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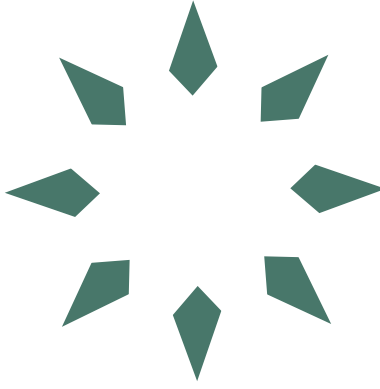
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ENTRY OF RUSSIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST: OLD PLAYER WITH A NEW GAME STRATEGY

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This paper focuses on Moscow's activity in the Middle East. The main aim is to study the that after the Re-emergence of Russia it has sent a message that it is a power to be recognized in the region. It also studies on the growing competition the west will face from Russia other than China in that area politically and economically. It concludes on the Russia confidence of its success in the Middle Eastern strategy based on the principle of balancing between the different regional players.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a rise in Moscow's activity in the Middle East, but its decision to strike in Syria came as a shock to many. In its actions and strategy, the Kremlin used its air and missile operations carried out with sophisticated weaponry and in an impressive manner demonstrated that Russia is a modern military superpower with a global reach. Moscow when it decided to launch a large-scale operation outside of what it considers Russia's backyard, it had for its foreign policy set an important precedent. The Kremlin forecasted and feared that in the near future it would bring further political crises in Yemen, Lebanon, Libya, and Iraq. This scenario seems much more certain with the increase in Saudi-Iran tensions in the region. Moscow for its part in which it will continue to promote its grand vision for the Middle East as a region with a coherent security structure, which would let it cope with the challenges from within and keep threats smoldering up from the region, including those into Central Asia and the Caucasus. This vision is being made much harder to promote with the current conflict patterns, let alone implement. Stretching far beyond its regional goals the Russian operation in Syria has much to do with setting the boundaries of what the Kremlin considers a struggle to shape the world order¹.

The Russian strategy for the region especially since the downfall of Gaddafi, has involved several elements. Blocking all Western and Arab-backed efforts against Syria's Assad regime at the UN Security Council, Putin has indicated that then-President Medvedev's decision to abstain on the 2011 UNSC resolution, which called upon for the imposition of a no-fly zone in Libya, was the lever which certain Western and Arab governments used to engineer Gaddafi's downfall. Supplying heavy arms to the regime in Damascus to avoid it from complete collapse, as well as collaborating with regional



actors that oppose the downfall of the Assad regime or at least fear that what will replace it will be worse Iran, the Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq, besides Egypt, Algeria, and Israel. Russia has been cooperating with American and European anti-Weapons of Mass Destruction efforts especially regarding chemical weapons in Syria and Iran's nuclear program so that they perceive Russia as a partner in the region, despite their differences over Ukraine. Attempting to isolate Saudi Arabia and its Gulf, Arab allies from the West has been Moscow's regional strategy in particular by trying to raise Western fears that they actually support Wahabi militant forces².

Russia's return to the Middle East has been witnessed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Guided by the unfinished quest for the Russian identity there has been no change in its foreign policy, of which it has many as it is a Slavic, Muslim, Asian and European nation. It is from the Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet periods a definite heritage which it carries, marked by both the interaction between the two spaces and the ideological ambitions of Moscow. In order to fully understand the weight of the heritage of Soviet orientalism which is important today that causes the Russian political elite to reflect on Russian policy in the area through the prism of Muslim civilization. Russia has built bridges with the Muslim world and where Putin intends to play a defining role. However, these relations are affected by the militant threat on the Russian territory of Chechnya and Dagestan and the memory of the war against the mujahideen in Afghanistan. Russian foreign policy for the Middle East the structure of which is being given by this perception. Moscow intends to play its part in the fight against terrorism and avoid any eventual destabilization of Central Asia, it's near abroad. Mainly transmitted by westerners, this policy which is being followed in the post 9/11 discourse and is part of the Russian-American rapprochement, it reveals an alternative diplomatic vision to those of the western diplomatic circles³.

