The bloody attack in Ankara on March 13 that left 35 people dead and 120 injured provoked universal condemnation across the globe. Russia’s President Vladimir Putin almost immediately sent his condolences to the Turkish people after the attack. Turkish officials decided that the coverage of this attack in the media would be closely monitored and censored. Moreover, Turkish citizens found their access to certain social networks blocked by Turkish security agencies. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has immediately assembled an urgent meeting of the Security Council in the aftermath of the attack.

Naturally, the question arises: who may be behind this outrageous crime and who benefits from it? It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to point the finger in the direction of ISIS, since its members have been roaming Turkish territory freely while being particularly unhappy about the fact that the process of national reconciliation has begun in Syria. It would even be easier to push the blame on the militants of the Kurdish PKK or their supporters from among the Syrian Kurds who are dissatisfied with the fact that Turkey has been continuously shelling their settlements, in spite of the declared cease-fire.

It didn’t take Turkish security services long to announce that they had found a “trace” of the PKK behind the attack. But there’s just one question nobody can answer: how could the car that was used in the attack, the one that was allegedly stolen last January from an old woman, be allowed to be taken to the city of Diyarbakir (located in Turkish Kurdistan) first, and then once filled with explosives be driven across Turkey to become a murderous weapon in Ankara? It has been announced repeatedly that in recent years Turkish authorities have seriously tightened security measures in Ankara, Istanbul and other major cities, especially in south-eastern Anatolia, where ethnic Kurds are being literally slaughtered by the Turkish army. So how could this be possible?

Should we believe the official version it remains unclear why the head of the Interior Ministry and Turkish secret services generals haven’t been forced to step down since they have “missed” yet another terrorist attack? Or maybe the government is just trying to throw Kurds under the bus? Why would Kurds try to sign a death warrant for themselves across both sides of the Syrian-Turkish border when they have already found themselves under assault? There’s no chance that they could forget how brutally the Turks have been in suppressing any manifestation of their national identity so far. At this point one can no longer speak about the Armenian genocide without mentioning the present day Kurdish genocide.

Therefore, one cannot rule out the version that is now being carefully voiced by a number of international experts, even though they do it with extreme caution. What they say is that Turkish special services have been tasked with launching this attack to provide Tayyip Erdogan with a pretext to launch an armed invasion of Syria aimed at
the occupation of its northern border region. This step would break the fragile ceasefire, with hostilities being resumed in a matter of hours. That’s where ISIS and Jabhat Al-Nusra would take a chance to even the odds with the legitimate government in Damascus. There can be no doubt who could be behind this operation – Riyadh and Doha. After all, should the war be carried on in Syria with no agreement whatsoever being reached, a brute force scenario will finally prevail. Under these circumstances, the United States will itself be in no position to change anything, since it has been voicing its objection against the possible armed intervention of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in Syria. Washington is well aware of the fact that Russia would not watch the invasion silently and would resume its airstrikes against ISIS and, quite possibly, against the invading forces. This path will lead to an armed conflict between Moscow and Ankara, which has been the dream of war hawks in Washington and their allies in Eastern Europe for some time.

After all, once the plan of the overthrow of the legitimate Syrian government took distinct shape back in 2011, Western think tanks were wondering if Russia was prepared to defend Syria until the end or could it back down after a measurable amount of pressure was applied against it by the West, as it was with Libya and Iraq. At that time there were a lot of those who assured that just like before, Moscow would not risk intervening. But other experts have pointed out that Syria is Russia’s last bastion in the Middle East and should it be abandoned, Russia would have to fight NATO forces in the immediate vicinity of its own borders.

The past few years have clearly shown that those who said Russia won’t back down this time were right. Moreover, Russia has all legal, political and military means to support the Syrian government, and it has even turned a blind eye to the extremely generous promises Saudi Arabia has made about investing tens of billions of dollars in its economy.

However, certain statements that were made by a number of Russian officials in recent days led to pessimism and mistrust towards Moscow among its allies. In particular, those statements concerned the beginning of negotiations with Saudi Arabia on the increase in oil prices or the construction of a nuclear power plant in the KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). There’s been rumors that on March 20 Moscow will host a meeting of representatives of the Russian Federation, the KSA and other OPEC countries to reach an agreement on “freezing” oil production and exports. Against this background oil prices began to rise steadily in recent weeks. The Russian side has even decided to change its approach to the Jaysh al-Islam terrorist group that is being directly supported by Saudi Arabia. In turn, Riyadh has displayed no desire to change its aggressive stance towards the Assad regime, and started to devise new plans on the overthrow of the legitimate Syrian government once the ceasefire has been implemented. In addition, some senior Russian officials began mentioning the federalization of Syria, the implementation of which in the present situation would only lead to the balkanization of the country.

