it shows that key players in a regime change coalition can take matters into their own hands and autonomously plan for war outside of the confines of their political patron’s will (i.e. the US, which has not been linked to this conspiracy). When mutual defense treaties are involved (i.e. Article 5 of NATO), then this means that the actions of one actor could dangerously involve the entire larger alliance. Secondly, the pattern of deceit in trying to justify an attack on Syria shows the desperate measures that certain governments will go to in order to not admit that they are solely pursuing regime change. This means that they understand that their citizens and the world will not approve of a war launched on such grounds, and therefore they need to manufacture a seemingly plausible reason to excuse their militant

---

<sup>203</sup> YouTube ban: How Turkish officials conspired to stage Syria attack to provoke war. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization TV-Novosti, 30 Mar. 2014. Web. 29 May 2018. <http://rt.com/news/turkey-syria-phone-leak-861/>.

actions. Finally, the tomb conspiracy reinforces the fact that Turkey is a major actor in destabilizing Syria and that it continues to be a security threat there.

Having had its conventional intervention plans scuttled by Russia's diplomatic handling of the Ghouta chemical weapons attack, and with its regional Lead From Behind allies reluctant to unilaterally intervene on their own, the United States constructed a massive internal proxy army to continue its regime change goals in Syria. A declassified Pentagon report written in August 2012 proves that the US knew about, and actually had a strategic interest in, the rise of an ultra-extremist Islamic terrorist organization along the country's border with Iraq<sup>204</sup>. This group eventually came to be known as Daesh, and it's currently the world's most notorious terrorist organization.

What had happened was that the US allowed this organization to metamorphasize into an internal proxy army that could carry out its regime change objective for it, thus accomplishing what the US itself was unable to do, which was wage a conventional war in Syria<sup>205</sup>. Just like Al Qaeda and the Taliban before it, however, Daesh seemed to rebel against its Western patrons and began pursuing its own interests, some of which appeared to be contrary to America's, such as invading Iraq and threatening Baghdad. This development provided the 'convenient excuse' to justify an American military response against the organization and pave the way for the Pentagon's return to Iraq. Since this also was a strategic aim of the US, it's questionable whether Daesh ever in fact truly rebelled, or if it was actually an agent for promoting their interests all along.

Moreover, the US and Russia's fight against Daesh would see the PYD-YPG Kurds become a globally renowned name, which in turn fed into their desire to reap tangible political-administrative dividends after the anti-Daesh portion of the War on Syria was completed. This forms the basis for the post-conflict

---

<sup>204</sup>Department Of Defense Information Report. Op. Cit.

<sup>205</sup> Milne S. Now the Truth Emerges: How the US Fuelled the Rise of Isis in Syria and Iraq. The Guardian. Guardian News And Media Limited, 3 June 2015. Web. 3 January 2018. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/us-isis-syria-iraq>.

“federalization” scenario that has become popular in Western think tank circles as the US tacitly preferred “solution” to the war.

\*\*\*

The analysis shows that American policy toward the Middle East after the end of the bipolar order is an inherent part of the US global strategy aimed at establishing the international liberal order with America’s domineering role based on Western institutions. This strategy was a combination of realist – global power projection and presence, and liberal ideas and plans – democratization, making the world similar to the American (Western) political and economic system. This combination manifested itself in neoconservative ideology which became the official American ideology determining its global and regional behavior. Neutralizing or removing any opposition to the American world order formation and promotion of its national interests became the primary goal of the policy of all administrations since 1991. Concept of the Greater Middle East and its variations were part of American global strategy making Arabic countries the testing field for new mechanisms and norms of interference into domestic political life of various countries. After it was tested in Yugoslavia in 1999, concept and techniques of regime change were broadly used in the Arabic countries. This led to destabilization of the region, destruction of Iraq and Libya, growth of terrorism, beginning of severe competition among big regional powers with growing ambitions of Turkey. Iran and Syria were also the objects of this policy aimed at serious restructuring of the distribution of power, but these two cases became so called “hard cases”, and required rather sophisticated approaches to their solution. Policy toward Syria was constructed in the framework of the general American strategy and general Middle Eastern strategy. Since it did not go in accordance with the acquired techniques, and with interference of Russia into the conflict, the United States had to apply agile strategy playing on the contradictions and ambitions of regional players. Syrian conflict has been growing and unsolved as a result of American efforts and foreign interference supporting opposition groups,

situation has become a disaster for the Syrian people and a serious problem for the world community and the United Nations.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **POLITICAL CRISIS IN SYRIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION**

#### **3.1. Activities of the United States and NATO in Syria**

The third chapter of the dissertation covers the tumultuous and fast-moving events which occurred following the commencement of the US conventional bombing campaign against Syria in September 2014 on supposed “anti-terrorist” pretexts against Daesh, and ends in December 2018. Many dynamic events took place within this nearly three-year-long time period. A certain sequence will be presented whereby everything during this timeframe is categorized according to one of three themes which also correspond to the subsections of this chapter.

The first one deals with the US and NATO conventional actions against Syria, and include such developments as the Pentagon’s support for anti-government Kurdish separatists and Turkey’s open invasion of northern Syria. The middle part of Chapter 3 talks about Russia’s anti-terrorist intervention in Syria and correspondingly touches upon its Tripartite diplomatic initiatives with Turkey and Iran and the resultant Astana peace process. Lastly, the final part of this post-“Arab Spring” chapter concerns the fate of Syria after the war and the US tacitly understood preferred scenario of “federalizing” (internally partitioning) the country into identity-centric statelets. This format will allow one to more clearly understand all of the complex and interconnected events in Syria which will enable them to better understand intentions of the main actors and formulate some scenarios for the future development of the conflict.

As the world stood in apparent shock at the devastating advances that the planet’s most notorious terrorist group rapidly made in Iraq in the summer of 2014, the US began planning a military operation in order to exploit the situation under the guise of bombing Daesh. President Obama authorized the Pentagon to strike

the group's Iraqi positions on 7 August, 2014<sup>206</sup>, and nearly a month and a half later on 23 September, the US and its Gulf allies illegally did the same thing in Syria, thus officially internationalizing the conflict<sup>207</sup>. Still, the US did not use this new state of affairs to directly attack the Syrian government or the Syrian Arab Army. Instead, it scarcely attacked anything at all, delivering only token airstrikes that didn't alter Daesh's military dynamics. This makes it seem as though the US was strategically 'corralling' the group deeper inside Syria, since it applied symbolic pressure against some of its positions, but it never decisively acted to prevent its offensives anywhere inside the country.

When the destabilization of Syria began in March 2011, the United States supported the opposition's demands. The Obama administration urged President Bashar Assad to start a "serious dialogue" with the opposition to initiate what the US described as a "democratic transition". However the Syrian government tried to establish order and prevent further growth of instability using forceful measures. As a result the United States imposed sanctions against President B. Assad accusing him of "human rights violations". In April 2011 Washington imposed sanctions against Syrian government agencies and officials. In August 2011 Barack Obama stated for the first time that President Assad must resign for the sake of the Syrian people. At the same time Washington's open support for the opposition was diplomatic and had yet to enter into the military realm.

At the beginning of August 2012 CIA got the official permission to help terrorist groups. They gave them very important intelligence information about location and movements of the government forces, trained the fighters, and sustained permanent connection with the terrorist groups commanding center in Adana, Turkey (100 kilometers from the Syrian border), close to the Turkish military base Injirlik which was used by the American military. Still the Obama's order did not mention arms delivery to the opposition. In December 2012 the

---

<sup>206</sup>Cooper H., Landler M., Rubin R. Obama Allows Limited Airstrikes on ISIS. The New York Times, 7 Aug. 2014. Web. 1 January 2018. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/08/world/middleeast/obama-weighs-military-strikes-to-aid-trapped-iraqis-officials-say.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/08/world/middleeast/obama-weighs-military-strikes-to-aid-trapped-iraqis-officials-say.html?_r=0).

<sup>207</sup>U.S. Airstrikes Hit ISIS Targets inside Syria - CNN.com.CNN. Cable News Network, 23 Sept. 2014. Web. 1 January 2018. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/u-s-airstrikes-isis-syria/>.

United States officially recognized the “National Coalition of Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary Forces” (established in November 2012 in Doha, Qatar uniting various groups of Syrian opposition) as the “legitimate representative” of the Syrian people and as the leading governing structure of all opposition forces. However there was no mentioning of arms delivery to the “opposition” in the foreseeable future, though arms were always supplied to the terrorist groups covertly through Turkey and with the funding of the Gulf countries under the supervision of the United States despite Washington not officially acknowledging it.

Radical shift in the American policy came with the new administration of D. Trump. After the chemical attack on April 4, 2017 in Idlib (north-west of Syria) when according to figures presented by the World Health Organization (WHO) more than 80 people died and more than 500 suffered, the American administration changed position towards the Syrian conflict. President Trump said that Syria crossed the red lines. On April 4 State Secretary R. Tillerson also declared that the chemical attack “violated UN resolutions, international norms and agreements” between Russia, Syria and all other members of the UN Security Council. The administration blamed the Syrian government for the chemical attack and warned that the US was working to make a serious answer to the Syrian government.

And the answer followed: on April 7, 2017 there was a severe air-strike on the Syrian base in Shayrat. According to Syrian Information Agency SANA, 9 people died (4 children among them). The US representative in the UN N. Haley declared that the United States do not see any possibility of achieving peace in Syria with the government, and American aim is not only this regime change but also destruction of the Islamic state (DAESH)<sup>208</sup>.

The Russian scholar M. Braterskiy points out that the United States uses two types of policies towards to various countries: deterrence and involvement. Deterrence means international isolation by establishing political coalitions which support and pursue American policy; introducing sanctions; using military

---

<sup>208</sup>Эволюция позиции США по сирийскому кризису. Досье // <http://tass.ru/info/5125589>.

methods to prevent any reciprocal actions or/and to force it to change its policy. M. Braterskiy also states that the United States can use radical methods – “strategy of throwing back” aimed at changing the political regime by supporting the opposition, by conducting special operations and even military intervention<sup>209</sup>.

Policy of involvement has the same aims – to influence policies of certain countries. However methods are different: engage the country in international trade structures, develop humanitarian ties (culture, tourism, etc.), integrate the country into existing system of international organizations and agreements. In this case the country, understanding the benefits from this kind of involvement, gradually will give up any offensive plans and change its policy towards Western countries<sup>210</sup>.

The United States used policy of deterrence towards Syria using full list of repressive methods.

The Daesh development is thus the epitome of the US strategy in overthrowing the Syrian government, and it's not unlikely that it could be replicated against other governments as well. It allows the US to not only retain a degree of ‘plausible deniability’ in pursuing regime change, but one can argue that it's even an attempt to make America ‘look good’ while doing it too, since it's supposedly only engaged in an ‘anti-terrorism’ campaign. The dangerous cover that the US is using to ‘legitimize’ its direct intervention opens up near-limitless opportunities for exploitation and conflict escalation, and it's truly a Damocles’ sword intended to strike fear and uncertainty in the hearts of the targeted decision makers. Be that as it may, the Syrian government remained confident and calm, avoiding the trap that the US set up for it, but the situation continued to be critical and extreme caution was obviously being observed.

Approximately one year after the US began its “anti-Daesh” bombing campaign in Syria, the Syrian Arab Army and allied pro-government forces were being worn down by the terrorists’ advances. Instead of stemming the tide of

---

<sup>209</sup> Братерский М.В. США и проблемные страны Азии: обоснование, выработка и реализация политики в 1990-2005 гг. М.: Московский общественный научный фонд; Институт США и Канады РАН, 2005. С. 113.

<sup>210</sup> Бирюков Е. Этапы и инструменты внешней политики США на Ближнем Востоке // <https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/d07/biryukov.pdf>

Daesh advances, the US bombing campaign clearly coincided with a rapid enlargement of the group's holdings, thereby furthering the argument that the US wasn't trying to fight the terrorists but was instead indirectly aiding them this entire time per the strategic 'corralling' policy which was earlier described. The situation became so dire by September 2015 that it appeared to many outside observers that the capital of Damascus might fall to the terrorists by the end of the year, though it was during this most dire and darkest moment of the war that Russia began its celebrated anti-terrorist operation in Syria. This operation seriously impacted on the US and NATO conventional military operations in Syria.

Almost exactly two years after the 2013 chemical weapons false flag attack nearly led to a conventional American War on Syria, President Putin spoke at the UN General Assembly. The situational backdrop had considerably changed in the period since, and while the risk of a Libyan-like NATO campaign on Syria had diminished, the terrorist threat inside of the country had remarkably spiked. This was all the more ironic because the US and its allies had supposedly been bombing Daesh and other terrorists over the past year, though that campaign was more of an effort to 'corral' them in the direction of shared interests than to undertake any sincere effort aimed at destroying them. In that respect, the American "anti-terrorist" campaign in Syria was a success because Daesh had grown in the past year and was rapidly gaining the strength necessary to threaten Damascus and topple the Syrian state<sup>211</sup>.

It was with this context in mind that President Putin addressed the UNGA on what would soon turn out to be the advent of Russia's first military intervention outside of the former Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War. The Russian President described the international situation that led up to the crisis in the Arabic countries and Syria and questioned why the world had let it get to as dangerous of a point as a terrorist group being on the brink of taking control of an entire country. President Putin drew effective parallels to the World War II Allied coalition

---

<sup>211</sup>Kemp T. ISIS in Damascus: Fighting in Syrian capital a new threat. CNBC. 7 Apr. 2015. Web. 27 January 2017. <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/04/07/isis-in-damascus-fighting-in-syrian-capital-a-new-threat.html>

against the fascist threat and argued that a modern-day equivalent is necessary in order to defeat terrorism. It was a principled proposal to make, especially bearing in mind how it was presented at the UNGA. The contrast between the West's complicity in destabilizing the Mideast – which President Putin brilliantly explained in detail during his speech – and Russia's efforts to restore peace and stability through its forthcoming anti-terrorist intervention were very prominent<sup>212</sup>.

The Russian Strategic Missile Forces officially began their anti-terrorist intervention in Syria on 30 September, 2015, and forever after altered the course of the War on Syria and the future of the Middle East.

The whole world was taken off guard by Russia's direct military involvement in the war, and it unexpectedly threw a wrench in the US plans for using Daesh, Al Nusra, and other terrorist groups as on-the-ground proxies for overthrowing the legitimate government of President Assad. The Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov commenting on the first anniversary of Russia's anti-terrorist operation said: "We have more and more reasons to believe that from the very beginning the plan was to spare al-Nusra and to keep it just in case for Plan B or stage two when it would be time to change the regime"<sup>213</sup>. As the Foreign Minister himself recognized, while the US continued to rely on jihadist proxy mercenaries in Syria, it also modified its ground campaign to incorporate the use of Kurdish militias, albeit to a different stated end than the Islamists.

One of the first major responses that the US made to Russia's conventional involvement in Syria was to support the creation of the so-called "Syrian Democratic Forces" (SDF), which are a composite 'rebel' fighting group led by the Kurdish PYD-YPG presiding over a minority of Arab fighters<sup>214</sup>. The Kurds had hitherto earned a legendary reputation in Western eyes for their American-assisted anti-terrorist resistance to Daesh around the northern Syrian town of Ayn al-Arab,

---

<sup>212</sup>Putin V. 70th session of the UN General Assembly. President of Russia. 28 Sept. 2015. Web. 27 January 2018. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>.

<sup>213</sup>US 'spare Nusra for plan B' to change regime in Syria – Lavrov. RT. 30 Sept. 2016. Web. 24 January 2018. <https://www.rt.com/news/361242-interview-lavrov-bbc-syria/>.

<sup>214</sup>Al-Khalidi S., Perry T. New Syrian rebel alliance formed, says weapons on the way. Reuters. 12 Oct. 2015. Web. 24 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUSKCN0S60BD20151012>.

popularly known in the global Mainstream Media by its Kurdish name “Kobani”. The US rightly figured that Russia’s anti-terrorist moves in Syria were a good opportunity for Washington to abandon (though not completely) its previously overt support for radical Islamic “rebels” and transition to more openly supporting the secular Kurdish fighters for reasons of practical military relevance and international image and to further implement their de-centralization project in Syria.

Aside from these two reasons, however, is also a more ulterior one which correlates to the US long-standing geostrategic designs in Syria and the broader Middle East, and that’s to reengineer the region’s borders via a divide-and-rule scenario which sees the emergence of a transnational “Kurdistan” right in the heart of West Asia (this plan will be quite visible during discussion of the federalization plan for Syria). At that moment the Kurds were anticipated to play a leading role in executing Ralph Peters’ “Blood Borders” plans, and the consolidation of the SDF was intended to provide a cover for their scheme. The SDF – especially its Kurdish PYD-YPG core – must be seen as being equally under the American influence, if not more, than the jihadist proxies that had hitherto been operating inside of the country, but it’s just that the US obtained ‘plausibly acceptable’ reasons to support the anti-terrorist secularists and thereby has been able to sustain their advances through the insertion of conventional Marine forces.

Roughly two months after the start of Russia’s anti-terrorist operation in Syria, Turkey shot down a Su-24 which it claimed had illegally ventured into its airspace. Moscow vehemently denied this charge and produced radar reports from the time which disproved Ankara’s allegations, but the incident nearly brought the two neighboring states and former partners to the brink of war with one another. It was later officially revealed that the shadowy Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) was behind this provocation in order to sabotage the Russian-Turkish

relationship<sup>215</sup>, but even to this day there are reasonable doubts about whether or not this is what really happened.

Yuri Barmin remarked how the incident “changed the rules of the game in Syria” by giving Moscow a reason “to further beef up its military presence in Syria”<sup>216</sup>. Kerim Has, also observed how the event surely impacted in the most negative way possible on bilateral relations between both sides, though optimistically writing that “both Ankara and Moscow are of course aware of the long-term consequences of their actions, which is why there is still hope that the parties will be able to sit down at the negotiating table and arrive at the necessary consensus”<sup>217</sup>. His commentary was proven to be apt when by-then President Erdogan sent his Russian counterpart a letter in June 2016 apologizing for what happened during that time. Ilshat Saetov from the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences noted how this represented “an acknowledgement that the attack on SU-24 failed to achieve its goals”<sup>218</sup>, thereby setting both sides up for their eventual rapprochement through the forthcoming Tripartite arrangement between them and Iran.

The shooting down of Russia’s anti-terrorist Su-24 jet was probably the closest that Moscow had ever come to war with a NATO country in the post-Cold War period, but the tensions were thankfully able to be surmounted due to the cool thinking of President Putin. Erdogan’s refusal to further escalate the matter also contributed to a peaceful resolution of this matter, and helped lay the groundwork for his eventual apology and the subsequent rapprochement between the two sides. It was this fast-moving restoration of relations which is thought to have scared the

---

<sup>215</sup>Erdogan: Link Between Pilots Who Shot Down Russian Su-24 and Gulen Movement. Sputnik. 20 July 2016. Web. 24 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201607201043366406-erdogan-russian-jet-gulen/>.

<sup>216</sup>Barmin Y. Following the Downing of its Su-24 Russia Changes the Rules of the Game in Syria. Russian International Affairs Council. 30 Nov. 2015. Web. 24 January 2017. <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/posle-ataki-na-su-24-rossiya-menyaet-pravila-igry-v-sirii/>.

