



# **CIGS Yevgeny Satanovsky Seminar**

## **“The Middle East Knot” (Q&A)**

**(Summary)**

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Venue: Station Conference Tokyo 501AB

**Daisuke Kotegawa:** Thank you very much for the interesting presentation Mr. Satanovsky. We will now have our Q&A session. Please state your name, accreditation, and ask your question.

**Questioner 1:** I read an article in *The Japan Times* a few days ago written by Mr. Josh Cohen who is the former project officer with USAID. His claim was that the best way to beat Islamic State in Africa and Syria is offering the Sunnis their own state, which would be the incentive that you need to turn against Islamic State and just as importantly prevent any other Jihadi group from emerging. I would like to have your views on this question.

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** It is possible to have the eastern Syrian Desert with Raqqah plus Sunni areas of Iraq as a part of one Sunni state. However, the question is, will a practice of radical fanaticism, terrorism, and slave trading persist or not. Until 1922, slave trading was the norm in the Ottoman Empire and until the beginning of the 60s, slave trading was the norm in Saudi Arabia. All these leaders of Saudi Arabia were in their 40s when King Faisal, stopped the export, import and trading of slaves. The question is therefore, what will become of a potential Sunni state in the Middle East. Such a state is highly unlikely to be secular as it was under Saddam Hussein. It is also impossible to guarantee whether this state would become radicalized and pose threats to its neighbors, generating further conflict. It is possible to redraw the map in the Middle East based on closer ethnic and religious ties, but it poses a few problems.

**Questioner 2:** My question is about the strategy of President Putin. What will be his final call in Syria, and when he can order the Russian military to withdraw from Syria?

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** This is an interesting question – it is unclear that there will be a final call at all. The Duma recently voted for a Russian base knowing the timetable. Therefore, I believe Russian troops will be there after Putin for the time. Russian interests mean that there will be a long-term presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Syrian conflict is an unpredictable war with a lot of problems. This is not something which can be organized by a concrete timetable.

As an historical precedent, it was possible to stop the Third Reich rather than the Wehrmacht, SS, Luftwaffe, and Kriegsmarine. They had much larger forces than these two divisions of terrorists.

**Questioner 3:** I would like to ask you about the implications of China's involvement in Syria. Also, how do you explain cooperation between Iran and Russia?

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** Russia has a variety of agreements and disagreements with Iran. They can be ambitious, especially in the religious arena, which sometimes leads to problems. As far as Syria is concerned, Russia does not seek for it to become a part of an Iranian religious block. Syria must remain multinational and multi-religious. China has similar goals to Russia in Syria. They seek not religious, but security related influence there. In particular, they have interested in dealing with Uighur presence in Syria.

**Daisuke Kotegawa:** I would like to ask your views about where specifically ISIS received their modern weapons. One theory is that those were the weapons stored by Gaddafi, which were later taken by an unknown entity. Who actually sent those weapons to Syria through Turkey?

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** When Gaddafi's regime fell, had around 25 tons of chemical weapons or materials for chemical weapons. Half of them were destroyed, but we do not know where the remainder are. The situation is similar in Iraq after Saddam Hussein fell. The chemical weapons we have in Syria, are probably mostly not from Libya, but Iraq. There is a laboratory in Mosul University which produces a primitive type of chemical weapon. Chemical weapons are now on the primitive levels. Islamists do whatever they want, buying and selling any military equipment, traveling the whole of Europe and so on.

**Questioner 4:** What is the best way for Japan and Russia to cooperate in Syria as well as in Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan?

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** I do not believe that further efforts against terrorists in Tajikistan can be realized even more with Japan. The problems in Tajikistan are more likely to spill over to China and Iran, so further cooperation with these countries is likely to be more fruitful.

In Tajikistan, the biggest drug seller is their President, making a difficult situation to deal with as was seen in Afghanistan. Russia conducted special operations sometimes with Americans or on an international level, which were organized by the leaders of Afghanistan. Although there were successes, many of the officials were corrupt and continued to produce drugs. Therefore, in Tajikistan, people are afraid of a similar

situation, as many of the nomads of the territory in Afghanistan are Tajiks. This area is controlled by the drug barons, drug sellers, and drug users.

**Questioner 5:** One of the most interesting topics you touched on in the most detail is about Eritrea and UAE. Nowadays the Arab Gulf countries are more and more shifting their footprint not in the Gulf, but in the Red Sea. The trans-Red Sea region is becoming more and more prominent in my view. Is there a new emerging sub-region in the Middle East?

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** This new sub-region presents a host of problems. This region suffers from military conflicts, piracy deep corruption, and an economic crisis. Another prominent problem in this region is access to fuel. One of the major sources is energy from water, more specifically, the Nile. Six countries have signed a new agreement about the water of the Nile. Geopolitical problems present further challenges as the competition over resources is likely to grow.

**Daisuke Kotegawa:** When I looked at the list of names of people in Russia who are included in the sanctions, one person's name seemed to be quite peculiar. He is the head of a bureau in the United Nations that is in charge of anti-drug operations. I'd like to ask you why his name was included in the American's sanctions list.

**Yevgeny Satanovsky:** To tell you the truth, it's the biggest secret in the world why these sanctions were really there. A theoretical idea is that the only way to deter China on its road to superpower status, as well as Chinese cooperation with Russia, and the Russian-Chinese trade of oil and gas in Central Asia. Due to these factors, Russia was attacked by sanctions, and because of that, the Ukraine government was replaced.

The future of these sanctions is unclear and will depend on the results of the US Presidential Election. As for Hillary Clinton, I have known her for more than 25 years and know that she's absolutely sane. However, Donald Trump is absolutely unpredictable. We don't know what he is. Bernie Sanders is semi-communist /semi-socialist. Therefore, the future of America is very unclear.