As a result, analysts started to question Russia’s determination in Syria by assuming that instead of saving the entire territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, it would try to retain military bases along the Mediterranean coast. Or, perhaps, the recent statements of Russia had only been a tactical step and were aimed at creating a more favorable environment for the implementation of a new agreement? There is no doubt that the second assumption is right, since otherwise the logic of Russia’s actions in Syria in recent years would become incomprehensible. In addition, should the first scenario be true, Russia will be in a difficult situation in dealing with its friends and enemies.

However, it is clear that although the bloody conflict has been brought to a screeching halt by a ceasefire agreement, few parties do actually believe that it will lead to a settlement of the conflict. In addition, there’s a chance that a ground invasion in Syria launched by Turkey and Saudi Arabia would lead them to a direct confrontation with Russia. The only thing they needed was a pretext, and they got it on March 13 in the result of the inhuman terrorist attack on Ankara.

Moreover, the fighting in Syria continues, but at on a much smaller scale. One way or another, a truce has been reached at the moment even when everyone expected fierce fighting in and around Aleppo, the last major city controlled by the so-called “moderate opposition.” Should it have fallen, the opposition forces could have found themselves split and Russia, Iran and the Syrian government forces would have finally prevailed.

The military operation that led to the encirclement of Aleppo was supported by the Syrian Kurds from the People’s Protection Units, which have officially become Damascus’s allies. Understandably this didn’t make Ankara happy, since it has been suppressing Kurds and defending Syrian Turkmen factions throughout the conflict, along with sponsoring “moderate” groups in Syria. Many of these groups have also enjoyed the support of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf monarchies, which have invested a lot of money in the defeat of Assad and seem reluctant to give up now. The situation in the north of Syria may lead them to the conclusion that an armed intervention would allow
them to provide relief to their proxies.

What is at stake now is not Syria alone, but influence across the entire Middle East and the Muslim world. Sunni monarchies have launched a fight against Iran and there’s an ever increasing amount of evidence that they are losing. A few years ago it seemed that their positions were invulnerable, but the “Arab Spring” has brought tremendous changes to the Middle East by destroying old alliances and giving rise to new processes. In addition, the hole situation has been aggravated by US determination to strike a nuclear deal with Iran even despite the fact that by doing so, it has undermined Washington’s relations with Israel and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

Turkey and its Wahhabi allies seems to have fully invested in confrontation. Perhaps for this reason, Riyadh is going to strengthen its weakening positions by playing a very strong card: Saudi Arabia is supposedly going to announce that it has nuclear weapons. This topic has been discussed before, but it is hardly a coincidence that once again it emerges in connection with the situation in Syria. There’s been reports that Saudi Arabia is prepared to buy nuclear warheads from Pakistan if Iran becomes a nuclear power.

But last February it went even further, when a Saudi political analyst, Daham al-Anzi, in an interview with the Arabic version of a Russian news service announced that the House of Saud has already acquired nuclear weapons. Speaking with a Fox TV journalist, a former CIA official announced that according to his sources, Saudi Arabia is in possession of up to seven nuclear warheads. But no official announcement was made by Riyadh so far. And, probably it will not come since all of this can be an old fashioned bluff. However, it can also be a part of a “nuclear conspiracy,” the strategy that has successfully been applied by Israel for years, most certainly being in possession of nuclear weapons. But should it be confirmed that Saudi Arabia has a nuclear arsenal, it can lead to very serious consequences.

It’s curious that Moscow has already voiced an informal warning to Riyadh and Ankara that while those players are planning an invasion of Syria, they should not forget the fact that Russia is a nuclear power. One couldn’t rule out the possibility that Russia could respond to any aggression with placing a number of its tactical nuclear warheads in Syria. But in this case, the conflict will take on a whole new dimension, where Turkey and the KSA have no chance to succeed.

Under these conditions the order that was signed by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin on the withdrawal of Russian forces from Syria is a direct confirmation that Moscow is not going to play its game aggressively, even though Western propaganda sources are trying to convince us of the opposite. This withdrawal should serve as a sign for all parties of the Syrian conflict that Russia seeks no military solution to the Syrian conflict.

The ball is in the court of those who have been trying to destroy Damascus, it’s their turn now to prove their peaceful intentions if there are any.

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