<sup>217</sup>Has K. Post Mortem by the Turkish Side: Relations between Moscow and Ankara Worsen. Russian International Affairs Council. 30 Nov. 2015. Web. 24 January 2017. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/razbor-poletov-po-turetski-obostrenie-otnosheniy-moskvy-i-an/?sphrase\\_id=82829](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/razbor-poletov-po-turetski-obostrenie-otnosheniy-moskvy-i-an/?sphrase_id=82829).

<sup>218</sup>Saetov I. RecepErdogan’s Letter Is an Acknowledgement that the Attack on SU-24 Failed to Achieve its Goals. Russian International Affairs Council. 29 June 2016. Web. 24 January 2017. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/pismo-redzhepa-erdogana-priznanie-provala-tseley-ataki-na-su/?sphrase\\_id=82829](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/pismo-redzhepa-erdogana-priznanie-provala-tseley-ataki-na-su/?sphrase_id=82829).

US and its allies and prompted them to move forward with their coup against Erdogan, but its failure actually solidified the Russian-Turkish partnership even more and inadvertently accelerated the very same process that the West might have been aiming to avoid through its speculated regime change attempt<sup>219</sup>.

Within around a month after the Su-24 incident and nearly half a year before the Russian-Turkish rapprochement began to unfold, the UNSC passed Resolution 2254 which outlined the international community's envisioned peace plan for Syria<sup>220</sup>. The document is full of many details, but the general idea is that constitutional reform, new elections, and political talks would have to be held within 18 months, thereby setting a deadline of June 2017 for compliance. Importantly, all sides also vowed to uphold Syria's territorial integrity, which therefore ruled out the possibility of the US immediately using its SDF Kurdish allies to formally divide Syria. However, this only advanced the case for the US to instead employ its proxies for internal partition purposes under the guise of "federalization", which is exactly what would begin to progressively unfold in the year and a half afterwards.

It is important to mention that this was an imperfect document which had the unintended consequence of still contributing to Syria's de-facto geopolitical fragmentation. Nevertheless, it had somewhat of a positive effect in setting a timetable for certain conflict resolution benchmarks and fostering a sense of urgency in reaching these deadlines, though it's still controversial in having forced the Syrian government to hold new elections and reform the country's constitution after having already done both in the couple of years preceding the decree's promulgation. Russia's acceptance of the document's dictates created a situation whereby Syria was compelled to go along with the motions of the resolution (due to it being passed in the UNSC) in making an effort to comply with what was

---

<sup>219</sup>Arango T., Yeginsu C. Turks Can Agree on One Thing: U.S. Was Behind Failed Coup. The New York Times. 2 Aug. 2016. Web. 24 January 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/03/world/europe/turkey-coup-erdogan-fethullah-gulen-united-states.html>.

<sup>220</sup>Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2254 (2015), Endorsing Road Map for Peace Process in Syria, Setting Timetable for Talks. United Nations. 18 Dec. 2015. Web. 24 May 2018. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12171.doc.htm>.

expected of it, so it's in hindsight a moot point whether or not such demands should have been made in the first place.

The passages pertaining to Syria's territorial integrity would be abused by both the Kurds and Turks for contradictory purposes in complicating the conflict – the former to argue that “federalization” doesn't violate the country's borders, and the latter to assert the opposite in justifying its conventional invasion of northern Syria in response to the PYD-YPG “federalization” plans. Neither of these outcomes were intended by Russia when Moscow agreed to the document in December 2015, though this goes to show that the US and its allies will always seek to exploit international legal documents just like they did with UNSC 1973 in making the case for waging the War on Libya. The lesson here is that unpredictable outcomes often result from UNSC Resolutions pertaining to any of the US given proxy wars, and that for as difficult as it may be to foresee a certain chain of events in advance, a shrewd assessment of the battlespace and all of the strategic factors influencing it could in hindsight have provided the Russians with a more accurate idea of what they could have possibly expected in the coming future.

Diplomacy is just another avenue for advancing the US subjectively defined national interests, whether in Syria, Libya, or elsewhere, and that it will resort to subterfuge in promoting its international agenda if it believes that certain legal clauses stand in its way. The differing understandings of what exactly constitutes “territorial integrity” lay at the heart of the controversy over UNSC Res. 2254, with Russia likely having initially assumed that this meant the retention of Syria's internal and external borders while the US already intended for this to refer solely to the latter.

One of the most surprising events to occur during the War on Syria was Turkey's conventional invasion of the country under “Operation: Euphrates Shield”, which it officially said was launched on the basis of both combating Daesh and stopping the unification of the PYD-YPG “federal” “cantons” across the entire Syrian-Turkish borderland region. The operation was unexpected even

though Turkey had been sending strong signals about it for months – even years – beforehand, but it was all made possible due to the dramatically rearranged geopolitical situation following the Russian-Turkish rapprochement and the failed coup against Erdogan. As is known, Russia is the dominant external military power active in Syria, being present in the country at the formal behest of the government, and it could very well have intervened to stop Turkey’s offensive had it felt that it constituted a threat to its own anti-terrorist operations or potentially to Damascus.

Moscow didn’t act in this regard because it had regained the solid trust which was previously lost with Ankara, but also due to the fact that Russia only has limited military resources in Syria. As for the first point, Russia’s decision makers and strategists understood Turkey’s concerns about the threat that Kurdish “federalization” (de-facto separatism and internal partition) in Syria posed to its own territorial integrity, although of course disagreeing with it over Ankara’s designation of Moscow’s nominally (and historically) allied PYD-YPG militia partners as equivalent to PKK “terrorists”. Be that as it may, it was already beginning to seem at that time that the US had successfully completed the full co-opting of this group into its proxies and that little hope remained for the Kurds to return to their historical role as Russia’s partners, so it can be inferred that Moscow might have had a purpose in mind in passively allowing Turkey to invade northern Syria in order to impede the unification of the Kurds’ “federalized” territories and therefore scuttle the US post-war plans to a certain extent.

Moreover, it needs to be remarked that the entire regional paradigm was rocked by the failed coup against Erdogan just one month prior, and that the talk of American complicity might have been convincing enough for Russia to realize that Turkey would never be as close to the United States as it previously was. Both countries became very close in the aftermath of that failed regime change operation, which itself might have even been launched in order to preempt the restored strategic partnership between the two which had already shown signs of

materializing in the immediate run-up to the coup<sup>221</sup>. This changed reality might have conceivably convinced President Putin that he had nothing to fear at the time from Erdogan's adventure into northern Syria, hence why it was 'permitted' to occur without militant opposition.

About the second point related to Russia's comparatively limited resources in Syria (relative to its aggregate arsenal that's mostly still based in the homeland), however, it should be accepted that Moscow has no inclination to start a war with NATO and that it does not want to be drawn into an Afghan-like quagmire over Syria. Even in the event that a certain degree of lingering distrust remained between Russia and Turkey, Moscow would naturally be reluctant to enter into a high-stakes game of brinkmanship in trying to make Ankara back down, let alone during the context of rapidly improving relations between the two. However, it would then have had to return to its heavier military presence in the Arab Republic in order to present a credible deterrence to scare off what at that time would have been its neighboring 'foe'. This in turn would have contradicted Moscow's desire to de-escalate its conventional involvement in the country and potentially opened up a Pandora's Box of ever-escalating tensions which Russia could ill-afford to unnecessarily engage in.

Reflecting on what ultimately transpired, it can be confidently asserted that whether Turkey received implicit 'approval' from Russia for its operation or not, both sides eventually entered into convenient cooperation with the other in January 2017 over the north Syrian town of Al Bab, when Russia carried out its first-ever joint anti-terrorist airstrikes with a NATO-member country<sup>222</sup>. This was meant more as symbolism than substance, however, as it occurred in the week prior to the Astana conference co-brokered by Russia, Turkey, and also Iran per the Tripartite format. Interestingly, though, for as smooth as Russian-Turkish relations had been progressing during this time, the Syrian authorities still insisted that Turkey had

---

<sup>221</sup>Mercouris A. Why Reports of the Russian Tip off to Erdogan May Be True. The Duran. 21 July 2016. Web. 24 June 2018. <http://theduran.com/reports-russian-tip-off-erdogan-may-true/>.

<sup>222</sup>Syria conflict: Russia and Turkey 'in first joint air strikes on IS' BBC. 18 Jan. 2017. Web. 24 March 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38667895>.

illegally invaded their country and was occupying it in contravention of all international laws, though Damascus did not make any demands of Moscow to discontinue its cooperation with Ankara.

In September 2013 it had been unthinkable that the United States will use varied forms of conventional intervention in the War on Syria. The US had previously been bombing the country under anti-terrorist pretexts, but what really needs to be focused on and brought to attention is how the US has set up three separate bases on Syrian territory, deployed a small number of US Marines (generally thought of as conventional US foot soldiers, albeit well-trained), and launched a cruise missile strike against the Syrian Arab Army.

The US has illegally opened a total of three bases on Syrian territory in the Kurdish-dominated northeastern regions controlled by its PYD-YPG proxies under the SDF umbrella. These facilities are in Rmeilan<sup>223</sup>, “Kobani” (Ayn al Arab)<sup>224</sup>, and Tabqa<sup>225</sup>, and their ostensible use is to contribute to the fight against Daesh. However, knowing how the US operates, it’s very likely that these bases will serve an ulterior motive in guaranteeing the “territorial integrity” of the Kurds’ unilaterally “federalized” regions and preventing the Syrian Arab Army from liberating them after the defeat of Daesh. This would be in line with the US strategy of “Balkanizing” Syria per the Bosnia template of internal partition in lieu of formally dividing it up into separate independent “states”.

In support of this objective, the US deployed 400 Marines to Syria in March 2017<sup>226</sup> to assist in the “Race for Raqqa”<sup>227</sup>, the first-ever dispatch of what are generally recognized as conventional troops to the war-torn country. While the President promised that these forces wouldn’t be used in direct combat but would

---

<sup>223</sup>Al Rifai D. US 'takes control' of Rmeilan airfield in Syria. Al Jazeera. 20 Jan. 2016. Web. 24 January 2017. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/takes-control-rmeilan-airfield-syria-160119141331681.html>.

<sup>224</sup>Pentagon Expands Air Base in Northern Syria for Use in Battle for Raqqa. Sputnik. 5 Apr. 2017. Web. 4 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201704051052299455-us-airbase-syria-kobani/>.

<sup>225</sup>US Eyes Tabqa Air Base as Turkey Sours on Washington's Ties to Kurds. Sputnik. 11 Apr. 2017. Web. 14 June 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201704111052534346-syria-raqqa-operation-incirlik/>.

<sup>226</sup>Gordon M. R. U.S. Is Sending 400 More Troops to Syria. The New York Times. 9 Mar. 2017. Web. 24 January 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/world/middleeast/us-troops-syria.html>.

<sup>227</sup>Haddad H., Korybko A. The Race For Raqqa And America’s Geopolitical Revenge In Syraq (I). Oriental Review. 14 Oct. 2015. Web. 24 January 2018. <http://orientalreview.org/2015/10/14/the-race-for-raqqa-and-americas-geopolitical-revenge-in-syraq-i/>.

only help with artillery targeting and other indirect sorts of attacks, the move indisputably proved that the US was engaged in mission creep at the time, even though it later began withdrawing those said units a little over half a year later in November 2017<sup>228</sup>.

Again, it can't help but be wondered whether these troops were there to fight terrorists like the US claimed or if they were really tasked with protecting the Kurds' territorial gains and safeguarding their "federalist" project by helping them capture Raqqa for that reason.

As for the cruise missile strike against the Syrian Arab Army, President Trump initiated this audacious and completely unprecedented move in response to a fast-moving chemical weapons false flag attack in Idlib Province, one which not coincidentally carried with it a similar fingerprint as its Ghouta forerunner three and a half years prior. The circumstances of what exactly happened during this incident are still unclear, but Russia and Syria clarified that the Syrian Air Force bombarded a terrorist warehouse which happened to have chemical agents in it, thereby releasing them into the atmosphere and inadvertently contributing to civilian casualties, while the US and its allies naturally accused President Assad of using illegally retained chemical weapons on purpose against civilians. All indicators point to the Idlib incident being a repeat of the Ghouta one, except this time the American President refused to 'back down' like his predecessor did and instead fired off a volley of cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase in near Homs in response.

This supposedly "one-off" strike shattered whatever misperceptions there may have previously been about Russia's military mandate, as Moscow didn't shoot down the incoming projectiles, and First Deputy Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs of the Council of Federation Vladimir Jabarov later said that it wouldn't respond to any future such strikes in order to "not be dragged

---

<sup>228</sup> "More Than 400 US Marines Leaving Syria." *Voice of America*, 30 Nov. 2017, [www.voanews.com/a/more-than-400-us-marines-leaving-syria/4143948.html](http://www.voanews.com/a/more-than-400-us-marines-leaving-syria/4143948.html).

into a military confrontation”<sup>229</sup>. This reaffirms the understanding that Moscow’s military mandate only covers anti-terrorist operations. American press reports went wild about how this was supposedly a major strike against Russia’s “prestige”, and the inadvertent soft power damage that Russia incurred because of its principled military restraint will be difficult to quantify in the short term. However, given the reasons laid out by Mr. Jabarov, it may very well have been for the right reasons and worth whatever trade-off occurred in the name of preserving the greater peace between the rival Great Powers<sup>230</sup>.

Russia’s anti-terrorist intervention in Syria has had profound consequences on the Mideast, and therefore the world. Distinguished Russian scholars Vitaly Naumkin, Irina Zvyagelskaya and Vasily Kuznetsov think that Russia’s efforts are aimed at stemming the state disintegration process which was sparked by the “Arab Spring” Color Revolutions<sup>231</sup>. The geopolitical damage wrought by the “Arab Spring” has been tremendous, and there’s no going back to the old paradigm of regional relations and the balance of power which existed before that moment, but nevertheless, this doesn’t mean that the chaotic processes need to be taken to their fullest extent. The number one thing which Russia wants to avoid above all else is the change of borders in the Mideast, which according to V. Naumkin and his colleagues, would only perpetuate the ongoing chaos in the region. The authors praise Russia for having “facilitated the change in the domestic balance and opened opportunities for breakthrough solutions on the road to political settlement”, which therefore feeds into the relative restoration of stability in the

---

<sup>229</sup>Russia Unlikely to Counter New US Missile Strikes in Syria - Senior Lawmaker. Sputnik. 10 Apr. 2017. Web. 4 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201704101052503997-russia-unlikely-counter-us-strikes/>.

<sup>230</sup> In the Russian academic community there were rather different, sometimes diverse, opinions on the decision to start the military operation in Syria. See, for instance: Russia and the Greater Middle East, Russian International Affairs Council, 29 May 2013, Web. 4 January 2018. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=1897](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=1897); Barmin Y. Identifying the Strategy behind Russia’s Air Strikes in Syria. Russian International Affairs Council, 5 Oct. 2015, Web. 4 January 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/opredelenie-strategii-aviaudarov-rossii-v-sirii/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/opredelenie-strategii-aviaudarov-rossii-v-sirii/); Zvyagelskaya I. Syria: Challenging factors for Kofi Annan's peace mission. Valday Club, 6 Apr. 2012, Web. 4 January 2018. [valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/syria\\_challenging\\_factors\\_for\\_kofi\\_annan\\_s\\_peace\\_mission/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/syria_challenging_factors_for_kofi_annan_s_peace_mission/); Naumkin V., Zvyagelskaya I., Kuznetsov V., Soukhov N. The Middle East: From Conflicts to Stability. Russia In Global Affairs. N.p., 14 Mar. 2016. Web. 8 January 2017. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/valday/The-Middle-East-from-conflicts-to-stability-18045>

<sup>231</sup>Ibidem.

region. As the authors observed, “pursuing the consolidation of government in parallel with civil society institutions and improving the efficiency of administration are becoming an urgent need for all countries of the region, and the only opportunity for ensuring their security in the future”<sup>232</sup>. Such policy is seen as the only real way to counteract the state fragmentation process, which the experts also warned could be disguised as “decentralization” and “federalization”. A year later the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would write a “draft constitution” for Syria which suggests the enshrinement of “autonomy” and “decentralization” for the Kurds.

The authors advise that economic recovery and the formation of a broad anti-terrorist coalition are the most realistic methods for resisting the geopolitical reengineering of the Middle East, though they state that nothing can be assured given how dynamic and fragile the situation is. As is correctly stated, Russia’s constructive efforts restoring stability to the Mideast are hampered by the Great Power competition which is taking place in the region and the global games being played by key countries, which have shifted the balance of forces and made everything all the more unpredictable. V. Naumkin, I. Zvyagelskaya and V. Kuznetsov compare the situation in contemporary Middle East with the state of affairs in Europe near the end of the Thirty Years’ War. Although not explicitly stated, this is a direct allusion to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia which set the conditions for the modern system of international relations, thereby inferring that something as similarly revolutionary might be on the cusp of happening in the Mideast too, if not the broader region.

The greatest obstacle to any constructive progress in resolving the Mideast’s geopolitical woes are the hybrid wars that have spread all throughout the region. The growth of terrorism is a natural outcome of such an anarchic environment, and the formation of a new general security system is absolutely needed in order to safeguard against the myriad international threats associated with hybrid wars. It is

---

<sup>232</sup>Naumkin V., Zvyagelskaya I., Kuznetsov V., Soukhov N. The Middle East: From Conflicts to Stability. Russia In Global Affairs. N.p., 14 Mar. 2016. Web. 8 January 2018. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/valday/The-Middle-East-from-conflicts-to-stability-18045>.

evident that Russia can take the lead in this process by helping regional governments tackle the threat of terrorism and thereby prevent the redrawing of the Mideast's borders. Once the region is geopolitically secure, then Russia can work with its partners – both existing and newfound – in order to streamline a Helsinki-like security system for sustaining its hard-fought gains.

Russian scholars A. Bezrukov, A. Sushentsov, M. Mamonov and S. Markedonov stress the importance of security in the case of Syria and the Middle East in general. They state that “from the Russian point of view, allowing ISIS to gain control over Syria and Iraq would mean a new influx of well-trained terrorists in the North Caucasus and Central Asia in five years”. They mentioned that according to Russian data, out of 70 thousand ISIS militants up to 5 thousand either are Russians or come from CIS countries. It means that when their return back home will tremendously influence the already fragile situation in the Russian Caucasus and Central Asian republics<sup>233</sup>.

These evaluations of the situation in the Middle East and in Syria are rather realistic and show the perspective for further efforts and outcomes for Russia and those who really are interested in the settlement. V. Naumkin notes that defeating Daesh which is playing a “key role” in the settlement of the Syrian situation. He added that all other problems in Syria, be they the issue of Idlib, Raqqa, or whatever else – potentially, it can also be inferred, even the Kurds – “should be solved through negotiations against the background of military successes”, importantly highlighting the interconnection between Russia's military and diplomatic policies in the formation of Moscow's grand strategy towards Syria<sup>234</sup>. This ‘double approach’ wisely allows Russia to maximize its strategic gains in the country with minimal expense because the instruments of its hard and soft power

---

<sup>233</sup> Bezrukov A., et al. RUSSIA'S POSITION IN WORLD POLITICS IN 2016: FOREIGN STRATEGY CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS. *International Trends*, 2016, Web. 27 April 2018. [intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/1257/f2ZsyvQQLn.pdf](http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/1257/f2ZsyvQQLn.pdf).

