

Current Concerns

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Battlefield Middle East – War on the “Islamic State” Notes from a perspective of military theory and geo-strategy

by Jürgen Rose



Jürgen Rose
(picture ma)

With regard to the thesis “War is not a solution” often repeated like a mantra not just in pacifist circles but also in circles dealing with political science, the question about the “sense”

or “nonsense” of the action by military force against the longstanding “Jihadist state-building project”², under the Rubrum “Islamic State” (IS), must seem heretical. For, if war can never present a solution, then not only any military action is a priori nonsense, but the question itself is pointless, since the answer to this is also a priori fixed. On the other hand, the sheer question of the meaningfulness of a military act of force implies the abstract possibility that a warlike action against the IS might be a solution. The purpose of the following considerations is to what extent and under what conditions this might be true.

Starting point is the thesis that an answer to the question of the sense or nonsense of a military action against the IS can not be derived from theoretical premises, but can be based solely on concrete empirical conditions of conflict. With regard to the latter, the phenomenon “Is-

lamic State” (Chapter 2 of this article) must be analysed first, followed by its role and function within the overall strategy of the most important actor in the Greater Middle East, namely The United States of America (Chapter 3). Finally, in the light of the over-arching question, some implications from geo-strategic and geo-economic perspectives are to be discussed in terms of the sense and nonsense of military control of the IS (Chapter 4). Before this, however, the fundamental problematic of the sense or nonsense of action with military means of violence has to be examined more closely (chapter 1).

I. Remarks on the senseless – versus sensible use of military

The general qualification of military use of force as being senseless is based on the unquestionable fact that almost inevitably humans, i.e. combatants who are involved in combat, as well as non-combatants who are not involved, are harmed, wounded, mutilated and killed. This is unquestionably true. Of course, such a point of view does not reveal the question of the legitimacy of military actions, particularly in regard to whether a military actor is pursuing an aggression and thus violating international law, or whether he is pursuing individual or collective self-defense in accordance with international law. In addition, such a statement appears to be peculiarly unhistorical and at the same time unpolitical, precisely in view of the devastating German military and war history: In view of the political result achieved in the end, the military defeat of the disastrous German militarism and also of the aggressive Japanese imperialism cannot be considered as “nonsensical”.

If the accusation of absurdity is also based on the actual or supposed ineffectiveness of real militarist actions, this ironically carries the risk of focussing and narrowing the perception of the problem on its one-sided military dimension. This must be avoided, otherwise the political or economic perspective of the conflict is taken out of account. The problem can be exemplarily illustrated by the his-

torical discussion between different military-strategic thinkers in Germany. One of them recruited from the adepts of the general field marshal Count *Alfred von Schlieffen* (1833–1913), the other from the followers of general *Carl von Clausewitz* (1780–1831). Ideally, their perceptions can be summed up as follows:

Von Schlieffen – fatal cult of military action

Schlieffen, as a pure craftsman of war,³ or according to the terminology of Clausewitz, as a grammarian of war, thought exclusively in the narrow limits of applied military strategy. He rejected the primacy of politics over war, just as *Wilhelm II* had expressed that motif with the motto: “In war, politics keep their mouths shut until strategy permits them to speak again.” Schlieffen’s military operations planning took place under purely military considerations, without consulting any political authorities.⁶ He is regarded as the “prophet of the battle of annihilation,”⁷ to him the “total destruction of the hostile forces”⁸ appeared to be “always the most commanding of all purposes pursued in war”. In order to realise, in his own view, the only goal of war¹⁰, Schlieffen developed his dogmatic doctrine of encirclement and decisive battle (battle of annihilation).¹¹ Typical in this context, was his assertion that the attack for the purpose of encirclement, and destroying of the hostile army was the only promising way of conducting military operations, while breakthrough or defense could not be successful.¹² The consequence was a fatal cult of the offensive¹³. As a result of this, among the generations of German general staff officers who had been influenced by the doctrine of Schlieffen, those typical military fallacies, manifested in the belief that “the victory on the battlefield coincided with the winning of the war”.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, Schlieffen presented “the prototype of a new kind of apolitical soldier, who alone lives his profession and is not interested in anything outside his narrow technical faculty.”¹⁵

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Warning shot or world war? Willy Wimmer warns about great misery after US attack

Interview by Sputniknews with Willy Wimmer



Willy Wimmer
(picture ef)

“The United States has been striving for world dominance since 1990” as Willy Wimmer, former State Secretary in the Federal Defense Ministry and former Chairman of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, recalls. Therefore, the

US attack on Syria does not surprise him. In the Sputniknews interview, he relies on prudent Russian reactions.

Sputniknews: Mr Wimmer, the US is attacking the Syrian military, who in turn combats the Islamic state (IS) in the country jointly with Russia. Are we on the verge of an international escalation?

Willy Wimmer: Yes, against the backdrop of the one-sided and unjustified action by the US, one must be of this opinion. Countries such as the United States, Great Britain and France, who started the war in Syria six years ago, do not comply with anything. They do not even comply with the UN Charter. Again they wage war in a well-known way. In conflicts inflicted by themselves. We know this at least since the war in Yugoslavia. When, if not now, there would be a need for a meeting between President *Putin* and US President *Trump*. After all, the mood is escalated here in this country. The people are similarly depressed, silent, taciturn and worried, as foreign observers have described about Germany before the outbreak of the Second World War. The people all over the world feel likewise because the Ramboesque action of the US president once again presents the world with a fait accompli ...

In any case, the Federal Government has, unsurprisingly, placed alongside Trump and welcomed the attack on the Syrian

military. Do you think the Chancellor has nothing left to do? Or does she really stand behind this US intervention?

One must, of course, see that the Federal Government itself is in difficulties of explanation, concerning the German participation in the Syrian territory, which is also not justified under international law – eg, tornadoes of the German armed forces, having collected data on a later destroyed school. In my opinion, the Federal government is currently glad that one can blame with pointing finger the USA and keep oneself a little bit out of the discussion. On the other hand, it is odd that they now place themselves on the side of the US President whom they criticised a few hours earlier for his policy.

So you clearly say: The US attack was not legitimate. In your opinion, are there adequate international responses?

The Chinese stated very clearly that it is not tolerable at all that a state, especially not a NATO state, makes its chemical weapons suitable for daily use. The use of chemical weapons is like opening Pandora’s box. There is a red line, the Chinese have expressed that. In addition, those things are fabricated on their own. We have also seen the howling of the Western press concerning the supposed poison gas attack at Idlib. But much is staged. We are driven into conflicts for decades. We have been deceived so sufficiently by the Western media that today no one gives a damn for what *ARD*, *ZDF*, *CNN*, *BBC* and others say. One can assume that these media are volunteering for the lie.

Russia argues that Syrian terrorist groups are responsible for the toxic gas. Thus, the fronts between Russia and the West continue to harden. What does this mean for the peace process in Syria?

Of course nothing good. However, the current dramatic situation offers the opportunity for the Russian and US American heads of state to meet as soon as possible. For the worries of the people be-

fore a global war, before a Third World War, are justified. Many observers point out that our present disastrous situation is very reminiscent of the Cuban crisis. This makes it clear where we stand. You have to put an end to it! Now there is a good opportunity to appeal to reason.

