

Russia's Brokering of Iran's Withdrawal from Syria. Russia's "Informal Alliance" with Israel?

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

Global Research, November 22, 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The Kremlin uncharacteristically declined to comment on reports that Russia is seeking to broker Iran's withdrawal from Syria in exchange for the Islamic Republic receiving sanctions relief from the US, which is extremely unusual because Moscow has a track record of issuing sharp unambiguous responses to fake news claims and sometimes even outright mocking them, which strongly suggests that its non-denial implies some degree of truth to the latest reports no matter how "politically incorrect" this may be for the Alt-Media Community to accept.

Rumors are swirling that Russia's "balancing" strategy is evolving to the point of Moscow taking active measures to "encourage" Iran's military withdrawal from Syria in exchange for the Islamic Republic receiving sanctions relief from the US, a scenario that the author himself foresaw last May when describing [President Putin's unofficial peace plan for Syria](#) and explaining how [Russia is already "balancing" Iran in the Mideast](#) as it is, despite Russia [consistently denying](#) that it has any power to do this at all. It turns out, however, that the country's official statements might have been a classic exercise in "diplomacy" if [Axios'](#) latest report from Tuesday evening turns out to be true, which claims that "Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said in a closed hearing on Monday that Russia recently proposed to Israel and the U.S. that Iran be granted relief from some U.S. sanctions in return for the removal of Iranian forces and proxies from Syria."

The First Non-Denial



The Kremlin uncharacteristically declined to comment on the report, with Russian Presidential spokesman **Dmitry Peskov** [simply saying](#)

"No comment. We don't comment on the subject matter of closed-door talks with heads of other states."

This is extremely unusual because Moscow has a track record of issuing sharp unambiguous responses to fake news claims and sometimes even outright mocking them, which strongly suggests that its non-denial implies some degree of truth to the latest reports no matter how "politically incorrect" this may be for the [Alt-Media Community](#) to accept. There's long been a concerted disinformation campaign at play aimed at trying to convince people that Russia is apparently an "anti-Zionist crusader state", which couldn't be further from the

truth when recalling the [regular praise that President Putin lavished on “Israel”](#) during his nearly two decades in office, which led to the author [concluding](#) that President Putin is actually a proud philo-Semite.

After all, Russia successfully “convinced” Iran to withdraw it and its allied forces 140 kilometers from the “[Israeli](#)”-occupied Golan Heights in southwestern Syria at what [RT](#) even cited the Russian Ministry of Defense spokesperson as saying “was done at the request of Tel Aviv”. Not only that, but Russia’s flagship international media outlet also quoted the Defense Ministry in the same report as confirming that the country passively facilitated the [more than 200 strikes](#) that “Israel” carried out in Syria since January 2017 (which interestingly coincides with when Moscow unveiled its [Russian-written “draft constitution”](#) for the Arab Republic). Moreover, Russia “provided assistance in preserving Jewish sacred places and graves in the city of Aleppo” on top of dangerously digging up “the remains of some Israeli servicemen that died during the past conflicts in an area where the Syrian forces were combating Islamic State (IS, former ISIS) terrorists at that time.”

The Second Non-Denial

None of this should be surprising since [Russia and “Israel” are allies](#), or rather, Russia has done so much to ensure “Israel’s” security that the latter could be described as a [joint protectorate between Moscow and Washington](#) at this point. In fact, it could even provocatively be argued that Russia has done more for “Israel” lately than the US has, especially when considering that America was unable to carve out the “buffer zone” in southwestern Syria nor put its men’s lives on the line to “preserve Jewish sacred places and graves in the city of Aleppo” as well as dig up “the remains of some Israeli servicemen that died during the past conflicts” in Syria. Therefore, it could have almost been expected that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov would release a [follow-up non-denial](#) that also strongly suggests some truthfulness to Axios’ explosive claims that President Putin is coordinating Iran’s withdrawal from Syria with Netanyahu.