<sup>234</sup> Naumkin V. Diplomatic and military victories play key role in settling Syrian crisis. Russian International Affairs Council, 9 Jan. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/comments/diplomatic-and-military-victories-play-key-role-in-settling-/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/comments/diplomatic-and-military-victories-play-key-role-in-settling-/);  
Naumkin V. What Awaits Syria? Russian International Affairs Council, 25 Sept. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/what-awaits-syria/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/what-awaits-syria/).

are optimized by working in coordination with one another. Moreover, it allows Russia to not be overly reliant on either of these two pillars of power but instead “balance” between them in flexibly adapting to challenges as they arise.

It is also important to have the support of regional powers as I. Zvyagelskaya wrote in early 2016, nearly a year before Astana was even conceptualized: “Regional powers could play a greater role in the resolution of the Syrian conflict”, and earlier talks between the US and Russia “will also largely depend on how [they] would be able to build their relationships with these regional partners”<sup>235</sup>. The US and Russia weren’t able to reach any pragmatic ‘compromise’ with one another, hence why Moscow embarked on the creation of a parallel but complementary peace process to the one in Geneva by gathering the Muslim Great Powers of Turkey and Iran together in the Astana format.

Formation of the Great Power Tripartite between Russia, Iran, and Turkey was of great importance though it was not a simple process<sup>236</sup>. Russia basically served as the balancer and bridge in bringing Turkey and Iran together, an impressive feat which barely anyone could have thought would have been possible given how Ankara and Tehran have been stridently supporting polar opposite sides in the War on Syria. This achievement proved that Moscow could indeed function as the extra-regional mediator which has the greatest chance at bringing peace to the Mideast, and its Turkish and Iranian partners were also receptive of Russia taking on this enormous role. After months of backchannel politicking, all three sides’ Foreign Ministers convened in Moscow at the end of December 2016 to issue the Moscow Declaration<sup>237</sup>. This reaffirmed the emerging Tripartite between

---

<sup>235</sup>Zvyagelskaya I. US-Russia dialogue as a key factor of the fragile Syria talks. Valday Club , 28 Mar. 2016, Web. 27 April 2018. [valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/us-russia-dialogue-as-a-key-factor-of-the-fragile-syria-talks/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/us-russia-dialogue-as-a-key-factor-of-the-fragile-syria-talks/).

<sup>236</sup> Crooke A. Will Turkey truly pivot to Russia? What now for neo-ottomanism? Valday Club. 5 Aug. 2016. Web. 27 January 2018. <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/turkey-truly-pivot-to-russia-neo-ottomanism/>; Clawson P. Syrian Kurds As A U.S. Ally: Cooperation And Complications. The Washington Institute For Near East Policy. Nov. 2016. Web. 27 January 2018. [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus150\\_Clawson.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus150_Clawson.pdf); Turkey's Erdogan: 'Confirmed evidence' US-led coalition supports ISIS & other terrorists in Syria. RT. 27 Dec. 2016. Web. 27 January 2018. <https://www.rt.com/news/371965-erdogan-us-coalition-isis/>

<sup>237</sup>Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey on agreed steps to revitalize the political process to end the Syrian conflict, Moscow, 20 December

them and set the legal-political basis for the following month's Astana peace process.

It can't be overstated just how revolutionary of a move it was that Russia not only brought Turkey and Iran together at the same table, let alone in the Russian capital, but also convinced them to cooperate in a new parallel peace process alongside the existing though stalemated one in Geneva. In fact, the most impactful developments in the War on Syria since it began can be said to have been the Russian anti-terrorist military intervention and Moscow's diplomatic successes at arranging the Astana Tripartite-brokered peace process between itself, Iran, and Turkey. While admittedly an imperfect format which still leaves a lot to be desired, it did indeed succeed thus far in establishing a workable ceasefire monitoring mechanism and in mitigating overall internal tensions within Syria.

We can see that Russia and the United States remain the most important players though participation of important regional powers will also be of great importance. Much will depend on the American actions who chair the coalition of 60 countries. Will plans and ambitions of various participants meet? It is practically impossible to give a clear answer, especially taking into account changing attitudes of the Trump administration which approved arms transfers to Syrian Kurds fighting against Daesh in the North of Syria. American actions in Syria against the government forces and IGIL often contradict Russian actions, and there is not good coordination. One of the obstacles to agreement is the fate of the Syrian government whose dismissal is supported by Turkey and the United States<sup>238</sup>.

Some Russian scholars consider cooperation with the United States a key factor for the settlement. D. Trenin, for instance, thinks that it's impossible for Moscow to bring peace to Syria without some kind of agreement with Washington first. In response to Trump's unprecedented missile strike against the Syrian Arab

---

2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 20 Dec. 2016. Web. 27 January 2018. [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489).

<sup>238</sup>Сирийский конфликт: чего хотят США, Россия, Турция и Иран? // <https://www.dw.com/ru/сирийский-конфликт-чего-хотят-сша-россия-турция-и-иран/a-41224728>

Army, the Russian expert wrote that though the risk of a confrontation increased, but, “paradoxically, greater American involvement in Syria may also bring about closer US-Russian co-operation there, leading eventually to a political settlement and an end to the bloody six-year civil war”. He suggested that this hyper-aggressive action was actually ‘good’ for Russian and Syrian interests, and “Mr Trump’s intervention could strengthen Moscow’s hand with respect to the Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad and to Iran and its client Hizbollah, both of whom have used the regime’s takeover of Aleppo to press for a complete victory, undermining Russian negotiation efforts”<sup>239</sup>.

Another scholar Y. Barmin has a similar understanding of Russian-American relations stating that “a military-oriented strategy, much in tradition with the old Republican rhetoric, will become more definite” under the new President’s tenure, and that “this may have become a necessary reality check for Moscow given the fact that the Obama Administration was never prepared to send strong signals like this”. According to his perspective, “Donald Trump has no intention to work towards maintaining the status quo that his predecessor carefully negotiated”, and that while he’s “not averse to the idea of the stabilization of the Middle East...he is not a politician who will demand democratization and civil society engagement from his partners in the region”<sup>240</sup>. One could almost proverbially say that the Trump administration was going to counter Russia’s diplomatic advances through the Astana peace process.

Hope remains that Russia and the United States will manage to come to some kind of agreement that will allow to better coordinate their actions and efforts<sup>241</sup>. The Sochi Summit was very successful in that it laid the basis for seriously pursuing UNSC Res. 2254’s mandated “political solution” to the War on Syria via constitutional “reform” and new elections, but it also proved that the

---

<sup>239</sup>Trenin D. Russia Needs American Help to Seal the Deal in Syria. Carnegie Moscow Center, 10 Apr. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [carnegie.ru/2017/04/10/russia-needs-american-help-to-seal-deal-in-syria-pub-68632](http://carnegie.ru/2017/04/10/russia-needs-american-help-to-seal-deal-in-syria-pub-68632).

<sup>240</sup>Barmin Y. How Obama’s Legacy in the Middle East is Shaping Trump’s Policy. Russian International Affairs Council, 10 May 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/how-obama-s-legacy-in-the-middle-east-is-shaping-trump-s-policy/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/how-obama-s-legacy-in-the-middle-east-is-shaping-trump-s-policy/).

<sup>241</sup>Joint Statement by the President of the United States and the President of the Russian Federation. US Department of State, 11 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm).

conflict is now shifting from the battlefield to the boardroom as political intrigue takes precedence over military tactics following the defeat of Daesh. All three countries – Russia, Iran, and Turkey – are dedicated to seeing a solution finally prevail in Syria, and while none of them wants to “compromise” on their core interests in the country, it seems inevitable that they might collectively have to do so alongside Damascus and the “rebels” in order to bring an end to this war.

For example, none of the three states wants the US to remain in northeastern Syria, but the options for removing the Pentagon’s presence are presently unrealistic given the possibly apocalyptic conditions that this might entail. Similarly, Turkey doesn’t want to see the Kurds receive “decentralization”, but its hands are proverbially tied in dealing with this. Furthermore, Iran would ideally like to deploy its forces anywhere in Syria with the consent of Damascus, but the national authorities might recommend (per Russia’s “suggestion”) that they stay away from the occupied Golan Heights so as to not “provoke” Israel and unwittingly trigger a larger and more conventional conflict between the three parties. Finally, Russia could actually gain by “balancing” all sides in accordance with its envisioned 21<sup>st</sup>-century geostrategy, but this is extremely difficult to do “perfectly” and it might accidentally end up undermining some of the regional trust that it’s worked so hard to build up over the past couple of years despite its positive intentions in preserving stability and facilitating the emerging multipolar world order.

In November 2017 Sochi Summit between the Presidents of Russia, Iran, and Turkey took place. The uncertain results of this gathering only highlighted the difficulty that Moscow was facing in its Kurdish “balancing” act. While it was formally a trilateral summit between the Russian, Iranian, and Turkish leaders, President Putin had earlier briefed his counterparts in the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt about the upcoming meeting<sup>242</sup>, suggesting that Moscow was very serious about getting the support of all stakeholders behind its initiative. Russia

---

<sup>242</sup>Pinchuk D. Putin urges political solution in Syria, in calls to Trump, Mideast leaders. Reuters, 21 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-putin-trump/putin-urges-political-solution-in-syria-in-calls-to-trump-mideast-leaders-idINKBN1DL2C2?il=0](https://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-putin-trump/putin-urges-political-solution-in-syria-in-calls-to-trump-mideast-leaders-idINKBN1DL2C2?il=0).

positioned itself as the supreme “balancing” force in the Eurasian supercontinent, to which end it has sought to strengthen its relations with all actors on the landmass, including those with which it hasn’t traditionally been very close to such as Saudi Arabia.

Commenting on the event, V. Naumkin wrote that in the long run Russia will be able to diversify its foreign policy in the Middle East: “With every new development in the region, the country gains experience and deepens its ties with all actors, including those who act in conflict zones. Today, almost all countries in the Middle East are interested in Russia’s involvement and view it as the main partner capable of influencing the situation in the region. We will hope that Syria will manage to create consensus between the conflicting parties and secure a ceasefire. ... Russian multi-vector policy and close ties with key regional countries will certainly give it a greater stake and higher status in the Middle East<sup>243</sup>.

This is a risky strategy, albeit one that could potentially yield enormous geopolitical dividends if properly executed. The leadership void left by the American ‘retreat’ from the region has created an opening for Russia to fill, though Moscow will never truly replace Washington simply for the reason that it has an altogether different vision in mind. Unlike the US disruptive divide-and-rule Hybrid Wars, Russia aspires to stabilize the region by assisting the states that have been victimized by America’s aggression, thus working for the diametrically opposite ends that the US was and instead seeking to repair some of the damage that Washington wrought. In order for this overall strategy and success of President Putin’s peace proposal it is necessary to ensure that none of Syria’s enemies will sabotage it<sup>244</sup>.

---

<sup>243</sup>Naumkin V. What Awaits Syria? Russian International Affairs Council, 25 Sept. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/what-awaits-syria/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/what-awaits-syria/).

<sup>244</sup> Russian experts: the Middle East will never be the same. Valday Club , 19 June 2017, Web. 7 April 2018. [valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/middle-east-will-never-be-the-same/](http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/middle-east-will-never-be-the-same/); Enjeti, Saagar. Netanyahu Draws His Own Red Line In Syria. The Daily Caller, 17 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [dailycaller.com/2017/11/27/netanyahu-draws-his-own-red-line-in-syria/](http://dailycaller.com/2017/11/27/netanyahu-draws-his-own-red-line-in-syria/)

### **3.2. Federalization plan for Syria: American approach**

To estimate certain results of great powers' efforts to normalize the situation in Syria, comparing them to the national interests of Syria, it is necessary to analyze the plans for Syria, which are described as being the "federalization" of the country in order to enact a de-facto internal partition. This strategy is an adapted version of Ralph Peters' "Blood Borders", though instead of de-jure "independent" statelets, the current manifestation deals with quasi-independent identity-focused ones within internationally recognized Syrian borders. It is the culmination of the earlier described three-part interlinked approach of using constructivist means (identity conflict) under the cover of neoliberal justifications ("democracy" and "human rights") in order to achieve neorealist ends (geopolitical positioning in the heart of the Mideast). The forced creation of a so-called "Kurdistan"/"Rojava" in northern Syria would be akin to a modern-day Israel in the sense that it would be a "state" formed out of the territory of others and through the support of foreign entities for their own interests.

From the Syrian view it is in the US supreme grand strategic interests to further the dissolution of Sykes-Picot, and establishment of "Kurdistan". This new transnational entity would also allow Washington to exert continued influence against multipolar-leaning Ankara, to say nothing of the very real threat that it would persistently pose to Damascus, Baghdad, and Tehran. The United States never envisioned that its theater-wide "Arab Spring" Color Revolutions and quest to construct the "New Greater Middle East" through "Blood Borders" would be decisively blocked by Russia's anti-terrorist intervention in Syria years later, but it can still recapture some of the geopolitical chaos and promote the state fragmentation process that it originally intended so long as it's successful in carving out a "Kurdistan" in Syria.

This presents Russia with a major dilemma, since Moscow has historically enjoyed very close relations with all manner of Kurds throughout the Mideast regardless of their civic nationality, and the centrifugal forces that the US already

unleashed appear almost impossible to fully control or reverse. Thus, as the research will explain, Moscow is stuck in a Catch-22 whereby it's criticized if it turns on the Kurds (which would require potentially quagmire-like military commitments) but equally accused if it goes along with their "state-building" project. Faced with such a predicament, Russia appears to have opted to gently guide the process along the direction of its preferred interests, which is to delicately appease the Kurds through "decentralization" while still standing strong by its Syrian ally in backing Damascus internationally recognized territorial integrity as enshrined in UNSC Resolution 2254.

This approach is frankly imperfect and clouded in wishful idealism, though it reflects the state of Russia's strategy towards Syria and the Kurds in the important period between the start of the Astana peace process in January 2017 and UNSC Resolution 2254's formal 18-month deadline in June 2017, which is the second-last part of the War on Syria

So, the Kurd's problem was seen as a key one in the federalization plan for Syria. The Kurdish PYD political group and its YPG militia made their "federalization" plans public in February 2015 when they released a manifesto ranting about their numerous disagreements with the Syrian government<sup>245</sup>. This document has many clauses that are unacceptable to Syria, whether it's to "eliminate the central state" and overthrow the present government, or to socially reengineer Syria into some sort of "socialist" utopia. The publication is difficult to follow because of its ideologically driven concepts, but the general point behind it is that it's an unambiguous anti-government declaration by the Kurdish PYD-YPG which fundamentally disproves the Mainstream Media narrative that this group is somehow "patriotic". In fact, it couldn't be more anti-state and more anti-Syrian.

This is an important point to dwell on because the prevailing view across the world is that the Syrian Kurds apparently "deserve" "autonomy", "decentralization", or "federalization" because of their "sacrifices" in fighting

---

<sup>245</sup>The Project of a Democratic Syria. Peace In Kurdistan. N.p., 16 Feb. 2015. Web. 12 February 2017. <https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/resources/rojawa/the-project-of-a-democratic-syria/>.

Daesh. This is a convenient storyline for the West to spin because the group's "federalization" objectives coincide with the progressive weakening of the Sykes-Picot order and therefore the steady unravelling of the regional states, the outcome of which perfectly accords with the "New Greater Middle East" scenario of "Blood Borders" which was previously explained. At the time of the manifesto's promulgation, however, Russia had yet to launch its anti-terrorist intervention in Syria, so this considerably less dramatic scenario was put on the backburner in favor of continuing with the US primary goal of a Salafist takeover of Syria. It was only after this original goal became impossible due to Russia's involvement in the conflict that the US could not directly use the Kurds as its proxies of geopolitical change, accepting that the endeavored outcome would have to be sub-state and de-facto instead of state-level and de-jure.

At that time the Brookings Institution happened to catch on to the geopolitical ingenuity of the Syrian Kurds' plan and published a policy proposal in June 2015 titled "Deconstructing Syria: Towards a Regionalized Strategy for a Confederate Country"<sup>246</sup>. Michael E. O'Hanlon would later go on to continue parroting this proposal in the years since its original republication, trying to get American decision makers to sign on to it as the most advantageous policy to pursue in Syria when it arguably became much more attractive to the US<sup>247</sup>. His vision is nothing more than an American repackaging of what the Kurds themselves declared they would do half a year earlier in their February manifesto, except he goes at length to describe how and why this would be beneficial for the American long-term strategy in the Middle East.

His points are the same – the United States should dedicate the time, effort, and resources to making sure that the Kurds have their own "autonomous" state modeled off of what Washington helped to achieve in Bosnia. O'Hanlon of course

---

<sup>246</sup>O'Hanlon M. E. .Deconstructing Syria: Towards a regionalized strategy for a confederal country. The Brookings Institute. 23 June 2015. Web. 28 January 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/deconstructing-syria-towards-a-regionalized-strategy-for-a-confederal-country/>.

<sup>247</sup>O'Hanlon M. E. HOW THE U.S. CAN WIN IN SYRIA. Newsweek. 2 Sept. 2016. Web. 28 January. 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/how-us-can-win-syria-495076>; O'Hanlon M. E. Why confederation can work in Syria. The Washington Times. 31 Oct. 2016. Web. 28 January 2017. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/31/why-confederation-can-work-in-syria/>.

doesn't talk about what a failure that project was, but in a sense, that's the whole point – the US never truly wants to resolve the identity conflicts that it helped provoke, but merely wants to freeze them in place for reactivation at a later time. This preserves Washington's hegemonic position in the post-conflict space by making it the go-to actor for resolving any internal differences between the bitterly divided forces. In this case, the Kurds would be taking the place of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The Brookings plan is important to pay attention to because of the institution's paramount influence over Washington policy-making circles, and in hindsight, the publication of this "confederate" document can be seen as the beginning of the US seriousness in entertaining such as scenario.

It also serves as proof that the concept of "Identity Federalism" is active in the thinking of American strategists. To explain, this idea holds that the most generally acceptable compromise solution to any prolonged domestic crisis is to accord each identity-focused conflict participant a degree of "self-rule" or "autonomy" in exchange for reaching a peace agreement. This happened in Bosnia, but it's also been seen lately in Iraq, South Sudan, and Nepal, with Myanmar also taking steps in this direction since pro-American "State Counselor" Suu Kyi came to power there a few years ago. While it might serve to halt fighting in the short- or perhaps even medium-term, it's impossible to escape the geopolitical nuances of this approach as it relates to neorealist grand strategic ends. Basically, it amounts to an internal partition which carves out a checkerboard of quasi-independent identity-focused statelets which could then be divided and ruled by outside players, in these instances, mostly the United States.

What the Syrian PYD-YPG Kurds aim to do is just this, whether they're self-aware of it or not, and it's why the US has thrown its full backing behind these groups at the expense of its decades-long strategic partnership of Turkey. In the new American strategic calculations after Russia's anti-terrorist intervention in Syria, the Kurds are a much more valuable resource to cultivate and protect than the Turks, and this is due to the destabilization potential that this demographic holds for geopolitically re-engineering the Middle East and unleashing

“managed/controlled chaos” all throughout the region. These concepts were explained earlier in the dissertation, but they once more become relevant when discussing the latest iteration of American strategy towards Syria, which thus extends towards the Middle East as a whole. The Kurds are the US preferred agents of geopolitical change in the region, and it’s for this reason why granting them their own de-facto statelet via a remixed “Balkanization” plan<sup>248</sup> (despite Washington’s public claims to the contrary<sup>249</sup> in order to diplomatically appease the Turks) has now become one of the main goals in Syria.