After the spontaneous intervention of the US in Syria, does it really have to be assumed that US President Trump will also drive this line in other conflicts and that we can still expect US military solo actions?

We know that since the end of the Cold War, the US has been pursuing a new, consistent line: they are striving for global dominance. They say so openly. You need to look at the directives of US presidents, which allows these people to wage war. This is the same pattern that we saw in 1939. This makes it clear in what serious controversy we are. One can only look with deep respect at Moscow that has such a sensible president, and not such an unpredictable head of state as Trump. We can assume that US actions can make many countries feel provoked. This is a fact.

Finally, Mr Wimmer: Well, you have a critical look at political world events for a long time. Can the present situation be compared with the beginnings of the Iraq war in 2003?

I’m closer to 1939 than to the mendacious Iraq war in 2003. They are telling lies since 1990 with a vengeance. No difference whether it is against Iraq or against Yugoslavia. This is a pattern that we have seen since the port of Havana in 1898 and the explosion of the USS *Maine* in US foreign policy. These are the self-created false flag operations, which entitle them to attack others. So: Either we stop this, or we end up in misery! This is the inevitable consequence. •

Source: <https://de.sputniknews.com/politik/20170407315244651-us-angriff-wimmer/> of 7. 4. 2017; Interview *Marcel Joppa* (Translation *Current Concerns*)

"Battlefield Middle East – War ..."

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In sharp contrast to Schlieffen, the strategist and military philosopher Clausewitz was a "logician of war"¹⁶. Hardly any fact proves this more impressively than his famous dictum which states accordingly "that war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means."¹⁷ He added: "This principle makes the whole history of war understandable, without it everything is full of the greatest absurdity."¹⁸

Clausewitz – interweaving political and military action

Accordingly, the primacy of politics against military applies categorically and unrestrictedly, "for politics has produced war; it is the intelligence, the war is merely the instrument, and not (the) reverse"¹⁹. This means that "there cannot be a purely military assessment of a strategic question and no purely military plan for its solution."²⁰ Political action and military operations are inextricably interwoven. Therefore, for the strategist, the first and most important question is that of the actual objective of the military use of force or war, that is, all military measures and efforts have to be directed toward this goal.²¹ For Clausewitz the overarching final purpose of every strategy and every military action is always peace. This peace is, of course, characterised by the fact that "one's will is forced upon the enemy,"²² and his disarmament is necessary for this purpose as "the real goal of warfare."²³ War must be regarded as a political act, as "a true instrument whose use is in one hand. This hand is embodied by politics. The urgency of the question to be solved determines the extent of the use of force."²⁴ According to Clausewitz's conception, there can be wars "where the goal is even a trifle, a mere threat, an armed negotiation or, in cases of alliances, a pseudo-action. It would be quite unphilosophical to maintain that these wars did not affect the art of war any more. As soon as the art of war is compelled to concede that there can be wars, which do not aim at the extreme, the defeat and annihilation of the enemy, it must also descend to all possible grades which may demand the interest of politics. The task and the right of the warlike art of politics is to be prevented chiefly from the fact that politics demanded things which are contrary to the nature of war, that they should make mistakes out of ignorance of the effect of the instrument in their use."²⁵ Therefore, for Clausewitz there is a very differentiated spectrum of both the conflict mode, which can range from a state of

"As already stated, the emergence of the "Islamic State" can be attributed directly to the US aggression war against Iraq in 2003. Already in the planning phase of this international law crime, the then US Vice President *Dick Cheney* expressed that it was about more than merely about Saddam Hussein's head, but that he wanted 'to use the end of Saddam's regime as a platform for wider reforms in the region'." Then as of 2005 under the rubrum "Redirection" the former US Secretary of State *Condoleezza Rice* spoke of "the spreading of creative chaos in the region [...], to advance the plan for a New Middle East by President *Bush*".

merely armed mutual observation to the military destruction of the adversary,²⁶ as well as options of military operations, and when analysing this he comes characteristically to the conclusion that not the attack, but, on the contrary, defense is the strongest form of war.²⁷ In contrast to the attack, the aim of which is the conquest, defense means safeguard and protection.

To consider geo-strategic and geo-economic determinants

With regard to the question of the absurdity or seriousness of military action against the IS follows from the preceding comparison of the two disparate military schools of thought that a criticism based on a diagnose that a success of the military operations against IS, as conducted by the coalition installed by the US, is not recognisable or totally inadequate, has its shortcomings. Also a criticism pointing out that the fact that IS is still in existence demonstrates the absurdity of the military application of force is too shortsighted and bears the danger to argument in the sense of the militaristically constricted thought patterns of the Schlieffen school. In contrast for a critical assessment of the actual conflict it seems to be necessary to take Clausewitz's differentiated approach into consideration. That is one has to take into account the overarching geo-strategic and geo-economic determinants in the Syrian-Iraqi war zone by subsuming the military events under the political realm. In the following, the phenomenon of the "Islamic State" (IS) is to be examined as a decisive actor of violence and as an addressee of military counter-violence.

II. The "Islamic State" (IS) – terrorist organisation, quasi-state or caliphate?

The "Islamic State" (IS) is a union of Sunni Muslims with tens of thousands of members who have been classified as

terrorist groups by the Security Council of the United Nations in its *resolution SC/11495* of 28 July 2014. The terrorist organisation controlled, or still controls large areas in Iraq and Syria, where it operates as a "Islamist"²⁸ or "jihadist state project"²⁹ or "state building project"³⁰, respectively, declared as a "caliphate". In addition, it is active in various other countries, including Libya, where it launched an "emirate" in 2015, as well as in Nigeria, Afghanistan, Central Asia, etc., and campaigns for fighters for its worldwide war operations.

As of 2004, the terrorist organisation was listed under "al-Qaeda in Iraq" (AQI), from 2007 as "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI), from 2011 to June 2014 as "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS), and further as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and as well the transcribed Arabic acronym "Da'esh".

Caliphate idea – a clever move

After the military conquest of a contiguous area in the east of Syria and in the northwest of Iraq with the metropolis of Mosul the terror organisation announced on 29 June 2014 the establishment of a caliphate with *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi* as "Caliph Ibrahim – commander of the devout Muslim". He is believed to have been born near Samarra in Iraq as *Ibrahim al-Badri*. He is said to be an Islamic scholar, but theologically never in appearance- He is said to have visited Islam seminars and to have the diploma of an Islamic College in Samarra and Baghdad.³¹ He is supposed of having passed one or two years in the US prison Camp Bucca in southern Iraqi where there were radical jihadists, military and intelligence officers merged in common cell blocks, from 2004 including no fewer than 17 of the 25 members of the future top leadership squad of IS, and where ex-

Because they still want Victory

Why there is no peace in Syria

by Karl Müller

Once again, might is right. The following text was written one day before the US attacks on Syria. What happened 24 hours later was already looming ahead. Now also the new US President has decided to continue the disastrous tradition of the US war policy violating international law. At this point the question of what made him break his campaign pledge has to remain unanswered. He has to bear the responsibility for this decision and its consequences. It looks downright perverse, however, that the anti-Trump campaign which has been on for months is now silent and now that he has blood on his hands US hawks like John McCain and "leaders" of other NATO states like the French President and the German Chancellor are declaring their "solidarity". – This speaks a lot for our "community of values" and for the state of today's world. – Yet: Still everything has to be done to prevent an extension of the war.

