

Russia saves Assad, we save Syria's life!

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To insist on the fall of Assad is neither morally responsible nor longer tolerable for humanitarian reasons.

It is time to review the objectives of the West in the Syrian drama. There are many objectives, too many!

The Syrian people wanted to get rid of its dictator. The West, i.e. the US and Europe, did not really get involved in this civil war. Western assistance was given nevertheless, rather covert, for fighters under the command of exiled Syrians, some of whom even were labeled being democratic – a very lofty assessment. Then, illusions about an "Arab Spring" leading to democracy and Rule of Law could hardly longer be maintained.

Around that time, Sunni Islamists of the al-Qaida fraction, in particular al-Nusra, began to pursue their own war aims. Again, the West just looked on. "Christian" ground troops in another Muslim country? Never again!

Only with the emergence of the IS was a passive role of the West no longer tenable, particularly since the IS began bringing the conflict to the Western world by carrying terrorist murders there.

The forces of the Assad regime were, in spite of Shiite support from Iran and Lebanon (Hezbollah), not strong enough to defeat the various rebellions and terrorist gangs. A permanent civil war evolved, carried out with incredible brutality, and with the result of millions of refugees and their flight into neighboring countries and to Europe.

For a while the West thought it possible to attain its diplomatic and military goals, i.e. the fall of dictator Assad, destroying the al-Qaeda troops, and defeating the IS.

Russia's military intervention on the side of the Assad regime has changed the situation fundamentally. With Russian help Assad will reconquer large parts of Syria, especially at the expense of non-Islamist Assad opponents.

Since the Western countries, absent military intervention, have no means to hinder Assad from regaining Western Syria, the West should acknowledge not to be able to topple Assad. Instead of supporting Assad's opponents, thus partially extending the civil war, the West should withdraw support from Assad's opponents and ally with Russia.

Such change towards a unified front is imperative on moral grounds. Only in this way a good chance exists to end the suffering of many people from hunger and bombs. It is certainly more humane to live under the dictatorship of Assad than to hunger and die in besieged towns and villages.

Only a united front of Assad, Russia and the West can stop the fleeing of refugees, and only a united front can fight and defeat the Islamist Nusra- and IS-terrorist groups.

Continuing assistance of other insurgents against Assad makes the Western responsible for further deaths and suffering in the Western regions of Syria and for any new floods of people seeking refuge elsewhere.

What problems would the West face with such policy change?

Some partners of the West would seethe. First, the NATO country Turkey. That would be acceptable because Turkey, under Erdogan, has long ceased behaving like a Western democratic state. Also, Turkey would have no tactical or strategic alternative, since it has fallen out with Russia. That the Kurds outside Turkey would be strengthened, could intensify the internal Turkish war against its own Kurdish population; still, that would have to be accepted.

Israel's anger at the solidarity of the West with, among others, Iran and Hezbollah in the Syrian issue would verbally explode, but would show the Israeli hardliners that also they would have to contribute to a peace settlement. Under no circumstances should any Israeli opposition be a reason to prolong the suffering of the Syrians and to provoke further refugee flows to Europe. In any case, it is about time to force Israel to a peace policy, at least towards the Palestinians in the West Bank. An Assad who is rescued by Russia and the West, who would be particularly dependent on Western reconstruction and development aid, could be very interested to keep the Golan at rest.

Saudi Arabia likely is so interested in a consistent fight against IS that it would accept a success of its Shi'ite regional adversary Iran though furiously, also because it has no strategic alternative.

Ultimately, granting Russia a great success in Syria, could induce Russia to be more cooperative in other foreign policy differences.

All these consequences may be unpalatable when changing Western policy in Syria. But such policy change most likely is **the only way to dry out the Syrian refugees stream at the source. That result should be worth our frank admission that we did not achieve our goal, namely the overthrow of Assad.**