13 months after the Kurds first published their “federalization” manifesto, they formally declared that they were setting up their own government in northern Syria in March 2016<sup>250</sup>. This proclamation was immediately condemned by the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>251</sup> (including President Assad himself<sup>252</sup>), Turkey, and even the United States, the latter of which was just paying lip service to its nominal ally in Ankara. Russia retained a neutral position and said that it would only support whatever the Syrian people themselves decide should be the future political administration of their country<sup>253</sup>, a supposedly “balanced” approach which would later give Moscow the flexibility to actively work towards “decentralizing” Syria in order to try and appease the Kurds while simultaneously pleasing Damascus. The important point to concentrate on is that the Kurds’ public decree of “federalization” was internationally condemned, though this doesn’t mean that every critic’s rebuke should be taken seriously.

The United States supports the Kurds’ “federalization” plans, but feels compelled to diplomatically retain its relations with NATO-member Turkey, which

---

<sup>248</sup>Osman M. US to balkanize Syria under Kurdish pretext. RT. 3 Apr. 2017. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/383291-syria-kurdish-balkanization-us-forces/>.

<sup>249</sup>Said R. Syria's Kurds rebuked for seeking autonomous region. Reuters. 17 Mar. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-federalism-idUSKCN0WJ1EP>.

<sup>250</sup>Kurdish-controlled areas declare federation in Syria's north – media reports. RT. 17 Mar. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://www.rt.com/news/335951-kurds-federal-system-syria/>.

<sup>251</sup>Syria's Federalization Violates Int'l Law - Ambassador to Russia. Sputnik. 17 Mar. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201603171036481779-security-kurds-region/>.

<sup>252</sup>Assad to French Lawmakers: Syria is ‘Too Small’ for Federalization. Sputnik. 27 Mar. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201603271037042472-assad-syria-federalization/>.

<sup>253</sup>Russia says no to Syrian federalization as former NATO commander talks partition. RT. 12 Mar. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://www.rt.com/news/335384-syria-ceasefire-federalization-partition/>.

sees the PYD-YPG's "nation-building" quest as akin to setting up a terrorist safe haven all along its southern borderland region. In fact, it's for these reasons why Turkey would conventionally invade Syria less than half a year later during "Operation: Euphrates Shield" because of the highly sensitive security dilemma that it fell into ever since the US started overtly backing the PYD-YPG with military, logistical, training, and other sorts of support. In hindsight, however, it's unlikely that the Kurds would have gone forward with their public moves had they not earlier secured implicit American backing, so their March 2016 announcement should be understood as an indirect statement of the US' geopolitical intentions in Syria and the broader Mideast.

The RAND Corporation came out with its own set of policy proposals aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of a "federalized" solution to the War on Syria. The second installment of an eventual three-part series, "A Peace Plan for Syria II: Options for Future Governance"<sup>254</sup>, elaborates on arguments about why the US should promote a "federal" or "confederal" "solution" to the War on Syria. Nothing too new is mentioned in this document, as it's essentially a rehash of O'Hanlon's arguments, which themselves were Americanized reiterations of what the Kurds first suggested in February 2015.

The reason why this is being brought up in the context of this dissertation is because it's proof that the idea of "federalization" had begun to take hold of the American think tank community, and it also provides a paper trail for arguing that important influencers were peddling this policy proposal for some time. The Brookings Institution and RAND Corporation lobbying may have indeed had a powerful effect in shaping American strategy towards the Kurds. This is significant for academics to take note of if they're studying the progression of American strategy towards the Mideast and especially Syria.

The Kurdish issue has acquired salience in the later stages of the War on Syria. Had it not been for the PYD-YPG unilateral and illegal "federalization"

---

<sup>254</sup>Dobbins J, Gordon P., Martini J. A Peace Plan For Syria II: Options For Future Governance. RAND Corporation. 7 June 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE202.html>.

decree, Turkey wouldn't have thought that they'd pose as dire of a threat to its territorial sovereignty, and consequently, no invasion would likely have commenced. However, because the Kurds openly declared their desire to "unify" the myriad "cantons" under their occupation in northern Syria and therefore de-facto create what Turkey believed to be a PKK-backed statelet along its entire southern borderland, Ankara was moved to act before this plan could be completed.

Turkey's invasion occurred after the failed coup attempt against Erdogan and in the midst of the fast-moving Russian-Turkish rapprochement, and also followed the Kurds' capture of Manbij on the western side of the Euphrates. This last point proved to be the trigger for Turkey's actions because it demonstrated to Ankara that the group was on the verge of finally carrying through on their "unification" pledge. It's here where the geopolitical situation gets very complicated, though, because the Kurds are traditional allies of Russia in spite of their present proxy servitude vis-à-vis the US, and Moscow was in a position to stop Ankara if it felt inclined to do so. However, Russia didn't do anything to stop Turkey, and this raises very serious questions about why that was.

The Syrian Arab Republic officially and consistently condemned Turkey's invasion as an illegal occupation, yet Damascus chief ally – Moscow – did nothing to stop this breach of international law. To the contrary, Russia continued to its rapprochement with Turkey and would eventually carry out joint anti-terrorist airstrikes with it around Al Bab in January 2017. The reason for this is very nuanced and is likely attributable to Russia seeking to present itself as the chief Great Power balancer all throughout Eurasia, which would naturally include the area of its present military focus, the Middle East. Russia and Turkey have much more to gain from one another if they're cooperating on positive terms, so it makes sense from the Russian perspective why Moscow would proverbially 'turn a blind eye' to Ankara's transgressions of international law in Syria.

This might be especially so since at the time Russia could have been under the impression that the American-backed "unification" of the Kurdish "cantons"

would have sparked an unstoppable geopolitical chain reaction which could have rapidly ended with the complete unraveling of the Sykes-Picot order and the unveiling of a “New Greater Middle East” through “Blood Borders”. That’s not to say that Russia was “betraying” the Kurds, either, but just that its leadership might have wagered that it’s better for Turkey to “balance” them out and therefore dilute the group’s pro-American geopolitical disposition in order to buy time for a more thorough Russian-led political solution to be offered in the coming future. This is indeed what would happen in January 2017 with the Russian-written “draft constitution” for Syria, which would represent a reversal in many respects to what Moscow’s previously stated position was towards the Syrian Kurds and “decentralization”.

Russia was adamantly opposed to changing the borders in the Middle East, seeing this as a dangerous precedent which would inevitably snowball out of control after opening Pandora’s Box. This is still true into the present day, and UNSC Resolution 2254 also calls for all sides to respect Syria’s internationally recognized borders, though the key point of contention is now coming down to what should happen to the administrative-political ones within the country. Herein lies the paradox of Russian policy – on the one hand, Russia doesn’t want the US to succeed in geopolitically re-engineering the Mideast’s formal international borders, though on the other, this process will inevitably happen sooner or later if the internal borders of the regional states are changed and de-facto independent statelets emerge in their place.

This dilemma continues to confound Russian decision makers, and it can be illustrated most clearly by what a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee at the upper house of the Russian parliament said in late October 2016. Alexander Babakov told the *Izvestia* newspaper that “...the US wants to support the federalization of Syria, including establishing an autonomous Kurdish region”<sup>255</sup>, highlighting that Moscow was indeed aware of the US state-reformatting plans and

---

<sup>255</sup>Country Torn Apart: Ultimate Goal of US, Turkish Military Campaigns in Syria. Sputnik. 30 Oct. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201610301046892243-us-turkey-syria-federalization/>.

inferring that it was preparing countermeasures for opposing it. But then things began to change just a few months later in December 2016. *Reuters* reported that Russia had supposedly been entertaining a plan to divide Syria into “spheres of influence”<sup>256</sup>. There was not anything new but the difference this time was that the talk supposedly included Iran and Turkey, and it came just a week after the three concluded their historic Tripartite meeting in the Russian capital and issued the Moscow Declaration.

The only possible explanation for this pivot was the battlefield situation in Syria at the time. The SDF had made strong inroads towards Raqqa, the so-called capital of Daesh, and it already seemed by that time to be a *fait accompli* that the US proxies would be the ones to liberate that city and therefore enter into a premier position to dictate their preferred post-war settlement terms to Damascus. Moreover, Russia has continually stressed that it only wants a political – not military – solution to the War on Syria, and Moscow is very risk-averse and doesn’t want to chance getting drawn into an Afghan-like quagmire. For these reasons, Moscow didn’t commit the same level of military resources and effort to the “Race for Raqqa” as it had to the liberation of Aleppo, so Russia might have reckoned that the best ‘trade-off’ is to “give” Aleppo to President Assad and in exchange grant the Kurds “decentralization” and “cultural autonomy” as some sort of ‘compromise’, which could have also been influenced by the conflict of interests that it has with the US east of the Euphrates.

V. Naumkin warned that the Sykes-Picot order began to collapse in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and that this has led to a regional identity crisis. He said that “the trend could have serious consequences, including changing of state borders” that he believes “is a serious identity crisis rooted in a number of deep inner tensions as well as meddling in the region from abroad.” He assessed that this is very dangerous and not something that the Mideast needs at all. Commenting on the paradigm shift that’s unfolded since the beginning of the

---

<sup>256</sup>Osborn A., Coskun O. Russia, Turkey, Iran eye dicing Syria into zones of influence. *Reuters*. 28 Dec. 2016. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-deal-idUSKBN14H12V?il=0>.

century, he drew attention to the following: “What we’re witnessing now is the fact that the regional center of power has moved. Previously, there were three pillars of the Arab world – Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Now, their role has decreased and the balance changed towards other Arab nations, like Saudi Arabia, or beyond the Arab world, to non-Arab countries, like Iran, Turkey and Israel. They are much powerful today”<sup>257</sup>.

He’s right – some non-Arab actors are becoming much more powerful than Arab ones, despite the Arabs being the largest ethnic group in the Middle East. Part of this has to do with Israel’s Yinon Plan of dividing and ruling the region through the exploitation of identity conflicts (Hybrid Wars) within the territories of its Arab neighbors. Concurrent with this, Egypt ceded its Nasser-era leadership of the Arab World when it signed a peace treaty with Israel, while Iraq was decimated after the ruinous Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s that the US helped encourage and sustain. It also didn’t help any that Iraq’s military was crushed during the US-led Gulf War in 1991, with Washington dealing a literal death blow to the Iraq state after its 2003 war and subsequent occupation. As for Syria, the thesis has already elaborated at length in the previous two chapters on the chronology of the US Hybrid War of Terror on Syria.

The aggregate result of the weakening of Arab states is that Iran, Turkey, and Israel became stronger, as did US-ally Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the leadership void left by the demise of Arab Nationalism in the Middle East made it so that the rival ideology of Wahhabism and religious extremism began to rise. On top of all of this, the United States was able to skillfully manage the region in order to promote a Balance of Power advantageous to its interests. Unwittingly, however, the US overstepped with the Iraq War and the “Arab Spring” in Syria, as the former led to the growth of Iranian influence while the latter eventually provided the pretext for Russia to militarily intervene in fighting terrorism there. Nevertheless, V. Naumkin’s point is still valid, and his observations about an

---

<sup>257</sup>Naumkin V. 'Identity Crisis': New Balance of Power Emerges in Middle East. Russian International Affairs Council, 2 Dec. 2016, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/identity-crisis-new-balance-of-power-emerges-in-middle-east/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/identity-crisis-new-balance-of-power-emerges-in-middle-east/).

identity crisis hold true. Not only are some of the people in the formerly secular states of the Middle East turning to Wahhabism and other forms of extremism, but the non-Arab minorities within some of them such as the Kurds in Syria are being weaponized as instruments of power for external actors such as the United States. It's with this in mind that Russia has sought to challenge its rival in competing for influence with this particular group.

V. Naumkin wrote a little bit on this topic back in 2015 where he accurately predicted Russia's support for Syria's "decentralization". He thought that this outcome could weaken the sway of Islamic fundamentalism as any kind of "decentralization" in the Levant is strongly opposed by Islamic State extremists who see their ideal in a strictly unitary state in the form of a caliphate"<sup>258</sup>. However, the very serious concerns of Syrian decision makers that "decentralization" would lead to the fragmentation of their country weren't heeded. That's why there was literally no progress on advancing Russia's envisioned constitutional 'solution' for the entirety of the year.

V. Naumkin's views are still very valuable because they hint that Russia began to conceptualize the Syrian peace process in accordance with its own domestic situation and "Near Abroad" interests in Ukraine, which could have contributed to groupthink at the highest levels of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the subsequent promulgation of a policy that is at variance with the realities on the ground, similar in a sense to the shortcomings of the US own policies towards the region. Russia's intentions were the opposite of the US because Moscow has sought to leverage its influence with the Kurds for constructive ends in retaining the unity of the Syrian state (however "decentralized" it ends up being) while Washington has endeavored to weaken it through employing the exact same demographic-geographic instruments.

The Kurdish factor becomes even more relevant in regional relations than ever before when one considers the trend of federalization that V. Naumkin also

---

<sup>258</sup>Naumkin V. Russia and the Kurds. Russian International Affairs Council, 8 Jan. 2015, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/russia-and-the-kurds/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/russia-and-the-kurds/).

commented on. He wrote that it's seemingly sweeping the region and could dangerously open up a Pandora's Box, warning how centrifugal processes recently tore apart Sudan and could potentially do the same for other countries as well if they're not controlled. This, he observes, is the consequence of the identity crisis gripping the Mideast in the wake of Sykes-Picot revisionism and the weakening of formerly strong states since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, like what was cited above from his previous analyses. Nevertheless, V. Naumkin says that "that nationalism has not only not perished, but is preparing for a revival, although it can take new forms", hinting that all is not lost and that the dissolution processes might be stopped before they get out of hand. Even so, he concludes by hinting that there might be some positives that could be obtained from "federalization" if it's properly approached: "Will the universal federalization ensure a successful way out of the crisis in the region that does not cease to amaze the world, or at least of those countries, which became classified as failed states? Perhaps this will happen. However, let us not downplay the risks that a radical change in the configuration of the state structure of any country brings, especially in the context of the traditional confrontation of unionism and particularism, Islamism and secularism"<sup>259</sup>.

Therein lies the crux of the problem and it's apparent paradox – federalization could be a 'solution' in and of itself, but it carries serious risks that could jeopardize regional stabilization and undermine the strategic gains that Russia has achieved ever since the commencement of its anti-terrorist intervention in Syria. That said, Moscow did indeed suggest "decentralization" in the "draft constitution" that it suggested for Syria, so it's clear to see that Russia is trying to harness this process and redirect it so that it's no longer the weaponized instrument that the US intends for it to be but could reversely become a crucial factor in restoring stability to the country and region as a whole.

One possible reason might have to do with the geostrategic dynamics of the War on Syria, namely the fact that Russia might have come to believe that the state

---

<sup>259</sup>Naumkin V. Pandora's Box of Federalization. Russian International Affairs Council, 25 Dec. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/pandora-s-box-of-federalization/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/pandora-s-box-of-federalization/).

fragmentation process which had started years ago with the 2003 US War on Iraq and 2011 theater-wide “Arab Spring” Color Revolutions was irreversible, and that the best course of action which Moscow could hope to initiate would be to ‘manage’ events and ideally guide them in the direction of Russia’s ‘least-bad’ interests.

However, hard geopolitical facts suggest that the Syrian PYD-YPG Kurds are very close American allies which Washington would be reluctant to give up. The United States has already ruined decades’ worth of political-strategic relations with Turkey in order to support these militias, so it’s not likely to ‘give them up’ to Russia or back down in the face of competition for their loyalty. Hopefully, though, the more pragmatic of the Syrian Kurdish leaders will realize that they’re being exploited as pro-American tools and lobby for a more balanced approach towards Moscow and Damascus, though this looks very unlikely.

Altogether, when evaluating the consequences of the Russian-written “draft constitution” for Syria, it’s fair to say that Moscow had the best intentions in mind, but that it poorly performed in its execution. Damascus’ reception to the proposal was uncharacteristically cool, and almost all “moderate rebel opposition” groups rejected the document for unnecessarily ceding Syria’s sovereignty to the Kurds through the dismantlement of the existing unitary state. Russia denied that it was pressuring Syria or had any of these goals in mind, but the soft power damage was done and it’s not for naught that Moscow later recognized in mid-April that it was “too early” for Syria to assemble a “constitutional commission” to discuss these proposals<sup>260</sup>. That can be read as a tacit sign of Russian backtracking by recognizing that it completely overstepped in its well-intentioned efforts to internally “balance” the Kurds with Damascus in order to externally “balance” the US destructive regional plans with Russia’s ones for reinforcing the regional order.

Moreover, there could have also been more Machiavellian plans at work as well, such as Russia’s desire to retain limited but credible indirect pressure on

---

<sup>260</sup>Too Early to Set Up Body on New Syrian Constitution - Moscow. Sputnik. 13 Apr. 2017. Web. 28 January 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201704131052618096-syrian-constitution-work/>.

Turkey vis-à-vis the Syrian Kurds in order to make sure that Ankara remains in the Tripartite with Tehran. Ultimately, it's impossible to know with any degree of absolute certainty what Russia was thinking in reversing its policy towards the Kurds and actively – in spite of its repeated denunciations to the contrary – working to “decentralize” the Syrian state in order to give its nominal Kurdish allies “cultural autonomy”, but the previously postulated ideas put forth in the passages above likely provide the best indication of what calculations might have been considered. Even so, just because Russia now seems to be in the game of managing different degrees of “decentralization” (and inevitably, as the author believes, state fragmentation and Sykes-Picot revisionism) doesn't mean that the US has given up on its own designs; instead, it's only made everything much more complicated and if anything emboldened Washington to continue full-speed ahead.

Washington didn't decide to forego its Kurdish proxies but instead retrenched its efforts to maintain their loyalty and give them their hoped-for “federalized” domains. These two qualifiers – that the US has not abandoned “federalization” despite Russia's administrative-diplomatic outreaches to the Kurds in the “draft constitution”, and Moscow's reluctance to support anything other than “decentralization” and “cultural autonomy” – are important to remember in analyzing how the RAND Corporation and Carnegie Endowment have sought to perfect the US' “New Greater Middle East” and “Blood Border” plans. Accepting that the Russian anti-terrorist intervention in Syria had scuttled the former Salafist-driven catalyst for these designs, yet also understanding that Moscow's reluctant embrace of “decentralization” and “cultural autonomy” had emboldened the Kurds, these two think tanks put forth separate policy proposals which must be taken in conjunction to understand the reformatted new approach that the US is considering for Syria.

The RAND Corporation published the third and last installment of their “Peace Plan for Syria” series in early February 2017 focusing on “Agreed Zones of

Control, Decentralization, and International Administration”<sup>261</sup>. The strategic adaptation mentioned in the document is that UN forces and/or a ‘coalition of the willing’ should be deployed to Syria in order to maintain “agreed zones of control” under an “international administration”, which will help to further the goal of “decentralization” if this takes place in the northeastern regions of the country presently under Kurdish and Daesh occupation. Essentially, the RAND Corporation is asking for a large-scale international ‘peacekeeping’ (occupation) force to be used to enforce the de-facto creation of a quasi-independent sub-state “Kurdistan” on Syrian territory, though hiding behind the ‘(semi-)plausibly justifiable’ excuse that this move is needed to retain stability in the post-Daesh socio-political environment.