The past period provided a great deal of clarity about some of the most important decisions facing the main players in the Middle East. It was the year when the US left its role as the guarantor of the Middle Eastern political order. The Russian entry into Syria militarily was a dramatic demonstration of how this is playing out. Taking the measure of American determination for which Putin has spent the past few years and testing the waters globally in Ukraine and elsewhere, Russia has the will to act and try to shape outcomes to suit its purposes while at least in Syria, the US does not. It is for any future American administration that will be extremely difficult to reverse, let alone fully correct, the impression created recently, especially in 2015, that the US has lost, or voluntarily surrendered, much of its regional influence⁴. The fact that since the Arab Spring the increasing influence of Moscow is related to it, Russia is easier to align with, and that the countries of the Middle East are now in a situation to ignore an alliance with the west particularly the U.S. and NATO. The Middle Eastern countries similarly profit from the military and economic deals which are being pursued by Russia as it expands its military presence in the region, from the shift of alliances as well as benefits. The Middle Eastern countries consequently are developing a transactional relationship with Russia⁵.



ENERGY GAMES

While the Western media persists in warning of apocalyptic consequences should Iran's nuclear ambitions lead to outright conflict with Israel, a conflict drawing in Russia is an entirely different scenario that has developed as the Russians have been quietly buying long-term into the Israeli-Cypriot gas and oil energy bonanza. The support to Kremlin by the public for its traditional Middle-East partners, its actions represent nothing less than a paradigm shift in the tectonic plates of regional power. More specifically, they represent an effective Russian backing for both Iran and Syria⁶. In the Middle East, the move by Putin involving a multitude of planning and already competing for pipelines are too complex. Moscow's new expansion is being carried forward by State-owned gas giant Gazprom and oil giant Rosneft. A major guarantor of Russia's weal, Gazprom bears liquified natural gas [LNG] to European markets. Significantly, the most important energy hubs of the myriad Middle East pipeline players are Syria and Turkey, the latter linked to Russia's second door to the Middle East, through Georgia and the Caucasus⁷.

The ailing Russian economy can get a boost with his help, an economy that is still in the tank from low oil prices and from Western economic sanctions over Russia's taking back of Crimea and support to militancy in Eastern Ukraine. The military buildup of Russia has already revived the security on the world oil market small rally in oil prices based on the speculation of shortages in different regions of the world because of conflict in the Middle East. In the field of energy customers, Russia is a competitor with the Saudis, and a war in the Middle East makes Saudi supplies look less reliable. With its new airbase in Syria, Russia could coordinate with Iran to disrupt shipments from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea terminals⁸. The Middle East with its notable energy resources and geopolitics is one of the most significant regions in the world.

The region has been the center of a rivalry between great world powers since World War I which ended with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. These powers aim to develop relations with regional states after the discovery of substantial energy reserves, particularly in oil. The region emerged as an important source of energy globally since the 1930s and the key to the stability of the world's economy. According to BP's Energy Outlook for 2035, the Middle East remains the world's largest oil-producing region; with 810 billion barrels in proven reserves - almost 50 percent of the world's total. Its share of global supply is expected to fall from 32 to 28 percent over the next few years, but return to 32 percent by 2035. Gazprom and the Russian state generally expand their ties with countries of the region for Russia's benefits and with this in mind; they want a presence in the Mediterranean for its strategic and geopolitical importance. If Gazprom was successful in obtaining a stake in the Leviathan Field, Russia would not only have been a part of the Mediterranean energy game but its influence would also have expanded in the Middle East. Russia's support for the Assad regime in Syria and its military intervention with Daesh are also part of the Kremlin's strategic policy in their projections for the future of the Middle East and the Mediterranean region⁹.



Russia holds the world's largest proven reserves of natural gas, most of which wait to be explored and continually alternates with Saudi Arabia as the top oil producer¹⁰. Out of the total supply of European oil and natural gas a third is being supplied by Russia and is now starting to export more to the energy-hungry East Asian markets. The energy sector is far more than a commercial asset for Moscow; it has been one of the pillars of Russia's national security and stabilization and increasing strength for more than a century. Nearly half of the Russian government's budget consists of energy revenues. The continuous flow of this capital proved to be instrumental in helping Russia build the military and industrial basis needed to maintain its status as a regional if not a global power. Revenues also became a large vulnerability as Russians became dependent on energy. The energy sector also contributes to Russia's ability to expand its influence to its immediate neighbors¹¹.

