

Moscow Outmaneuvers Washington's Kurdistan Project

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*For the moment it looks as if Russian three-dimensional geopolitical chess moves in the turbulent Middle East have thrown a giant monkey wrench into Washington plans to create an independent Kurdistan. In September the Kurdish population in Iraq voted apparently overwhelmingly for creation of an independent Kurdistan that would control some of the richest oil fields of Iraq in and around Kirkuk as well. Today, a month later, **Massoud Barzani**, the US and Israel-backed Kurd leader, is facing a major loss of powers from the Iraq Kurd Parliament. In the middle of the fast-changing developments—whose outcome is decisive to far more than the Middle East—is Russia and the Russian state-owned oil giant, Rosneft.*

Contrary to the slick US and EU propaganda that has portrayed former President Massoud Barzani and his Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) as champions of western-style democracy, Barzani is a clan warlord who has ruthlessly pursued ethnic cleansing against a Yazidi and Christian Assyrian minority in order to gain control of oil lands those peoples had historically occupied until 2014. The Barzani clan and his Peshmerga military arm were trained beginning the late 1960s by Israeli Mossad Lt Colonel Tzuri Sagi, initially to go against Saddam Hussein's [rule](#). Israeli ties to the Barzani clan have remained since.

Since that time the Massoud Barzani clan has built a dictatorial power in the Kurdish region of Iraq using assassination, corruption and since 2014, control of sales of Iraqi oil via Turkey. Such is Barzani's mafia-power, despite the fact that his term as President of the Iraqi Kurdistan ended in 2015 and the Kurd regional parliament refused to renew it, he has ruled since without any legal basis by preventing the parliament from convening and formally ousting him. Massoud's son controls the region's security council and all all military and civilian [intelligence](#).

Barzani, with open backing of Israel's Netanyahu, despite major opposition from most of the world, went ahead with a referendum for an independent [Kurdish state](#). It was to have been the beginning of a domino-style reshaping of the geopolitical map of the entire Middle East along the lines of US Army Col. Ralph Peters' 2006 Armed Forces Journal, "Blood Borders: [How a Better Middle East Would Look](#)."

Since the British and French carved up the oil-rich lands of the collapsing Ottoman Empire in the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 during the First World War, the ethnic peoples known as Kurds were divided, deliberately, between the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria and of Turkey. To now create a single Kurdish state would destabilize the entire region and beyond. The issues among the various ethnic Kurds themselves are as well vast with differences in

Kurd dialects sometimes being as vast as that between English and modern German. The political differences as well are significant.

Had the US and Israel succeeded in forming an independent Kurdish state in Iraq as a precursor to a Greater Kurdistan of some 23 million people, it would have thrown the entire region from Iran to Iraq to Syria and Turkey into war, the kind of really big war the Pentagon neoconservatives have salivated over since they concocted the fake proof in 2003 that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

Interesting to note, the same California PR firm, Russo Marsh & Rogers, that created Move America Forward (MAF), as a pro-war lobby for the 2003 war against Saddam Hussein, using fabrications to whip up popular support in the US for war in Iraq, is the PR firm used since 2005 by the Barzani clan to promote the idea in the US that Kirkuk oil should be part of an independent [Kurdistan](#).

One month later...

One month later and how the Iraqi Kurd landscape has changed. In a blitz military action that was clearly supported by a strong anti-Barzani faction of the Kurds, the Baghdad army retook Kirkuk and the key oilfields occupied since 2014 illegally by Barzani's forces.

This meant that the financial key to Barzani and Tel Aviv's "independent" Iraqi Kurdistan, the oil revenues from Kirkuk and Bai Hasaan fields of around 1.2 million barrels per day are no longer in the hands of the Barzani mafia.

After Barzani's gang took control of the Kirkuk oil-rich region in 2014, driving hundreds of thousands of ethnic Yazidis and Assyrian Christians from their homes, US oil interests helped to build Barzani's power. Rex Tillerson as CEO of ExxonMobil defied the Baghdad government and invested in the Kurd region of Iraq along with Chevron after 2014 as a clear part of the US preparation for an independent oil-rich Kurdistan.

Amidst the chaos of the conquests of ISIS across Iraq and Syria after 2014, a conquest that was initially facilitated by Barzani in his bid to grab Kirkuk oil, Barzani's clan made an illegal deal with the family of Turkish President Erdogan to sell the oil via Turkish pipelines where it was sold on to Israel earning Barzani's clan billions of dollars. By August 2015 the Jerusalem Post reported that as much as 77% of Israel oil imports were coming from Kurd-occupied Kirkuk region, via pipeline from Turkish Ceyhan to the Israel oil port at [Ashkelon](#).

Following Barzani's bombastic declaration of a 93% independence referendum yes vote, the Iraq government, as did others including that of Turkey and Iran, declared the vote illegal. Baghdad swiftly moved to impose sanctions on the Iraqi Kurdish region. Erdogan's Turkey, fearing a spread of Kurdish independence to Turkish Kurds, a significant minority bordering Syria and Iraq, cut off Kurd pipeline flows.