Again the Syrian government is accused for being responsible for a poison gas attack on the civilian population in an area occupied by "rebels". In the Syrian proxy war, the public has become used to charges being issued without proof. This is true also here.

The central question is why not only all of our media but also all responsible Western politicians are joining in these accusations. What are we talking about if not about the assessment of proven facts? Why do we still see so much propaganda? Why is it always about escalation and never about de-escalation?

Why this immediate finger pointing?

It would have been de-escalating if all sides had called for an honest and thorough investigation of the incident. But this did not happen – at least not from responsible Western politicians. It is alarming that the US government is forming the vanguard of this movement. The US government has the means to intervene massively in Syria and against the Syrian government. Nobody knows which consequences this might have. It has to worry us extremely that we now hear that the US President had "changed his attitude towards head of state Assad", that

"It does not take much to create political enemy stereotypes or to keep them alive. So what can we do? One possible answer could be to ask the right questions in the first place. To distrust official announcements and to follow media accounts critically. At best they show the peak of the iceberg. Syria is only one of the timeless stories dealing with injustice, suffering and human abysses. Why not renounce the logic of

power and dominance, to think us differently, including all people of good will? Maybe it really takes a fundamental change in awareness, the insight that we have no other choice but taking the future in our own hands."

Michael Lüders: *Die den Sturm ernten. Wie der Westen Syrien ins Chaos stürzte*, 2017, p. 169

(Translation Current Concerns)

the Syrian government has stepped over "red lines" and that the US would also act without approval of the UN Security Council, that is, violating international law. Obviously in Washington the agitators and war hawks are winning out.

"The first casualty when war comes is truth"

We all know that in the current situation where a proxy war is going on in Syria (as well as in other places), the war drums are sounded. Of course the saying "The first casualty when war comes is truth" is true also here. This is not an abstract statement but has been proven several times for Syria – only recently in Michael Lüders' book "Die den Sturm ernten. Wie der Westen Syrien ins Chaos stürzte" [Those who reap the whirlwind. How the West threw Syria into chaos]. The author explains what is at stake in the war in Syria and that the "sponsors" of the war were ready to pay any price for victory – even if it seemed remote. These "sponsors" were and are still sitting in leading political positions in the US and their allies.

On 5 April a German daily newspaper, the "Landeszeitung" issued in Lüneburg – it was the exception in the press review – was writing: "A sarin attack against individual rebel positions will not bring Assad closer to a military victory – especially after a partial withdrawal of the Russian forces. However, it might be the rebels' political calculation that a war crime for which the regime can be held responsible could revive the determination of Assad's enemies in the West." This can be food for thought for all citizens.

But: The Western governments will already be better informed and let their poli-

tics neither be controlled by the media nor by the Syrian "rebels". If they still join the movement, we can only draw one conclusion: They still want victory ... and thus escalate the war. •

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“For the practical implementation of the redirection strategy the leadership of American intelligence misused Islamist and Salafi groups of various persuasions by using financial resources of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States working on a fragmentation of the State in Iraq and on a civil war in Syria.”

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perienced soldiers of the Iraqi army were recruited for the battle of IS. The name Abu Bakr chosen by al-Badri is symbolic because Abu Bakr was one of the first followers of the Prophet Muhammad, after his death he became Caliph, i. e. successor, and ruled over the community of the devout believers. The addition of al-Baghdadi in turn refers to the seat of the caliphate at times of the Abbasids who founded an Islamic Empire. The symbolism of this name refers to the claim of IS to reconnect to the tradition of earlier eras, now being the guardian of the true faith and at the same time to form the spiritual centre of the Islamic world. “The idea of caliphate was a clever move also because it gave radicalised Sunni much more room for identification as al-Qaeda. ... al-Qaeda was yesterday, IS is the branding of today and tomorrow.”³³

2003 an aggressive war of complacent vassals

The cradle of IS was in Mesopotamia, which, in 2003, by a coalition of complacent vassals under the leadership of the USA, had been inflicted with an aggressive war, violating human rights. The destruction of the Iraqi army was carried out with lightning speed and the implemented occupation policy of immeasurable stupidity, ignorance, and unscrupulousness towards the Iraqi people and its culture with the result of the dismantling of the Iraqi army and the destruction of all party- and state structures, resulted in the shortest possible time in a massive uprising against the occupation regime which continued from 2003 to 2011. It was supported mainly by the Sunnis, who were previously in power under *Saddam Hussein*, with radical Islamists quickly setting the tone. As of June 2003, a combat group of about 2,000 men under the leadership of the Jordanian *Abu Musab Az-Zarqawi*, known as the “Community for Tauhid and Jihad” (JTJ), participated in the resistance of Sunni groups to the US occupation regime in Iraq. The terrorist group was initially active mainly in the Anbar province, Divala and Baghdad, by use of bomb at-

tacks, hostages and assassinations preferred against Iraqi policemen, soldiers, and especially against Shiites.³⁴ In October 2004, this group joined al-Qaeda and changed its name in “Organisation of Jihad’s Base in Mesopotamia”, usually referred to as “al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)”.

Clinton – “Part of what we are fighting against right now, the United States created”

The original birthplace of the terrorist parent company itself was nota bene in the Hindu Kush, where decades before in the Soviet-Afghan war it had been “part of a covert CIA operation, which had already been prepared under the *Carter* administration, and which aimed at the funding and active support of Islamic fighting groups who later became known as al-Qaeda.”³⁵ It was no less than the then US Secretary of State, *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, who years later in an interview on 7 November 2010 in Melbourne, Australia ‘attended’ by War Secretary *Robert Gates* in the broadcast “ABC’s Nightline”, had conceded frankly that it had been the US itself, that had brought *Osama bin Laden* and his terrorist group into this world. Literally she placed on record: “Part of what we are fighting against right now, the United States created. We created the Mujahidin force against the Soviet Union. We trained them, we equipped them, we funded them, including somebody name *Osama bin Laden*.”³⁶

More than half of the Nusra fighters defected to al-Baghdadi

In October 2006, after Iraqi branch leader *az-Zarqawi* was killed by a targeted air strike from US forces in June 2006, AQI proclaimed, after the inclusion of several smaller groups of resistance, the successor organisation “Islamic State in Iraq” (ISI). The terrorist organisation was financed primarily by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Gulf monarchies.³⁷ Due to their ruthless brutal approach, combined with devastating massacres, and the creation of powerful tribal militias on the basis of adventurously high payments given by the US occupying forces, ISI got into an existential crisis by the end of 2010.³⁸ In May 2010, *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi* took over the leadership of the thinned-

