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War in Yemen: Historic Prerequisites and Geopolitical Aspects (II)

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4/9/2015



The air campaign against Yemen launched by Saudi Arabia and its allies is another phase in the process of changing geopolitical realities in the Middle East. Various regional forces take part in the activities that lead to reshaping state boundaries, arms race and gradual erosion of strategic alliances with the United States and the West in general. It all complicates the situation in the Middle East. New alliances may be formed to change the way the Middle East chess game is

played.

Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Qatar will more frequently resort to so-called «humanitarian interventions» ignoring the principles of territorial integrity and state sovereignty stated in basic international documents. It has become useless to refer to the United Nations Charter. The situation in the Middle East makes remember the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The document emasculates the idea of hierarchically organized political community. The substance of this declaration is the «denial of independence which precluded the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights and that colonialism itself, no matter how Enlightened» (W. Bain, 2003, p.66). With the Declaration in force «An international hierarchy based on a state's level of development was no longer applicable to the relations between states, and thus trusteeship was no longer considered a viable policy alternative.» (1)

The United Nations Charter and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples obstruct the creation of «new world order» aimed at establishing an international hierarchy (a colonial regime). The dilution of the notion «state sovereignty» in the Middle and Near East (Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Bahrain) is normally explained by colonial past and the actions of the Islamic State. These explanations do not suffice. It is the United States who is responsible for reshaping the map of the Greater Middle East. The process was triggered by the US interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003).

Today the development of the process is fraught with danger. According to the estimates of experts and diplomats, there is a possibility that Libya, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and even Saudi Arabia may get partitioned into at least 14 states which, in their turn, may be united into Sunnistan and Shiitestan.

It's worth to note that the would-be reshaping of the Middle Eastern map according to the plans of Islamists is especially popularized by Anglo-Saxon authors. French experts are more cautious in their assessments. For instance, talking about the areas beyond control of state power Michel Fouchet says the Islamic State is a state-building project. The first thing it does is the creation of classic state structures, introduction of passports, currency, and all the things typical for states with national borders.

The Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia does not fight the transboundary Islamic State. It rather sides with one of the belligerents participating in the internal conflict. The situation in Bahrain unravels along the same lines. The Sunni government opposes Shiites who constitute the majority of population. In the both cases the Islamic State is used as a cover for propaganda efforts aimed at expanding military and political influence of Saudi Arabia and the pro-Saudi Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Looks like the development of situation will not be decisively influenced by military operations led by Saudi Arabia and the allies in Yemen. With the framework agreement achieved at Lausanne talks, a rapprochement between the United States and Iran is looming to become an important factor to impact the state of things. Besides, the Turkey's influence abroad is growing. Riyadh is seen as a rival and adversary by Tehran and Ankara. Turkish newspaper Taraf expressed an opinion (which is widely spread in Turkey) that

by joining the Sunni camp Ankara cannot abandon its role of third rate rear guard partner of Saudi Arabia.

Turkish Yenicag believes that the statement made by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in support of operation in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia doesn't meet the Turkey's interests. According to the outlet, it's important to understand that the conflict between Arabs and Iran is a fight for interests and regional leadership. The stand-off between Sunni and Shia branches of Islam is used as an instrument and a pretext to justify these and that foreign policy decisions. One thing is clear - Iran instills fear in Arabs. Turkey should protect its interests by taking a neutral stance in the confrontation between Arabs and Iran.

Turkey and Iran have some experience of mutual cooperation, including common search for a solution to the issues related to the nuclear program. If the project of U.S.-Iranian-Turkish alliance based on common foreign policy and energy goals becomes true, then Saudi Arabia may take reckless steps including launching its own nuclear program to follow the example of Iran.

[1] Bain W. The Political Theory of Trusteeship and the Twilight of International Equality // International Relations. Vol.17. №1. 2003. P.66.