In recent years, Russia has consistently improved its domestic energy industry and took it as a major force to stimulate the economy and as a tool of foreign policy implementation¹². In the field of energy export nations the Middle East and Russia became rivals. The world's energy importing countries are trying to find new sources of imports in order to reduce energy dependence on the Middle East through the oil advantage of the region still exists, Russia has been a very good choice. The Middle East also has strategic significance to Russia, but there lacked a diplomatic strategy of Moscow in the region, but since Putin attained power, more attention and adjustment of the strategy showed the importance of the Middle East. From the geopolitical perspective, the Middle East is an important factor related to the security of the Russian homeland and especially the southern part¹³. Towards the major exporting countries Russian energy diplomacy has been to strengthen communication, promote cooperation and fair competition and jointly maintain world energy market stability. Russia competes as well as cooperates with OPEC to jointly promote the international energy order which is beneficial to the oil-producing countries¹⁴.

In the Middle East as it is now clear that Russians want to enter the region with an energy card in their hands. It utilizes the advantages of energy export cooperation and will have close contacts with major oil-producing countries with further penetration into the Middle East. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, being different from the United States' pro-Israel policy, Russia had actively made contacts with Hamas and greatly enhanced its political influence in the Middle East¹⁵.

SOVIET POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In the early and Mid-1970, the Soviet foreign policy suffered several setbacks towards the Middle East. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat expelled most Soviet military advisers from Egypt in 1972 and abrogated his treaty of friendship and cooperation with Moscow in 1976. The Arabs widely blamed insufficient Soviet support as a hurdle for the Egyptian army's further movement towards Tel Aviv after Egypt's complete victory against Israel in the October 1973, war. The conclusion that Moscow had no influence over Israel as according to most Arab nations and that only Washington could influence



that state. Many Arab governments including Syria for a time cooperated with the United States seeking a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moscow was on the diplomatic sidelines¹⁶. In the Persian Gulf at that time, the Shah of Iran was a close ally of the United States. The conservative Arab monarchies Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates were also firmly linked with the West; except for Kuwait, they all refused even to exchange embassies with Moscow. Only in Iraq and South Yemen, was the Soviet Union influential. But even in Iraq, the ruling Baath party did not hesitate to suppress the large Iraqi Communist party¹⁷.

In 1978-1979, however, the Soviet Union appeared to be gaining influence in the Gulf and the Middle East. The American-sponsored Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel alienated almost all Arab governments since no provision was made for an independent Palestinian state. Most Arab governments broke relations with Egypt and criticized the United States for sponsoring an agreement that they felt sheltered Israel from having to make important concessions on the Palestinian issue. Not only did radical states like Syria come to rely more heavily on the Soviet Union, but even anti-Communist Saudi Arabia began the process of improving relations with Moscow. The rise of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's to power in 1979 with the anti-American policy led to the loss of Washington's influence in Iran. Moscow hoped to ally itself with Teheran on the basis of a common anti-American foreign policy¹⁸.

In the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Soviet Union soon switched sides. After it tried to maintain a policy of friendship with Israel at first, Abstaining from and allowing the passage of Security Council Resolution 95 in September 1951 an attempt was made to maintain a friendship policy towards Israel, which chastised Egypt for preventing ships bound for Israeli ports from traveling through the Suez Canal, asking them to cease interference on shipping for political reasons, in armistice violation discussions in the Security Council in 1953, it sided with the Arabs. The first state to instruct their envoy to as late in December 1953 to present his credentials to the President of Israel in Jerusalem was the Soviets, the Israeli annexation of and usage as the capital being controversial. This move was followed by other nations and strongly protested by the Arabs as flouting UN resolutions¹⁹. A Security Council resolution relating to a Syrian-Israeli water dispute was vetoed by the Soviets on January 22, 1954, because of Arab objections for the first time, and soon after even vetoed a resolution expressing concern that Egypt did not live up to Security Council Resolution 95. The resolutions recognizing Israeli rights could not pass because of the Soviet veto policy as complained by Israel. The Israeli demand at the same time for direct negotiations with the Arab states did not receive support from the Soviets, which the Arab states opposed²⁰. A major episode in the Soviet relation to the conflict was also the Czech arms deal with Egypt for arms from the Soviet bloc in August 1955. The Soviets after the Mid-1950s and during the Cold War unequivocally supported various Arab regimes over Israel. The Soviet Union's position along with its satellite states and agencies was that Zionism was a tool used by the Jews and Americans for racist imperialism. The meaning of the term Zionism was defined by the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union defined the meaning of Zionism that the main posits of modern Zionism are militant chauvinism, racism, anti-communism, and



anti-Sovietism overt and covert fight against freedom movements and the USSR²¹.