The high-ranking official let the cat out of the bag by saying that

“Regarding the specific aspect of lifting sanctions in exchange for something, I can’t confirm it. There were close, but not coinciding with this idea, which did not develop. But we continue to look at what can be done in this area in conjunction with all the participants, all the countries that we are talking about now.”

The part about how “there were close (proposals), but not coinciding with this idea” reveals that Russia was in fact discussing something along these lines all along in spite of its official denials, exactly as the author in hindsight correctly analyzed back in May. In fact, subsequent “policy proposals” by the influential and publicly financed Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) suggest that the Kremlin is very serious about removing Iran from Syria.

Relevant RIAC Reports

Yury Barmin, a RIAC analyst on Russia and its Middle East policy, published a detailed report on “[Russia and Israel: The Middle Eastern Vector of Relations](#)” in October that urged the Kremlin to curtail Iran’s activities in Syria as soon as possible and even broker peace between Damascus and Tel Aviv in order to further diminish Tehran’s influence in the Arab

Republic. The following are the most relevant passages:

“Israel has been an unofficial ally of Moscow in the Middle East since 1991, when diplomatic relations between the USSR and Israel were restored, having been severed following the Six-Day War in 1967...Israel has made it clear that it views Moscow, and not Washington, as the side that is capable of preventing the conflict with Tehran from turning into a full-scale war...Just like the Sunni-majority countries in the region, Israel was counting on the Russian military presence to contain, and control, Bashar al-Assad and, more importantly, Iran.

...

Russia stands to benefit from the weakening of Tehran’s military positions in Syria, as it is a clear obstacle to a peaceful settlement, creating the illusion in Damascus that the military option for resolving the conflict remains open. However, Russia has very few political levers to enact such a recalibration of Iran’s position in Syria. Tehran has already stated that no one has the right to demand Iran’s withdrawal from Syria. Therefore, the Israeli campaign to prevent Iranian forces from taking root in Syria actually benefits Russia too, as long as it does not look like an open provocation...By withdrawing Shiite forces from the line of mutual disengagement of forces, Russia has been able to guarantee the security of Israel’s borders in the medium term.

...

Israel’s campaign to consistently undermine Iran’s military capabilities on the ground and weaken its influence partly fulfils the functions that Russia would like to take on itself but cannot for political reasons...To minimize the conflict potential between Iran and Israel “on the ground,” Russia will have to comprehensively review the modality of the pro-Iranian forces’ presence in Syria. Presence of pro-Iranian armed units in the country is an issue whose solution will be part of the political settlement and is likely to become an element in the security sector reform. Given the deep-rooted Iranian influence, primarily in the military sphere, one of Russia’s main tasks in Syria will be the reform of the security sector.

...

Given the position recently proclaimed by one of Israeli’s ministers that “Lebanon equals Hezbollah”, it now appears that Moscow should confine itself to discussing Hezbollah in the context of the Syrian conflict and avoid talking about the organization’s role in Lebanon, although attempts have been made to do this by the Israeli side...Strategically, right now, for Russia, the focus on Israel-Syria settlement is both feasible and promising, as it is the most achievable task and could help Moscow prove itself as a broker. Building trust between the leaders of Israel and Syria serves the interests of both sides and also partially limits Tehran’s influence in Syria, which Bashar al-Assad may seek in the post-conflict period.”

This was soon thereafter followed up by **Alexey Khlebnikov**, RIAC’s Middle East expert and Russian foreign policy analyst, who published his report on the “[Evolution of the Syrian Military: Main Trends and Challenges](#)” earlier this month. Here are the most pertinent passages to the present analysis:

“Today, one of the central questions for country’s stabilization and political reconciliation is how Syrian armed forces are going to be reformed and whether Damascus will choose the right direction in dealing with re-

establishing its military...In this context, Iran's heavy involvement in creation and sponsoring pro-government militia in Syria exacerbates the complexity of the issue even further. In addition, some of the most efficient pro-government militia groups enjoy sponsorship from abroad, particularly from Iran. It creates quite big risk of becoming over-reliant on the foreign patron that pursues its own interests which might not always coincide with those of the client.

