

On Syria's Continued Resistance, Russia and the Threat to Western Power

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As a new year begins I wish to reflect on the Syrian government's continued resistance and impending victory—with the help of the Russian military—against western backed terrorist forces. The defense of Syria, after an almost six-year-long proxy offensive against it, has served a blow to the western imperial agenda while greatly strengthening Russia's position globally.

The western imperial machine has failed miserably in its regime change agenda in Syria. The US-led failure to oust Bashar Al Assad's secular government is a global game changer that may decidedly tip the balance of power away from the US and its western and Mid East allies (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and, until very recently, Turkey). Syria's withstanding would not have been possible without Russian involvement, firmly placing Russia as a counter to western power as we move into 2017. As Argentine journalist and analyst, Pedro Brieger, aptly maintains, Russia has emerged as the key actor in global politics, in recent years: "Russia proved that it has become the key player in the international arena. If you want to understand that just look at what is going in Syria," Brieger told [Sputnik News](#).

It was Russia's direct involvement in Syria and its provision of crucial military and strategic support to the Assad government that allowed Syria to resist the dirty proxy war that has been waged against it for the almost six years. It was also Russia, in cooperation with Iran and the purely opportunistic Turkish regime, that brokered a [nationwide ceasefire](#) between anti-Assad terrorists and the Syrian government, which came into force yesterday (December 29, 2016). One of the biggest turning points has been the recent liberation of the strategic and once most-populous city of Aleppo from Daesh/IS control and occupation. With instrumental help from Russia, the Syrian government has been able to take back the city. In mid December the Russian Reconciliation Center [evacuated 50,000 civilians](#) from eastern Aleppo. The evacuation of [5,000](#) 'rebels' and their family members from eastern Aleppo, via a humanitarian corridor, began around the same time.

Overall, though the West tried to topple the Syrian government for almost six years, using terrorist or 'rebel' groups as proxy, it has not succeeded—and this failure arguably weakens western/US/NATO's global hegemony going forward. Most importantly, western actions in Syria (and the broader Middle East) have highlighted just how hypocritical and contradictory western powers are. While the US has long claimed to be waging a global war on terror, it's overt support of terrorist groups in Syria, such as the US-backed 'moderate' terrorist group Nour al-Din al-Zinki, that brutally beheaded a Palestinian child in July 2016, as well as terrorist staples such as Al Qaeda and the Nusra Front, demonstrates the US' willingness to promote terrorism for its own interests.

This is not a new trend. The US has been arming and backing Islamist radicals and terrorist groups for decades, especially in its efforts to undermine the influence of Russia—a world power that does not seek uni-polar power, like the US does, and has repeatedly called for a multi-polar world in terms of both culture and politics. The US has been backing Islamic terrorist groups since at least the 1970s when, as the US [admitted](#) in the 1990s, American intelligence services began to aid the Mujahadeen—presently known as the Taliban—in Afghanistan 6 months *before* the Soviet-Afghan war began, suggesting that the terrorist group was to a large degree a creation of the US.

Promoting Islamic extremism was one western response to the so-called communist threat (read as the threat to NATO and US power) posed by the Soviet Union. The same is true of contemporary terrorist groups such as ISIS. While the west claims to currently be at war with ISIS, the reality is that western/NATO powers actually supported and armed these violent lunatics in an effort to undermine other *secular* Muslim regimes such as Assad's Syria. For instance, the [BBC](#) in 2013 reported that states such as France and the US gave arms and military support to the Free Syria Army, a so-called insurgency group openly linked to ISIS, in Syria.

Overall, despite western rhetoric against Islamic extremism and radicalism, Russian and or Soviet influence and involvement in the region has long been a *secularizing force* while the US and other western powers have long been allies, champions and or architects of radicalization. This is evidenced not least by the west's very cozy relationship with Saudi Arabia and Wahabi/Salafi Sunni Islam, which is arguably the most radical, extreme, and violent interpretation and practice of Islam today.

Much of the US' motivations for radicalizing Sunni Muslims are linked to its unwavering support for Israel. But it also greatly serves the US' own hegemonic interests, not least its efforts to undermine the Soviet Union in the past and Russia presently. For instance, an obvious yet unspoken component of the US/NATO campaign in Syria, as well as their efforts in Ukraine, and the so-called Missile Defense Shield in Europe, is to undermine Russia's ability to not only project power but also to defend itself strategically. These are examples of the West's attempts to militarily and economically contain Russia. But with US President-elect Donald Trump seemingly intent on a detente with Russia—reports have come out that [Russia is not](#) on Trump's list of Pentagon priorities—the tide could turn. If Trump does indeed plan to improve US-Russia relations, and given Russia's increasing status and global importance, 2017 could mark the beginning of the long transition to a saner and potentially more multi-polar world.

Do we dare hope for such things? The US has been a belligerent bully that has terrorized the entire world—directly or indirectly—for at least the last fifteen years (if not closer to fifty). I believe that much of the world would welcome any changes to global politics and the global balance of power that would have the US become less meddling, less war mongering and generally less imperial/hegemonic.

It remains to be seen what will happen. But one thing is certain: with respect to the West's imperial agenda, 2016 has been a welcome failure. Despite western mainstream media's and the global neo-liberal/neo-con propaganda campaign against 'evil Russia-Putin' and its insistence on the need to oust the 'Syrian regime,' at the end of 2016 these two stand as robust as ever. Indeed each of these targets has arguably been made more powerful and more relevant due to the west's (and its allies') colossal miscalculations. The fear-mongering campaign has backfired and has, ironically, helped elevate the status and

influence of Russia and the Syrian government as we enter the New Year.

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