The Soviet policies towards the Middle East until the Brezhnev period ended were principally influenced by the demands of superpower competition with the USA. This was followed by a series of broadly chronological case studies of the main Soviet alliances, such as Syria and South Yemen; and of Sadat's Egypt and Khomeini's Iran²². The Soviet policy's main thrust of which has been toward greater regional involvement, the USSR's local objectives as well as the strategies, tactics, and ideological dicta employed for achieving them have undergone frequent revision. It was likely to require a major setback in the future to the Soviet position either in the Middle East directly or in the Communist world to secure diminution of Soviet involvement²³. Soviet policies toward the Middle East had shown low interest and involvement mainly due to the weakness of the Communist movement in its projections for development and expansion, but also because of the directions of its foreign policy course. The Soviet Union as fairly said became strongly involved in the Middle East region only after the ending of the Second World War while the actual penetration to the Middle East region dates from the Khrushchevian era²⁴.

The Soviet policy towards the Middle East was defined by the idea to spread and secure its influence in the region as opposed to the Americans and to promote socialism among the peoples inhabiting that area. The prominent aspect of Soviet foreign policy was the dualism of advocating a worldwide revolution and assuring its own national security²⁵. The justification for Soviet involvement in the Middle East was based on the notion of the proximity of this area to the Soviet homeland²⁶. While the battle for ideological leverage in the Middle East was not so different than the rest of the world stage under Cold War terms. After the Second World War, when the Soviet Union decided to tackle the Middle East, this region was primarily Western and increasingly an American sphere of influence²⁷.

There are many shreds of evidence and writings dedicated to the Soviet Union – USA confrontation in the Middle East²⁸. However, it seems that it was during the Nixon era, during the détente period when the U.S. decided to deal with the Russian threat in a more institutional manner. It was through that period of time with the US, the Soviet Union became differently incorporated into the international system. Besides the close communication and talks on several mutual areas of interest, Moscow and Washington agreed to establish a hotline between the foreign ministers Gromyko and Kissinger. The Soviets were perceived as determined to increase and expand their presence in the Middle East, though not for expanding and promoting communism²⁹. The main point of Soviet power in the Middle East was the support it gave to Egypt and Syria mainly in arms supply, although this relationship was not even close to the US-Israel alliance. In his writings, Nixon underlined that the Soviets were seeking access to what they long-desired land, oil, power, and the warm waters of the Mediterranean rather than ideological conversions³⁰.



PUTIN IN THE MIDDLE EAST

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Middle East region did not lose its appeal for Russian foreign policy. This was a result of Russia's interests, although some claim that given its limitations, Moscow naturally gravitated towards the one region where it still stands a superpower³¹. In the late Yeltsin era in which the Russian identity and its new role had its roots but Putin has subtly deflated the balloon of US power by cleverly manipulating developments in the Middle East which includes the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Lebanon, Iraq, the Syrian revolution and other regional issues. Russia three decades back was a very different place, and as it took its first fragile steps in a world full of dangers, the Middle East was not a top priority. In the Russian Middle East policy, the remarkable development that took place after the turning point in 2005-2006, which mirrored Putin's turn to full control. Whether Putin's Middle East policies can be reconciled with Russia's long-term interests economically and strategically remains to be seen³².

Championing of the Kurds with which Russia as per western perception aims to divide Europe and NATO. As Turkey downed a Russian jet couple of years back, Russia retaliated by amassing her forces on the Turkish border to secure a base in the Syrian Kurdish region. The armed forces of both were engaged in fighting just a few kilometers away and had the clash occurred NATO could either be unwillingly dragged into war or to Putin's satisfaction lose all credibility as a common defense pact. It may be for a reward for hosting of a Russian base, and as snub American support which really should have been there from the start, the Kurds of Rojava, in northern Syria an autonomous Kurdish area, have been given their first representative office overseas representative in Moscow. In northern Iraq, as well as Rojava there, exist the Regional Kurdish Government. There is a rise in the Kurdish campaign and are unlikely to ever accept to be a part of Syrian, Iraqi or Turkish administration, no matter what cessation of hostilities reaches³³.

