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What Awaits the Middle East in 2017

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There's a good chance that the dreams about peace and prosperity won't betray the people of the Middle East this year around. It won't be an exaggeration to state that that's what the absolute majority of those dwelling in the region bruised with constant bloodshed and conflicts hope for. But in order to exercise optimism one must answer what policies the United States will be pursuing in the future?

It is natural that there's no answering this question without predicting what will be Donald Trump's position on the Middle Eastern affairs. It is generally believed that his views on the world order were formed back in the 1980s, so they differ drastically from the typical mindset one could expect from an American. Trump is convinced that a number of international players have turned the US into a cash cow by abusing unfavorable trade agreements and excessive obligations that the latter put in place to ensure their loyalty. The president-elect believes that America has no strategic interest whatsoever in the military involvement in the Asia or the deployment of its troops in Europe. As the Middle East, regional players must be forced to pay, since Trump is convinced that a state like Kuwait should hand over a quarter of its oil revenues to Washington to ensure its security. One can hardly argue the point that Trump once made that Saudi Arabia "wouldn't not exist" as a state, if not for the strong American protection.

It is unlikely that in the nearest future the Trump administration will be able to bring to life the better part of Trump's most radical presidential campaign promises. Nevertheless, it looks that those scared US allies all right, since that they are convinced that the newly elected US president didn't have any qualified political advisers during the campaign, therefore, they say, the better part of his international initiatives are unattainable.

And now, days away from his inauguration, Donald Trump remains a "terra incognita" for analysts across the globe, which leads to a certain degree of nervousness being displayed by the major Arab players. Against this background, some Arab leaders prematurely welcomed Donald Trump, claiming that they "generally share" the views of the new US. The latest string of conflicts, namely the Afghan, Iraqi, Libyan and Syrian wars, have transformed the US into a "controversial ally". However, if a number of Arab leaders that matured during the Cold War era were willing to put up with this ally, now they are completely bewildered by the fact that they are supposed to carry on "without American leadership". This can be observed clearly among the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, that have made gone all in on Washington, and now found themselves poorly adjusted to the present day political realities. Just take a look at the Al Saud royal family of Saudi Arabia that failed miserably at every single step of their foreign policies, starting with oil price dumping, and ending with their attempt to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which resulted in the rapid rise of ISIS.

It is believed that after a number of controversial statements that Trump made during the election campaign, he is about to lose all interest in international politics. In this case, the responsibility to preserve the cooperation with a number of key US allies will be handled by the future Secretary of Defense General James Mattis along with the future Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and along with a number of notorious Republican congressmen, who adhere to way more conservative views than the president-elect.

But at the same time there's a chance that Donald Trump is going to enforce his vision upon US allies, plunging them into a state of deep. This indicates how much the newly elected president is different from all of his predecessors.

But no matter what the White House is going to do in the next year, the Western and Arab media have already agreed that the United States lost the Middle East and there is a handful of states left that are still willing to seek active cooperate with Washington. Moscow's involvement in Syria has clearly manifested the fact that Russia understands regional dynamics way better than the United States and Europe, while knowing how and when one is to apply his military might to pursue diplomatic advances and secure decisive victories. Moscow has built a bridge between Iran and Turkey, transforming former enemies into partners in order to carry on the fight against ISIS effectively, which has been supported by the United States, Europe, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Despite massive financial flows that are being allocated to fund radical militants, and in spite of massive supplies of modern weapons provided by the CIA, the Pentagon and European intelligence communities, Syrian government forces have managed to liberate the former terrorist stronghold in Syria – the city of Aleppo.

Of course, we should not kid ourselves that the fragile truce in Syria that was so hard to secure would be preserved by all parties. Radical militants and their accomplices will try time and time again to disrupt the peaceful course of events, returning Syria to state of war.

However, the Moscow-Tehran-Istanbul alliance has repeatedly stressed the fact that it's determined to hold negotiations with all the interested parties. It was refreshing and strangely encouraging to learn that Donald Trump wouldn't try to overthrow the legally elected President of Syria Bashar al-Assad, since the president-elect is determined to fight the real threat to the international security – international terrorism. In an interview for The Wall Street Journal, Trump stated that one cannot fight against the government of Bashar al-Assad and ISIS terrorists at the same time, while adding that fighting against Syria, we be an equivalent of a war against Russia, which under the present circumstances corresponds poorly with the United States interests.

Apparently, Trump has a bumpy road ahead of him in his dealing with Iran, which also testifies to the fall of US prestige in the region. In this regard, one could be interested in the reaction the Iranian political circles displayed when Trump was elected. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated it was irrelevant who was about to become the next US president. Those words were in sounded in sharp contrast with the statement of the President of Iran Hassan Rouhani, who claimed that the elections in the United States – was a choice between bad and very bad, and Donal Trump was perceived as the latter.

In any case, the Middle East region is heading to troubled waters, since both conflicts and negotiations require a lot of political wisdom for one to succeed in. The Arab rulers are to face a number of difficult choices and they have only themselves to blame since they didn't care enough to remain cold headed and rational in their regional games.