...

Excessive Iranian presence in Syria irritates Israel, the US, Turkey, Russia, and even Damascus itself. Being weak and with no foreign alternative to rely on regarding the funds for reconstruction, Syrian government is pushed closer to Iran. As a result, progress in political process, reconstruction, and return of the refugees seems highly impossible, as all of it requires broad international involvement.

...

First, in the last seven years Iran has heavily invested in Syria creating sophisticated multi-layered presence and it is extremely unlikely that Tehran will leave the country without return on its investments. It has already struck a deal with Damascus which grants Tehran exclusive right to assist in rebuilding Syrian military industry and infrastructure. The situation creates additional risks for the Syrian state. Excessive Iranian presence in Syria will be the major irritant for Israel and the US that almost certainly excludes any lift of Syria sanctions which are necessary for the successful reconstruction and economic restoration of the country. Second, Iran's presence irritates Moscow which has its own military infrastructure in Syria. Excessive Iranian presence in the country is counter-productive for Russia's long-term Syria policy which eventually envisages political transition, reforms and reconciliation with the regional powers and the West. From the very beginning, deployment of the Russian military was a double-edge sword.

On the one hand, Kremlin's decision to deploy its air and special forces to Syria in fall of 2015 was a result of an agreement with Damascus and Tehran aiming at preventing Syria from collapse. Russia's air cover without Iranian forces on the ground would be meaningless, so it was mutually beneficial division of labor which worked out quite successfully for its purposes. On the other hand, Russia's military deployment to Syria sent a signal to Israel and the West that Iran would not be left unchecked. Moscow is seen as a force which is able to keep Iranian presence in the country in check to a certain degree. The recent deal on south Syria between Russia, Israel and the US, which envisaged Iranian forces pull out from the Syria-Israeli border, is a good evidence. Damascus understands that and might use this issue as a bargaining chip in its talks with the West and GCC states to eventually attract their money into Syria.

...

One of Moscow's main tasks in Syria is to rebuild country's armed forces almost from scratch, which is going to be extremely difficult. First, the army must have control over entire country's territory and to have monopoly on using force which is not the case now and is highly unlikely in the near future. Second, during the last seven years Iran has been creating extensive network of military structures in Syria, which are loyal to Tehran and are unlikely to either disband themselves and leave, or to become part of the state armed forces. This problem might become a major stumbling rock between Russia and Iran in the coming months and years. And third, Russia lacks sufficient resources to accomplish this task alone.

In such context, there is an opportunity to attract foreign sources to restore Syrian army and to reconstruct the country. The GCC and Israel should be very much interested in rebuilding Syria with lesser Iranian presence. By helping out Russia to accomplish this task regional players impose indirect limits on Iran's presence in Syria. With no foreign assistance Tehran receives more room to grow its influence in the country further. This might well help Moscow to make sure the new Syrian army is free from Iranian influence or is at least not dominated.

The stronger the army and the central government — the lesser it needs foreign partner to rely on. Moreover, in the MENA region armies also play a role of state-building element — which makes successful military reform crucial for a country's restoration. Otherwise, Iran has quite good prospects of increasing its influence in Syria and stimulating further rise of sectarianism in the country."

The immediate reaction of the many people who are indoctrinated with Alt-Media dogma will be to condemn RIAC's reports as "Zionist propaganda", but they'd do well to consider that the organization isn't a foreign lobbying group at all but is rather an official policymaking instrument of the Russian state itself. Russian **Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov** serves on the [Board of Trustees](#), probably because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of RIAC's [co-founders](#). In addition, the Presidential Administration, State Duma, and importantly, the Ministry of Defense are listed as its [many partners](#).

