

America's Contradictory Foreign Policy, Towards a Shooting War with Turkey in Syria?

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Global Research, February 02, 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Terrorism, US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The consequences of the contradictory choices of the United States in Syria are beginning to become apparent. The obsessive efforts to advance geopolitical goals with war, chaos, betrayals and shaky alliances has brought us to the recent events in Northern Syria on the border with Turkey in the Kurdish enclave of Afrin.

The overall picture of alliances and alignments, especially in Northern Syria, is not the simplest and needs some elaboration. The Kurds (PKK/YPG) in Syria are basically allies of the United States, using the territory under their control to train additional jihadists to spread chaos in the country. In particular, there are more than ten US military bases in Syria, violating all manner of international norms. According to the media, the Kurds are excellent fighters by virtue of their ability to fight Daesh. But looking at the situation more honestly, the collusion with Daesh by the US and allied countries in the region is evident, particular Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's involvement. The provision to Daesh of healthcare, weapons, logistics, intelligence, financial, and diplomatic support has never been lacking over the years. It seems evident that the Kurds (under the name of the SDF) often found easy accommodation with the Daesh terrorists, granting voluntary relocations to combatants in areas adjacent to the Syrian Arab Army (SAA). American and Israeli politicians and Generals have openly stated that it is not convenient to fight Daesh if this ends up benefitting Assad.

The Kurdish area in Syria is divided between the areas east and west of the Euphrates. The canton of Afrin is under Russian protection, both on the ground (Russian military police were present in Afrin until a few days ago) as well as in the air. The Kurdish area to the east of the Euphrates, which connects to Iraq, openly seeks independence, is under American control, and obviously threatens Syria's territorial integrity. This is the result of an American strategic Plan B devised by Brookings in 2009 that continues to give hope to the neocons in Washington. But as we shall see, it is a forlorn hope.

The Kurdish entity located in the Afrin enclave fought with the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in Aleppo in the liberation of the city. It also resisted the Turkish and Free Syrian Army (FSA) attack on Syria when Erdogan decided to create a buffer zone between the Afrin canton and the Kurds to the east of the Euphrates when advancing towards Azaz. Following the liberation of Aleppo, the relations between Damascus and the Kurds of Afrin saw some initial progress, thanks to Russian diplomacy. The temporary compromise between Damascus and the Kurds saw Moscow deploy a symbolic number of Russian military police to Afrin, with the much more important air defense being guaranteed by the operational range of the Russian S-400 air-defence systems deployed in Syria.

Meanwhile, the progress of the diplomatic and negotiating agreement between Ankara, Moscow and Tehran is bearing fruit, diminishing the importance of the Geneva peace talks on Syria as well as the areas controlled by the Americans, Europeans, Saudis and Qataris.

The events over the last few days are the combined results of the nefarious actions of the United States, the incompetence of the Kurds, and the superb diplomatic and strategic actions of Damascus and Moscow.

The starting point for Iran, Russia, Syria and Turkey concerns the territorial unity of Syria. The opposing countries are clearly the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Kurds of Rojava claim their independence, and therefore easily see themselves as allies of the United States, openly supported by Israel (in the case of the independence referendum) and even by the Saudis. Afrin's Kurds are in a different position, which is why Moscow found itself faced with a perfect situation, the result of months of diplomatic work, allowing it to pull off a strategic trifecta. Moscow first called the Kurdish bluff, who refused to allow the Syrian Arab Army entry into Afrin and accept the canton's return to the borders that preceded the chaos that started in 2011 (when the Kurds had in fact their important autonomy even if under the banner of Damascus). Moscow had probably guaranteed Erdogan that if the Kurds in Afrin refused entry of Damascus's troops into the town, then Ankara's military operation would be justified. Perhaps Putin could have persuaded Erdogan to postpone Operation Olive Branch, but he did not, and the reason has to do with the strategic considerations at play.

The objective of Damascus, Moscow and Tehran is to remove the United States from Syria. Of course they currently fight America's proxies in the region, but the seedlings of chaos that have been sown in the country will have to be uprooted in the long term. Erdogan's military action in the Afrin Region puts the interests of Washington and Ankara on a direct collision course. Erdogan is aware of what Putin is doing, but he is more interested in what Trump is doing with the Kurds along his border than with the territorial unity of Syria and Iraq.

Washington has its back against the wall, forced to defend a Kurdish ally against a key member of NATO, in the forlorn hope of retaining some significance in the Syrian picture. The weakness of the American position will lead to them abandoning their Kurdish ally to its fate at the hands of Moscow and Damascus, who will have all the necessary leverage with the Kurds to get what they want for the good of Syria. There are already rumors of Syrian army troops entering the town of Afrin at the invitation of the Kurds. The Kurds are denying it, but we will see how long they can resist Erdogan, who finds the road before him clear to force Washington to break with its Kurdish ally if a shooting war among NATO allies is to be avoided.

We can only imagine the thoughts and impressions in the chancelleries in much of the world as they observe Moscow's diplomatic adroitness, able to secure the territorial integrity of Syria at the expense of two NATO members opposed to Assad.

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This article was originally published by [Strategic Culture Foundation](#).

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