out ISI cells. During the so-called “Arab Spring”, many former commanders of the Iraqi armed forces of *Saddam Hussein* joined the ISI as of 2011, as a result of which it regained its combat power. In addition, “the personnel composition became increasingly international by means of Saudi funding and recruitment”.³⁹ As a result, the ISI continued its fight against the Shiites in Iraq and the reigning government of *Nuri al-Maliki*. “When Syrian armed resistance against Assad gained speed, al-Baghdadi founded the terrorist organisation *Jabhat al-Nusra* there at the end of 2011 under the leadership of Syrian *Abu Mohammad al-Julani*. ... The proximity to the ISI and to al-Qaeda was initially concealed, for good reason: al-Qaeda and the Iraqi ISI were not popular among the Syrians.”⁴⁰ By 2013, *Jabhat al-Nusra* had grown to the most powerful guerrilla group in the Syrian civil war. After that, al-Baghdadi, in April 2013, decided to clarify that *Jabhat al-Nusra* was basically nothing but an offshoot of his ISI and demanded al-Julani to publicly pledge allegiance to him, which he refused. Instead he declared his allegiance to *Ayman al-Zawahiri*, who following the assassination of *Osama bin Laden*, became successor in the leadership of al-Qaeda. The latter demanded al-Baghdadi to continue keeping ISI and the Syrian *Jabhat al-Nusra*, which is operating in Iraq, separate, which the latter, however, rejected. Al-Baghdadi was officially expelled from al-Qaeda by al-Zawahiri in January 2014, which is why he broke with al-Qaeda in return and declared al-Julani the apostate. “More than half of the Nusra fighters then left Julani, defected to al-Baghdadi, and pledged allegiance to him.”⁴¹ As a result, the northeast of Syria, Rakka, and the Euphrat Valley were added to the areas of Iraq controlled by al-Baghdadi, who called its terrorist organisation “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” (ISIS), and then “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL), until finally, with the proclamation of the caliphate on 29 June 2014, after the conquest of Mossul, was only called IS.

The Islamic state is not a terrorist militia, but a ruling organisation

The “Islamic State” is not simply a terrorist militia. This characterisation, which is widespread in the media, is a triviality.⁴² In fact, we are dealing with a ruling organisation, which at times controlled about a third of Syria and Iraq. Up to eight million people live there, and the IS, the so-called caliphate, de facto functions as a state authority.⁴³ There are tens of thousands of administrative staff available to the administration, as well

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as lawyers, judges, engineers and doctors.⁴⁴ The IS handles in a barbaric, totalitarian way, its own judicial system, which is oriented to the most extreme Islamic jurisprudence, it raises taxes, recruits soldiers, promotes and exports oil. It also maintains the supply of markets and the power supply. In mid-November 2014, the IS announced the introduction of its own currency based on gold and silver coins. All nine IS provinces have their own budget, with a financial adjustment between them for the benefit of the poorer regions.⁴⁵ A separate social system has also been established for the families of killed or imprisoned fighters, there are soup kitchens for the poor and the needy. In the areas controlled by the IS, the schools are open, for the school, the IS publishes its own school books⁴⁶ and university life is continuing.

Is Islamic state a subject of international law?

In contrast to other state-building projects, however, the "Islamic State" does not seek diplomatic approval or membership in the United Nations, because it simply rejects the international state system.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the question of the statehood of the IS is not insignificant concerning the legitimacy of its combatting by military force in the framework of the United Nations Charter as well as of international humanitarian law, since these regulations presuppose, in case of an international, armed conflict, that the war parties in question involve states which are subjects to international law – and the latter is precisely not applicable to any criminal or terrorist organisations.⁴⁸

III. On the IS' role and function as part of the US geo-strategy

At this point, a description of the geostrategic and geo-economic essentials of US policy in the international system, as they emerge in *Halford Mackinder's* "Heartland Theory"⁴⁹ or *Alfred Thayer Mahan's* "Influence of Sea Power upon History"⁵⁰, for instance, would be necessary, but would be beyond the constraints. Therefore, the focus should be confined to the Middle East region.⁵¹ As already stated, the emergence of the "Islamic State" can be attributed directly to the US aggression war against Iraq in 2003. Already in the planning phase of this international law crime, the then US Vice President *Dick Cheney* expressed that it was about more than merely about Saddam Hussein's head, but that he wanted "to use the end of Saddam's regime as a platform for wider reforms in the region".⁵²

"Early last year the former four-star General came out again with a statement, remarkable for an insider of the top military establishment, when he put on record, that ISIS is created and funded by the 'closest allies' of the US.⁶⁵ Literally he said: 'ISIS got started through funding from our friends and allies. People will tell you in the region that if you want somebody who will fight to the death against Hezbollah, you don't put out a recruiting poster saying "sign up for us, we're gonna make a better world." You go after zealots and you go after these religious fundamentalists. That's who fights Hezbollah. It's like a Frankenstein.'"

Rice – "Spreading of creative chaos to advance New Middle East"

Then as of 2005 under the rubrum "Redirection"⁵³ the former US Secretary of State *Condoleezza Rice* spoke of "the spreading of creative chaos in the region [...], to advance the plan for a New Middle East by President *Bush*"⁵⁴. In January 2005, Rice pointed out before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, "that there is 'a new strategic alignment in the Middle East,' separating 'reformers' and 'extremists'; she pointed to the Sunni states as centers of moderation, and said that Iran, Syria and Hezbollah were 'on the other side of that divide.' [...] Iran and Syria, she said, 'have made their choice and their choice is to destabilize.'"⁵⁵ In its substance this new strategic alignment for the region aimed to split up and enrage the local religious groups, the Sunnis and the Shiites, against each other more than it already was the case for historical reasons. The purpose of this was to reach the maximum benefit for the US interests out of this sectarian conflict. In 2008, a research report created for the army of the United States by the think tank *RAND Corporation* confirmed again this perfidious strategy. It recommended that the United States "could also choose to capitalize on the 'Sustained Shia-Sunni Conflict' trajectory by taking the side of the conservative Sunni regime against Shiite empowerment movements in the Muslim world."⁵⁶ In order to contain Iran's power and influence in the Gulf region, "US leaders could decide to concentrate, in the short term, on shoring up the traditional Sunni regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan as a way of containing Iranian power and influence in the Middle East and Persian Gulf."⁵⁷

Islamist groups of different political couleur misused

For the practical implementation of the redirection strategy the leadership of

American intelligence misused Islamist and Salafi groups of various persuasions by using financial resources of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States working on a fragmentation of the State in Iraq and on a civil war in Syria.⁵⁸ So the aforementioned RAND report pointed out that at that time already "in Iraq such a strategy is being used at the tactical level, as the United States [...] forms temporary alliances with nationalist insurgent groups [...] by exploiting the common threat that al-Qaeda [...] poses [...] and providing carrots in the form of weapons and cash."⁵⁹

"Blood borders" – ruthless, violence-based, purely self-serving analysis

In 2006, the military analyst and Lieutenant Colonel of the US Army *Ralph Peters* described exemplarily in the *"Armed Forces Journal"* under the characteristic title "Blood borders", how the world has to envision this realignment policy à la US for the region of the "Greater Middle East".⁶⁰ For an area "between the Bosphorus and the Indus", he drew completely new borders for states to be defined according to the criterion of ethnic and religious group affiliation. A ruthless, solely violence-based, and purely self-serving analysis forms the basis of his spooky-looking outline: "Correcting borders to reflect the will of the people may be impossible. For now. But given time – and the inevitable attendant bloodshed – new and natural borders will emerge. Babylon has fallen more than once. Meanwhile, our men and women in uniform will continue to fight for security from terrorism, for the prospect of democracy and for access to oil supplies in a region that is destined to fight itself. The current human divisions and forced unions between Ankara and Karachi, taken together with the region's self-inflicted woes, form as perfect

