Donald Trump's inauguration was accompanied by an array of scandals that were staged by the opponents of the new US President. However, Trump's problems don't stop there, since he's got a number of foreign policy challenges at hand that need to be addressed urgently. The absolute majority of those is in one way or another connected with the Middle East, since the Obama administration failed in approaching regional players rather miserably.

As a matter of fact, the region lies in smoldering ruins. Let's start with Iraq. The country remains deeply divided because of the policies pursued by the previous US presidents, that decided to start the "democratization" of the Greater Middle East with the invasion of Iraq. Yet, they failed to manage the post-war situation in Iraq properly, which resulted in Washington de-facto splitting the country along sectarian lines. In this situation Iraqi Sunnis found themselves at a disadvantageous position, which resulted in their rapid radicalization, therefore they've been joining ISIS en masse for years. From this point of view, Donald Trump hasn't been too far from the truth when he stated that it was the Obama administration that created the monster known as the Islamic State. Additionally, Washington has been providing support to the local Kurdish communities, which were promised independence during the Bush era for their support of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

One can describe all this as strategic miscalculations or deliberate evil designs, depending on his or her position. Adding to all this, there's been a pretty clumsily managed campaign to capture Mosul. The three months of fighting have led to no strategic successes so far, with the only result being the exodus of radical militants to Syria, where they try to capture Deir ez-Zor and gain a foothold in Palmyra.

But it's safe to say that Iran has been taking full advantage of every mistake Washington has ever committed in Iraq, which resulted in Donald Trump announcing his intention of increasing the pressure that the US puts on this country. Otherwise Washington can pretty much kiss its Arab allies in the Persian Gulf goodbye, along with its ability to influence the course of events in the main oil-producing region of the world.

The situation in Syria is even worse for Washington. The US has managed to discredit itself in the eyes of almost all the parties of the conflict - Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, while there's no use mentioning Iran and the Syrian government itself. Therefore, those players in search of a viable solution that could put an end to the bloody conflict decided to leave Washington overboard. Now the new US administration has the opportunity to watch the negotiations in Astana silently, having no say for the first time over the last twenty-five years. Trump remains silent on this issue, while only putting forward the steps to establish cooperation with Russia in the fight against ISIS that Moscow, as a matter of fact, has been proposing all along.

In Libya the Obama administration has suffered a crushing defeat, which the former president, unlike other crises his administration created, had the courage to recognize. The failed state that exists in the place where Libya was, instead of having a stable government that was toppled by the US-sponsored intervention, now has three governments, along with two parliaments and several armies. The UN peace plan that has been actively supported by Washington hasn't been implemented, so the so-called government of national unity led by Washington-backed Fayez al-Sarraj is literally "on its last legs." On the other hand, the chairman of the Libyan parliament in Tobruk,
Aguila Saleh Issa and the commander of the armed forces of Libya, Marshal Khalifa Haftar that are getting increasingly popular among the local population, therefore they are trying to establish ties with Moscow. Donald Trump has made no comment so far on the situation in Libya, but his sharp opposition to all sorts of Islamists implies that he would rather support the above mentioned secular tandem, instead of supporting Fayez al-Sarraj that has discredited himself a long while ago.

Another disaster for the United States has been the Yemeni crisis. Instead of stepping aside, while observing the parties of the conflict being entangled in their own contradictions, the Obama administration declared last year that it had a comprehensive peace plan to implement. The plan, designed as an initiative of four states: USA, Saudi Arabia, UAE and the UK, failed with a big bang. What is even worse, it was rejected by the Saudi protégé - the official Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, since he clearly saw that its implementation would have forced him to step down. Apparently, Donald Trump hasn't even come close to reviewing this matter, and he will have to think hard how to save the old-time US ally Saudi Arabia, that got itself trapped in a bloody war that can result in the rapid expansion of the Iranian zone influence in the region.

However, the greatest failure of American foreign policy in the Middle East has been the Palestinian-Israeli settlement. Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize prematurely for his alleged commitment to the settlement of this conflict due to his "historic" speech at Cairo University on June 4, 2009. But what we receive was an even greater number of Israeli settlements occupying Palestinian lands and the complete disappearance of any prospects for the emergence of a Palestinian state. As a result, Obama irritation was manifested in Washington, for the first time in 70 years of the US-Israeli relations, not blocking an anti-Israeli resolution in the UN Security Council, that would condemn new Israeli settlements being constructed. Thus, the US policy has been deeply discredited in the eyes of the Palestinians, and in the eyes of Israelis. In this matter Donald Trump has made a bet on Israel by announcing the transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem. Even though the Palestinian problem is not playing the same role in Middle Eastern affairs as it used to, the decision can be pretty costly for the new US administration and its relations with Arab satellites, for sure, if Trump wasn't planning to turn his back on the Arab allies of the US all along.

In other words, the overall picture looks pretty depressing for the White House. The absence of simple solutions, the tense relations with such allies as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, can be too much for the Trump administration to swallow. And it doesn't seem that an alliance with Israel will be enough for Washington to preserve its influence in the region. The most rational approach one can propose today is to choose priorities wisely. Initial success can be reached by carrying out a joint operation with Russia against ISIS terrorists in Iraq and Syria. It must be an ambitious and decisive goal. Then, Trump can pursue the Syrian settlement by sending his representative to Astana. Washington can still apply pressure on the pressure on the Syrian Kurds, that it has been supporting for a long while. However, to achieve this Trump will have to abandon the traditional US policy of supporting Kurdish independence. Additionally, both Moscow and Washington can work hand in hand on the Libyan and Palestinian-Israeli settlements. If those topics are not addressed, Trump is running the risk of getting drown in the Middle Eastern mess that Obama created.

Maxim Egorov, a political commentator on the Middle East and contributes regularly for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.