The Carnegie Endowment, however, doesn’t go nearly as far as the RAND Corporation does with its latest plans, but it does offer a more cunning and wily way to achieve its objectives with comparatively less expenses or commitments. In their brief policy proposal published in mid-March 2017 and titled “Syria’s Decentralization Roadmap”, they pinpoint a constitutional technicality from 2011 which is believed to provide the ‘solution’ for ‘legally’ enforcing the US desired “decentralization” blueprint onto Syria. Author Samer Araabi, a researcher on Syria, recalled that Damascus implemented what is known as Decree 107 in the early days of the War on Syria in order to grant more administrative-political privileges to local municipalities, and he believes that this set the precedent for inserting a more ambitious “decentralization” scheme into the country’s legal system during UNSC Resolution 2254’s mandated constitutional reform<sup>262</sup>.

If successful, and provided that the Syrian people vote for it in a referendum – which is extremely unlikely – then Araabi’s scheme would make any large-scale international deployment to Syria ‘redundant’. Such plans were made for a post-Daesh ‘peacekeeping’ mission, but they were also considered in parallel with

---

<sup>261</sup>Dobbins J., Gordon P., Martini J. A Peace Plan For Syria III: Agreed Zones of Control, Decentralization, and International Administration. RAND Corporation. 8 Feb. 2017. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE233.html>.

<sup>262</sup>Araabi S. Syria’s Decentralization Roadmap. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 23 Mar. 2017. Web. 28 January 2018. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/68372>.

changing Syria's constitution through the exploitation of Decree 107 in order to enact a "federalized" system under the guise of "decentralization" (and also taking advantage of the well-intended clauses contained in the Russian-written "draft constitution"). Either way, it's unlikely that either of these plots will succeed in their original manifestations and will probably have to undergo several stages of revisionism before a serious attempt is made to enact them in practice, if at all.

While the will of the Syrian people should undoubtedly be the final arbitrator for the country's post-conflict political-administrative formation, there's no avoiding the inconvenient but realistic fact that Great Power influence plays a powerful role in deciding what will happen next. Russia is in a position to reinforce the Syrian people and their government's resistance against "decentralization", "cultural autonomies", and "federalization", though at the same time Moscow would like to use its anti-terrorist intervention in Syria as a way for more profound Great Power engagement elsewhere in the region and Greater Eurasia. However Russia needs to be very careful that its pandering to the Kurds doesn't inadvertently embolden them to the point of unwittingly helping the US plans, the very same grand strategy which Moscow is desperately trying so hard to avoid.

Russia has stated on numerous occasions that it is not in support of President Assad personally, but it supports him in order to fight terrorism and uphold the constitutional order of the country<sup>263</sup>. This is a critical clarification because it complements what Moscow has previously said about how his fate can only be determined by the Syrian electorate, not any outside force<sup>264</sup>. Russia has also insisted that UNSC Res. 2254's mandate for constitutional revisionism can only be undertaken by the Syrians themselves. Taking into consideration that Russia has said that both sides of the Syrian conflict must enter into "compromises".

---

<sup>263</sup> Lavrov to Sputnik: Assad Not Moscow's Ally Like Ankara is to Washington. Sputnik, 4 May 2016, Web. 27 April 2018. [sputniknews.com/politics/201605041039060941-assad-russia-ally-lavrov/](http://sputniknews.com/politics/201605041039060941-assad-russia-ally-lavrov/).

<sup>264</sup>Wintour P. Putin brings Iran and Turkey together in bold Syria peace plan. The Guardian, 22 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/22/iranian-and-turkish-leaders-arrive-in-russia-for-syria-talks-with-putin](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/22/iranian-and-turkish-leaders-arrive-in-russia-for-syria-talks-with-putin).

Presidents Putin and Trump met during the APEC Summit in Vietnam in November 2017, where they publicly released a joint statement and probably discussed many more details in private<sup>265</sup>. The most controversial known outcome of that declaration was that both sides said that all foreign forces would have to eventually leave Syria, which was ambiguous enough to make some commentators worry at the time that Russia had “sold out” the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah. Such fears were unfounded, however, since Moscow later clarified that both actors were legally in the country at the invitation of the host government<sup>266</sup>, and that it’s actually the US forces that are illegal and need to leave, though President Trump curiously didn’t seem to interpret it that way when he agreed to the declaration.

In any case, it’s possible that this specific clause was deliberately left ambiguous by both sides as a form of psychological warfare against the other’s decision makers, knowing that each would interpret it differently but nevertheless figuring that it’s better for them to have some positive outcome. That said, and recalling Russia’s envisioned “balancing” strategy in the Mideast, it’s indeed very possible that Moscow might gently press Damascus sometime in the future to ensure that the IRGC and Hezbollah don’t deploy so close to the occupied Golan Heights that it would “provoke” Israel to strike them and endanger the entire peace process. In addition, there seem to be no realistic chances that Moscow will resort to brinkmanship with Washington over the Syrian Kurds and their illegally hosted US bases in the northeastern part of the country, which is probably why President Putin is attempting to broker a series of “multilaterally acceptable” “compromises” on this issue.

It is also necessary to mention the “energy factor”<sup>267</sup>. Syria agreed in spring 2016 to allow Russia to rebuild its oil and gas industries after the war, but most of

---

<sup>265</sup>Joint Statement by the President of the United States and the President of the Russian Federation. US Department Of State, 11 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm).

<sup>266</sup> Iran only fights terrorism in Syria: Russia envoy to Israel. Press TV, 21 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/11/21/542926/Israel-Syria-Iran-Russia-Alexander-Shein](http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/11/21/542926/Israel-Syria-Iran-Russia-Alexander-Shein).

<sup>267</sup> Syria asks Russia to rebuild its oil industry. Press TV, 20 May 2016, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/05/20/466598/Syria-asks-Russia-to-rebuild-its-oil-industry](http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/05/20/466598/Syria-asks-Russia-to-rebuild-its-oil-industry).

its energy resources are in Kurdish-occupied territory. Syria desperately needs some of this revenue in order to rebuild the entire country at large, but with Russia also having a stake in these assets and the overall goal of strengthening the country's post-war economy, it's conceivable that Moscow could try to mediate a revenue-sharing arrangement between Damascus and the Kurds, with Russia receiving a portion of the profits as well.

This employment of "energy diplomacy" could at the very least help to ease tensions for the time being and prevent any outbreak of hostilities between the two camps (the United States and their Kurdish allies on one hand, Russia and the Syrian government on the other) across their de-facto line of control along the Euphrates River, a state of affairs which will probably be implicitly enforced by Russia and the US per a "gentleman's agreement" to keep their respective allies at bay. One of the controversial problems is the post-war status of the American troops in northeastern Syria and their 10 bases in the region, which Damascus would never accept as "legitimate" because their presence is an illegal occupation of Syrian territory which it perceives as being a huge humiliation for the government and the Syrian people. Thus, since there are scant chances that Russia will militarily work to dislodge the Pentagon's presence nor is it likely to back the SAA's efforts to do so either, the only solution is for Moscow and Damascus to work together and push the United States to withdraw their troops from the region along with trying to convince the Kurdish factions in northeastern Syria that the Americans are not reliable allies and that they are using the Kurdish problem as a tool to establish their "blood borders".

Russia does not want to irresponsibly enter into nuclear brinkmanship with the US over its 10 bases and estimated 2000 troops in northeastern Syria. It means that the Arab-Kurdish issue in Syria might remain a "frozen conflict" kept under control by the speculated "gentleman's agreement" between Presidents Putin and Trump, though with Russia actively brokering some degree of a "political

---

solution” in order to temporarily calm on-the-ground tensions between all sides<sup>268</sup>. Turkey might not like this because of its well-grounded fear that the Syrian Kurdish PYD-YPG are really just offshoots of what they consider to be the terrorist PKK, but there’s little that President Erdogan can do aside from unilaterally invading northeastern Syria and dealing self-inflicted damage to the Russian-Turkish Strategic Partnership, to say nothing of risking a more dramatic falling out with his nominal US and NATO “allies”.

Russia and Turkey are actively cooperating on a wide variety of ventures, one of the most significant of which is the Turkish/Balkan Stream through Southeastern Europe and beyond, so it is very unlikely that President Erdogan jeopardize his close personal relations with his Russian counterpart, especially bearing in mind an unprecedented deal for Moscow to sell Ankara its state-of-the-art S-400 anti-air missiles<sup>269</sup>. Iran figures into all of this, wisely staying on the sidelines and remaining silent for the time being, prudently watching how events develop and doing nothing that could even be remotely perceived as interfering with this complicated political process, though consistently abiding by its principles in reiterating its support for Damascus and the international legal mechanisms guiding the “political solution” in the country. In any case, Iran would still be compelled to act in whatever manner it sees fit if its military interests vis-à-vis the IRGC and Hezbollah are endangered in any way that goes against Damascus’ sovereign preferences, such as if external pressure was put on Syria to seek their removal, up to and including more Israeli airstrikes against their positions.

The Trump administration made controversial statements about policy towards Syria. President Trump said that the United States spent 7 tn dollars for its actions in the Middle East since 2001 when it started military operation in Afghanistan. He said that American policy there was very successful, that ISIS was

---

<sup>268</sup> Ali I. Pentagon likely to acknowledge 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria: U.S. officials. Reuters, 24 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-syria-military/pentagon-likely-to-acknowledge-2000-u-s-troops-in-syria-u-s-officials-idUSKBN1DO2II](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-syria-military/pentagon-likely-to-acknowledge-2000-u-s-troops-in-syria-u-s-officials-idUSKBN1DO2II).

<sup>269</sup> Purchase of Russian S-400 system creates issues for Turkey’s use of F-35 – top US Air Force official. RT, 18 Nov. 2017, Web. 27 April 2018. [www.rt.com/news/410197-turkey-s400-nato-f35/](http://www.rt.com/news/410197-turkey-s400-nato-f35/).

almost defeated, and it was time to come back home. In April 2018 the White House press secretary S. Sanders confirmed that the military operation was coming to an end but the United States and its partners will remain committed to eliminating the small ISIS presence in Syria, and the US will continue to consult with its allies and friends regarding future plans, and to work toward peace and ensure that ISIS never re-emerges<sup>270</sup>.

These statements contradicted the previous one on Syria made by the State Secretary R. Tillerson who declared in January 2018: “The US intends to maintain an open-ended military presence in Syria not only to fight Isis and al-Qaida but also to provide a bulwark against Iranian influence, ensure the departure of the Syrian government and create conditions for the return of refugees”<sup>271</sup>.

It meant that there was no consensus on this issue, and republicans tried to find the most suitable variant of acting in Syria. The dilemma was how to remain in the domineering position in the region while spending less money and to have minimal involvement in military actions. Finally those who did not want “to leave Syria to Russia” and were thinking in the paradigm of great power competition and keeping strong American presence in the region prevailed<sup>272</sup>.

As the previous analysis showed American strategy in Syria was aimed at the fragmentation of the country. As the official representative of the Foreign Ministry of Russia M. Zakharova stated, this aim explains American behavior in Syria and in the Middle East in general. The United States, as it was mentioned above, wanted to keep the central position in the region, weaken other big players, get full control of natural resources, and to have this country as a strategic place for the American military presence (military bases). Additional concern was Russia’s successful operation of fighting terrorism in Syria and its support of the legal

---

<sup>270</sup> White House clarification only adds to confusion over Syria withdrawal. White House says fight against Isis is ‘coming to rapid end’, but US still committed to Syria presence, despite Trump insistence on withdrawal / Web. 27 April 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/04/syria-isis-latest-trump-white-house-remove-troops>

<sup>271</sup> US military to maintain open-ended presence in Syria, Tillerson says. US secretary of state says forces will remain in country in push against Isis, Bashar al-Assad and Iranian influence / Web. 27 April 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/17/us-military-syria-isis-iran-assad-tillerson>

<sup>272</sup> Сучков М. Политическое отступление: что мешает США вывести войска из Сирии. Web. 27 April 2018. [https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/politics/06/04/2018/5ac75e949a794719ebf0c007?from=center\\_10](https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/politics/06/04/2018/5ac75e949a794719ebf0c007?from=center_10).

Syrian government and the Syrian Army who were fighting against ISIS and terrorists<sup>273</sup>.

As it was mentioned above there are controversial points in the opinions of Russian specialists on the future of Syria, however officially Russia persistently supports the right of the Syrian people for the choice of their future.

A well-known expert from the Institute of Oriental Studies V. Sotnikov, characterizing the situation in Syria and American actions there said the following: “The situation in Syria shows that we might finish with “federalization” of the country. It will mean that separate groups, opposition groups, government forces, ISIS will control different parts of the country. ... Finally it will mean the end of Syria as a unified state”. He added that Russia does not fully support American plan and does not want the dismantlement of the country<sup>274</sup>.

There are pro-federalization views among Russian scholars who consider federalization as the only possible way to end the war. They point out that Kurds are well aware that they cannot have full independence within Syria, and there is no way for establishing an independent Kurdistan uniting all Kurds who live in different countries. They are ready to accept broad autonomy in the federal Syria. Syrian Kurds who constitute 12-15% of the population have been fighting for their autonomy, and with the support of the United States succeeded in extending its military and political control of the territories in Syria by 1,5. Syrian Kurds were fighting together with the American forces in Raqqa and in other places against ISIS groups, and as a result of successful operations Kurds managed to establish in the northern part of Syria quasi-federation governed by separate Kurdish groups, the biggest among them “Syrian Democratic Forces”.

Some Russian scholars say that the Syrian government cannot ignore this fact, and suggest to use model of asymmetric federation used in Iraq where three provinces with Kurds got broader autonomy than other 15 provinces with the

---

<sup>273</sup> Ильин С. Тайные планы США в Сирии: российский МИД вывел Вашингтон на чистую воду. Web. 27 April 2018. <https://ria.ru/accents/20180127/1513383273.html>.

<sup>274</sup> Эксперты оценили возможные последствия новой стратегии США в Сирии // <https://ria.ru/syria/20170707/1498019789.html>.

Arabic population. Supporters of this kind of settlement think that though such a model may seem unacceptable, further escalation of the conflict and further rejection of the federalization plan can cause further consolidation of independent status of territories with Kurds when it would be even harder to reach any compromise<sup>275</sup>.

Russian scholar D. Okrest mentions that at the beginning Kurdistan Workers' Party (KWP) proclaimed as its primary goal to build Socialism and a nation-state. Later the Party gave up the idea of absolute independence and agreed to become part of the "Syrian Federation" (without the word "Arabic"). At present there are 3 "cantons" with partly-Kurdish population in Syria – Jazira, Euphrat and Afrin defined as the "Democratic Federation of Northern Syria" (DFNS) (in the past – "Rojava"). These regions are rather independent having their military forces and local governing bodies. D. Okrest writes that there are Arabic leaders in Syria who support the idea of federalization considering that this model can "unite all Syrian citizens" despite their religious, ethnic and national differences making Syria a "really democratic country"<sup>276</sup>. So, we can see that there are different scenarios for the Syrian crisis settlement, suggested by specialists in international relations and in the Middle East. Some of them can be discussed, but some of them are not acceptable for Syria, taking into consideration that much will depend on the situation on the ground as well as the conflicting interests of the involved parties who will act according to their general view of the world and regional situations. For Russia the security situation close to its borders is of vital importance, so it will have to put more efforts and skills, diplomatic and military, to bring most favorable solution to the conflict.

\*\*\*

The analysis shows that despite noticeable achievements in Syria first of all due to the Russian military actions, though there are certain agreements achieved by the main outer players, there remain problems that require further discussion

<sup>275</sup> Как собрать Сирию заново // <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2018/02/26/751947-sokrat-siriy>.

<sup>276</sup> Сирию ждет выбор между кантонизацией и федерализацией // [http://www.ng.ru/problems/2018-04-18/13\\_441\\_siria.html?print=Y](http://www.ng.ru/problems/2018-04-18/13_441_siria.html?print=Y).

and compromise. The most important issue is the future of the Syrian state, and suggested plan of federalization is not fully accepted by the Syrian government and people, though one cannot deny the fact that the Kurdish problem should be solved. One of the main obstacles to the solution is the American policy in the Middle East and its global strategy aimed at consolidating US domineering role in the world. Despite the fact that D. Trump promised to cut expenses for foreign policy and to bring more money to the American citizens, administration policy after the elections of 2016 is different. Ambitious American policy will continue added by a new cold war with Russia<sup>277</sup>. Arrogant and uncompromising behavior has a visible impact on the Syrian situation, complicates the situation for Russia fighting terrorism and trying to bring peaceful solution as soon as possible.

The War on Syria is at a fundamental crossroads. The US and its Kurdish-led SDF proxies are in a strong position to defend their on-the-ground gains and push forth their desired political solution to the country's crisis, while Russia is still the top military actor in the theater and is capable of preventing the dissolution of the Syrian state at the negotiating table provided that it has the will to do so. Russia must make sure that its hard-fought gains in Syria aren't reversed at either Astana or Geneva, and the key to safeguarding its successes is to moderate its political outreaches to the Kurds and not get too far ahead of itself in trying to appease their demands.

---

<sup>277</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America. December 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov>

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the American policy in the Syrian crisis allows to make the following conclusions:

1. Contemporary American strategy has incorporated ideas presented by representatives of different theoretical schools: neoliberalism, neorealism, constructivism. It demonstrates quite realist aims at consolidating the US central position in the international order that is being constructed with the active participation not only of the United States and its allies, but also of Russia, China, India, Turkey and some other actors. The American strategy is characterized by historic and conceptual continuity and is directed at projecting power (military, economic, ideological) in the world, and keeping influence in the states and regions that are included into spheres of its interests where Middle East occupies an important place. Neoliberalism is quite visible in the declarations of all strategic American documents about promotion of “democratic values and institutions” to the countries “lacking democratic political systems” or “violating basic democratic norms”. Though this “democratic promotion” policy and establishment of the world liberal order has not been successful, the American administration continues even more adamantly to follow the declared strategy, and Syria is in the center of these American efforts.

2. US policy in the Middle East and in the Syrian crisis in particular shows that the United States continues its hegemonic strategy and is ready to use all methods, including military, to achieve its goals. Detailed examination of the strategies and actions of several American administrations after the end of the bipolar world order demonstrated this kind of continuity, neoconservatism has become the official American ideology.

3. US policy in the Middle East and in Syria proves that events of so called “Arabic Spring” are related to “color revolutions” in some post-Soviet countries. The technology of regime change revolutions developed by G. Sharp, has been actively used by the United States in various countries. Application of

this technology brought instability to the countries – objects of the American policy, and it was very clearly seen especially in the Arabic countries. In Syria American efforts to carry out regime change were not successful, so the decision was made to start a limited military operation (practically – war) against this country.

4. “Hybrid war” in Syria, started by the United States, was accompanied by establishing a “conflict of identities” – national, ethnic, religious. Very visible role in intensifying all kinds of conflicts and growth of extremist tendencies and sentiments among various groups of population was played by Daesh (ISIS) – so called “Islamic State”. It was necessary to analyze how the US and other outer players fought against it, and whether the results were really decisive for the future survival of Syria. The conclusion was that the decisive role was the beginning of Russia’s military campaign that brought visible results in fighting terrorism and Daesh.