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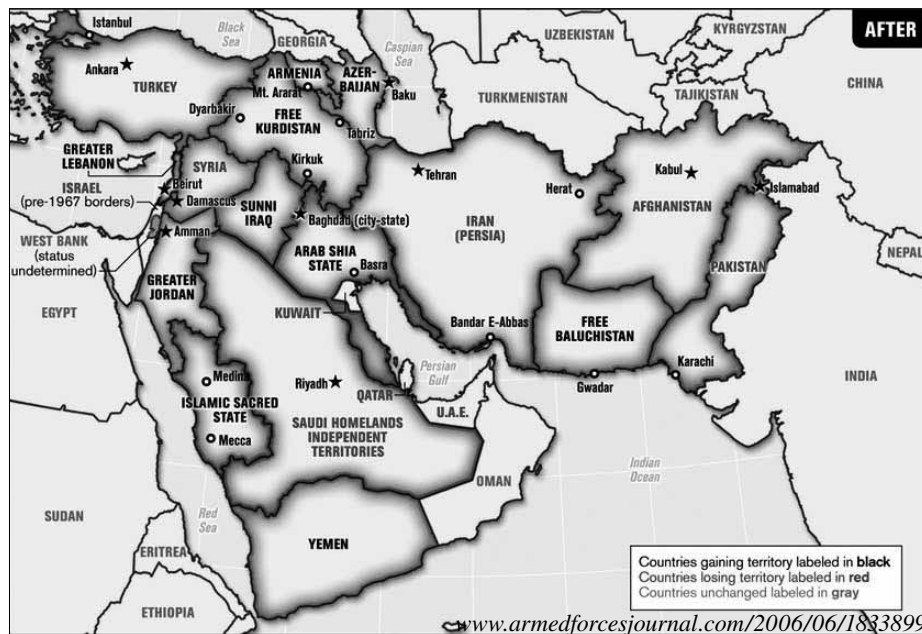
a breeding ground for religious extremism, a culture of blame and the recruitment of terrorists as anyone could design. Where men and women look ruefully at their borders, they look enthusiastically for enemies. From the world’s oversupply of terrorists to its paucity of energy supplies, the current deformations of the Middle East promise a worsening, not an improving situation. In a region where only the worst aspects of nationalism ever took hold and where the most debased aspects of religion threaten to dominate a disappointed faith, the U.S., its allies and, above all, our armed forces can look for crises without end.”⁶¹

Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld – government criminals

These above-mentioned considerations are anything but a mere fiction. A year later, the four-star general and former NATO Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark confirmed this, revealing that already in 1991 the former Pentagon Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz informed him during a personal meeting that the US harboured war plans to topple “the Soviet clientele regime” in Syria, Iran and Iraq.⁶² A few weeks after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, a general from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) showed him a memorandum of the former Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, outlining the global war plans of the United States of America. According to Clark, his fellow told him: “This is a memo that describes how we’re going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and finishing off, Iran.” On a meeting of the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, the retired General and Vietnam veteran summed up: “Our country had fallen into the hands of a group of men, Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others, who wanted to destabilize the Middle East, plunge it into chaos and bring it under our control”.⁶³ And these government criminals do not back off from supporting terrorism, because so Clark: “[...] we are supporting terrorist groups, apparently, who are infiltrating and blowing up things inside Iraq – Iran. And if we’re not doing it, let’s put it this way: we’re probably cognizant of it and encouraging it.”⁶⁴

“ISIS is created by the ‘closest allies’ of the United States”

Early last year the former four-star General came out again with a statement, remarkable for an insider of the top military establishment, when he put on record, that ISIS is created and funded by the “closest allies” of the US.⁶⁵ Literally he said: “ISIS got



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It may remain an open question, whether Wesley Clark was influenced in his assessment by a “Information Report” of the US Military Intelligence DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency)⁶⁷ of 12 August 2012. On the basis of that report at this time it is, however, clear that the US Administration had to be clearly aware, of where the development was heading to in the theatre of operations in north-eastern Syria and north-western Iraq.⁶⁸ The central findings of the DIA were as follows:⁶⁹

- “The Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria.”
- “AQI supported the Syrian opposition from the beginning.”
- “AQI conducted a number of operations in several Syrian cities under

the name of Jaish al Nusra (victorious army), one of its affiliates.”

- “Internally, events are taking a clear sectarian direction.”
- “If the situation unravels, there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist Principality in eastern Syria (Hasaka and Der Zor), and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran).”
- “This creates the ideal atmosphere for AQI to return to its old pockets in Mosul and Ramadi [...] ISI could also declare Islamic State through its union with other terrorist organizations in Iraq and Syria, [...]”

“Staged regime change from the very beginning”

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ly inspired by the pursuit of freedom and democracy, this intelligence document illustrates only too clearly that in truth it was about something completely different: that is to say a regime change in Damascus, from the very beginning violently staged, by means of terrorist-acting Islamist extremist groups.⁷⁰ The fact that for this purpose the West and its allies used any means, is proved by a revealing document from Riyadh which was presumably written at the beginning of 2012.⁷¹ In view of the increased survival prospects of the Assad government after Russian intervention, Saudi Arabia as one of the main warders of the war against Syria feared that “the situation will reach a high degree of danger for the Kingdom, which must seek by all means available and all possible ways to overthrow the current regime in Syria.”⁷² The fact that exactly this happened, is testified shortly afterwards by the DIA report already mentioned, in which “US intelligence predicted the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS), but instead of clearly delineating the group as an enemy, the report envisions the terror group as a US strategic asset”⁷³ Which in fact meant that the US (and its Western allies) hoped for the establishment of a Salafist territory in East Syria.⁷⁴ A formation of a Sunni state was

also mentioned by *John Bolton*, former US ambassador to the United Nations and member of “Project of a New American Century” and one of the architects of the Second Gulf War, when he demanded: “I think our objective should be a new Sunni state out of the western part of Iraq, the eastern part of Syria run by moderates or at least authoritarians who are not radical Islamists. What’s left of the state of Iraq, as of right now, is simply a satellite of the Ayatollahs in Tehran. It’s not anything we should try to aid.”⁷⁵

Consequence – Christians and other minorities are slaughtered

In view of these facts, it is hardly surprising that the former DIA Chief Lieutenant General *Michael Flynn*, who had previously served as the Director of the News Section of the “Joint Special Operations Command’s” (JSOC), revealed that “the Obama administration supported Islamic terrorists, including al-Qaeda, in the rebellion against the Syrian regime. ‘I don’t know that they turned a blind eye, I think it’s a decision,’ the former DIA chief said. ‘I think it was a willful decision.’”⁷⁶ This deliberate aid to Islamic terrorists fighting Bashar al-Assad was a decisive factor in the rise of the IS.⁷⁷ Among the numerous US officials who admitted that “Obama’s so-called anti-ISIS coalition helped create, arm, and fund ISIS”⁷⁸, Flynn was the highest-ranking person dis-

cussing in public the role which the United States played in bringing about the brutal terrorist group that subsequently slaughtered the Christians and other minorities in the Middle East. However, despite all warnings, the White House continued to provide material support in the form of “weapons, PR, communications, funding, training, international legitimacy, and more”⁷⁹ to those formations officially listed as terrorist organisations.

