

Military Intervention in Syria? The Troubled Middle East and NATO's Future Plans

By [Natalia Meden](#)

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The West is generously adding fuel to the fire in order to speed up the fall of the [Syrian regime](#). Will it come to a military intervention? In any event, the United States has developed specific plans for a military intervention, which are already being undertaken.

According to the Secretary General of NATO, the antimissile systems along the north-western border of Syria can be used to create a no-fly zone, and this is a well-trodden path towards military intervention. In addition to the NATO missile defense systems in the region, Germany is sending AWACS reconnaissance aircraft to potential future combat areas; it will be clear in which places and situations they will fly.

Also the transfer of additional U.S. forces to Iraq has been written about, which suggests the preparation for a ground operation... Formally, there is not even a broken a promise regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, which President Barack Obama has honestly fulfilled: but what he has not promised (!) is that the Americans will not return again to Iraq.

In political terms, for an intervention to take place the same play as in the Iraqi scenario can be used with some modifications. I remember ten years ago, U.S. Vice President Richard B. Cheney in his speech to veterans in Nashville, claimed that only fools or cowards think that intervention can be avoided. Last week, addressing the foreign ministers of NATO after the completion of the NATO council meeting, Anders Fogh Rasmussen called on the alliance "not to hide our heads in the sand."

External initiatives seem to have moved from the U.S. to NATO, but in fact nothing has changed. Also there is a statement from the U.S. side referring to intelligence information of the intention of the unpopular regime to use weapons of mass destruction. At the time, ignoring the data supplied by Hans Blix inspections, the Americans persistently referred to Saddam Hussein's intention to use all kinds of weapons of mass destruction – chemical, biological and nuclear. With Syria it becomes easier as it is limited to chemical weapons: in August this year Obama warned the Syrian leadership against its use.

The example of Iraq has not been forgotten, and to ward off such a charge, the Syrian government has done all it can, even up to appealing to the UN Security Council. However, this is unlikely to help. Never mind that not only the Syrians, but German intelligence claims: that [Assad](#) has no plans to use chemical weapons. But the Pentagon and the British Foreign Secretary William Hague have some information in this respect. (1) Meanwhile, according to media reports, the An Nushrah front (an organization close to Al-Qaeda) has taken control of a factory for chlorine production. The Syrian leadership notified the UN

Security Council about the threat of chemical weapons which has arisen from this side, but it is thought that its use or threat of use will play a role here no matter whose finger pulls the trigger.

When a fire breaks out, the smoke does not tell who threw the burning firebrand into the house. Thus, the German neo-Nazis for the last 70 years have claimed that it was not Nazi Germany, but Poland that started World War II by its provocations along the border. If we go back to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, then the U.S. did not refrain from outright forgery. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell when accusing Iraq presented before the UN a tube of anthrax and falsely interpreted satellite images. And when it turned out that the "evidence" was fabricated, it no longer mattered.

The possible presence of chemical weapons in Syria, of course, concerns the Atlantic allies so that it is sending soldiers, in addition to its military missile components, to the Turkish border. Germany, the Netherlands and the United States are sending similar amounts of equipment and manpower to Turkey: two sets of Patriot Missiles and 400 soldiers each (2). It seems that the recent assurances by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs and the head of the BND intelligence service that the Syrian regime is soon about to collapse under the blows of the opposition (3), was addressed in the first instance to the German public. By the way, according to polls, 59% of Germans do not support sending surface to air missiles to Turkey, and in the German parliament, which has to approve the decision of the government; the Left Party strongly opposes the granting of a military mandate.

Finally, for a military solution of the problem for the West to change the Syrian regime the "responsibility to protect" can be used as an appeal (a modification of humanitarian intervention). As formulated by the UN World Summit in 2005, the "Responsibility to Protect" requires States to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is assumed that in the inability of a country to carry out these responsibilities, the international community through the United Nations shall have the right to use appropriate means to protect the public. It can be recalled that so far in Syria more people have been killed than all the countries swept by the hurricane of the "Arab Spring": 42,000 people (the death toll in Libya is 30 thousand, 850 people in Egypt and Yemen, 200 in Tunisia, and 40 in Bahrain) (4). The German Defense Minister assured that in the case of the use of chemical weapons, Russia and China will change their positions and no longer block the UN resolution allowing intervention (5). As for the Turkish Prime Minister, he said that, given the inability of the UN to provide a legal basis for an invasion, there is a need to reform the UN.

It seems that today, the main difference from the situation that occurred in the Middle East 10 years ago, is the West's unwillingness to get involved in an escalating confrontation with the Muslim world. But how to achieve this strategic objective, given the regimes that have been brought to power in the Middle East?

Tunisia wanders from one poll to the next (October 2011 – Election of the National Constituent Committee, presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for June 2013), writing a constitution on the go and stumbling from one demonstration to another. As recently as last September demonstrators were chased from the territory of the U.S. embassy, and in late November a wave of social protests arose... The [Egyptian Government](#) which was created during the "Arab Spring", has undertaken the development of a new constitution: again the world's media are reporting from Tahrir Square, where it is reported that people are demanding the overthrow of the regime (6), although these claims do not

seem to apply to all the people ... [In Libya](#), western oil companies are satisfied with the change of regime. In particular, the German Wintershall Company reports that in 2013, it will build a new pipeline that will cover the existing shortage of export capacity. "Current oil production exceeds our expectations", said the chairman of the German Company (7). Meanwhile, next door, in Mali, another explosion is brewing, while Western analysts and politicians prefer to ignore the fact that this is a consequence of the overthrow of Gaddafi, whose army contained Malians.

The unrest in the area of the "Arab spring" can, of course, try to be explained by the local details in each case. However, there is something in common, which is characteristic of all these artificially troubled parts of the world, namely the transition from relative stability to very badly managed and largely non-governed structures. Simultaneously, the West continues to increase the supply of weapons to selected Middle Eastern regimes. For example, the Germans intend to deliver to Saudi Arabia a new batch of tanks, regardless of the fact that the German tanks were used by the Saudis to suppress unrest in Bahrain (or rather, that's probably why.) To say anything in this case, about the possibilities of Russian influence on the situation in the region is difficult. Moscow has already indicated that it is not within its competence to discuss diplomatic action by NATO. That is how Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov reacted to a statement by the German Defense Minister Thomas de Maiziere (8). It is time to think about where all this may lead in the future.

Notes

- (1) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20650582>
- (2) Joint Press Conference of Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs of Germany / www.bmvg.de. Stand vom: 07.12.12.
- (3) BND-Chief Gerhard Schindler "Das Regime Assad wird nicht überleben" Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 09.12.2012. Westerbelle erwartet baldiges Ende des Assad-Regimes. Süddeutsche Zeitung. 10. Dezember 2012.
- (4) In Syria - AFP news agency reports with reference to the latest data of the Information Centre for Human Rights (Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme) www.france24.com 09.12.2012; in other countries - these RIA Novosti.
- (5) www.bmvg.de. Stand vom: 07.12.12.
- (6) www.bbc.co.uk, 10.12.2012.
- (7) Wintershall investiert in Libyen und baut neue Pipeline // www.wintershall.com, 02.10.2012
- (8) ARD-Sendung "Bericht aus Berlin", 25.11.2012

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