

Post Palmyra Liberation: The Islamic State (ISIS) Still a Threat. Washington Seeks the “Partition of Syria”

By [Paul Mansfield](#)

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The recent liberation of Palmyra by Syrian government forces was a significant defeat for ISIS and should represent a turning point in the fight against terrorism in Syria. It still may, but the determination of the USA, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to bring down Bashar al Assad jeopardises continued progress and the ultimate defeat of ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria.

US co-operation with Russia to actively fight Islamist forces and the withdrawal of financing, weapons and supply of fighters from Turkey and Saudi Arabia would isolate, weaken and lead to the destruction of ISIS as a fighting force.

The insatiable desire for control and influence in the Middle East drives the US and its allies to support Islamists as their proxies (enter ISIS) to achieve their goal of the overthrow of Assad, a stepping stone to the greater prize of [regime change in Iran](#).

These contradictory agendas are why ISIS, while in retreat, is far from a defeated force. ISIS are the key fighting force against Assad, so will continue to be supported directly or indirectly. Essentially, this means the US, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are aiding and abetting, not fighting terrorism. A perpetual war, chaos and the foreshadowed [partition of Syria](#) are the consequences of such destructive policies. John Kerry’s enunciation of [Plan B](#) threatens to be realised, sabotaging the gains of the Syrian government as it seeks to reclaim territory from Islamist forces and reunite the country.

ISIS has recently [captured 11 localities in the north of the Aleppo province](#) near the Turkish border. It is still capable of acquiring territory and can capitalise on [Syrian army forces being stretched and tied up in other regions of the country](#).

ISIS and Al-Nusra are currently [attacking](#) the strategically vital M5 highway from Aleppo to Homs, in order to aggravate the humanitarian situation. According to [Press TV](#), ISIS “has taken control of most of the Palestinian Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria after pushing out a rival Takfiri terrorist group.”

US and its Allies Backed ISIS Takeover of Palmyra

The Syrian Army faces a myriad of foreign supported Islamists who stretched it to breaking point, averted by the timely intervention of Russia in September 2015. Before this war changing intervention, the US and its allies, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel backed the ISIS [takeover and destruction of Palmyra](#).

Most of the weapons ISIS used were from the US, with some ammunition from Israel. It had US Hummers, explosives, military rations, and who can forget the sight of convoys of Toyota 4 wheel drives, ISIS fighters jubilantly waving, anticipating the capture of large areas of North East Syria, including the majority of oil fields.

A disturbing element of ISIS takeover of Palmyra was the way it was able to move across expansive stretches of desert without being bombed by the US. To do so would have been assisting the Assad government and this is definitely not in the playbook of the US.

It is one thing to conquer territory; it is another to retain control. Assad faces this challenge in Aleppo, the site of fierce fighting, where control is divided and is a key supply route for weapons and fighters from Turkey.

Desperate to keep the supply corridor into Syria open, Turkey has repeatedly shelled the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and also Syrian army positions. Turkey intervened with artillery shelling in the [battle for Azaz](#) and to attempt to stop the YPG from [capturing the Menagh airbase](#), making it clear they are willing to intervene directly on behalf of their proxy Islamist forces.

[Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, speaking at a meeting](#) of the parliamentary faction of the ruling Justice and Development Party, made Turkey's position abundantly clear, saying:

“We will return our historic debt. At one time, our brothers from Aleppo defended our cities of Sanliurfa, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaras, now we will defend the heroic Aleppo. All of Turkey stands behind its defenders.”

Davutoglu made the statement after the Syrian military cut off terrorists' major supplies channels in northern Aleppo province from Turkey.

Erdogan's Dream of a Neo-Ottoman Empire Fuels ISIS Support

Oil Smuggling

The stream of accusations, backed by multiple sources of evidence is growing against Ankara over illegal oil trade and support of ISIS. Despite the impossible to ignore evidence, the Western mainstream media has framed the issue as tit for tat accusations in a bitter dispute between Russia and Turkey. Meanwhile the US government, decidedly uncomfortable at damning revelations, stubbornly continues to back its NATO ally.

The Russian Ministry of Defence (MOD), Syrian authorities, the Kurds and Iraqis have all exposed the smuggling of oil from Syria and Iraq into Turkey. The MOD, after extensive surveillance, released satellite images of convoys of tanker trucks smuggling oil across the Turkish border, unchallenged by Turkish border guards and officials. Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed 40 countries support ISIS at the G20 summit. Within days, Turkey, a key supporter of ISIS, and furious at Russian air strikes disrupting the lucrative oil smuggling trade, struck a blow, downing a Russian SU24 in a blatant act of aggression.

Erdogan's Hatred of Assad and the Kurds

The dual imperatives of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of removing from power

Bashar Assad, and preventing the strengthening of the Kurds in Syria aiding their territorial expansion, has led Turkey to collaborate with ISIS terrorists, vital tools in its war with Assad and the Kurds. Turkey is either supporting or turning a blind eye to terrorists crossing its border into Syria.