Joe Biden – there were no “moderate” rebels

The remarks made by *Joe Biden* during a speech given at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government on 2 October, 2014, were spectacular and eye-opening at the same time.⁸⁰ Biden – in a move that diametrically opposed the views of his President Obama – conceded that there were no such things as “moderate” rebels in Syria and that the anti-IS coalition supplied ISIS with weapons. “And what my constant cry was that our biggest problem is our allies – our allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria. The Turks were great friends [...] the Saudis, the Emiratis, etc. What were they doing? They were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad except that the people who were being supplied were al Nusra – and al-Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.”⁸¹ And from those terrorist groups, ISIS recruited for itself, Biden added.

“Rat line” – weapons from Gaddafi’s arsenals to Syria

The cunning way in which the terror monster – named “Frankenstein” by Wesley Clark – was systematically brought to life, was first described by renowned investigative journalist *Seymour Hersh* for the “London Review of Books”.⁸² There, he details how the US cooperated intensively with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, in fact “creating what the CIA calls a ‘rat line’, a back channel highway into Syria.”⁸³ This so-called “rat line” was authorised by the Obama administration at the beginning of 2012 and “was used to funnel weapons and ammunition from Libya via southern Turkey and across the Syrian border to the opposition.”⁸⁴ It bore no significance whatsoever that “[m]any of those in Syria who ultimately received the weapons were jihadists, some of them affiliated with al-Qaeda. It pertained to the rat line.”⁸⁵ According to the concluded agreements, “funding came from Tur-

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key, as well as Saudi Arabia and Qatar; the CIA, with the support of MI6, was responsible for getting arms from Gaddafi's arsenals into Syria. Retired American soldiers, who didn't always know who was really employing them, were hired to manage procurement and shipping. The operation was run by *David Petraeus*, the CIA director [...]."⁸⁶

Hidden supply line to ISIS

Further "Information Reports" by military intelligence service DIA indicate that the US government had precise information regarding the make-up of the weapon arsenal supplied to their terrorist allies. A report dated 16 September 2012 states, that "they have SA-7 and SA-23/4 MANPADS as well as unidentified missiles over two meters in length."⁸⁷ Another report from 5 October 2012 mentions, that "the weapons shipped from Syria during late August 2012 were Sniper rifles, RPG's and 125mm and 155mm howitzers missiles. The numbers for each weapon were estimated to be: 500 Sniper rifles, 100 RPG launchers with 300 total rounds, and approximately 400 howitzers missiles (200 ea – 125mm and 200ea – 155 mm.)."⁸⁸ Two years later, in the summer of 2014, Obama's National Security Advisor *Susan Rice* confirmed, that the US continued to deliver weapons to Syrian rebel groups.⁸⁹ To sum up, facing the extent to which "important Arabic allies" directly support ISIS and a never ending stream of fighters and weapons of the imploding "moderate" rebel troops supported by the US desert for ISIS [...], it is but a small step to the realisation that US aircraft movements into ISIS territory as well as those of the coalition could be a hint toward a hidden supply line. And this is exactly what high-ranking Iraqi sources have

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been claiming since the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015."⁹⁰

Geo-economic interests – advocates of two competing pipeline projects

That the policy of "redirection", that is the reorganisation of the Greater Middle East region as well as the geostrategic calculations so far discussed, is also based on massive geo-economic interests is clearly demonstrated by an article, revealingly entitled "Pipeline Politics in Syria – You Can't Understand the Conflict Without Talking About Natural Gas"⁹¹, which has been published by *Rob Taylor*, significantly again in the *Armed Forces Journal*. The author states quite correctly: "Any review of the current conflict in Syria that neglects the geopolitical economics of the region is incomplete."⁹² Specifically, it is about the fact that the war conflict in Syria and Iraq is essentially characterised by the diametrically opposed interests of the advocates of two competing pipeline projects.⁹³ The latter are intended to serve the purpose of obtaining the world's largest natural gas reserves, namely, the gas field South Pars/North Dome, which is located at the bottom of the Persian Gulf and is owned partly by Iran, partly by Qatar. Both countries had begun to extract oil in 1989. In

2009, Qatar had proposed to build a pipeline that would bring natural gas through Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria to Turkey and then would be connected to the already existing Nabucco pipeline, which would allow the gas to flow to Austria. It was necessary to reduce high production and shipping costs and to make Qatar gas more competitive on the European market. On the other hand, of course, the states over whose territory the pipeline would lead could expect generous transit charges. The Western industrial countries supported this project with the intention of weakening Russia's position in the energy sector and reducing the European dependence on Russian gas. In light of this, Moscow supported a competing project launched by Iran, which involved a pipeline in which Iranian gas was to be pumped through Iraq and Syria to Latakia and further to Europe. In a deal with Iran and their close ally Syria, the Russians apparently saw greater opportunities to influence prices, but also to marketing of resources in the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. In consultation with Russia, the Syrian president rejected the Qatar pipeline and entered into the deal with Iran – whereby he also gave the start signal for the attempt to bring him down. When, in July 2011, a 10 billion dollar project was announced for a pipeline from Iran through Iraq and Syria, the so-called "Arab Spring" had already plunged the Middle East into chaos. However, in July 2012, the agreement on the Iran pipeline was signed.

Qatar – about 3 billion dollars to Islamist fighting brigades only in 2013

It is clear that Qatar had already begun financing an armed insurrection in 2011 and, only by 2013, had sent some 3 billion dollars to various Islamist fighting brigades to overthrow Assad, in addition "it even offered a \$ 50,000 reward to defectors from the Syrian regime and their families and hosts a base from which the CIA has trained Syrian rebels."⁹⁴ More-

Attack was illegal

cc. As Professor Dr *Hans Köchler* points out President *Trump's* intervention is undoubtedly illegal under international law. "According to international law, the use of force is restricted to very specific cases, namely when an attack occurs against a country in self-defence, that is according to Article 51* of the Charter. Or when the United Nations Security Council authorises the use of force under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter. This was not the case, and for that reason the attack was obviously illegal."

Source: www.sputniknews.com/europe/201704071052419436-syria-air-strike-uk-reaction/

*Article 51 – Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

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over, the Qatari TV channel *Al-Jazeera* spread the voices of the Syrian opposition. In all these activities at least the UK, the USA, France and Turkey were inaugurated and supported them. Also from Saudi Arabia large sums flowed into building up armed units. The strategy was to destabilise Syria by terror in order to achieve a regime change. The Saudis have long been making plans for the overthrow of Assad because they wanted to contain the Iranian-Shiite influence in the region and dismantle the Tehran-Damascus-Hezbollah axis. From the outset, also the NATO country Turkey played a key role.

