The True Results of the Anti-Terrorist Meeting in Jeddah

On 11 September 2014, on a ‘historic’ thirteenth anniversary of the terror attack proclaimed by suicide bombers aimed at the buildings of the World Trade Centre, an urgent meeting was called in Jeddah calling for the ministers of foreign affairs of six countries – members of the Gulf Co-Operation Council, as well as Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and the USA. The issues of counter-action to the Middle East terror organisations were discussed there; and first of all, the activities of the ISIS terror organisation.

The USA, as the true champion of this event, although it was officially summoned by Riyadh, hastened to announce its success and creation of the international coalition to fight the ‘absolute evil’, as ISIS is now called. Indeed, the participants of the meeting, apart from the foreign minister of Turkey - M. Chavushoglu - unanimously signed the document stating the goals of the coalition, as dictated by the USA (in fact they were false, as we will show later), fighting with ISIS and also with the methods proposed by Washington; bombarding the militants’ positions from the air, both on the territory of Iraq and Syria, providing military assistance to Kurds and Iraqi government, as well as offering humanitarian aid to those who found themselves on the territories occupied by the militants. In general, several measures were taken which would reduce the influx of militants into the zones seized by them.

Washington is pleased not only with the creation of the above-mentioned coalition with the active support on part of Riyadh, but also with the received freedom of actions. The USA were able not only to escape the immediate participation in destroying of ISIS by their own ground forces (i.e. formally to observe Obama’s declarations that he will not involve America into the Middle East conflicts), but also to receive the silent support of the regional states regarding the fact that the actions undertaken by this created coalition will take place virtually beyond the framework of the United Nations Charter, bypassing its requirements to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the independent states, and first of all Syria. The repetition of 2003 scenario is evident.

John Kerry rebuffed the criticism on part of Russia, regarding such intents by issuing a statement that Moscow itself allegedly violates the international law in Ukraine and that is why its criticism of the American activities is ‘ridiculous’, and it cannot demand respect for the United Nations regulations in the Middle East from the USA. They have a poor excuse – they are going to violate the rules because others do it. In other words, the USA, whilst nodding at others (without any evidence), will further destroy the system of international law, as they were doing successfully during the last decades, especially after the collapse of the bipolar system of international relations.

It is curious that after John Kerry’s speech, the same arguments were provided by the two Saudi newspapers on 13 September – the semi-official ‘Okaz’ published in Jeddah and ‘Al-Hayat’, which is published in London and sponsored by Saudi Arabia. The ‘Al-Hayat’ analyst J. Khashidji called the actions ‘immoral’, and the journalist M. Ali Al-Harbi of ‘Okaz’ also reproached the Russian government in being illogical, repeating word by word the arguments of the US Secretary of State, whilst criticising the international coalition as it allegedly ignores the ISIS threats addressed to Russia itself.

Why would the attacks of Riyadh start, being aimed at Russia after the successful visit, as everybody would believe,
of Sergei Lavrov to the same Jeddah on 20-21 June of this year and after the process of improvement in the bilateral relations started?

It seems like the key to this problem is quite simple. Saudi Arabia needs Russia partly only (if we don’t talk about the collaboration to prevent the returning of ‘Muslim Brothers’ to the power in Egypt). The shadow of improving the relationship with Moscow was necessary as it seems now, mainly to threaten Washington once again, of friendship with Russia, if it does not take into account the Riyadh’s concerns (among them are binding of Washington and Tehran and refusal to bring down the Bashar al-Assad regime).

Now the Saudi royal family received from the White House virtually everything if not all it wished, and at least the compromise was found:

- bombing of ISIS which became the threat to the ruling Saudi clans, whilst the ISIS achieve the main Wahhabis goal – removal of the pro-Iranian premier Nouri Al-Maliki from power and securing of nearly half of Iraq from the ‘non-Sunni elements’ (Azidi, Christians, Assyrians and other minorities);

- the US withdrawal from the approach aimed at being close to Iran, resuming the policy of turning down the Bashar al-Assad regime by any means by the American administration – by means of bombing of the north-eastern territories of the country and transferring the territories relieved from ISIS to the so-called ‘moderate’ Syrian opposition (for this Riyadh creates some training camps on its territory for the militants as is confirmed by J. Khashidjihimself, and giving the links to the American mass media).

There is an impression that the Saudis are right. They are in a more favourable position, whereas the White House is essentially lost; it has to spread its forces, and instead of concentrating on the fighting with Russia and China, it is drawn again into the Middle East bog, taking the orders of the Saudi princes’ to neutralise Iran and create the area free from Sunni minorities which would seem like caliphate long longed by the Saudis.

