



Ruins Jabal Semaan near Aleppo
Personal archive of Timur Karmov
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Aleppo: A Mirror of the Future World

History tends to repeat itself, sometimes in the most ironic or maybe even sarcastic version. Exactly 100 years ago this December a significant event in Syria happened- an army led by Arab leader Faisal, guided by British intelligence officer and adviser Thomas Edward Lawrence (better known to the world as Lawrence of Arabia) defeated the Turkish occupation force. The dream of Lawrence to stage a crusade through the Arabian desert came true as the Arabs guided by Lawrence's clever strategy won an improbable victory. But neither Lawrence nor Faisal knew about a secret agreement between Britain and France on the division of spheres of influence in the Middle East after the victory of Feisal's army. This agreement, known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, didn't consider the geopolitical interests of Turkey, nor especially the sovereign interests of the Arab states. Meanwhile, the agreement become a time bomb exploding in another century, when participants

have other geopolitical weight, but again foist turmoil in troubled Syria. This time, the conflict has much more bloody and protracted battles, and it pits the Syrian army against mercenary-terrorists from different countries, hiding their faces behind a mask of insurgents and fighters for the freedom of the Syrian people. The conflict also exposed two visions of world order, drawn in an orbit of the geopolitical battle among the USA, Western Europe, Russia, Turkey, Israel, Qatar, Iraq and Iran.

Following one vision, the combined efforts of the West to free the Syrian people from President Assad, springing to power an opposition which has brought terror to the people of Syria under its banner. The destruction of the Syrian state was important for the new world order proponents as sovereign states would gradually dissolve in the global community leaving a single elite controlled world government.

Russia and Iran in the conflict allied with Assad as the legitimately elected President of Syria, a position reflecting an opposite world order where respect for the rights of sovereign states to maintain their development ideal is the basis for international order. Russian aircraft and instructors provided serious moral and military support to the Syrian army in the fight against the new world order terrorists. If from the Russian side all those who kill civilians, shell the ancient cities, organize demonstrations of cruel punishment are unequivocally declared as terrorists to be destroyed, the West clumsily tries to cover up agents of terror by labeling their mercenaries a "moderate opposition." But, the longer the bloody events in Syria proceed, the policy to justify terrorism as a means to assert world domination appears more and more feckless and cynical. At the same time, the more convincing and worthy Bashar al-Assad and his allies appear.

The irony of history is that 100 years ago, the same West represented by Britain and France, Germany and its ally Turkey, sought to turn the Middle East into a large cake of their interests as primacy of the world oil economy emerged. The war in the form of the Arab Revolt against the Turks was in the interests of Britain and France, but the sovereign interests of the Arab tribes at the time looked to the West as outright ridiculous pretensions. The Arab victory in the fight against Turkish occupation to a greater extent was the result of the strategic genius of Lawrence of Arabia and his very clever choice of Faisal as the best leader of the uprising.

The Syrian conflict has exposed the urgent need to resolve problems brought about by the urge of western democracies to impose hegemony in the post-Soviet era. As Russia re-emerges, and China looms as a wildcard, the West's previous methods of aggression under the flag of democratic uprisings has made relations between East and West in the new century appear insolvable. Catastrophic failures of the unipolar world strategy appeared before the eyes of the international community in the destroyed states of Libya, Iraq, and the bloody wheel of history seemed unstoppable.

Vladimir Putin in the Image of Lawrence of Arabia

To an impressive series of images, which Vladimir Putin appears on the world stage during 17 years of power, he rightfully can add a white silk robe and the Arab kufiya conferring an image to spiritualized persons the magical power of holiness. It was Putin who played the role of Lawrence of Arabia in resisting the absorption of another middle eastern country by the global expansion of the West under the leadership of the "exceptional nation" and apologists of the New World

order. His ability to take a punch, to exhaust the enemy and inflict a decisive blow, acquired in his study of judo, a brilliant intellect of a professional secret service officer, and the ability to quickly calculate the personality of an ally or opponent, as well as a deep respect for those who dare resist vast and overwhelming force - all this he brought to the altar of the victory in the geopolitical battle for Syria.

And just as Lawrence of Arabia united disparate and conflicting Arab tribes by subtle negotiations and the ability to find a common language with other cultures and other civilizations, so Vladimir Putin has managed to combine a united front in the army of Assad and other key allies. Iran and China have supported not only a political solution consistent with Putin's position in the Syrian conflict, but committed military and moral support at the right time. Especially convincing was a platoon of Chinese soldiers, marching in the parade on Red Square on May 9, 2016 with Xi Jinping, seated next to Putin assessing the military power of Russia. Victory always has a lot of friends, and emissaries from Doha, Riyadh, Baghdad and Tripoli, Cairo and the Emirates quickly travelled to Moscow. Vladimir Putin, like Lawrence of Arabia, does not consider his nation as an exceptional nation, recognizing in other nations and countries their right to choose their own path. And in this position he was absolutely sincere, not simply donning a mask for negotiations.