The emergence of the Russia-Iran-Iraq- Syria alliance is of deeper concern that may challenge every component of U.S. policy in the region. Such an alignment could have destabilizing impacts far beyond the borders of Syria and may have far more important consequences than simply bringing more actors into the war against ISIS. Baghdad is now sharing intelligence with Russia and Iran, much to the dismay of U.S. policymakers the intelligence sharing between Baghdad with Russia and Iran is in full flow. Russian support has been welcomed by the Iraqi government and some politicians from the country are calling for even more Russian help, further undercutting the importance of U.S. military support. American diplomats and military leaders in Baghdad now must compete not just with Tehran in dealing with the Iraqi government, but with Moscow as well. The chances that the United States will cooperate with an anti-terror quartet composed of Russia, Syria, Iran, and Iraq are far less.

Russia now stands at the cusp of establishing itself as a major long-term power broker in the Middle East with military and diplomatic offensives already launched, rivaling



the United States' long-standing role. Power in the Middle East in some ways is a zero-sum game. The increase in Russian military presence on the battlefield along with the rise in its influence, regional confidence in the military and diplomatic clout and staying power of the United States will almost assuredly wane³⁴. In a larger geostrategic struggle against the United States and its allies in which Russia is engaged as believed by Kremlin, America has called for Assad's departure. Its desultory attempts to make that happen have not worked. By going to war for Assad, and by calling for a new international coalition against ISIS that includes the Syrian dictator, Putin has publicly downgraded US and is presenting Russia as an alternative guarantor of the world order³⁵.

Putin's consistency in his approach to the Syrian conflict and Moscow's unexpected success in holding its own against Washington led to the perception in Moscow of growing respect from leaderships in the Arab World, particularly those like Saudi Arabia which did not have a favorable tilt toward Russia. Moscow needed to be dealt with was the belief of leaders in these countries, even if this strained relations with Washington. More close consultations with Russia started in the region by some countries, to lobby for its support, and to return to the Russian arms market, while others resumed high-level exploratory contacts. Fortunately, for Putin, he has also benefited from the West's mistakes and intervention fatigue. Russia's focused political will resulting in these realities, Moscow continues to punch above its weight in the Middle East. The region is one of the butts, not a top priority for Russia. Even more since the onset of the Ukraine crisis, countries such as China and South Asia far outrank the Middle East as global geopolitical priorities³⁶.

THE TURKEY-RUSSIA-IRAN TROIKA AND KREMLIN'S INTEREST

It is from Tehran to Beirut that Iran has been expanding its influence in the Middle East. Any sort of political solution in the Sunni majority Syria which involves the ousting of President Bashar al-Assad would officially end the rule of the dominant Shias which are in minority and therefore thwart the influence of Iran the Shia country. On the other hand, Russia's focus goes far beyond Bashar al-Assad. According to analysts, there is an attempt on the part of Russia to reduce the influence of the European Union and NATO forces away from nations it believes should be under the control of Moscow. The aiding of refugees on which one hand the EU is strained under pressure and on the other Putin seems to be proud of it.

Turkey has also been dragged into the conflict. This is because of the Russian backing of Rojava known as Syrian Kurdistan, which is making advancements against the Islamic State and claiming territory on the Syrian-Turkish border. Though calls for restraint by the US, EU, and even UN, Turkey has continued to battle the People's Protection Units YPG the armed forces of Rojava, seeing them as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party PKK, which has been internationally classified as a terror organisation³⁷. Russia, Iran, and Turkey have agreed that the priority in Syria is to fight ISIS and terrorism



rather than remove the government of Bashar al-Assad, according to Mr. Lavrov, which marks a change in Turkey's previous stance. The terms set out by the troika should be followed for opening access to humanitarian aid and an extended ceasefire, before restarting the peace process in a document called "The Moscow Declaration." To facilitate the drafting of an agreement, which is already being negotiated for which Russia, Turkey, and Iran have shown that they are prepared, between the Syrian government and the opposition, and to become its guarantors, the declaration read³⁸.