Then Baghdad held secret talks with the opposition Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of the recently deceased Jalal Talabani. PUK had opposed the idea of referendum, and it was their soldiers who largely controlled Kirkuk.

According to Bafel Talabani, the son of recently-deceased Jalal Talabani, just before the Iraqi forces, in a joint operation of the Iraqi army and the Shiite Hashd al-Shaabi militias were moving to retake Kirkuk, a deal was reached with Baghdad to peacefully withdraw PUK-controlled Peshmerga forces from the city, opening the way for dialogue and saving

thousands of lives. Talabani called the decision of Barzani to go ahead with a referendum, despite clear warnings of the consequences, a “[colossal mistake](#).”

On October 29, Massoud Barzani announced he would step down as (illegitimate) President of the Iraqi Kurdish region, acknowledging the utter failure of the Israel-backed referendum ploy.

Russian Oil Geopolitics

A crucial if little-noted factor in making the strategic shift in the geopolitical energy field of the Iraqi and Syrian Kurdish regions in the last months has been Russia, specifically Russia's giant state-owned Rosneft.

Surprising many, just after the September 25 Iraqi Kurd referendum vote, Rosneft CEO, Igor Sechin announced that Rosneft had agreed to buy control of Iraqi Kurdistan's main oil pipeline, boosting its investment in the autonomous region to \$4 billion according to remarks by Sechin on October 18 at a conference this author attended in Italy two days before the signing of the deal.

Rosneft plans to increase pipeline capacity to 950,000 bpd. Under the agreement Rosneft will control the majority 60% with the rest held by the current operator, the Kurdish KAR Group in Erbil. In addition to investing \$3.5 billion into the Kurdish pipeline, Rosneft earlier this year lent the regional Kurdish government \$1.2 billion to ease a budget crisis, making Russia far and away the largest foreign investor in the [Iraqi Kurdish region](#).

The same day, October 19, the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), strongly backed by US weapons and training, in the ongoing war in Syria's oil and gas-rich Deir Ezzor province, made a surprise deal to turn over the rich gas field to troops of the Russian Ground Forces, according to a report in the [Beirut Almasdar News](#).

The report that the Kurdish SDF agreed to turn over Al-Tabiya gas field it had just taken from ISIS control on September 23 suggests more than a minor role of Russia in both Syrian and in Iraqi oil and gas developments as well, of course, in Kurdish developments. The Al-Tabiya gas field, formerly operated by Conoco of the US had the largest capacity of any field in Syria, capable of producing 13 million cubic meters of natural gas per day. The Almasdar News report states that the Russians will turn control back to the Syrian Damascus government. The deal followed secret talks between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Special Presidential Envoy for the Middle East in the self-declared Kurdish autonomous zone of Rojava to meet with Kurdish and Syrian leaders in the northern city of [Qamishli](#).

On October 25 Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi met with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara, a significant thaw in their relations. The US-Israeli-backed Kurdistan independence ploy of Barzani has completely backfired. Again, Washington geopolitical stupidity and neoconservative war mania has driven hitherto geopolitical foes to cooperate in ways unimaginable just three years ago.

Russia has shrewdly played a game of geopolitical chess. Moscow knows that if Rosneft holds the trump card in the Iraqi Kurdish energy economy, the Kurds have no option to get their oil out but via Turkey. Two years ago, before Erdogan offered a rapprochement to Russia over the shooting of a Russian jet over Syria, Turkey was financing ISIS against the

regime of Bashar al Assad and at the same time reportedly facilitating export sales of oil from Syria via a Turkish state company. Qatar was spending billions of dollars to finance Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS and other Salafist terror groups in Syria. Now Turkey has to deal with Rosneft for Iraqi gas and with Damascus where Bashar al Assad remains firmly entrenched with Russian support. And Turkey seems to be doing just that, one reason for the growing hostility between Ankara and Washington.

Further setback for Washington is the development around Qatar. Since Washington and Israel goaded the incalculable Saudis last summer into the laughable idea of creating an “Arab NATO” of Sunni oil states (plus Israel), aimed at Iran, that “Arab NATO” as its first act imposed an economic embargo against former Gulf Cooperation Council ally and Muslim Brotherhood-backed Qatar. Qatar was targeted by the Saudis because they had openly sought the cooperation of former arch foe Iran in building a common gas route to the EU. Now Qatar is working with Iran, Turkey, Russia and China in a new geopolitical alignment opposed by Saudi Arabia.

Russia, placing herself in the midst of the Kurdish regions of Iraq and Syria has managed a brilliant political coup against the Anglo-American and Israeli designs for a Greater Kurdistan and a NATO-controlled Greater Middle East.

Checkmate! Washington. You have just lost the Middle East. The unfolding of further events with Russia and Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, are just a matter of time, as the unprecedented recent visit of the Saudi King to Moscow to ask for Russian weaponry suggests.

The neocons around D.J. Trump and his neophyte son-in-law, 36-year-old “Senior Advisor” Jared Kushner, and the increasingly pathetic ExxonMobil Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, are a sad bunch. The world has tired of their wars of destruction. It’s time to build up new.

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