Captured ISIS fighters have said they were trained in camps in Turkey, received payments, were supplied with weapons and given passage across the border to fight in Syria.

Weapons Supply Through Turkish Border

Cumhuriyet journalists Can Dündar and Erdem Gül stand trial behind closed doors after publishing a report on the [funneling of weapons to Islamists in Syria](#). The two face multiple life sentences if convicted, amid suppression of Turkish media freedom. Turkey at first denied the accusations, saying the trucks were carrying humanitarian supplies, but later backtracked and claimed the weapons were for the Free Syrian Army, changing the story again later to supplying Turkmen who fight both Assad government forces and ISIS.

Diligent investigative reporting cost Lebanese-American journalist [Serena Shim](#) her life, dying mysteriously in a car accident while reporting on weapons being carried across the Turkish border for ISIS. According to an [article on the sott.net website](#)

On October 17th last year, just two days before her death, Shim had told Press TV that the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) had accused her of “spying”. She stated it was “probably due to some of the stories she had covered” about Turkey’s role in the Islamic State terror group and particularly in regard to the militants in Kobani. It was Shim who had reported on ISIL militants being smuggled across the Turkish border into Syria in trucks deceptively bearing the symbols of NGOs like the World Food Organisation.

Chemical Weapons Supplied Through Turkey

Turkish MP Eren Erdem of the Republican People’s Party (CHP) has made allegations that chemical weapons materials were bought into Turkey and used to produce Sarin gas in Syria in ISIS camps.

[Erdem told RT News](#) that “All basic materials are purchased from Europe. Western institutions should question themselves about these relations. Western sources know very well who carried out the Sarin gas attack in Syria.”

Investigations by the General Prosecutor’s Office in the city of Adana in Southern Turkey revealed that a number of Turkish citizens assisted ISIS with acquiring Sarin gas.

Adana authorities conducted raids and 13 suspects were arrested. However, as quickly as the case was opened it was inconceivably closed, the suspects released, further investigations dropped and the case disappeared down a black hole. Erdem himself faced death threats and [treason charges](#) for daring to reveal Turkey’s role in supporting terrorists acquire illegal chemical weapons.

The US Role in the Creation of ISIS

Opinion is divided on whether the USA [deliberately created ISIS](#) or [created the conditions for](#)

[ISIS to evolve.](#)

The former argument says it was deliberately created, consistent with a long history of backing Islamists in pursuit of US geostrategic interests, while the latter argues the destruction and decimation of once prosperous Iraq fomented the rise of ISIS, which was able to rapidly accrue firepower by capturing and using to its advantage a vast array of weapons left in Iraq.

Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, as head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, warned in an August 2012 classified report that Salafists were the dominant insurgent forces fighting in Syria and that the US and its allies were fully aware of and supported the Salafist led insurgency. The report stated: “the Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI [Al- Qaeda in Iraq] are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria,” being supported by “the West, Gulf countries and Turkey.”

“If the situation unravels, there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria... and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime.”

It is crucial to understand this report illustrates that far from being a popular revolt which evolved into armed defence against a deadly crackdown by Syrian security forces, the insurgency was directed and driven by jihadist Islamists, fully backed by Western and regional powers. The US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar capitalised on popular discontent, using it as false legitimacy to unleash their Islamist proxy forces on unsuspecting Syrians.

In truth, the US planned for the [overthrow of Assad](#) at least as far back as December 2006, Wikileaks releasing a State Department cable that recommended taking advantage of an “increasing presence of transiting Islamist extremists” (in Syria).



[Assad was merely one of 7 victims](#) of planned regime change, to be achieved at a breakneck speed of 5 years. This staggering genocidal vision is in the pursuit of the geostrategic ambition of total control over the oil producing regions of the Middle East and North Africa. As Henry Kissinger said, “control oil and you control nations”.

Oil smuggling revenue for ISIS may have dried up after systematic and accurate bombing

from Russian aerospace forces, revenue from antiquities ceased in Palmyra following its liberation and ISIS fighters are enduring their own brand of [austerity](#) following income streams being debilitated, but there is no cessation of support from Gulf States and Turkey, from whom the continued supply of weapons and fighters ensures this conflict will drag on.

Saudi and Turkish financed weapons supplies continue to cross the porous Turkish border, despite a cessation of hostilities agreement designed to ease the conflict and enable Geneva peace talks. The claim is made these are for “moderate rebels”, however it has been amply demonstrated these so called moderates are either killed by Islamists, or absorbed into their forces, surrendering their weapons as they do so. Infamous CIA training and supply of moderates was a debacle as they immediately surrendered their weapons to Al Nusra. ISIS too, have been able to capture weapons easily, so it is patently absurd to believe it is possible to target weapons into areas so hotly contested, with allegiances as fluid as the shifting desert sands and with widespread ISIS presence and control.

Afghanistan Redux?