All the previous efforts of Washington as well as Moscow to halt the escalation of the crisis were unsuccessful due to the provocation of the Syrian regime or rebellion groups along the line of contact (LoC). Eventually, after the peace talks in Lausanne in September 2016 ended without any significant progress, Russia – US dialogue over Syria completely fell apart. In the Middle East, Turkey and Iran are keen to maintain strong positions in the region besides their concern over the growing influence of Russia in Syria. The Astana talks hoped to lead further peace negotiations between Assad's regime and military opposition forces, but the current talks will definitely pursue a long-awaited resolution of the conflict. The Astana dialogue must include besides regional also international players. It would be really hard for the Troika to halt in the current status of the conflict in Syria the bloodshed in another part of Syria without the assistance of international players³⁹.

In the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, the three countries agreed to shift their focus to a political settlement as the Islamic State terrorists are being expelled from Syria by Damascus troops backed by Russian warplanes. A broad intra-Syrian dialogue among all segments of Syrian society is being backed by the three leaders, calling on representatives of the Syrian government and the opposition to participate in the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi. The agreements between Russia, Turkey, and Iran are proof of the fact that they have taken the initiative to solve Syria's crisis and will not give it up. The situation is still sensitive as everything depends on the political will of not only Russia, Iran, and Turkey but also other countries that have an impact. The participation of Iran and Turkey in the peace process has largely deprived the United States of maneuvering space in Syria⁴⁰.

The UN and the international community, unfortunately, did not succeed to end the Syrian war and stopping the refugee crisis. New hope for cooperation has raised after Sochi. The international community and the UN too during this period assumed effective responsibility in the struggle against terrorism and crisis management. On the other hand, Russia with its political and military power seems to avoid the risk of arrogant behavior, which can endanger the peace process success⁴¹. The violent conflict in which after losing ground to Moscow, Washington is taking a backseat. The conflict seems moving towards a possible stalemate over the future of the country. Assad though backed by Putin but many analysts believe he is not particularly wedded to the Syrian President. Moscow is more concerned for its sole foothold in the Mediterranean and therefore retaining control of the naval facility in the Syrian city of Tartus is of prime importance. Moscow may only have been interested in using its intervention in Syria as a way



to try to position itself as a great power⁴².

In the Middle East, the protection of Russian interests is one of the most consistent objectives of Moscow's policy in the region. However, scale and context are important. The Middle East accounts for a small percentage of total Russian exports and is not a critical market for the Russian economy⁴³. The regional economic activities of Moscow as said are intended to achieve more than monetary gain. Russia is being provided with economic opportunity with regional presence and influence. Russia is the driving force its interaction economically with the Middle Eastern countries is increasing.

The Gulf states have the financial strength unlike Moscow's traditional partners, Egypt and Syria to make the high-cost investments that Russia's domestic economy craves⁴⁴. Russia's sovereign wealth fund, the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), has entered into co-investment deals with the sovereign wealth funds of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE to make equity investments in the Russian economy. These investments stretch across a variety of commercial enterprises, agriculture, and infrastructure⁴⁵.

CONCLUSION

Moscow has been surprised as much as any other capital by the resurgence of its influence in the Middle East. Russia is now in a stronger position with national leaderships across the Middle East than it was in 2011, despite its Ukrainian crisis involvement, although its stock with Wahabi Arab public opinion has been sinking. The United States has to take Russia's interests into account in the Middle East is the value which is instrumental for the region and beyond is more important than ever to the political legitimacy of Putin as a strong leader at home.

The objectives of Russians have much to do with domestic considerations as in competing with the United States to win influence in the region. Russia's recent engagement of Moscow with Riyadh and its stance on Hamas and Hezbollah, for instance, are aimed at convincing regional actors to refrain from supporting or expressing solidarity with Chechen rebels. Being the only major power not dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas, it has an open hand to establish economic relations beyond the energy sector with a focus on those countries facing Western economic sanctions, where there is less competition for Russian exports, as well as Turkey and Israel. Russia's interests in Middle Eastern energy are different compared to China, the US, or the EU. As a major player in the international energy market, Russia has an interest in keeping the prices high while deterring key energy-producing countries from jeopardizing its market share in Europe. In the ongoing stand-off between Iran and the West over Tehran's nuclear program in which Russia has been on the forefront to gain benefit.