However Washington considers this loss as the tactical one. As a matter of fact the upcoming military campaign is promising to bring strategic dividends to it as they believe. If it is possible to clear the territory of Iraq from the ISIS militants, then the new Iraqi government will be obliged to the USA more than to Iran regarding stability, whilst they will get rid of the Russian influence. The militants driven away from Iraq territories will find themselves in Syria, which will give a perfect excuse for the attack by the so-called international coalition. During the second phase of the operation the ISIS militants are not only meant to be destroyed but also the whole north-eastern region will be free from the power of the Syrian regime, so that it could be transferred to American and Saudi descendants comprising the ‘moderate’ Syrian opposition, among which by the way there are quite a lot of Islamists.

Judging by the messages from Israel, according to the same ‘Al-Hayat’ paper on 9th September, the IDF is planning to strike a blow at the Hezbollah positions in Lebanon, in order to make it withdraw its forces from Syria where they successfully resist the ‘moderate’ Islamic militants sponsored by the Gulf monarchies.

This attack (or a real threat of its being implemented) will also have to reduce the political positions of Hezbollah and provide the promotion of the Western protégé for the post of Lebanon president. And this is where Riyadh has its say, attacking from a new flange – and it is done already – by the forces of the stepson of the Saudi king S. Hariri – this will be ‘the financial attack’ on the Lebanon political forces which do not agree with the Western Diktat in order to achieve the necessary result.

Thus the true goal of the whole operation engaged in so-called fighting with ISIS is in for the USA trying to significantly lessen the ‘Shiite union’ and make Tehran surrender even prior to 20th November when the sanctions are to be lifted or to be resumed in relation to Iran, making it accept Washington’s conditions to lift the embargo. They are certain to include not only giving up the ambitions of the Iran government regarding nuclear matters but also refusing a close approach to Russia. Destroying of Assad’s regime is considered by Washington to be a matter of technicality. The once shaken American-Saudi friendship will have a chance to be restored again.

Removal of Iran from the number of potential strategic allies of Russia will become the main geopolitical prize for the USA in the world game played by the patterns established by Z. Bzhezinsky. Then it will be possible to do literally anything; to knock down the prices for the hydrocarbons or build any oil and gas pipelines. This will help reduce the dependence of Europe on Russian gas and deprive Moscow of resources which are meant both for its own development and strengthening the newly created Eurasian Economic Union, where Yerevan sees itself, but so far it is being actively talked out of this.

What is Russia to do in this situation? First of all, it should vigorously explain to the Arabs that the Americans do not
want to play a fair game, making them agree to the implementation of their own geopolitical goals. In spite of all the attempts of making fun of Russia, it is necessary to demand clarifications on part of the USA, in the United Nations, about how their operation agrees with the United Nations Charter, where the consent of the Security Council for such actions is still necessary. By the way, Paris, where the next ‘Anti-Terror Conference’ is going to take place, today formally announced that all the actions should follow the international law. It would not be bad to propose our own anti-terror initiative in order to avoid the reproaches that we apply brakes to this noble business due to the so-called anti-Americanism and love to the ‘Assad, the Dictator’.

Secondly, it is necessary to protect the Middle East minorities, first of all the Christians, who are exposed to a powerful pressure on part of the Salafist jihadist militants. In this connection Moscow might arrange a meeting (sponsored by R&D and scientific centres), with the representatives of the major Middle East minorities (Iraq and Levant). The issues to be discussed concern finding a safe place for the Middle East ethno-confessional groups living under the conditions of the ruined geopolitical project, created one hundred years ago by the Sykes-Pikot Agreement. We shouldn’t let Washington play this card, which is seeking to actively do so.

Thirdly, it is necessary to inform Damascus that it should pull up its forces and destroy the remaining centres of rebel forces in Douma, Jobar, Yarmouk, Golan Heights and other places, in order to get a chance to start a march into Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa to shell out the ISIS militants and restore the powers of the central government by their own means. The Syrian authorities should cooperate with Kurds more closely in north-east of the country – who are lured away by the pro-western forces under the disguise of the anti-terror operation. Russia could take the initiative and supply Damascus with the modern antiaircraft defence systems in order to prevent the creation of the ‘no-fly zone’ by the West, above the regions being freed from the ISIS militants. We all remember the consequences of such a ‘no-fly zone’ in Lebanon...

And fourthly, we have to continue the started work regarding development of the relations with Iran. Otherwise it will be too late...

*Pogos Anastasov is a political science and Mid-East scholar and a columnist for the online journal “New Eastern Outlook”.*