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## A new option to terrorism, quagmire in Middle East?

By Ben Tanosborn

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Vladimir Putin should not be pegged as a master strategist nor as a superb tactician; not when he is proving to be both. But perhaps the most miraculous thing: his success is being carved while presiding over a nation still not fully evolved into a market economy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union; and, still for now, a country export-dependent of its energy resources.

Yet, the maligned Russian leader by much of the Western media seems to be carrying the right arrows in his quiver, and his aim at four key targets appears to be accurate, at least for now. He has already scored a bull's eye with the Russian people by hitting the first target: national pride. A two-headed target at that, involving both national defense - against military encroachment by the US and its European allies, and commitment to a large ethnic Russian populations living in now bordering independent nations that once were part of the Soviet Union, more specifically Ukraine and the Baltic republics.

It should come as no surprise to Americans if Putin's popularity among his countrymen is higher than that of any president in US' entire history, and that includes FDR's at its highest point. Putin has become not just head of state of a major, powerful nation, but a stout defender of Mother Russia, her culture, and her people - whether they live in St. Petersburg, Moscow or Ukraine's Donbass region.

Archer Putin's second target aims at a closer and more mutually-beneficial relationship, both economic and militarily non-confrontational, with Continental Europe; something which is rather difficult given the forced influence that the US exerts over its "captive" allies dating back to the end of World War II. US pressure against the EU's warming up to too- cozy relations with its former adversary (Soviet Union/Russia), and possible dismantling of NATO in its present form in the not distant future, has made extremely difficult the emergence of strong European statesmen capable of cutting their puppet strings to Washington in critical foreign policy matters of and national/regional defense. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Germany's Angela Merkel could emerge as leading the way to better relations with Putin-Russia soon by lifting all sanctions placed on Russia following the 2014 coup d'état in Kiev, the uprising against the Kiev junta in Eastern Ukraine and the reunification of Khrushchev-orphaned Crimea with Russia.

How accurate Putin's aim becomes with his second target, and his future success with Europe, is likely to depend, and be intertwined, with his ability in hitting another bull's eye in Syria, showing the world, and specifically the United States, how things should be done, both diplomatically and militarily. Achieving military quick-success in Syria is a formidable, but doable task; so long as Washington and the Pentagon's Keystone Cops stay away from conflict - hands off completely, both ground and air - and any meddling; waiting by the wayside until Russia and its allies, to include the Syrian Army, bring ISIS and other terrorist groups to their knees. A result which I believe Putin could deliver, if given the chance, within 6 to 12 months.

At that time, Bashar Al-Assad would step down, something which would have to be prearranged; and an interim government accommodating all Syrian political factions formed which would permit an orderly transition to democratic rule. Iran, Iraq - Sunni-Shia sharing power, or territorial partition as an alternative - and neighboring nations would share in the reshaping of the region without "outside interference". And Syria's reconstruction would see the return of its millions of displaced-exiled people in its transformation to a successful nation operating in freedom and peace.

A pipe dream, you say, worthy to be part of the tales in One Thousand and One Nights? Well, perhaps... but for now the only logical and humane answer which could take place in the Middle East, given the mess the US and the United Kingdom have helped create in that part of the world during the past seven decades. And Vladimir Putin could possibly shoot his third arrow straight into another bull's eye, on a target of solidarity for friends (Syria as a nation, if not Bashar al-Assad), in a quest for peace and anti-global terrorism.

A Putin's bull's eye on the fourth target, encompassing Russia's entry into a zone of future influence in the Middle East, would be accomplished without having to shoot the fourth arrow.

And if such a success story would come to pass, it would save America lots of blood and treasure that the nation's warmongering politicians are always ready to spend while clamoring for strict debt limits and balanced budgets - cost of wars which hypocritically are never properly identified and budgeted, a major reason for the nation's deficit.

But Putin's success will not have a chance unless there is vision and resolve in Obama accepting to become a spectator in this Putin-round... and are willing to make nice with him; and that's usually not the trademark of failing empires. A smart Barack Obama could prove newfound wisdom by sitting this one out, even at the expense of having the hawks in Congress claim that the American Empire is in shameful retreat.