5. Analysis of the American and NATO strategy in the Middle East and in Syria demonstrated dual character of their actions. Prevailing importance was given to the regime change in Syria, to the transformation of its political system according to the American vision and concept while real fight with terrorism was not effective, and some positive results were visible only after Russia interfered.

6. Besides the United States there are other outer players who try to influence the situation in Syria each with their own view of the region and to the benefit of their interests. Among them there are Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Russia which plays the decisive role in the settlement. However, Russia has to coordinate and take into account interests of regional actors, especially Turkey.

7. The change in the situation in Syria and the actions of the several most important players compelled the United States to employ the new “hybrid warfare” tool of trying to “federalize” the country. This project is not accepted by the Syrian government and the vast majority of the population, though some Kurdish armed groups who purport to represent this minority (which constitutes 12-13% of the total population) and control part of the state’s territory are in favor of it. This

means that the settlement of the Syrian crisis will remain on the agenda of the United States, Russia and Turkey who are most actively working for the settlement.

The research has proved that the presented hypothesis was correct. The American strategy in the Middle East is of hegemonic character, and its policy in Syria has been pursued according to this paradigm. American policy was aimed at destabilizing the region and Syria in particular in order to establish and consolidate control over the region, strategically important for the United States, and Syria as a strong, geopolitically important and rich in resources country.

American policy towards Syria is one of the central defining factors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century thus far, especially in the present moment. It may not have been so important decades ago during the Cold War (although its significance during that period shouldn't by any means be underestimated), but it's just that the contemporary conditions of the emerging multipolar world order following the failure of the "Arab Spring" theater-wide Color Revolutions and subsequent revival of Russian leadership in Greater Eurasia created the conditions which pushed Syria to the forefront of global geopolitics. US grand strategy is aimed at destabilizing the countries and regions of Eurasia in order to control their governments and resources, and the US is targeting Syria in order to overthrow the leadership and reorganize the state into a loose federation of identity-based units that would be easier for it to manipulate. At present there is no conflict more relevant than Syria's because its outcome will determine the geopolitical future of the Middle East, which in turn will shape the balance of power in Eurasia and thenceforth the world.

The study demonstrated the influence that the three traditional theoretical-interpretive schools of International Relations have on the US policy formation, reasoning that the interplay between them forms a unique goal-oriented pattern which sees Neorealist geopolitical ends disguised by Neoliberal "humanitarian" and "democratic" rhetoric in order to hide the Constructivist utilization of identity-centric warfare. This forms the basis of the US Hybrid War on Syria, which can be

conceptualized as the phased transitioned from the failed “Arab Spring” theater-wide Color Revolution to the Unconventional Warfare of Daesh, Al-Nusra, and other terrorist groups against the democratically elected and legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Throughout the course of the dissertation, it was also explained in more practical terms how the geopolitical theories-visions of the “New Greater Middle East” and “Blood Borders” served as the final end game that the US wanted to achieve, which were pursued under the rhetoric of “spreading democracy” and “protecting human rights” though advanced on the ground through proxy sectarian Hybrid Warfare via a broad anti-Syrian “Lead From Behind” coalition. These are advanced through conventional intervention (2003-2011 War on Iraq) and Hybrid War destabilizations (post-“Arab Spring” after 2011).

The research strove to uncover the evolution of American policy in the Syrian conflict, looking back to the Cold War past for clues about how and why it progressed as it did into the post-“Arab Spring” present. The outcome of this academic investigation was that the reader was presented with the changing geopolitical motivations behind why the US continually targeted Syria for regime change destabilization across more than half a century, though interestingly illustrating that the same geostrategic determinants remained in place this entire time. While the regional situation continued to change, the enduring fact which remained consistent was always that Syria’s location endows it and any country that it’s partnered with (USSR, Russia) or controlled by (as the US, Turkey, and the Gulf States wanted) with a powerful position to influence Mideast affairs by virtue of its position. Whether it’s to stabilize the region like Russia wants, or catalyze its dissolution and subsequent geopolitical re-engineering like the US aspires, the unchanging fact is that the future of the Mideast disproportionately rests on the future of Syria itself.

9/11 led to the US “Global War on Terror”, which failed in its official aims and was exploited to launch the 2003 War on Iraq and subsequent occupation which lasted until 2011, all with the intent of constructing a “New Greater Middle

East” through the geopolitical re-engineering of “Blood Borders”. The period of time between 9/11 and the “Arab Spring” saw the US perfect its forthcoming planned Color Revolution destabilization against Syria and a broad range of other Mideast states.

The “Arab Spring” Color Revolution was the initial stage of the US Hybrid War on Syria, which ultimately morphed into its next phase of Unconventional Warfare through terrorism. Every event since 2011 can be understood as a different development in the same Hybrid War, one which first had its goal as regime change but then adapted its objective following the Russian anti-terrorist intervention to seek the internal partition of the Arab Republic through “federalization” or some other form of broad “decentralization”. The research therefore addressed the failed Color Revolution, its transition into an Unconventional War, the US “Lead from Behind” stratagem of assembling a regional anti-Syrian coalition, the 2013 chemical weapons false flag attack, the rise of Daesh, the US and its allies’ “anti-terrorist” bombing campaign, Russia’s anti-terrorist intervention, Turkey’s “Operation Euphrates Shield”, the Astana trilateral framework, and the US first-ever direct cruise missile strike on the Syrian Arab Army.

The prevailing theme is that the externally provoked Hybrid War on Syria lasted a lot longer than the US expected, and that the prolonged conflict eventually became a dangerous and high-stakes proxy war between the US and Russia, both of which have been pursuing contradictory objectives though with the potential for reaching some kind of compromise solution in the future. Russia’s direct military involvement in Syria fundamentally destroyed – or at the very least, greatly delayed – the US original plans for the Mideast, though Moscow wants to indefinitely sustain all of its geopolitical gains but the most probable scenario is that it enters into some sort of deal with Washington. Nevertheless, Russia did in fact make tremendous progress in stabilizing the situation following the groundbreaking trilateral framework that Moscow successfully launched in late-2016 between itself, Iran, and Turkey that allowed it to aid the Syrian Arab Army

in multilaterally defeating Daesh and other terrorist groups. Concurrent with all of this, the dual trends of rising Kurdish nationalism and progress on spearheading a “decentralized” political solution to the war heavily impacted on developments in Syria across the last two years of the study.

The War on Syria can thus be seen in hindsight as a decisive event in global history since it stretched across the transition from the fading unipolar world order to the rising multipolar one, manifested respectively by the US failure to achieve its original far-reaching objective of deepening its control over the Middle East through geopolitical re-engineering, and also by Russia’s success in stopping (or at the very least, slowing down) this project to the extent that some semblance of relative order returned to the region following the US-unleashed Hybrid War chaos.

Considering that the US tested and appears comfortable with wielding a new form of warfare (Hybrid War, the phased transition of failed Color Revolutions to Unconventional Wars, or in other words, from the “Arab Spring” to Daesh), it’s of the highest importance that Russians study the case of Syria in order to more fully understand the US’ new techniques so that they can effectively forecast and respond to them in the future if they’re ever unleashed against its interests.

The ultimate use of the dissertation will derive from the fact that Russia can reference this academic resource in better understanding the complicated factors which combined to create the US regionally transformative power play of the “Arab Spring” theater-wide Color Revolutions, which in turn inadvertently provided the eventual context for Russia’s pivotal anti-terrorist intervention in Syria in the disastrous aftermath of this so-called “democratic revolution”.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I. Sources

1. Al-Assad B. President Bashar Al-Assad's Speech At The People's Assembly. 30 Mar. 2011 / [http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=305:president-bashar-al-assad-s-a-speech-at-the-people-s-assembly-march-30-2011&catid=117&Itemid=496](http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=305:president-bashar-al-assad-s-a-speech-at-the-people-s-assembly-march-30-2011&catid=117&Itemid=496).
2. Albright M. Madam Secretary: A Biography. N.Y.: Harper Perennial, 2003.
3. Background Information on the Responsibility to Protect. United Nations, 2013. <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgresponsibility.shtm>
4. Bringing Real Muscle to Bear Against Syria. Central Intelligence Agency. 14 Sept. 1983. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88B00443R001404090133-0.pdf>.
5. Clinton H. America's Pacific Century. US Department Of State, 11 October, 2011. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/10/175215.htm>.
6. Department of Defense Information Report. Judicial Watch. 12 Aug. 2012. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pg.-291-Pgs.-287-293-JW-v-DOD-and-State-14-812-DOD-Release-2015-04-10-final-version11.pdf>.
7. Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey on agreed steps to revitalize the political process to end the Syrian conflict, Moscow, 20 December 2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

[http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489).

8. Joint Statement by the President of the United States and the President of the Russian Federation. US Department Of State, 11 Nov. 2017, [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275459.htm).

9. President Assad 2000 inauguration speech (July 17, 2000). [http://www.presidentassad.net/speeches/bashar\\_assad\\_2000\\_inauguration\\_speech.htm](http://www.presidentassad.net/speeches/bashar_assad_2000_inauguration_speech.htm)

10. President Donald J. Trump Is Protecting the United States from Terrorism // <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-protecting-america-terrorism>.

11. Press release: 'London 11' meeting on Syria. . Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 22 Oct. 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-11-meeting-on-syria>

12. Putin V. 70th session of the UN General Assembly. President of Russia. 28 Sept. 2015. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>

13. Putin V. Russia and the changing world. - RT Russian politics. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 27 Feb. 2012. <http://rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>.

14. Remarks by President Trump on the Administration's National Security Strategy // <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-administrations-national-security-strategy/>

15. Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2254 (2015), Endorsing Road Map for Peace Process in Syria, Setting Timetable for Talks. // United Nations. 18 Dec. 2015. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12171.doc.htm>.

16. Summary of the National Defense Strategy of The United States of America 2018 // <http://introvertum.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

17. The United States of America. The President of The United States. // The National Security Strategy Of The United States Of America. 17 Sept. 2002. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2002.pdf>.

18. The United States Of America. The President Of The United States. // The National Security Strategy Of The United States Of America. 16 Mar. 2006. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf>.

19. The United States Of America. The President Of The United States. // National Security Strategy Of The United States Of America. 27 May 2010. <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf>.

20. The United States Of America. The President Of The United States. // National Security Strategy Of The United States Of America. 6 Feb. 2015. <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>.

21. U.S. Relations With Syria. U.S. Department of State, 20 Mar. 2014. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm>.

22. US 'spare Nusra for plan B' to change regime in Syria – Lavrov. // RT. 30 Sept. 2016. <https://www.rt.com/news/361242-interview-lavrov-bbc-syria/>.

## **II. Literature**

### Monographs:

23. Akhmedov V.M. Syria with Bashar Asad. Regional modernization experience in conditions of external instability [Siriya pri Bashare Asade. Regional'nyy opyt modernizatsii v usloviyakh vneshney nestabil'nosti]. M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2005. – 189p. (In Russ.)

24. Allison R. Russia, the West, and Military Intervention. Oxford University Press, 2013. - 320 p.

25. Bacevich A. Washington Rules. America's Path to Permanent War. N.Y.: Metropolitan Books, 2010. - 286 p.

26. Barnett T. The Pentagon's New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004. - 448 p.

27. Batalov E.Y. The problem of democracy in American political thought of the twentieth century [Problema demokratii v amerikanskoj politicheskoy mysli XX veka]. M.: Progress-Traditsiya Publ., 2010. 376p. (In Russ.)
28. Bogaturov A.D. International Relations and Russian Foreign Policy [Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya i vneshnyaya politika Rossii]. M.: Aspekt Press Publ., 2017. – 480p. (In Russ.)
29. Bratersky M.V. The United States and Asian Problem Countries: Justification, Policy Development and Implementation in 1990–2005 [SSHA i problemnye strany Azii: obosnovanie, vyrabotka i realizatsiya politiki v 1990-2005 gg.] M.: Moscow Public Science Foundation; Institute for US and Canadian Studies Publ., 2005. – 179p. (In Russ.)
30. Brooks S., Wohlforth W. America Abroad. The United States' Global Role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2016. - 288 p.
31. Brzezinski Zb. Second Chance. N.Y.: Basic Books, 2009. - 240 p.
32. Brzezinski Zb. Strategic Vision. America and the Crisis of Global Power. N.Y.: Basic Books, 2012. - 240 p.
33. Brzezinski Zb. The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York: Basic Books, 1998. - 305 p.
34. Brzezinski Zb., Scowcroft B. America and the World. Conversations of the Future of American Foreign Policy. N.Y.: Basic Books, 2008. - 304 p.
35. Challenge and Change. Global Threats and the State in Twenty-first Century International Politics. Norma C. Noonan, Vidya Nadkarni (Eds.) N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. - 287 p.
36. Clark W. A Time to Lead: For Duty, Honor and Country. N.Y.: St Martin's Press. 2007. - 273 p.
37. Conflicts and wars of the 21st century (Middle East and North Africa [Konflikty i voyny XXI veka (Blizhniy Vostok i Severnaya Afrika] Ed. Naumkin V., Malysheva D. – M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2015. – 504p. (In Russ.)

38. Dolgov B.V. The phenomenon of the “Arab Spring” 2011-2016: Causes, development, prospects. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Algeria [Fenomen «Arabskoy vesny» 2011-2016 gg.: Prichiny, razvitiye, perspektivy. Tunis, Egiptet, Liviya, Siriya, Alzhir]. – M.: Lenand Publ., 2017. – 200p. (In Russ.)
39. Drezner D.W. The Ideas Industry. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2017. - 344 p.
40. Dueck C. The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today. Oxford. 2015. - 336 p.
41. Emerging Powers in a Comparative Perspective. The Political and Economic Rise of the BRIC Countries. Ed. by Vidya Nadkarni and Norma C. Noonan. N.Y.: Bloomsbury, 2013. – 241 p.
42. Filimonov G.Y. Cultural and informational mechanisms of US foreign policy [Kul'turno-informatsionnye mekhanizmy vneshney politiki SSHA]. Moskva: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia Publ., 2012. – 408p. (In Russ.)
43. Filimonov G.Yu., Karpovich OG, Manoylo A.V. Technology of "soft power" in service with the US: Russia's response [Tekhnologii «myagkoy sily» na vooruzhenii SSHA: otvet Rossii]. M: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia Publ., 2015. – 583p. (In Russ.)
44. Foreign policy of Russia. 1991-2016. [Vneshnyaya politika Rossii. 1991-2016] Ed. Torkunov A.V. M.: MGIMO University Publ., 2017. – 538p. (In Russ.)
45. Foreign policy process in the East [Foreign policy process in the East]. Ed. Streltsov D. M: Aspekt Press Publ., 2018. – 352p. (In Russ.)
46. Friedman G. The Next 100 years. A Forecast for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. N.Y: Anchor Books, 2010. - 252 p.
47. Fukuyama F. The End of History and the Last Man. 1992. - 464 p.
48. Haass R. The Reluctant Sheriff. The United States after the Cold War. N.Y.: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 1997. - 148 p.
49. Haass R. Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the next President. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008. - 232 p.

50. Hendrickson D. Republic in Peril. American Empire and the Liberal Tradition. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2018. - 304 p.
51. Huth P., Todd A. The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002. - 512 p.
52. Ikenberry J. After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. - 320 p.
53. Ikenberry J. Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order. Princeton, 2011. - 392 p.
54. Ikenberry J. Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics. Cambridge: Polity, 2006. - 312 p.
55. Indik V.S., Lieberthal K.G., O'Hanlon M.E. Bending History. Barack Obama's Foreign Policy. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012. - 342 p.
56. Is peace possible in the Middle East? [Vozmozhno li mir na Blizhnem Vostoke?] / Ed. Naumkin V., Popov V. M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2010. – 204p. (In Russ.)
57. Kagan R. The Return of History and the End of Dreams. New York: Knopf, 2008. - 128 p.
58. Kagan R., Kristol W. Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy. San Francisco, CA: Encounter, 2000. - 392 p.
59. Kant I. Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch. New York: Liberal Arts, 1957. - 72 p.
60. Kaufman R. In Defense of the Bush Doctrine. Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky, 2007. - 264 p.
61. Keohane R. After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984. - 320 p.
62. Khanna P. The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order. New York: Random House, 2008. - 496 p.

63. Korybko A. Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change. Moscow: People's Friendship University, 2015. - 132 p.
64. Lake D. Hierarchy in International Relations. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011. - 248 p.
65. Layne C., Bradley T. American Empire: A Debate. New York: Routledge, 2007. - 166 p.
66. Legvold R. Return to Cold War. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016. - 208 p.
67. Lesch D. Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East. Westview Press, 1992. - 242 p.
68. Lieber J.R. Retreat and Its Consequences. American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2016. - 152 p.
69. Mann J. The Obamians. The Struggle inside the White House to Redefine American Power. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2012. - 416 p.
70. Mann J. Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2004. - 464 p.
71. Megatrends. The main paths of the evolution of the world order of the XXI century [Megatrendy. Osnovnye traektorii evolyutsii mirovogo poryadka XXI veka]. Ed. Shakleina T.A., Baykov A.A. M.: Aspekt Press Publ., 2014. – 448p. (In Russ.)
72. Nation R.C., Russian Security Strategy Under Putin: U.S. And Russian Perspectives - U.S. Interests In The New Eurasia - Russia's Threat Perception And Strategic Posture. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007. - 56 p.
73. Naumkin V.V. Arab world, Islam and Russia: past and present [Arabskiy mir, islam i Rossiya: proshloe i nastoyashchee]. M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2013. – 528p. (In Russ.)
74. Paul T. V. Accommodating Rising Powers. Past, Present, and Future. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. - 335 p.

75. Perthes V. Syria under Bashar al-Asad: modernization and the limits of change. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. - 120 p.
76. Pillar Paul R. Why America Misunderstands the World: National Experience and Roots of Misperception. Columbia University Press, 2016. - 224 p.
77. Pir-Budagova E.P. History of Syria. Twentieth century [Istoriya Sirii. XX vek]. – M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2015. – 392p. (In Russ.)
78. Power S. A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide. New York: Basic Books, 2002. - 656 p.
79. Reich S. Good-bye Hegemony! Power and Influence in the Global System. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. - 208 p.
80. Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and Realities. Ed. by T. Shakleina and A. Melville. Budapest-N.Y.: Central European University Press, 2005. - 496 p.
81. Shakleina T.A. Ideological support for the Bush administration's foreign policy [Ideynoe obespechenie vneshney politiki administratsii Busha]. M.: Institute for US and Canadian Studies Publ., 2003. – 181p. (In Russ.)
82. Shakleina T.A. Russia and the United States in the new world order [Rossiya i SSHA v novom mirovom poryadke]. M.: Institute for US and Canadian Studies Publ., 2002. – 443p. (In Russ.)
83. Shakleina T.A. Russia and the United States in world politics [Rossiya i SSHA v mirovoy politike]. M.: Aspekt Press Publ., 2017. – 336p. (In Russ.)
84. Sharp G. From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation. 4 ed. East Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2010. - 160 p.
85. Sharp G. Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Two: The Methods of Nonviolent Action. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973. - 368 p.
86. Sharp G. There Are Realistic Alternatives. Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003. - 54 p.
87. Shumilin A.I. US policy in the Middle East in the context of the "Arab Spring" [Politika SSHA na Blizhnem Vostoke v kontekste «Arabskoy vesny»]. M.: International Affairs Publ., 2015. – 336p. (In Russ.)

