

## A new geo-political map is unfolding – The end of Syria (and of “Palestine” for now)

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### ***Israelis generally are celebrating their ‘victories’. Will this euphoria weigh with U.S. business élites?***

Syria has entered the abyss – the demons of al-Qa’eda, ISIS, and the most intransigent elements of the Muslim Brotherhood are circling the skies. There is chaos, looting, fear, and a terrible passion for revenge scalds the blood. Street executions are rife.

Maybe *Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham* (HTS) and its leader, Al-Joulani, (following Turkish instruction), thought to control things. But HTS is an umbrella label like Al-Qa’eda, ISIS and An-Nusra, and its factions have already descended into factional fighting. The Syrian ‘state’ dissolved in the middle of the night; the police and army went home, leaving weapons depots open for the *Shebab* to loot. The prison doors were flung (or prised) open. Some, no doubt, were political prisoners; but many were not. Some of the most vicious inmates now roam the streets.

The Israelis – within days – totally eviscerated the defence infrastructure of the state in more than 450 air strikes: missile air defences, Syrian air force helicopters and aircraft, the navy and the armouries – all destroyed in the “largest air operation in Israel’s history”.

Syria no longer exists as a geo-political entity. In the east, Kurdish forces (with U.S. military support) are seizing the oil and agricultural resources of the former state. Erdogan’s forces and proxies are engaged in an attempt to crush the Kurdish enclave completely (although the U.S. has now mediated a ceasefire of sorts). And in the south-west, Israeli tanks have seized the Golan and land beyond to within 20 kms of Damascus. In 2015 the *Economist* magazine wrote: “*Black gold under the Golan: Geologists in Israel think they have found oil – in very tricky territory*”. Israeli and American oilmen believe they have discovered a bonanza in this most inconvenient of sites.

And a big impediment – Syria – to the West’s energy ambitions has just dissipated.

The strategic political balancer to Israel that was Syria since 1948, has vanished. And the earlier ‘easing of tensions’ between the Sunni sphere and Iran has been disrupted by the rude intervention of ISIS

rebrands and by Ottoman revanchism working with Israel, via American (and British) intermediaries. The Turks have never really reconciled themselves to the 1923 Treaty that concluded World War I, by which they ceded what is now northern Syria to the new state of Syria.

Within days, Syria has been dismembered, partitioned and balkanised. So why do Israel and Türkiye still bomb? The bombing started the moment Bashar Al-Assad departed – because Türkiye and Israel worry that today's conquerors may prove ephemeral, and may soon themselves be displaced. You don't need to own a thing in order to control it. As powerful states in the region, Israel and Turkey will wish to exercise control not just over resources, but over the vital regional crossroads and passageway that was Syria.

Inevitably however, 'Greater Israel' is likely, at some point, to butt heads with Erdogan's Ottomanesque revanchism. Equally the Saudi-Egyptian-UAE front will not welcome the resurgence of either ISIS rebrands, nor the Turkish-inspired and Ottomanised Muslim Brotherhood. The latter poses an immediate threat to Jordan, now bordering the new revolutionary entity.

Such concerns may push these Gulf States closer to Iran. Qatar, as purveyor of arms and funding to the HTS cartel, may again be ostracised by other Gulf leaders.

The new geo-political map poses many direct questions about Iran, Russia, China and the BRICS. Russia has played a complex hand in the Middle East – on the one hand, prosecuting an escalating defensive war versus NATO powers and managing key energy interests; while, at the same time, trying to moderate Resistance operations toward Israel in order to keep relations with the U.S. from deteriorating utterly. Moscow hopes – without great conviction – that a dialogue with the incoming U.S. President might emerge, at some point in the future.

Moscow likely will draw the conclusion that ceasefire 'deals' such as the Astana Agreement on jihadist containment within the boundaries of the Idlib autonomous zone in Syria are not worth the paper on which they were written. Türkiye – an Astana guarantor – stabbed Moscow in the back. Likely, it will make the Russian leadership more hard-nosed over Ukraine, and of any western talk of ceasefires.

Iran's Supreme Leader spoke on 11 December: "*There should be no doubt that what happened in Syria was plotted in the command rooms of the United States and Israel. We have evidence for this. One of the neighbouring countries of Syria also played a role, but the primary planners are the U.S. and the Zionist regime*". In this context, Ayatollah Khamenei quashed speculations about any weakening of the will to resist.

Türkiye's proxy victory in Syria nonetheless may prove Pyrrhic. Erdogan's Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, lied to Russia, the Gulf States and Iran about the nature of what was being cooked-up in Syria. But the mess now is Erdogan's. Those that he doubled-crossed will at some point extract pay-back.

Iran seemingly, will revert to its earlier stance of gathering together the disparate threads of regional resistance to fight the Al-Qa'eda reincarnation. It will not turn its back on China, nor the BRICS project. Iraq – recalling the ISIS atrocities of its civil war – will join with Iran, as will Yemen. Iran will be aware that the remaining nodes of the former Syrian Army might well, at some point, enter into the fight against the HTS cartel. Maher Al-Assad took his entire armoured division with him into exile in Iraq on the night of Bashar Al-Assad's departure.

China will not be pleased at events in Syria. The Uyghurs played a prominent part in the Syria uprising (there were an estimated 30,000 Uyghurs in Idlib, under training by Türkiye (which sees Uyghurs as the original component of the Turkic nation). China too, will likely see the overthrow of Syria as underlining putative western threats to their own energy security lines that run through Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Finally, western interests have been fighting over Middle Eastern resources for centuries – and ultimately that is what lies behind the war today.

*Is he, or isn't he, pro-war*, people ask about Trump, since he has already signalled that energy dominance will be a key strategy for his Administration.

Well, western countries are deep in debt; their fiscal room for manoeuvre is shrinking fast, and bond-holders are beginning to mutiny. There is a race to find a new collateral for fiat currencies. It used to be gold; since the 1970s it was oil, but the petrodollar has faltered. The Anglo-Americans would love to have Iran's oil again – as they did until the 1970s – to collateralise and build a new money system tied to the real value inherent in commodities.

But Trump says he wants to 'end wars' and not start them. Does the re-drawing of the geo-political map make some global *entente* between east and west more, or less, likely?

For all the talk of possible Trump 'deals' with Iran and Russia, it is likely too early to say whether they will – or can – materialise.

Seemingly, Trump has to secure the domestic 'deal' first, before he will know whether he has the scope for foreign policy deals.

It seems that the Ruling Structures (notably the 'Never-Trump' element in the Senate) will allow Trump considerable latitude on key nominations for *domestic* Departments and Agencies that manage U.S. political and economic affairs (which is Trump's key concern) – and will also permit a certain discretion on, shall we say, the 'warfare' Departments that targeted Trump over the last years, such as the FBI and the Department of Justice.

The putative ‘deal’ seems to be that his nominations will still need to undergo Senate confirmation and must broadly be ‘on-side’ with Inter-Agency foreign policy (notably on Israel).

The Inter-Agency grandes, however, reportedly insist on their veto over nominations affecting the deepest structures of foreign policy. And therein lies the crux of matters.

Israelis generally are celebrating their ‘victories’. Will this euphoria weigh with U.S. business élites? Hizbullah is contained, Syria is demilitarised, and Iran is not on Israel’s border. The threat to Israel today is of a qualitatively lower order. Is this, in itself, sufficient to allow tensions to ease, or to see some wider understandings to emerge? Much will hang on Netanyahu’s own political circumstances. Should the PM emerge from his criminal Court process relatively unscathed, would he need to take the big ‘bet’ of military action against Iran, with the geo-political map so suddenly transformed?