Faced with the thwarting of their regional hegemonic ambitions, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have upped the ante, threatening to supply rebel groups with anti-aircraft weapons.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, in an [interview with der Spiegel](#), said that arming Syrian rebels with shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles would shift the balance of power in Syria:

We believe that introducing surface-to-air missiles in Syria is going to change the balance of power on the ground. It will allow the moderate opposition to be able to neutralize the helicopters and aircraft that are dropping chemicals and have been carpet-bombing them, just like surface-to-air missiles in Afghanistan were able to change the balance of power there. This has to be studied very carefully, however, because you don't want such weapons to fall into the wrong hands.

An explanation is needed of just who these “moderates” are and what helicopters and aircraft would be “neutralized”. Sputnik News website explains [who Saudi Arabia supports in Syria](#):

the militants that Saudi Arabia supports include al-Fatah, an Idlib-based coalition of Islamist groups including al-Nusra Front, Ahrar ash-Sham and Jund al-Aqsa, all three of which are affiliated with al-Qaeda. Elsewhere across the country, Riyadh has provided assistance to other al-Nusra Front and Ahrar ash-Sham-affiliated groups, and to the Free Syrian Army, an organization which has been whittled down into a small group that actively cooperates with Islamist militants, and which the Pentagon itself has previously estimated consists of “more than 50%...extreme Islamist groups.”

As for aircraft and helicopters, the reference to how surface to air missiles changed the balance in Afghanistan is a none too subtle threat to Russia. In the der Spiegel interview al-Jubeir makes no secret of the unchanged desire to overthrow Assad, so clearly Syrian aircraft will be targeted. Al-Jubeir made the Saudi position crystal clear, saying:

“I don't think anyone can predict what the short term will look like. In the long

term, it will be a Syria without Bashar Assad. The longer it takes, the worse it will get.”

“We have always said there are two ways to resolve Syria, and both will end up with the same result: a Syria without Bashar Assad. There is a political process which we are trying to achieve through what is called the Vienna Group. That involves the establishment of a governing council, which is to take power away from Bashar Assad, to write a constitution and to open the way for elections. It is important that Bashar leaves in the beginning, not at the end of the process. This will make the transition happen with less death and destruction.”

“The other option is that the war will continue and Bashar Assad will be defeated.”

Plan B: Deadlier Weapons to “Moderate” Rebels



The Wall Street Journal on 12 April reported on Plan B of the US, which carries on with its charade of pretending to support a negotiated peace in Syria. It revealed [CIA plans to arm “vetted rebels”](#) (obviously an evolution from moderates ones) with more powerful weapons, primarily manpads to counter Syrian aircraft, tanks and artillery. This was timed just before the start of the latest Syria peace talks in Geneva on 13 April.

The preparations for a so-called Plan B center on providing vetted rebel units with weapons systems that would help them in directing attacks against Syrian regime aircraft and artillery positions, the officials said.

The Wall Street Journal first reported in February that President Barack Obama’s top military and intelligence advisers were pressing the White House to come up with a Plan B to counter Russia in Syria. Since then, fresh details have emerged on the nature of the new weaponry that could be deployed under the covert program.

Officials said the CIA has made clear to its allies that the new systems, once agreed upon, would be given to the rebels only if the truce and the concurrent political track toward a lasting peace—Plan A—fall apart and full-scale fighting resumes.

An unmistakable message is being conveyed by Washington. Sabotage the cease fire and “rebels” will receive more powerful weapons, transforming them into more potent fighting forces. The “lasting peace” of Plan A is the resignation of Assad. The Syrian government, backed by Russia has repeatedly stated that the will of the Syrian people, through elections will decide if Assad remains the President of Syria. These irreconcilable positions virtually guarantee a resumption of hostilities.

Sure enough, the breakdown of the cease fire appears set to be a fait accompli. The

opposition's High Negotiations Committee (HNC) spokesperson, Riyad Naasan Agha told Sputnik News there is a [general feeling that the ceasefire in Syria has ended](#).

Agha [posted a statement on behalf of the HNC](#) on his Facebook page, which clarifies that the opposition has entered the realm of delusionality in making strident demands from a much weakened negotiating position. He posted "the main issue, which is forming a governing body in which Assad has no role."

Almost on cue, the opposition has withdrawn from the peace talks and rebel forces have launched assaults against government forces in Latakia province and in Hama.

The HNC claim mounting frustration over deteriorating humanitarian and security situations, accusing government forces, backed by Russia and Iran, of violating the cease fire. Senior opposition negotiator Mohammad Alloush [told Reuters](#) there was no way the opposition could continue in peace talks while the humanitarian situation deteriorates.

Perhaps Alloush missed the breaking news of Russia [delivering four tonnes of humanitarian aid](#) to the Homs province.

The Syrian people have shown great courage and resolve in resisting the barbaric ISIS. They have endured assaults on multiple fronts, from terrorists coming across the Turkish border in the north to Israel supporting ISIS and Al Nusra in the Golan Heights to the south. Sustained by support from rogue regional regimes and US complicity, ISIS isn't going anywhere. It needs to be crushed and rendered impotent. Hopefully the accomplishment of this task can occur without inflaming an escalated war with the US and Russia aiming their military firepower at each other.

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