88. Skidmore D. *The Unilateralist Temptation in American Foreign Policy*. Routledge, 2010. - 168 p.
89. Sushentsov A.A. *America's Small Wars: US Political Strategy in the Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2000-2010* [Malye voyny SSHA: Politicheskaya strategiya SSHA v konfliktakh v Afganistane i Irake v 2000-2010-kh godakh]. M.: Aspekt Press Publ., 2014. – 272p. (In Russ.)
90. Sushentsov A.A. *Essays on US Policy in Regional Conflicts of the 2000s* [Ocherki politiki SSHA v regional'nykh konfliktakh 2000-kh godov]. M.: MGIMO University Publ., 2014. – 249p. (In Russ.)
91. *The Arab crisis and its international implications* [Arabskiy krizis i ego mezhdunarodnye posledstviya] / Ed. Vasiliev A. – M.: Lenand Publ., 2014. – 256p. (In Russ.)
92. *The Arab world in the flow of events and time* [Arabskiy mir v potoke sobytiy i vremeni]. M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2016. - 436p. (In Russ.)
93. *The Arab world in the flow of events and time* [Arabskiy mir v potoke sobytiy i vremeni]. M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2014. - 353p. (In Russ.)
94. *The crisis of civilization in the context of the political processes of the XXI century* [Krizis tsivilizatsii v kontekste politicheskikh protsessov XXI veka] Ed. Kostin A. M.:Moscow University Publ., 2016. – 304p. (In Russ.)
95. *The Middle East, the Arab Awakening and Russia: What's Next?* [Blizhniy Vostok, arabskoe probuzhdenie i Rossiya: chto dal'she?] / ed. Naumkin V., Popov V., Kuznetsov V. – M.: The Institute of Oriental Studies Publ., 2012. – 591p. (In Russ.)
96. Wallerstein I. *The Modern World-System*. New York: Academic, 1974. - 442 p.
97. Waltz K. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1979. - 256 p.

98. Wendt A. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999. - 447 p.

99. Zvyaglskaya I.D. *The Middle East Clinch: Conflicts in the Middle East and Russia's Policy* [Blizhnevostochnyy klinch: Konflikty na Blizhnem Vostoke i politika Rossii]. M.: Aspekt Press Publ., 2017. – 208p. (In Russ.)

Articles:

100. Alekseeva T. The Chimeras of the Country of Oz: “Cultural Turn” in the Theory of International Relations [Khimery strany Oz: «kul'turnyy povorot» v teorii mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy] // *International Trends*. – 2012. – № 3-4. pp. 4-19.

101. Badi B. Resumption of History? [Vozobnovlenie istorii?] // *International Trends*. – 2016. - № 2. pp. 6-22.

102. Batalov E. Current Global Trends and New Consciousness [Sovremennyye global'nye trendy i novoe soznanie]. // *International Trends*. – 2012. –№ 1. pp. 4-17.

103. Bezrukov A. Russia’s Position in World Politics in 2016: Foreign Strategy Challenges and Prospects. // *International Trends*. Volume 14. No. 1 (2). pp. 102–110.

104. Bishku M. Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Checkered History. // *Middle East Policy* - 2012. - Vol.19. - №.3. pp.36-53.

105. Bogaturov A. The Sources of American Conduct. // *Russia in Global Affairs*. – 2005. - № 1. [https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_4426](https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_4426).

106. Bogdanov A. American hegemony and factors of systemic instability in the XXI century [Amerikanskaya gegemoniya i faktory sistemnoy nestabil'nosti v XXI veke] // *International Trends*. – 2014. – T. 12. – № 3. pp. 8-22.

107. Eldridg A. No Exit: The Bush Doctrine and Continuity in U.S. Middle East Policy. // *The Stanford Journal On Muslim Affairs*. - 2013. - Vol. 3. - №. 2. P. 26-31.

108. Huntington S. The Lonely Superpower // Foreign Affairs. – 1999. - Vol. 78. - №. 2. P. 35-49.
109. İşçi O., Barın K. Turkey and America: 1957 All Over Again? // The National Interest. 10 Apr. 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/turkey-america-1957-all-over-again-10224>.
110. Korolkov L. The Shifting Middle-Eastern Balance of Power // International Trends. – 2016. pp. 87–94.
111. Krauthammer Ch. The Unipolar Moment. // Foreign Affairs. – 1990. - Vol. 70. - №. 1. pp. 23-33.
112. McFaul M. The Liberty Doctrine // Policy Review. – 2002. - №. 1-2. pp. 1-24.
113. Mearsheimer J.J., Walt S.M. The Case of Offshore Balancing. A superior U.S. Strategy // Foreign Affairs. – 2016. - Vol. 95. - №. 4. pp. 70-84;
114. Naumkin V. The Crisis of Nation-States in the Middle East [Krizis gosudarstv-natsiy na Blizhnem Vostoke] // International Trends. – 2017. - № 2. – pp. 27-43.
115. Naumkin V., Zvyagelskaya I., Kuznetsov V., Soukhov N. The Middle East: From Conflicts to Stability. // Russia In Global Affairs. – 2016. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/valday/The-Middle-East-from-conflicts-to-stability-18045>.
116. Pearson I. The Syrian Crisis of 1957, the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship', and the 1958 Landings in Jordan and Lebanon. // Middle Eastern Studies. 2007. - № 1. pp. 45-64.
117. Peters R. Blood borders. // Armed Forces Journal. - 2006. <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/blood-borders/>.
118. Quandt W. Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East. // Foreign Affairs. - 1994. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1994-11-01/syria-and-united-states-eisenhowers-cold-war-middle-east>.

119. Saprónova M. New Statehood in the Arab World. // *International Trends*, 2016. Vol. 2. - № 3. pp. 93–103.
120. Shakleina T.A. The Evolution of the Global Strategy of the USA (2001-2011) [Evolyutsiya global'noy strategii SSHA (2001-2011)], Moscow University Journal. – 2011. - № 3. pp. 35-58.
121. Skriba A., Novikov D. The Middle East: The Main Trends. // *Russia in Global Affairs*. - 2016. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/valday/The-Middle-East-the-main-trends-18114>.
122. Stuster D. Turkey Clashes with Syrian Kurds as Tensions with U.S. Rise. // *Foreign Policy*. - 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/10/turkey-clashes-with-syrian-kurds-as-tensions-with-u-s-rise/>.
123. Vodopyanov K.G. Suffering Leviathan: What Will Save the Modern State [Stradayuschhii Leviatan: chto spaset sovremennoe gosudarstvo]. // *Polis. Political Studies*. - 2018. - № 3. pp. 182-191. (In Russ.)
124. Vorobieva D.A. The political behavior of Bashar al-Assad as the cause of the civil war in Syria and the influence of the President's speech on March 30, 2011. on its beginning [Politicheskoe povedenie Bashara Asada kak prichina grazhdanskoy voyny v Sirii i vliyanie vystupleniya prezidenta 30 marta 2011g. na ee nachalo] // *Society and civilization*. - 2015. - № 1. pp. 84-96.
125. Voytolovskiy F. Instability in the world system [Nestabil'nost' v mirovoy sisteme]. // *International Trends*. – 2009. –№ 9. pp. 4–16.
126. Zobnin A. On the definition of the principle of balance of forces. Experience neoinstitutional approach to the international environment [K opredeleniyu printsipa balansa sil. Opyt neoinstitutsional'nogo podkhoda k mezhdunarodnoy srede]. // *International Trends*. – 2014. - № 3. pp. 55-69.
127. Zvyaglskaya I., Kuznetsov V. State in the Middle East. The future began yesterday [Gosudarstvo na Blizhnem Vostoke. Budushchee nachalos' vchera] // *International Trends*. – 2017. - № 4. pp. 6-19.

### III. Internet Publications

128. "More Than 400 US Marines Leaving Syria." *Voice of America*, 30 Nov. 2017, [www.voanews.com/a/more-than-400-us-marines-leaving-syria/4143948.html](http://www.voanews.com/a/more-than-400-us-marines-leaving-syria/4143948.html).
129. "Syria conflict: Russia and Turkey 'in first joint air strikes on IS'" BBC. 18 Jan. 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38667895>.
130. "Syria writes to world: Stop spread of Saudi-backed Wahhabism." Al-Alam News Network, 16 Dec. 2013. <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1545075>.
131. "Syrian rebels linked to al-Qaeda behead man using small knife in front of children." *The Daily Mail*, 2 Feb. 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2550504/Syrian-rebels-linked-al-Qaeda-behead-man-using-small-knife-chidren.html>.
132. "The truce between Turkey and Kurdish militants is over." *The Economist*. 26 July 2015. <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21659870-truce-between-turkey-and-kurdish-militants-over-turkey-and-kurds>.
133. "Turkey's Erdogan: 'Confirmed evidence' US-led coalition supports ISIS & other terrorists in Syria." RT. 27 Dec. 2016. <https://www.rt.com/news/371965-erdogan-us-coalition-isis/>.
134. "U.S. Airstrikes Hit ISIS Targets inside Syria - CNN.com." CNN. Cable News Network, 23 Sept. 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/u-s-airstrikes-isis-syria/>.
135. "UK Gov't Foresaw 'Determined' Russian Response to US Bid for Syria in 1957." *Sputnik*. 23 Oct. 2015. <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201510231028974526-Russian-Syria-Involvement-Revealed-1957-Note/>.

136. "UN notes 'concrete suspicions' that Syrian rebels used chemical weapons." Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 6 May 2013. <http://rt.com/news/un-syria-rebels-chemical-weapons-854/>.
137. "UN to get Syria evidence - Russia." BBC, 18 Sept. 2013. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24140475>.
138. "US expands 'axis of evil'." BBC, 6 May 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1971852.stm>.
139. "US Eyes Tabqa Air Base as Turkey Sours on Washington's Ties to Kurds." Sputnik. 11 Apr. 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201704111052534346-syria-raqqa-operation-incirlik/>.
140. "US Plans to Topple Assad Family Go Back Six Presidents, CIA Doc Reveals." Sputnik. N.p., 10 Apr. 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201704101052502201-cia-syria-assessment-1986/>.
141. "US-Military Logic behind Syrian Insurgency. The "Special Forces Unconventional Warfare" manual TC 18-01." NSNBC, 15 Feb. 2012. <http://nnsbc.me/2012/02/15/us-military-logic-behind-syrian-insurgency-the-special-forces-uncon/>.
142. "West Tried to Stage Another Color Revolution in Ukraine – Lavrov." RIA Novosti. RIA Novosti, 24 Apr. 2014. <http://en.ria.ru/world/20140424/189342116/West-Tried-to-Stage-Another-Color-Revolution-in-Ukraine--Lavrov.html>.
143. "With No Foreign Meddling, Syrian War Over in 2 Weeks - Assad." Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 28 Jan. 2013. <http://en.ria.ru/world/20130128/179090168/With-No-Foreign-Meddling-Syrian-War-Over-in-2-Weeks---Assad.html>.
144. "YouTube ban: How Turkish officials conspired to stage Syria attack to provoke war." Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 30 Mar. 2014. <http://rt.com/news/turkey-syria-phone-leak-861/>.

145. "Syria asks Russia to rebuild its oil industry." Press TV, 20 May 2016, [www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/05/20/466598/Syria-asks-Russia-to-rebuild-its-oil-industry](http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/05/20/466598/Syria-asks-Russia-to-rebuild-its-oil-industry).
146. Abbas F. Did the Russians just 'invade' Syria? // Al Arabiya. 28 Sept. 2015. <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2015/09/28/Did-the-Russians-just-invade-Syria-.html>.
147. Abdelaziz S., Hamdi A. Video: Syrian rebel cuts out soldier's heart, eats it. // Cable News Network, 14 May 2013. <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/14/world/meast/syria-eaten-heart/>.
148. Abouzeid R. Arming Syria's Rebellion: How Libyan Weapons and Know-How Reach Anti-Assad Fighters. // Time Inc. 29 May 2013. <http://world.time.com/2013/05/29/libyans-arming-syrian-rebels/>.
149. Al Rifai D. "US 'takes control' of Rmeilan airfield in Syria." Al Jazeera. 20 Jan. 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/takes-control-rmeilan-airfield-syria-160119141331681.html>.
150. Ali I. Pentagon likely to acknowledge 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria: U.S. officials. // Reuters, 24 Nov. 2017, [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-syria-military/pentagon-likely-to-acknowledge-2000-u-s-troops-in-syria-u-s-officials-idUSKBN1DO2II](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-syria-military/pentagon-likely-to-acknowledge-2000-u-s-troops-in-syria-u-s-officials-idUSKBN1DO2II).
151. Al-Khalidi S., Perry T. New Syrian rebel alliance formed, says weapons on the way. // Reuters. 12 Oct. 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUSKCN0S60BD20151012>.
152. Araabi S. "Syria's Decentralization Roadmap. // The Carnegie Endowment For International Peace. 23 Mar. 2017. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/68372>
153. Arango T., Yeginsu C. Turks Can Agree on One Thing: U.S. Was Behind Failed Coup. // The New York Times. 2 Aug. 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/03/world/europe/turkey-coup-erdogan-fethullah-gulen-united-states.html>.

154. Argentieri B. Are the Syrian Democratic Forces any of the above? // Reuters. 26 Jan. 2016. <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2016/01/25/are-the-syrian-democratic-forces-any-of-the-above/>.

155. Assad says Syria fighting 'external war'. // The Voice of Russia, 6 Jan. 2013. [http://voiceofrussia.com/2013\\_01\\_06/Assad-says-Syria-fighting-external-war/](http://voiceofrussia.com/2013_01_06/Assad-says-Syria-fighting-external-war/).

156. Barmin Y. America's War Against Itself for the Greater Middle East. // Russian International Affairs Council, 20 June 2016, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/america-s-war-against-itself-for-the-greater-middle-east](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/america-s-war-against-itself-for-the-greater-middle-east).

157. Barmin Y. Following the Downing of its Su-24 Russia Changes the Rules of the Game in Syria. // Russian International Affairs Council. 30 Nov. 2015. <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/posle-ataki-na-su-24-rossiya-menyaet-pravila-igry-v-sirii/>.

158. Barmin Y. How Obama's Legacy in the Middle East is Shaping Trump's Policy. // Russian International Affairs Council, 10 May 2017, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/how-obama-s-legacy-in-the-middle-east-is-shaping-trump-s-policy/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/how-obama-s-legacy-in-the-middle-east-is-shaping-trump-s-policy/).

159. Barmin Y. Identifying the Strategy behind Russia's Air Strikes in Syria. // Russian International Affairs Council, 5 Oct. 2015, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/opredelenie-strategii-aviaudarov-rossii-v-sirii](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/opredelenie-strategii-aviaudarov-rossii-v-sirii).

160. Barzegar K. France emerges as key U.S. ally against Syria. // USA Today, 2 Sept. 2013. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/09/02/france-syria-strikes/2754931/>.

161. Baunov A. A Well-Timed Retreat: Russia Pulls Back From Syria. // Carnegie Center Moscow. 15 Apr. 2016. <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/63044>.

162. Black I. Syria crisis: Saudi Arabia to spend millions to train new rebel force. // Guardian News and Media, 8 Nov. 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/07/syria-crisis-saudi-arabia-spend-millions-new-rebel-force>.

163. Bomb voyage: 600 Libyans 'already fighting in Syria'. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 29 Nov. 2011. <http://rt.com/news/libya-syria-fighters-smuggled-475/>.

164. Bordachev T. Syria: War of the Worlds or the Future Today. // Valdai Club , 12 Oct. 2016, [valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/syria-war-of-the-worlds-or-the-future-today](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/syria-war-of-the-worlds-or-the-future-today).

165. Branigin W. Last of Syria's chemical weapons handed over for destruction, international body says. // The Washington Post, 23 June 2014. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/agency-last-of-syrias-chemical-weapons-handed-over-for-destruction/2014/06/23/4eb9a138-fad9-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/agency-last-of-syrias-chemical-weapons-handed-over-for-destruction/2014/06/23/4eb9a138-fad9-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1_story.html).

166. Brooke S. U.S. Policy and the Muslim Brotherhood. // Foreign Policy Research Institute. Mar. 2013. [http://www.fpri.org/docs/chapters/201303.west\\_and\\_the\\_muslim\\_brotherhood\\_after\\_the\\_arab\\_spring.chapter1.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/docs/chapters/201303.west_and_the_muslim_brotherhood_after_the_arab_spring.chapter1.pdf).

167. Chossudovsky M. Media Disinformation: The Protest Movement in Syria. // Global Research. GlobalResearch.ca, 28 Mar. 2011. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/media-disinformation-the-protest-movement-in-syria/24016>.

168. Chumley C. Islamic cleric decrees it OK for Syrian rebels to rape women. // The Washington Times, 3 Apr. 2013. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/apr/3/islamic-cleric-decrees-it-ok-syrian-rebels-rape-wo/>.

169. Cichowlas O., Popov M.. Russia saved Assad but Syria peace settlement elusive. // Digital Journal, 3 Nov. 2017, [www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/russia-saved-assad-but-syria-peace-settlement-elusive/article/506710#ixzz55rBMXinA](http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/russia-saved-assad-but-syria-peace-settlement-elusive/article/506710#ixzz55rBMXinA).

170. Clawson P. "Syrian Kurds As A U.S. Ally: Cooperation And Complications." The Washington Institute For Near East Policy. Nov. 2016. [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus150\\_Clawson.pdf](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus150_Clawson.pdf).

171. Conason J. "Seven countries in five years". // Salon Media Group, Inc., 12 Oct. 2007. [http://www.salon.com/2007/10/12/wesley\\_clark/](http://www.salon.com/2007/10/12/wesley_clark/).

172. Cooper H., Landler M., Rubin A. Obama Allows Limited Airstrikes on ISIS. // The New York Times. The New York Times, 7 Aug. 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/08/world/middleeast/obama-weighs-military-strikes-to-aid-trapped-iraqis-officials-say.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/08/world/middleeast/obama-weighs-military-strikes-to-aid-trapped-iraqis-officials-say.html?_r=0).

173. Country Torn Apart: Ultimate Goal of US, Turkish Military Campaigns in Syria. // Sputnik. 30 Oct. 2016. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201610301046892243-us-turkey-syria-federalization/>.

174. Crooke A. "Will Turkey Truly Pivot to Russia? What Now for Neo-Ottomanism?" // Valday Club. 5 Aug. 2016. <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/turkey-truly-pivot-to-russia-neo-ottomanism/>.

175. Dobbins J., Gordon P., Martini J. A Peace Plan For Syria II: Options For Future Governance. // RAND Corporation. 7 June 2016. 2017. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE202.html>.

176. Dobbins J., Gordon P., Martini J. A Peace Plan For Syria III: Agreed Zones of Control, Decentralization, and International Administration. // RAND Corporation. 8 Feb. 2017. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE233.html>.

177. Doherty R., Amena B. Exclusive: Secret Turkish nerve center leads aid to Syria rebels. // Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 27 July 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/27/us-syria-crisis-centre-idUSBRE86Q0JM20120727>.

178. Eisenhower D. Eisenhower gives famous "domino theory" speech. // The History Channel. 7 Apr. 1954. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/eisenhower-gives-famous-domino-theory-speech>.

