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Middle East: Redrawing the Map

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The recent history of Middle East has been fraught with conflict. More information has started to surface recently. It gives a clue on what drives the tumultuous events. Separate leaks lead to conclusion there were covert plans harbored in Western capitals to reshape the boundaries of the region. Now the issue has started to come into the open becoming part of international agenda.

Michael Hayden, a retired United States Air Force four-star general and former Director of the National Security Agency, Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, told French Le Figaro that it was time to tell the truth and admit that Iraq and Syria do not exist anymore while Lebanon and Libya are on the verge of collapse. The 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement on the spheres of influence and control in the Middle East

never corresponded to reality. The General said he does not know how the events will unfold. He is sure that the policy aimed at restoration of these countries is doomed. According to Hayden, Iraq and Syria still maintain representation in the United Nations but in reality these states have disappeared [as entities](#).

Michael Hayden endorses Jeb Bush in the presidential race and may be offered an influential position in the foreign policy team in case the Republican wins in 2016. Democrats have prepared the ground for Republicans to act in case they win the White House. Hayden does not elaborate on the future plans, but some of the things he writes give a clue. For instance, he says the Kurds should become a leading US ally in the region. The General views Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as an alternative to radical Islam. Hayden believes it is expedient to restore full-fledged cooperation with Cairo.

Yaakov Amidror, who is now the Anne and Greg Rosshandler Senior Fellow at the BESA Center, is an important analyst, since he is the immediate past national security adviser to Prime Minister Netanyahu and previously served as chief of the Research and Analysis Division of Military Intelligence in the IDF (Israel Defense Force). He has recently published an open report called Perfect Storm: The Implications of Middle East Chaos. In this major monograph Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yaakov Amidror studies the storms convulsing the Arab Middle East. He looks at the long-term implications of Middle East chaos. Amidror sees civilizational shifts of historical proportions underway, and he argues that there is no way of knowing how long the upheavals will continue or how they will end.

The troubles go all the way back to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, he writes, and to the revolution in Iran, the consequent rise of radical Islam, the attacks of 9/11 on the U.S., the conquest of Iraq as a response to these, and to the Arab Spring. «To this we must add the weakness manifested by the international system, especially the U.S.-led Western alliance; the total worthlessness of global organizations; and the ruinous activities of local forces unique to each state», as he puts it. Amidror's conclusion is that anyone from the outside trying to influence these regional upheavals in a positive direction will find the task very difficult. According to him, the states artificially created by British and French a century ago are [on the brink](#) of collapse today.

In many regions of the Middle East tribes and clans are more important for self-identification than statehood. Amidror sees drastic changes with uncertain outcome taking place in the region. «We are witnessing a wide and deep struggle over the character and future of the Arab nation, and perhaps of Islam as a whole», the author points out. For Israel, Amidror writes, the best strategy is to identify the greatest threats looming in its vicinity, and concentrate its efforts narrowly in dealing with these specific threats.

Amidror believes that the West is prone to short-term strategic planning in the given circumstances. It's a serious weak point as the fighters for Islamic caliphate are ready for incessant and long-term war to reach their goals. The United States provoked the Arab Spring. Now it is doing its best to avoid the responsibility for the implications. It would like to influence the events at the distance resorting to different manipulations. But it's not enough for reaching

the desired goals.

Many regional leaders are frustrated with the US. It explains the Saudi Arabia's aspiration to spur the budding rapprochement with Russia. Radical Islamists may become the dominant force in the Muslim world. The Israeli expert believes that some regimes (especially conservative monarchies) face existential threats and are urgently seeking ways to maintain stability in the region. To prevent collapse they may build alliances with Israel to strengthen its position as a result.

Many Israeli experts believe it's not enough. They stand for more drastic changes. For instance, Zvi Hauser who currently serves as special counsel at Goldfrab Seligman & Co. in Tel Aviv, was Israel's Cabinet Secretary from 2009-2013. He was also appointed Chairman of the Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Council in 1997. Hauser also serves as a board member for several public institutions. In his article *A Historic Opportunity for Israel in the Golan Heights* published by Israeli Haaretz on July 3 he writes that «The virtuoso use of military technology to destroy pinpointed targets allowed Israel's strategic-diplomatic leadership to fail to grasp the importance of the opportunity, refraining from adopting a broad, David Ben Gurion-esque historical vision. Consequently, it ignored the first real opportunity in nearly 50 years to conduct a constructive dialogue with the international community over a change in Middle Eastern borders and recognition of Israeli rule on the Golan Heights, as part of the global interest in stabilizing the region.» According to him, the Golan Heights should be defended from the Islamic caliphate and Jabhat al Nusra. But whose interests are met by the activities of these organizations? Besides, according to his vision, the Golan Heights moving under the Israeli rule could be seen as some kind of compensation for Israel's approval of the Iran nuclear deal now in works.