The Soviet Union became strongly involved in the Middle East region after the ending of the Second World War. Before the Mid-1950s, the Arab world was never a high-priority region for the Soviet Union's foreign policy and the actual penetration to the Middle



East region dates from the period of Khrushchev. Noted by Trenin that the strategic borders along the southern perimeter during the Soviet era were not precise. In fact, most Soviet leaders, including Brezhnev and Kosygin, showed no or small interest in that region, and only a minority favored the extension of the socialist community toward the Middle East. In more ways than one Europe too felt the onsequence of Obama's lack of vision. As Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kurds, Turkey, Russia, and various militants and terrorist factions such as ISIS and al Qaeda fight over the Middle-Eastern jewel, half of Syria's population has become displaced. Millions are moving towards Europe resulting in cultural strife the sparks of which will only bolster the breakup of the European Union.

Russia's deployment of forces to Syria marked a new chapter in Moscow's involvement in the Middle East and raised profound concerns about Russian strategy and its repercussions for broader regional security. It is about the exact Kremlin's Middle East policy under Vladimir Putin and that it resulted in the dispatch of Russian military power to Syria. Going forward, this robust new intervention means much more for the United States and its allies.

To be reckoned with as a force in the Middle East is the ultimate goal of Russian policy. It has made much of its recent intelligence-sharing deal with Syria, Iran, and Iraq in the fight against ISIS. Moscow does not have that much intelligence on the group to share due to lack of assets in the region, but the symbolism especially Russia's partnership with Iraq, the country in which the Americans invested so much blood and wealth are striking.

Moscow emphasizes the short-term nature of its intervention, yet Russia should remember that going in is the easy part. In a costly foreign adventure that Moscow could risk at a time when the Russian economy looks increasingly vulnerable. The missing point is the lack of Syrian strategy for which Russia desperately wants to engage the US in dialogue and demonstrate its great power status by showing that Moscow is Washington's main interlocutor in global security. The USA-led coalition collapse which has been prevented by the troika of Russia-Turkey-Iran and compensated for the deficiency of initiatives. To become the strong base for a historical partnership in the Middle East, the potentiality of this new balance of power is very high. To avoid the terrorism and violence spreading through ethnical, religious, and sectarian reasons in the region three actors can be the role model.

The Syrian society as per international law, itself will determine the future of the country. The humanitarian aid, reconstruction of the country, and normalization process are the concerns connected with it. The solidifying of power dynamics along with the peace talks and the Islamic State having largely been dislodged from the country, experts say the war's proxies are taking steps to resolve civil war potentially. It is worth noting that three of these deals were announced after Western sanctions on Russia were enacted in 2014, although these sovereign wealth funds did not violate sanctions as secondary sanctions have not been implemented with Kuwait increasing its pre-existing



investment with RDIF in 2015. The Gulf states like many countries in the Middle East have been unwilling to be politically constrained by sanctions against Russia. In Moscow's efforts to build a sanction-proof economy, besides regional trade activity, the investments in the Middle East are part of its economic policy.

In Sochi, the troika gained victory in the Syrian crisis by means of military and political stability. The statements by Trump and Putin were also an important step towards ending the war and passing to the political solution. A noteworthy achievement is the Sochi Summit targeting the defeat of terrorism in the Middle East and Eurasia. On the best approach for the West, there is no consensus to take with regard to Russia in the Middle East. The interrelation between Russian diplomacy in the region and the dynamics of Russia the interrelations between them for West confrontation leaves no illusions. Russia in this situation will not hesitate to take advantage of the situation in the region against western interests by responding to Western policies elsewhere if it found to be anti-Russian. The Western policymakers must keep in mind that currently, Russia is confident of its success in the Middle Eastern strategy based on the principle of balancing between the different regional players. Rapprochement with Iran, success in Syria, the strengthening of ties with Egypt, and the development of dialogue with Israel and the GCC further cement its self-assurance. The influence of Russia's approaches towards the Middle East consequently will be challenging.

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