179. Ending Syria's Occupation of Lebanon: The U.S. Role. // The Middle East Forum, May 2000. <http://www.meforum.org/research/lsg.php>
180. Enjeti S. Netanyahu Draws His Own Red Line In Syria. // The Daily Caller, 27 Nov. 2017, [dailycaller.com/2017/11/27/netanyahu-draws-his-own-red-line-in-syria/](http://dailycaller.com/2017/11/27/netanyahu-draws-his-own-red-line-in-syria/).
181. EU eases Syria oil sanctions to assist rebels. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 23 Apr. 2013. <http://rt.com/news/eu-syria-embargo-oil-206/>.
182. Fenton B. Macmillan backed Syria assassination plot. // The Guardian. 27 Sept. 2003. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/sep/27/uk.syria1>.
183. Flintoff J.-P. Gene Sharp: The Machiavelli of non-violence. // New Statesman, 3 Jan. 2013. <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/your-democracy/2013/01/gene-sharp-machiavelli-non-violence>.
184. Freedland J. John Kerry on Syria: how a gaffe could stop a war. // Guardian News and Media, 10 Sept. 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/10/syria-gaffe-war-john-kerry>.
185. Friends of Syria' recognise opposition. // Al Jazeera, 12 Dec. 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212124541767116.html>.
186. Golinger E. Colored Revolutions: A New Form of Regime Change, Made in the USA. // Global Research, 10 Feb. 2011. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/colored-revolutions-a-new-form-of-regime-change-made-in-the-usa/27061>.
187. Gordon M. U.S. Is Sending 400 More Troops to Syria. // The New York Times. 9 Mar. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/world/middleeast/us-troops-syria.html>.
188. Gordon M., Schmitt E. Russian Buildup in Syria Raises Questions on Role. // The New York Times. 19 Sept. 2015. [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/world/middleeast/russian-buildup-in-syria-raises-questions-on-role.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/world/middleeast/russian-buildup-in-syria-raises-questions-on-role.html?_r=0).

189. Gray L. Gene Sharp: How to Start a Revolution. // Telegraph Media Group Limited, 10 Oct. 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmmakersonfilm/8841546/Gene-Sharp-How-to-Start-a-Revolution.html>.

190. Haddad H., Korybko A. The Race For Raqqa And America's Geopolitical Revenge in "Syraq" (I). // Oriental Review. 14 October, 2015. <http://orientalreview.org/2015/10/14/the-race-for-raqqa-and-americas-geopolitical-revenge-in-syraq-i/>.

191. Harvey B., Bilgic T.. Turkish Report Exposes Locations of U.S. Troops in Syria. // Bloomberg, 19 July 2017, [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-19/turkish-leak-of-u-s-positions-in-syria-seen-endangering-troops](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-19/turkish-leak-of-u-s-positions-in-syria-seen-endangering-troops).

192. Has K. Post Mortem by the Turkish Side: Relations between Moscow and Ankara Worsen." Russian International Affairs Council. 30 Nov. 2015. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/razbor-poletov-po-turetski-obostrenie-otnosheniy-moskvy-i-an/?sphrase\\_id=82829](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/razbor-poletov-po-turetski-obostrenie-otnosheniy-moskvy-i-an/?sphrase_id=82829).

193. Hersh S. The Redirection. // The New Yorker, 5 Mar. 2007. [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa\\_fact\\_hersh?currentPage=all](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa_fact_hersh?currentPage=all).

194. Holly Y., Castillo M., Shoichet C., Brumfield B., Sterling J. "Syria allies: Why Russia, Iran and China are standing by the regime." Cable News Network, 30 Aug. 2013. <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/29/world/meast/syria-iran-china-russia-supporters/>.

195. Iran only fights terrorism in Syria: Russia envoy to Israel. // Press TV, 21 Nov. 2017, [www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/11/21/542926/Israel-Syria-Iran-Russia-Alexander-Shein](http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/11/21/542926/Israel-Syria-Iran-Russia-Alexander-Shein).

196. Karouny M. Saudi edges Qatar to control Syrian rebel support. // Thomson Reuters, 31 May 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/31/us-syria-crisis-saudi-insight-idUSBRE94U0ZV20130531>.

197. Karouny M., Bayoumy Y.. Assad blames unrest on saboteurs, pledges reforms. // Thomson Reuters, 20 June 2011. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/20/us-syria-idUSTRE75J0AV20110620>.
198. Kasapoglu C. Russia's Renewed Military Thinking: Non-Linear Warfare And Reflexive Control. // NATO Defense College. Nov. 2015. [http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/Articles/russia's\\_renewed\\_Military\\_Thinking.pdf](http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/Articles/russia's_renewed_Military_Thinking.pdf).
199. Kemp T. ISIS in Damascus: Fighting in Syrian capital a new threat. // CNBC. 7 Apr. 2015. <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/04/07/isis-in-damascus-fighting-in-syrian-capital-a-new-threat.html>.
200. Kessler G. "President Obama and the 'red line' on Syria's chemical weapons." The Washington Post, 6 Sept. 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/09/06/president-obama-and-the-red-line-on-syrias-chemical-weapons/>.
201. Kurdish-controlled areas declare federation in Syria's north – media reports." RT. 17 Mar. 2016. <https://www.rt.com/news/335951-kurds-federal-system-syria/>.
202. Labott E., Silverleib A., Sterling J. "U.S., Europe call for Syrian leader al-Assad to step down." Cable News Network, 19 Aug. 2011. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/08/18/us.syria/>.
203. Lake E. "So Many Jihadists Are Flocking to Libya, It's Becoming 'Scumbag Woodstock'." The Daily Beast Company LLC, 6 May 2014. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/06/so-many-jihadists-are-flocking-to-libya-some-counter-terrorists-now-call-it-scumbag-woodstock.html>.
204. Larsen J., Breedlove P., Lasconjarias G. NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats. Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015.
205. Lavrov to Sputnik: Assad Not Moscow's Ally Like Ankara is to Washington. // Sputnik, 4 May 2016, [sputniknews.com/politics/201605041039060941-assad-russia-ally-lavrov/](http://sputniknews.com/politics/201605041039060941-assad-russia-ally-lavrov/).

206. Lubell M. Across enemy lines, wounded Syrians seek Israeli care.// Thomson Reuters, 13 Sept. 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/13/us-syria-crisis-israel-wounded-idUSBRE98C0J520130913>.
207. MacAskill E. George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq. // The Guardian. N.p., 7 Oct. 2005. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa>.
208. Malashenko A. Russia and the Arab Spring. // Carnegie Moscow Center, 1 Oct. 2013. [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/russia\\_arab\\_spring2013.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/russia_arab_spring2013.pdf).
209. Mercouris A. Why Reports of the Russian Tip Off to Erdogan May Be True. // The Duran. 21 July 2016. <http://theduran.com/reports-russian-tip-off-erdogan-may-true/>.
210. Milne S. Now the Truth Emerges: How the US Fuelled the Rise of Isis in Syria and Iraq. // The Guardian. Guardian News And Media Limited, 3 June 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/us-isis-syria-iraq>.
211. MIT study of Ghouta chemical attack challenges US intelligence. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 19 Jan. 2014. <http://rt.com/news/study-challenges-syria-chemical-attack-681/>.
212. Narwani S. Syria: The Hidden Massacre. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 7 May 2014. <http://rt.com/op-edge/157412-syria-hidden-massacre-2011/>.
213. Narwani S. Ten years on, Lebanon's 'Cedar Revolution'" RT. 13 Mar. 2013. <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/240365-lebanon-revolution-anniversary-cedar-2005/>.
214. Naumkin V. Diplomatic and military victories play key role in settling Syrian crisis. // Russian International Affairs Council, 9 Jan. 2017, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/comments/diplomatic-and-military-victories-play-key-role-in-settling-/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/comments/diplomatic-and-military-victories-play-key-role-in-settling-/)
215. Naumkin V. 'Identity Crisis': New Balance of Power Emerges in Middle East. // Russian International Affairs Council, 2 Dec. 2016,

russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/identity-crisis-new-balance-of-power-emerges-in-middle-east/.

216. Naumkin V. Pandora's Box of Federalization. // Russian International Affairs Council, 25 Dec. 2017, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/pandora-s-box-of-federalization/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/pandora-s-box-of-federalization/).

217. Naumkin V. Russia and the Kurds. // Russian International Affairs Council, 8 Jan. 2015, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/russia-and-the-kurds/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/russia-and-the-kurds/).

218. Naumkin V. The Sykes-Picot Agreement and Russia. // Russian International Affairs Council, 23 Aug. 2016, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/nuzhno-li-prisoedinyat-rossiyu-k-soglasheniyu-sayksa-piko/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/nuzhno-li-prisoedinyat-rossiyu-k-soglasheniyu-sayksa-piko/).

219. Naumkin V. What Awaits Syria? // Russian International Affairs Council, 25 Sept. 2017, [russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/what-awaits-syria/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/what-awaits-syria/).

220. Nazemroaya M. Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a “New Middle East”. // GlobalResearch.ca, 14 June 2014. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/plans-for-redrawing-the-middle-east-the-project-for-a-new-middle-east/3882>.

221. O'Hanlon M. Deconstructing Syria: Towards a Regionalized Strategy for a Confederal Country. // The Brookings Institute. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/06/23-syria-strategy-ohanlon>

222. Osborn A., Coskun O. Russia, Turkey, Iran eye dicing Syria into zones of influence. // Reuters. 28 Dec. 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-deal-idUSKBN14H12V?il=0>.

223. Osman M. US to balkanize Syria under Kurdish pretext. // RT. 3 Apr. 2017. <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/383291-syria-kurdish-balkanization-us-forces/>.

224. Pan E. Middle East: Syria and Lebanon. // Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 18 Feb. 2005. <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-syria-lebanon/p7851>.

225. Pentagon Expands Air Base in Northern Syria for Use in Battle for Raqqa. // Sputnik. 5 Apr. 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201704051052299455-us-airbase-syria-kobani/>.

226. Pertsev A. Spinning Russia's Syria Exit. // Carnegie Center Moscow. 21 Mar. 2016. <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/63079>.

227. Peterson S. 'Friends of Syria' conference demands Assad open humanitarian aid corridors. // The Christian Science Monitor, 24 Feb. 2012. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0224/Friends-of-Syria-conference-demands-Assad-open-humanitarian-aid-corridors>.

228. Pinchuk D. Putin urges political solution in Syria, in calls to Trump, Mideast leaders. // Reuters, 21 Nov. 2017, [in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-putin-trump/putin-urges-political-solution-in-syria-in-calls-to-trump-mideast-leaders-idINKBN1DL2C2?il=0](http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-putin-trump/putin-urges-political-solution-in-syria-in-calls-to-trump-mideast-leaders-idINKBN1DL2C2?il=0).

229. Pollack K., Byman D., Indyk M., Maloney S., O'Hanlon M., Riedel B.. Which Path To Persia? Options For A New American Strategy Towards Iran. // The Brookings Institute. 20 June 2009. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2009/6/iran-strategy/06\\_iran\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2009/6/iran-strategy/06_iran_strategy.pdf).

230. Purchase of Russian S-400 system creates issues for Turkey's use of F-35 – top US Air Force official. // RT, 18 Nov. 2017, [www.rt.com/news/410197-turkey-s400-nato-f35/](http://www.rt.com/news/410197-turkey-s400-nato-f35/).

231. Rebels seize Syria's largest dam, controlling water and electricity supplies to wide areas. // FOX News Network, 12 Feb. 2013. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/02/12/rebels-seize-syria-largest-dam-controlling-water-and-electricity-supplies-to/>.

232. Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century. Project for the New American Century, Sept. 2000. 24 May 2016. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>

233. RT source: Israeli strike on Syria was carried out from Turkish base. // RT News. Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 16 July 2013. <http://rt.com/news/israel-strike-syria-turkey-089/>.

234. Russia Acting as Guarantor of Syrian-Kurdish Talks on Federalization. // Sputnik. 14 Jan. 2017. <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201701141049588900-russia-syria-government-kurds/>.

235. Russia and the Greater Middle East. // Russian International Affairs Council, 29 May 2013, [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=1897](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=1897).

236. Russia releases key findings on chemical attack near Aleppo indicating similarity with rebel-made weapons. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 4 Sept. 2013. <http://rt.com/news/chemical-aleppo-findings-russia-417/>.

237. Russia suggests Syria 'chemical attack' was 'planned provocation' by rebels. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 22 Aug. 2013. <http://rt.com/news/russia-syria-chemical-attack-801/>.

238. Russian Experts: The Middle East Will Never be the Same. // Valdai Club, 19 June 2017, [valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/middle-east-will-never-be-the-same/](http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/middle-east-will-never-be-the-same/).

239. Saetov I. Recep Erdogan's Letter Is an Acknowledgement that the Attack on SU-24 Failed to Achieve its Goals. // Russian International Affairs Council. 29 June 2016. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/pismo-redzhepa-erdogana-priznanie-provala-tseley-ataki-na-su/?sphrase\\_id=82829](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/pismo-redzhepa-erdogana-priznanie-provala-tseley-ataki-na-su/?sphrase_id=82829)

240. Said R. Syria's Kurds rebuked for seeking autonomous region. // Reuters. 17 Mar. 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-federalism-idUSKCN0WJ1EP>.

241. Sareen A. US Training Syrian Forces In Jordan: Report. // The Huffington Post, 25 Mar. 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/25/us-training-syrian-forces\\_n\\_2952132.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/25/us-training-syrian-forces_n_2952132.html).

242. Saudi Arabia and Qatar funding Syrian rebels. // Thomson Reuters, 23 June 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/23/us-syria-crisis-saudi-idUSBRE85M07820120623>.

243. Saudi Arabia to finance Syrian opposition government. // The Voice of Russia, 13 Nov. 2013. [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013\\_11\\_13/Saudi-Arabia-to-finance-Syrian-opposition-government-1721/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013_11_13/Saudi-Arabia-to-finance-Syrian-opposition-government-1721/).

244. Saudi Arabia to supply Syrian rebels with anti-aircraft missiles -- report. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 15 Feb. 2014. <http://rt.com/news/saudis-new-weapons-syria-124/>.

245. Schuh T. Faking the Case Against Syria. // CounterPunch, 18 Nov. 2005. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2005/11/18/faking-the-case-against-syria/>.

246. Secretary Rice Holds a News Conference. // The Washington Post, 21 July 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/21/AR2006072100889.html>.

247. Sectarian slaying: Syrian rebels attack Alawites, Christians - reports. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 8 Aug. 2012. <http://rt.com/news/syria-sectarian-violence-alawite-111/>.

248. 'Sexual jihad': Tunisian women go to Syria to 'relieve' holy warriors, return pregnant. // Autonomous Non-Profit Organization "TV-Novosti", 21 Sept. 2013. <http://rt.com/news/sexual-jihad-tunisia-syria-133/>.

249. Sherlock R. Turkey 'aided Islamist fighters' in attack on Syrian town. // Telegraph Media Group Limited, 14 Apr. 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/10765696/Turkey-aided-Islamist-fighters-in-attack-on-Syrian-town.html>.

250. Snyder C. Syrian bishop: 'Christians are being targeted'. // FOX News Network, 27 Jan. 2014. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/01/27/syria-christians-on-front-lines-civil-war/>.

251. Stea C. "Syria: UN Mission Report Confirms that "Opposition" Rebels Used Chemical Weapons against Civilians and Government Forces." GlobalResearch.ca, 31 Dec. 2013. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/syria-un-mission->

report-confirms-that-opposition-rebels-used-chemical-weapons-against-civilians-and-government-forces/5363139.

252. Sterling J. "Daraa: The spark that lit the Syrian flame." Cable News Network, 1 Mar. 2012. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/01/world/meast/syria-crisis-beginnings/>.

253. Suchkov M. The Middle East between the U.S. and Russia: Potential Traps for Moscow. // Russian International Affairs Council. 28 Jan. 2016. [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=7176#top-content](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=7176#top-content).

254. Trenin D. Russia in the Middle East: Moscow's Objectives, Priorities, and Policy Drivers. // Carnegie Center Moscow. 5 Apr. 2016. [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/03-25-16\\_Trenin\\_Middle\\_East\\_Moscow\\_clean.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/03-25-16_Trenin_Middle_East_Moscow_clean.pdf).

255. Trenin D. Russia Needs American Help to Seal the Deal in Syria. // Carnegie Moscow Center, 10 Apr. 2017 <http://carnegie.ru/2017/04/10/russia-needs-american-help-to-seal-deal-in-syria-pub-68632>.

256. Trenin D. Syria's Future Lies in its Neighbors' Hands. // Carnegie Moscow Center, 9 Feb. 2016 <http://carnegie.ru/2016/02/09/syria-s-future-lies-in-its-neighbors-hands-pub-62742>.

257. Trenin D. The Mythical Alliance: Russia's Syria Policy. // Russian International Affairs Council, 12 Feb. 2013 [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/the-mythical-alliance-russia-s-syria-policy/?sphrase\\_id=5161440](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/comments/the-mythical-alliance-russia-s-syria-policy/?sphrase_id=5161440).

258. Trianni F. "Watch: Syrian Children Talk About Life As Child Soldiers" Time Inc., 20 June 2014. <http://time.com/2902332/syria-child-soldiers/>.

259. Ulchenko N. The Pendulum of Turkish Foreign Policy. // Valdai Club. 22 Aug. 2016. <http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/pendulum-of-turkish-foreign-policy/>.

260. Weiner B. "A PNAC Primer: How We Got Into This Mess." AntiWar.com, 2 June 2003. <http://www.antiwar.com/orig/weiner6.html>.

261. Winer N. "The Project for the New American Century" MoveOn.org, 4 May 2003. <http://www.moveon.org/moveonbulletin/bulletin13.html>.
262. Winter M. "Report: Saudis sent death-row inmates to fight Syria." USA TODAY, 21 Jan. 2013. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/01/21/saudi-inmates-fight-syria-commute-death-sentences/1852629/>.
263. Wintour P. "Putin brings Iran and Turkey together in bold Syria peace plan." The Guardian, 22 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/22/iranian-and-turkish-leaders-arrive-in-russia-for-syria-talks-with-putin](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/22/iranian-and-turkish-leaders-arrive-in-russia-for-syria-talks-with-putin).
264. Wittes T. The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation. // The Brookings Institution, 10 May 2004. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2004/05/10middleeast-wittes>.
265. Wroughton L. "As Syria war escalates, Americans cool to U.S. intervention: Reuters/Ipsos poll." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 24 Aug. 2013.. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/25/us-syria-crisis-usa-poll-idUSBRE97O00E20130825>.
266. Zvyagelskaya I. "US-Russia Dialogue as a Key Factor of the Fragile Syria Talks. // Valday Club , 28 Mar. 2016, [valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/us-russia-dialogue-as-a-key-factor-of-the-fragile-syria-talks/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/us-russia-dialogue-as-a-key-factor-of-the-fragile-syria-talks/).
267. Zvyagelskaya I. Syria: Challenging Factors for Kofi Annan's Peace Mission. // Valday Club , 6 Apr. 2012, [valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/syria\\_challenging\\_factors\\_for\\_kofi\\_annan\\_s\\_peace\\_mission/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/syria_challenging_factors_for_kofi_annan_s_peace_mission/).
268. Zvyagelskaya I. The Loss of Palmyra: Why Syrian Army Let It Happen. // Valday Club, 12 Dec. 2016, [valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/loss-of-palmyra-why-syrian-army-let-it-happen/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/loss-of-palmyra-why-syrian-army-let-it-happen/).