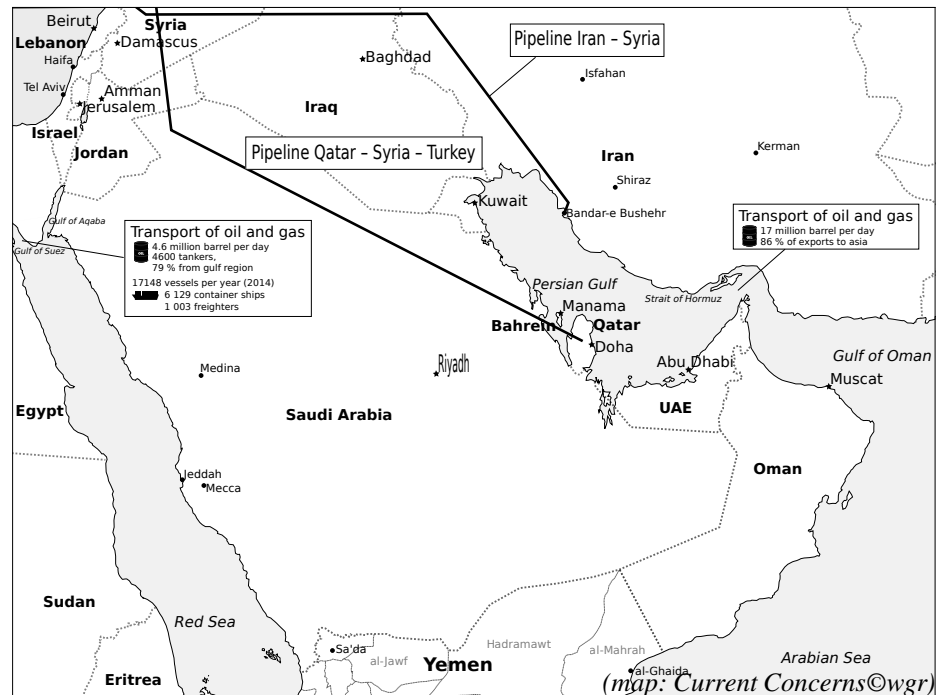
Erdogan assumes high transit charges

It can be assumed that President *Erdogan* has calculated with high revenue from transit pipelines through Turkey and that he hoped to reduce the dependency on Russian energy supplies. This may be one of the reasons why he is almost fanatically in favour of the overturn of the Assad government. Since 2011, Turkey has been a transit country and transport hub, through which weapons and chemical agents for numerous chemical substances were launched into Syria. They were used by terrorist militias such as the al-Nusra front, especially against the defenceless civilian population⁹⁵, as well as for combatants. Without the logistical base provided by Turkey, the otherwise fully encircled caliphate could not exist under any circumstances. The key finding from the analysis of the geo-economic factors led the above-mentioned US Major Taylor to the conclusion: "Viewed through a geopolitical and economic lens, the conflict in Syria is not a civil war, but the result of larger international players positioning themselves on the geo-political chessboard in preparation for the opening of the pipeline in 2016. [...] Reports that disregard the pipeline and its geopolitical implications ignore the elephant in the room."⁹⁶

IV. Implications for the military combating of IS

In view of the rapid expansion of the IS occupied areas, which even threatened the Iraqi capital Baghdad in the summer of 2014, the US was forced to fly air raids against IS units from August onwards and subsequently established an international alliance against the IS on 5 September 2014 during the NATO summit in Welsh Newport.⁹⁷ The founding members were: Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Australia, Canada, Turkey and

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"Specifically, it is about the fact that the war conflict in Syria and Iraq is essentially characterised by the diametrically opposed interests of the advocates of two competing pipeline projects.⁹³ The latter are intended to serve the purpose of obtaining the world's largest natural gas reserves, namely, the gas field South Pars/North Dome, which is located at the bottom of the Persian Gulf and is owned partly by Iran, partly by Qatar. Both countries had begun to extract oil in 1989. In 2009, Qatar had proposed to build a pipeline that would bring natural gas through Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria to Turkey and then would be connected to the already existing Nabucco pipeline, which would allow the gas to flow to Austria. It was necessary to reduce high production and shipping costs and to make Qatar gas more competitive on the European market. On the other hand, of course, the states over whose territory the pipeline would lead could expect generous transit charges. The Western industrial countries supported this project with the intention of weakening Russia's position in the energy sector and reducing the European dependence on Russian gas. In light of this, Moscow supported a competing project launched by Iran, which involved a pipeline in which Iranian gas was to be pumped through Iraq and Syria to Latakia and further to Europe. In a deal with Iran and their close ally Syria, the Russians apparently saw greater opportunities to influence prices, but also to marketing of resources in the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. In consultation with Russia, the Syrian president rejected the Qatar pipeline and entered into the deal with Iran – whereby he also gave the start signal for the attempt to bring him down."

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the United States of America. A few days later, on 10 September 2014, US President *Barack Obama* in a speech to the nation presented his future strategy against IS, which essentially comprises four points:⁹⁸

- A systematic air warfare campaign against IS targets in both Iraq and Syria.
- Support in form of training, reconnaissance and equipment by US military advisors for Iraqi and Kurdish troops, as well as for opposition groups in Syria, who should also fight against the Assad regime and against IS organisations. US soldiers were not allowed to land on the ground.
- Numerous non-military counterterrorism measures to prevent IS attacks, including the interruption of financing for terrorist operations and the prevention of the leakage of foreign terrorists into the war zone.
- Reinforcement of humanitarian aid to victims of IS terrorism and refugees.

Joffe: “Saudis and Americans do not really want it”

But in August 2014, one of the most ardent warmongers in Germany, “Zeit” editor-in-chief *Josef Joffe*, had complained: “Obama fights lukewarm.”⁹⁹ Within a short time, the ineffectiveness of the military action against IS became apparent and led to a fierce debate about the lukewarm air strikes of the then US President.¹⁰⁰ On 7 October 2014 “Washington Post” was criticising “that the U.S. air campaign is failing to achieve the minimal aim of stopping the expansion of the Islamic State – much less ‘degrading’ and ‘destroying’ it.”¹⁰¹ At the same time, military-strategic analysis of the situation suggested that the “Islamic terrorists [...] had made a mistake when they moved from al-Qaeda to the ‘Islamic State’” and thus abandoned the classic advantages of ‘asymmetric warfare’. Previously, they attacked out of nowhere. The IS now has a capital in Rakka. They fight in larger units. They have heavy weapons, depots and supply lines. This offers military targets. The local anchorage makes the IS vulnerable. This creates an asymmetry in favour of the West, which can use its best weapons. But they don’t do it.”¹⁰² “In the air war against the IS 15 attacks are flown daily in Syria and Iraq. On the other hand, 50 attacks were flown in the 2011 NATO-campaign against Libya. The average in Afghanistan 2001 was 85 per day, in the Iraq war 800. That means: The Saudis and Americans do not want it really. But war should only be started if one also wants to win.”¹⁰³ The conclusion from this was: “As long as the West does not take advan-

tage of its strength, the IS will be able to withstand. But this does not invalidate the principle: if terrorist acts like a state, they sacrifice their unique strength.”¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the war against the IS remained purely “cosmetic”, as the Deputy Foreign Minister of Syria, *Fayssal Mikdad*, rightly noted sarcastically.¹⁰⁵

Against ISIS Syrian ground forces would be needed

Taking into consideration the disparate and partly completely diametrical interests of the actors involved in the anti-IS coalition, the ineffectiveness of the military actions against IS were not really surprising. Indeed the US, Europe, Russia, Iran, Turkey and the Gulf States were all ready to fight against IS. “But a coalition of the willing needs a leading power that takes the greatest burden. And Obama’s US will no longer bear this burden. Neither the Europeans nor the US want to deploy any ground forces. Russia and Iran mainly want to save Syrian dictator Assad. Jordan and Saudi Arabia are flying attacks, nothing more. The idea that Sunni armies would clear up in Iraq and Syria as the West’s accomplices is as real as hoping for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.”¹⁰⁶ However, there would be

an option that the West and its allies, of course, would avoid like the plague: “In order to militarily counteract the ‘Islamic State’ effectively, i.e. with local ground troops, the Syrian army, which has long been acting as a militia, would be needed. The Syrian army solely is able to fight its guerrilla associations. [...] At the same time, targeting IS and Damascus is absurd.”¹⁰⁷ It remains to be seen whether and to what extent the re-conquest of Mossul and Rakka, carried out by Iraqi government forces, Kurdish militia and Iranian associations, will be a lasting success.