For all practical intent and purposes, RIAC is pretty much the public extension of the Russian permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies ("deep state"), which therefore also allows them to publish controversial "policy proposals" such as this one while retaining "plausible deniability" that this isn't "officially" state policy. It's also an excellent platform for the state to network with foreign counterparts and aspiring experts, all the while preconditioning the public to accept certain policy moves before they're actually implemented out in the open, such as is likely the case with Barmin and Khlebnikov's "suggestions".

Supplementary Analyses

Whether one agrees with RIAC's "proposals" or is strongly opposed to them, they undoubtedly confirm what the author previously analyzed about Russia's strategy in Syria and the overall dynamics that the war is now taking. As such, the reader is encouraged to reference the following five analyses if they're interested in obtaining a deeper understanding of what's happening and why:

["Chaos Theory, Hybrid War, And The Future Of Syria"](#)

["Here's How The Latakia Tragedy - Nay, Conspiracy! - Might Have Played Out"](#)

["Strategic Assessment Of The War On Syria In Fall 2018: Idlib & The Northeast"](#)

["Russia's Reshaping Syria's 'Deep State' In Its Own Image"](#)

["The Reopening of The UAE Embassy Might Signal Syria's Pivot to The GCC"](#)

To sum it up, the kinetic (military) phase of the [Hybrid War](#) of Terror on Syria is drawing down as the conflict begins to take on a non-kinetic (political) form that could pave the way

for a so-called “political solution”, though this must responsibly include reliable reconstruction aid and other assurances in order to be sustainable, hence the sensitive Russian-led diplomatic efforts underway in order to facilitate this.

Timing Is Everything

Returning back to the latest reports alleging that President Putin told Netanyahu about his plan to broker Iran’s military withdrawal from Syria in exchange for the Islamic Republic receiving sanctions relief from the US, their veracity can’t be confidently assessed without first keeping in mind the four reports that immediately preceded it.

To begin with, [Sputnik](#) wrote on Monday about what Haaretz published over the weekend concerning Netanyahu’s meeting with the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, during which time he purportedly said that “Russia doesn’t have the necessary influence over Iran to force it to leave Syria”, but that “aerial surveillance has shown a decrease in the amount of supplies to Hezbollah coming through Syria (allegedly being delivered by Tehran)”. This could be interpreted as a two-part message, the first being a subtle acknowledgement that he and President Putin have indeed discussed this scenario and concluded that only Damascus has the power to request the removal of Iranian forces from its territory (seeing as how the Islamic Republic [consistently said](#) that it would comply with its partner’s wishes if asked to do so), and the second being that the “Israel’s” Russian-facilitated bombing campaign against the IRGC and Hezbollah over the years has been largely successful in its aims.

The last three reports all came out the day afterwards on Tuesday.



What would have otherwise been a non-eventful weekday began with the US’ Special Representative for Syria Engagement **James Franklin Jeffrey** [surprisingly saying](#) that his country doesn’t demand Russia’s military withdrawal from Syria, claiming that its pre-war naval refueling station in Tartus constitutes a “base” and therefore gives it the right to remain in the country after the war. The official also said that while his government doesn’t approve of President Assad’s continued tenure, it’s not going to try and oust him from his position, which suggests that a behind-the-scenes deal might have been reached between the US and Russia to get Washington to walk back its years-long insistence that “Assad must go”. Included in this speculative agreement might have also been the US recognizing Russia’s right to retain military bases in Syria, provided of course that it succeeds in removing Iran’s military footprint. To “sweeten the deal”, the US might have promised that its GCC allies would rebuild Syria.

