



Nukes in the Fight against Terror

Obama's Nuclear Security, Putin's Euro-Titanic

In their last year in office, American presidents realize how time flies by – which led at the Nuclear Security Summit under Barack H. Obama that ended on Friday to well-crafted short texts on the results – and they realize that terrorists try ever more to get their hands on nuclear material. To ABC weapons we have to add Cyber weapons. Obama has brought together more than 50 states every other year now in four summits on nuclear weapons and how to secure them from terrorists. Web arms used propaganda to attract about 40,000 foreigners from 120 countries to the Islamic State, IS. Among them were 7,000 from the West, 800 from Germany and 250 from America. There is a problem when those jihadists return home.

Photo: Flickr



Obama developed a global network for nuclear security. Today there are 120 countries that joined the UN Convention for the Protection of Nuclear Material. In addition, 85 states and five organizations have pledged to fight nuclear terror. On Friday Obama watched with the participants a video of a simulated nuclear terror attack against a city. They then debated about it.

There are tendencies in a contrary direction. Besides North Korea's and Pakistan's expansion of their weapons and missiles, President Putin, who did not participate in the nuclear security summit for "weak cooperation" (as his spokesperson Dimitri Peshkov put it), has supposedly enlarged his arsenal of warheads. Both he and Beijing pointed to American atomic weapons.

Though Obama underscored on April 1st that no terrorist group so far was able to successfully obtain nukes or a dirty bomb, questions remain. He pointed to the "most active terrorist network IS." But he explained also that al-Qaida has been trying to get its hands on nukes, adding that jihadists who were involved in the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels made a video about a manager of a Belgian nuclear facility. IS used chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq, also mustard gas. Without any doubt, Obama concluded, if anybody among them could get hold of nukes or atomic material, that person would not hesitate to use it to kill as many innocents as possible.

On Friday Obama explained that Iran still destabilizes the Middle East. Yes, it builds missiles capable of carrying nukes, and it has threatened to eradicate Israel. Why did nobody talk about this at the same day 5+1 meeting with President Obama? America and the EU agreed with the UN on March 28 that the missile starts did not violate the UN resolution. On March 30 Tehran's Ali al-Khaminai praised the starts as a "joy for America's and Israel's foes." He warned against weakening the youth's belief in Islam and the efficacy of the government. The 5+1 states and especially Berlin should not allow any concession when Israel is threatened. Big speeches without counter-measures are of no use. Obama pointed to boycotts, though the nuclear deal is hardly to be called a huge success. The President wants Iran to behave normally. As in Cuba, the judgement is still out as to whether or not it is really possible to retune or entice regimes by speeches. So far they did not give up regimes, and they will not give up their nature or ideology.

Against Whom?

That democracies have after one and a half decades of the Global War not a clear enough idea about the opponents was demonstrated by an incident at the summit. President Hollande told Obama that the roots of the Islamist terrorism lie in Syria and Iraq. But the word "Islamist" was then left out in the [video](#), though not in the [text](#). Soon the White House has corrected the video.

François Hollande hit the nail on the head, though in fact the Islamists and their ideology have been active for more than a [100](#) years in the Middle East. Many Europeans use "Islamist," also Angela [Merkel](#). Obama rejects the term "[Islamism](#)" and fails thereby to fulfill his [lead](#) role in distinguishing between Muslims and Islamists, the faithful and the ideologues. Imagine if the Allies had struck out "National Socialism" so as not "to hurt all Germans." Whoever distinguishes between those terms does not throw everyday Muslims in the same basket as jihadists.

This problem is demonstrated by the report "Strategy for the Middle East and to Counter Violent Extremism" of February 15, [2016](#). If the term "Islamic State" was not used, there would be no reference at all to Islamism. The words counter violent [extremism](#) appear as unspecific as extremist ideology. The fight is waged against networks of propaganda and jihadists who are called there also foreign terrorist fighters, FTF. Against them struggle foreign fighter surge teams in Europe as well, for there is now an additional danger from visa free travel. Iran and Russia, the report claims, could contribute by cutting their support for Bashshar [al-Asad](#), the "main cause of radicalism and terrorism in Syria." This wording and the strategy appear vague: they obscure insights into history, and key concrete and specific elements of the Middle East.

Euro-Titanic

Not trained in military himself, Obama ordered a war against IS without ground troops. Thus, Syria's moderate opposition and Iraq's army had to play their roles. This made sense at first, for it is their land, and they have then to defend it. The tactics have not worked. Half a year, it was not directed at the origins and sources of IS. Then "Strategic [patience](#)" dragged it out even longer. Moderates and Iraq's army failed also by sectarian strife. Five years of the Syrian war, two war years against IS without victory, and the expansion in Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sinai, Nigeria, and Europe in a refugee crisis, weaken US allies, while empowering Putin's axis.

However, on March [31](#), near Moscow in a Security Council's session, Vladimir V. Putin appeared worried about the uncontrolled immigration from the Middle East to Europe: it has caused an outburst of crime, ethnic and religious conflicts, and social tension. Migrants, who have practically no opportunity to [integrate](#) into society, become the targets of propaganda and are recruited by extremist and terrorist organizations. Radicalism is growing among the local population as well. Putin asked for analysis taking full account of threats. He wants to monitor whether waves of migration are to be expected from the Middle East. Whoever likes to come to Russia, he says, has to study law, culture, traditions and language to engage in honest work.

Like Ankara, the Kremlin can exercise pressure on Europe if it triggers migrations. Putin would like to trade an end of Europe's boycott on account of the Ukraine against his pro-EU policies in the Mideast in case of jointly turning against IS. Though the EU is [re-nationalizing](#). The Dutch refused the Ukrainian trade deal. Austria set limits. Sweden locked down. Poles, Czechs and Hungarians do not like quotas. The British are considering their Brexit. Are there self-destroyers at the rudder of the Euro-Titanic heading for the icebergs? [Wolfgang G. Schwanitz](#)