Pipelines – “Islamic State” like a locking bolt

On the other hand, there are by no means insignificant reasons which give rise to fundamental doubts as to whether a complete elimination of the “Islamic State” would be at all useful and advisable in the light of the geostrategic and geo-economic considerations already discussed. On the one hand, this is about the two competing gas pipeline projects. In this regard, the following is true: “The successes against [sic!] IS is against these interests, as Assad, who has been massive-

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“In view of these facts, it is hardly surprising that the former DIA Chief Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, who had previously served as the Director of the News Section of the “Joint Special Operations Command’s” (JSOC), revealed that “the Obama administration supported Islamic terrorists, including al-Qaeda, in the rebellion against the Syrian regime. ‘I don’t know that they turned a blind eye, I think it’s a decision,’ the former DIA chief said. ‘I think it was a willful decision.’” This deliberate aid to Islamic terrorists fighting Bashar al-Assad was a decisive factor in the rise of the IS.⁷⁷ Among the numerous US officials who admitted that “Obama’s so-called anti-ISIS coalition helped create, arm, and fund ISIS”, Flynn was the highest-ranking person discussing in public the role which the United States played in bringing about the brutal terrorist group that subsequently slaughtered the Christians and other minorities in the Middle East. However, despite all warnings, the White House continued to provide material support in the form of “weapons, PR, communications, funding, training, international legitimacy, and more” to those formations officially listed as terrorist organisations.”

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ly kept on the run through [sic!] IS, would be strengthened in his position and the pipeline project thus recede into the distance"¹⁰⁸ What this means is, that the West would also like to see realised the planned Qatar pipeline. Regarding the competitive project of an Iranian pipeline, it is true that the new "Islamic State", described by John Bolton as a desirable one, is acting as a locking bolt, but only as long as it exists.

Reasons "for" the "Islamic State"

A strategic analysis by the director of the "Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies", professor *Efraim Inbar*, who was published in August this year [2016] titled "The Destruction of Islamic State is a Strategic Mistake", reads strikingly.¹⁰⁹ The author, professor emeritus of the Institute for Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University and Fellow of the Middle East Forum, counts quite laconically the reasons for the containment of "Islamic State", but not its elimination: "The West should seek the further weakening of Islamic State, but not its destruction. A weak but functioning IS can undermine the appeal of the caliphate among radical Muslims; keep bad actors focused on one another rather than on Western targets; and hamper Iran's quest for regional hegemony."¹¹⁰ An essential advantage of his continued existence is that the "IS is a magnet for radicalized Muslims in countries throughout the world. These volunteers are easier targets to identify, saving intelligence work."¹¹¹ It was true that the IS fighters acquire destructive skills on the battlefields, "but some of them acquire shaheed status while still away – a blessing for their home countries. If IS is fully defeated, more of these people are likely to come home and cause trouble."¹¹² Moreover, it was extremely unwise to save the Assad regime by the removal of the IS, and to strengthen actors such as Russia and Iran, including Hezbollah. Strategic farsightedness was necessary: "The Western distaste for IS brutality and immorality should not obfuscate strategic clarity. IS are truly bad guys, but few of their opponents are much better. Allowing bad guys to kill bad guys sounds very cynical, but it is useful and even moral to do so if it keeps the bad guys busy and less able to harm the good guys. The Hobbesian reality of the Middle East does not always present a neat moral choice."¹¹³

It is not enough to record the events on the battlefield

At this point at the latest, it should be clear that the question raised at the outset on the meaning and nonsense of a military action against the IS cannot be answered sweepingly. By no means, it is simply enough to

Letter to  the Editor**Poison gas in Syria****USA and UK want a regime change in Syria**

This use of chemical weapons in the rebel-occupied city of Khan Shaykhun will do *Assad* the most harm, whether the regime is responsible for it or not. Certainly the Syrian military knows this, too. It should be remembered that inspectors were in Syria and monitored the destruction of the poison gas and had the chemicals removed, as was the case in Iraq under Saddam?¹

It should be remembered that a regime change operation was planned long before the Civil War in Syria. As US General *Wesley Clark* heard in the Pentagon a few weeks after the terror attacks of 11 September 2001, the US's aim was to organise a regime change in seven countries in five years, starting with the bombing of Iraq, then it was said that Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and in the end

Iran would have their turn.² Also the former Foreign Minister *Roland Dumas* said in a TV interview that the British had already prepared the war in Syria two years before the outbreak of the rebellion.³

Heinrich Frei

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² Seven Countries in Five Years, General Wesley Clark; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW0a8rNekBY>

³ Dumas, Roland. The British prepared for war in Syria 2 years before the eruption of the crisis. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeyRwFHR8WY>

record the events on the battlefield and to reduce this to its military dimension in the sense of a Schlieffen. For what happens on the battlefield only provides a shallow appearance. In Clausewitz' sense, the "big" policy remains crucial, i.e. the respective geostrategic and geo-economic interests of the actors. Only if we understand war as a political act the way described, the sense or nonsense of the use of force can be deduced. Based on this premise the military action of the numerous parties to the conflict in the Syrian-Iraqi war theatre seems to make more sense than the world would care for, not least because the warlords still rather seek for victory than for peace. Less Schlieffen and more Clausewitz should therefore be the maxim. •

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³ cf. Wallach, Jehuda Lothar. *Das Dogma der Vernichtungsschlacht. Die Lehren von Clausewitz und Schlieffen und ihre Wirkung in zwei Weltkriegen*, München 1970, p. 123 (The Dogma of the Battle of Anihilation. The Theories of Clausewitz and Schlieffen and Their impact on the German Conduct of Two World Wars)

⁴ cf. ibd., p. 111

⁵ cited. ibd., p. 67

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⁹ ibd., p. 110

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¹³ cf. ibd., p. 116

¹⁴ ibd., p. 114

¹⁵ ibd., p. 114

¹⁶ cf. ibd., p. 111

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²⁷ cf. ibd., pp. 50 as well as p. 120

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³⁰ Perthes, Volker. Kampf gegen IS. Viel mehr als eine Terrormiliz (Fight against IS. Much more than a terrorist militia), in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 25 September 2014, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/kampf-gegen-is-viel-mehr-als-eine-terrormiliz-1.2144142 as well as Trechsel, Anna (interviewer). Der Islamische Staat verbreitet in Syrien und im Irak Tod und Verwüstung. Ihn als Terrororganisation zu bezeichnen, greife zu kurz, sagt der Nahost-Experte Volker Perthes. "Das ist ein Staatsbildungsprojekt" (The Islamic state is spreading death and devastation in Syria and Iraq. To call it a terrorist organisation is too short, says the Middle East expert Volker Perthes. "This is a state building project"), in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 31 August 2014; www.nzz.ch/international/das-ist-ein-staatsbildungsprojekt-1.18374003

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(Translation Current Concerns)