Next, the outgoing “IDF” chief of staff [declared](#) that “The military capabilities of Iran and Hezbollah near Israel’s northern border are much smaller than they could be because of successful actions by Israel”, which confirms what Netanyahu said over the weekend and downplays any conjecture about serious “deep state” divisions between the premier and his military following the Defense Minister’s resignation last week. Furthermore, it can even be implied that the success of this years-long Russian-facilitated operation has been so great that “Israel” no longer has a “need” to bomb IRGC and Hezbollah targets in Syria at the same pace as it did during the 18-month period between January 2017 and the tragic downing of the Russian spy plane in mid-September 2018. This might not be because of [Russia’s “strategically misleading” S-300 deployment to Syria](#), but possibly because Moscow

is taking active measures to curtail Iranian influence there on “Israel’s” behalf per Axios’ report.

Finally, the last relevant news item that came out before the claims that President Putin is brokering Iran’s (potentially “phased”) withdrawal from Syria was that the US suddenly imposed sanctions on Russian and Iranian entities that it accused of violating the [recently reimposed unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic’s energy exports](#). Whether these allegations are true or not isn’t within the ambit of this analysis, as the larger purpose of announcing them right before news about Russia and “Israel’s” supposedly secret conversations vis-à-vis Iran was “leaked” to the media might have been to proverbially “hold the fire to Moscow’s feet” so that it “convinces” Damascus to request the Islamic Republic’s military withdrawal from Syria. If everything was proceeding apace, then the US wouldn’t have any reason for doing this, so it might have been that some in Moscow, Damascus, and even Tehran are still “uncertain” about this plan and require additional pressure to “convince” them.

“Deep State” Divisions

To explain, Russia, Syria, and Iran aren’t politically homogenous, especially on the level of their “deep states”, and it’s natural that differences over strategic vision exist within each of these countries.

The Syrian “deep state” is split between those who are closer to Iran and those who lean more towards Russia, while the Iranian one is notorious for its bifurcation into “moderate”/“reformist” and “conservative”/“principalist” halves. Regarding Russia, the mid-September downing of its spy plane exposed the rift between the [“traditionalist” and “progressive” factions](#), represented most clearly by the “Israeli”-suspicious military that immediately blamed Tel Aviv for what happened and the “Israeli”-friendly President who – while publicly supporting the military’s position – [attributed](#) the tragedy more to “a chain of tragic circumstances” than any preplanned provocation. It’s because of these preexisting “deep state” divisions that the US and “Israel” concluded that they’ll have to commence an organized perception management and preconditioning campaign in order to improve the odds that President Putin’s reported initiative will be a success, even if Washington has to “show its teeth” through sanctions again in order to make it happen.

To simplify a very complicated diplomatic dance, Iran’s military commitment to Syria is already very expensive and the costs are only going to comparatively rise in the face of the US’ reimposed sanctions pressure against it, so the “moderate”/“reformist” argument can be made that Damascus’ possible Russian-“encouraged” request for a “face-saving” “phased withdrawal” from the Arab Republic would be to Tehran’s economic interests. Other than institutional resistance from the “conservative”/“principalist” factions, the other problem to this “master plan” is that there’s a very influential pro-Iranian “deep state” faction in Syria that doesn’t want to see this happen, and even some of the pro-Russian members of the country’s permanent bureaucracy might feel uneasy losing their “balancing” partner and becoming completely dependent on Moscow. Therein lays the relevancy of the UAE possibly reopening its embassy in Damascus in order to accelerate Syria’s pivot to the GCC, as Damascus could theoretically replace Iranian influence with the Gulf’s and continue “balancing” Russia.

As for the Russian perspectives, the military has been working very closely with its Iranian partners for the past three years and they all understandably established a close comradery

forged by the fires of battle, while the diplomats never had these sorts of experiences in the field and therefore have a “colder” but – it can be argued – more “impartial” stance regarding the issue of their country “encouraging” Syria to seek Tehran’s “phased withdrawal” from the Arab Republic. Of course, President Putin is the chief decision maker and all elements of the Russian state will dutifully obey his commands, but it might be a lot easier to execute his and his diplomats’ plans if the military sees that its Syrian and Iranian counterparts truly want to go along with all of this on their own will and aren’t being “pressured” by Russia to do this. On their own and without Russia’s knowledge, the joint American-“Israeli” is designed to shape the strategic conditions for facilitating this outcome.