Why Russians Help Syria?

Who, if not Russia, is able to understand Syria, besieged by gangs and international racketeers who threaten to break up the state? Russians survived the collapse of the USSR, and they know what it is to live in the ruins of an empire. For Russians there remains a sore wound inflicted by the bombing of Yugoslavia.

And, in 25 years of testing in a laboratory of wild capitalism and shock therapy, the loss of many features of their sovereign state, Russians have learned to appreciate the independence of the homeland and its friends. Syria has always been a friend of the USSR and the new Russia, and now perhaps it is a brotherly country, friendship tied to the bloodshed in the name of freedom.

There is another amazing connection between Russia and Syria. An archaeological expedition from Russia recently visited the Aleppo area in Syria and discovered facilities there of the times of early Christianity. In these areas a powerful center of Orthodox Christianity in the Eastern Roman Empire and Byzantium took shape. These monuments are associated with the ancient spiritual practice of pillar-dwelling. Ancient Christians in Syria practiced spiritual ascent through penance and long prayers on the stone pillars. Lawrence of Arabia, as an 18-year-old student walked 1600 kilometers through the ancient ruins of Syria, Palestine, and Arabia, studying ancient monuments of Christian culture. He called his famous book about the uprising in the desert (its most complete version) the "Seven Pillars of Wisdom." One hundred years later the Russian archaeologists found the surviving archaeological remains.

It can be seen in today's victory in Aleppo as a grand turn in the development of the modern world. The liberation of the historical part of Aleppo from the mercenaries sent by the West to destroy the ancient Syrian country, it is the first and very symbolic victory for those who believe that people are equal in their sovereign right to decide where and how they develop and live their life, and who will be their leader.

The Western model of governance of the world does not pass the test of the Arabian desert and the encounter with the will of united nations. After the victory in Aleppo changes in the world will occur in an increasing pace as in the falling of dominoes, but let's hope that these changes will be more joyful than alarming.

What the mirror of Aleppo reflects?

There are several issues which are now hardly possible to find the answer. The first and most important of them: where will Donald Trump lead America? As an ambitious man, he is unlikely to want to step on the rake, already hitting contenders for the role of world policeman. If he will take into account the sad experience of his predecessor in tearing to shreds the Russian economy and the transformation of Ukraine into an ungrateful and belligerent neighbor of Russia, we expect a thaw in relations between the two countries. And if he will be wise enough to stop predatory interventionism against countries called not democratic enough, the US has a good chance to regain the respect of the peoples of the Middle East and beyond.

In Aleppo, the mirror is now also closely scrutinized by Russia. Russians, first of all want to understand what can prevent the continuation of the bloody events in the Middle East and what alliances, treaties and strategies will work as a buffer between the still hot spots (Pakistan, Iran, India, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Israel). Russia is not interested in any long war in Syria, nor in any other country, because it has never used war as a way to solve their economic and political problems. Where will thousands of terrorists now in Syria go? - this issue is extremely important for Russia, because the tragedy of the Chechen wars is still very fresh in the minds of Russians. For the Middle East, the Aleppo mirror is a

compass, and decrees the choice of direction to find partners and allies in the stormy sea of geopolitical intrigues. In contrast to the situation of 100 years ago among the Arab leaders, we don't see Faisal, whose authority would consolidate and strengthen their position in a changing world order. Lacking such, Putin's attraction increases.

For European countries the mirror of Aleppo all the horror and chaos is reflected in which they are slowly and inexorably immersed, since millions of people from the destroyed cities of Syria, Iraq, Libya, poured into the streets of neat prosperous cities in Germany and France. What can they expect when the whole mass of people explodes with anger, unable to find the conditions they were promised, sending them as easy going tourists on a long journey? No answer in the Aleppo mirror. But the choice of the peoples of Europe between the advocates of interventionism and sovereign nationalism looks clearly predictable.

These days the spirit of Lawrence of Arabia clearly hovers over the ruins of ancient Aleppo, retching at the barbarism of our contemporaries and invisibly helping those who are fighting back for freedom for the people living in these harsh lands.

Galima Galiullina, Ph. D

Washington, DC