The military of Turkey and Jordan are not making a secret of their intention to enter the territory of Syria. The mission is to create large buffer zones keeping away the Islamic State. How long will the military hold the positions in the zones? Will it not be an actual annexation of the other state's territory? There are no definite answers to these questions. According to Israeli sources, air forces of Israel, United States and other NATO countries are ready to offer air cover in case of such intervention. This is the endgame. First, the West and the Syrian neighbors created the Islamic threat, now they are preparing for final partition of the country under the pretext of defending the country from it. At that the key actors pursue different goals. Turkey is very cautious when it comes to the issue of Kurdish statehood. It shies away from US plans to bolster the Kurdish movement.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turkey will never allow the establishment of a Kurdish state in Syria after major gains by Kurdish fighters. In a strong-worded warning on June 26, Erdogan accused the Kurds of ethnically cleansing other communities from land they have taken after pushing back Islamic State forces from the Turkish border. "I say to the international community that whatever price must be paid, we will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria," Erdogan was quoted by Turkish media as telling guests at a dinner to break the Ramadan fast. He accused Kurdish forces of «changing the demographic structure» of several areas close to the Turkish border, which also have Arab and Turkmen populations.

Ankara gives priority to its global Pan-Turkish plans, no matter it lacks resources to implement them. To counter the implementation of «Kurdish Project» Turkey put forward the idea of uniting all Turkic peoples, including those who come from Central Asia, making up the population of Syria. Turkey is trying to form a separate Syrian Turkmen army in Syria on the basis of Ankara-supported Free Syrian Army. 10 thousand strong it will fight the Islamic State and Syrian Kurds. Incited by Turkey Syrian «Turkmen fighting groups in Syria have taken the decision to offer greater support to each other and work to create a Turkmen army if conditions permit», Syrian Turkmen Assembly chief Abdel Rahman Mustafa told Turkish Anadolu news on July 6. The Turkmen officials' comments came as the Syrian Turkmen Assembly held a meeting in southern Turkey's Gaziantep that brought together Turkmen representatives from Aleppo, Tal Abyad, Jarabulus, Latakia, Idlib, Raqqa and the Golan.

The Turkmen military and civilian officials decided to form a military council which reports to the Syrian Turkmen Assembly, a pro-opposition group with ties to the Turkish government. The decision to form the council comes after calls emerged from Turkmen military formations to fight both the Islamic State and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party. Turkmen leaders claim they number 3.0 million. According to official statistics, the number is 100 thousand in comparison to 2 million Kurds residing in Syria. Probably, the figures are twisted to substantiate territorial claims to be put forward when the time is right.

Iraq is a failed state and a headache. According to the plans, its Sunni-populated areas will become part of Jordan, the US staunch Arab ally. On Tuesday, July 7, 2015, the House considered H.R. 907, the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, as amended, under suspension of the rules. H.R. 907 was introduced on February 12, 2015, by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which ordered the bill reported, as amended, by unanimous consent on April 23, 2015. H.R. 907 extends to Jordan expedited congressional review of proposed U.S. arms transfers that is otherwise reserved for NATO members and other close allies.

Specifically, the bill states that U.S. policy should be to: support Jordan in its response to the Syrian refugee crisis; provide necessary assistance to alleviate the domestic burden to provide for basic needs for assimilated Syrian refugees; cooperate with Jordan to combat the terrorist threat from the Islamic State or other terrorist organizations; and, help secure the border between Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. In 1996, the United States granted Jordan major non-NATO ally status, which makes non-NATO countries, who are exceptionally close allies of the United States, eligible for certain military assistance in the same manner as other NATO allies. Besides Jordan, the list of US major non - NATO (MNNA) allies includes Israel, Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.

It's hard to say if the abovementioned plans are feasible. Their implementation is in full swing to undermine the stability of the Middle East. The BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization have just held their summits in Ufa. It was stated there that the Eurasian space should not become a testing ground for geopolitical schemes. Until now the North-Western part of Eurasia has been protected from chaos and manipulations staged by those who see it as «strategic chess board». Its south-western part, or the Middle East, is going through major reshaping. The chess grand master starts with e2-e4 move. The offensive could be held back only if the two parts get

united on the way of economic and political rapprochement. The meetings in Ufa offered a pattern to be used as a plan before the process is launched. This is a bumpy road with multiple hindrances to overcome. But it is imperative to go to the very end in order to bring stability to the continent.