Referring back to the four news items that preceded the “leak” about Russia’s reported talks with “Israel” and the US over this scenario, they could in hindsight be interpreted as signaling Tel Aviv and Washington’s public willingness to support this plan. “Israel” was telegraphing to both Syria and Iran that it doesn’t “need” to continue bombing the Arab Republic anymore, while the US significantly reaffirmed that it won’t take active measures to overthrow President Assad. Fearing that the “deep state” divisions in Syria and Iran might be insurmountable without some extra outside pressure, the US took the step to impose sanctions against both of them and Russia over their alleged violation of the recently reimposed sanctions regime prohibiting the export of the Islamic Republic’s energy resources, wagering that this might compel Moscow to “lean more” on Damascus and therefore set into motion Tehran’s eventual military withdrawal from the country after breaking the strategic impasse.

Incidentally, it was [announced](#) on Wednesday afternoon that President Assad is considering another trip to Russia soon, which could mean that he’s finally ready to ‘seal the deal’ with President Putin.

The Bigger Picture Of Bringing Peace To The Mideast

The present analysis wouldn’t be complete without explaining the role that Iran’s Russian-facilitated “phased withdrawal” from Syria is expected to accomplish in terms of the bigger picture of bringing peace to the Mideast. Russia, which envisions itself 21st-century grand strategic role as being the [supreme “balancing” force](#) in Afro-Eurasia, believes that it can play the most important part in building the so-called “New Middle East”, to which end its “balancing” of Iran is expected to be followed up with the reconstruction of Syria’s “deep state” and the UNSC 2254-mandated reform of its constitution. The second-mentioned element should be paid special attention because [Article 8](#) of the Russian-written “draft constitution” contains two clauses decreeing that

“Syria shall maintain good neighborly relations with other countries based on cooperation, mutual security and other principles stipulated by international legal rules” and that “Syria denounces war as an infringement on other countries’ sovereignty and a means to resolve international conflicts.”

If (key qualifier) Article 8 is included in Syria’s forthcoming reformed constitution, then it would for all intents and purposes amount to Damascus de-facto giving up its claims to the “Israeli“-occupied Golan Heights by dint of its denouncement of war as a means to resolve this international conflict, as well as its promise to “maintain good neighborly relations with other countries based on cooperation, mutual security and other principles stipulated by international legal rules”. This would naturally place Russia in the position to broker peace

between “Israel” and Syria just like Barmin “suggested” in his RIAC analysis. Should Moscow be successful in this through one way or another, then Khlebnikov’s vision of “Israel” rebuilding Syria together with the GCC would become “politically feasible”, and Tel Aviv might also “advise” its Russian ally on how it should reform the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and reshape the country’s “deep state”.

This scenario would probably be timed to coincide with the GCC making peace with “Israel”, leaving only Lebanon as the last relevant holdout in Tel Aviv’s neighborhood, but one which [could possibly be “managed” by Russia](#) replacing Saudi Arabia’s influence there and “balancing” Iran’s. It would probably be around this time that Trump’s so-called “Deal of the Century” for restarting the Palestinian peace process might actually gain traction after the radical changes brought about by Syria and the GCC’s de-facto and/or de-jure recognitions of “Israel” unrecognizably alter the strategic chessboard. By that point, the only two pertinent countries that would likely remain in a position of potentially opposing this “New Middle East” would be Turkey and Iran, both of which would already be more dependent on Russia as a “pressure valve” than ever before due to [“Israel’s” anti-Turkish Eastern Mediterranean alliance](#), the Kurds, and the GCC’s anti-Iranian “containment” measures, therefore granting Russia unprecedented influence over them.

Faced with more pressing threats along their immediate peripheries and conscious of the strategic consequences if they act “too assertively” against their “pressure valve’s” “Israeli” ally, both of these Muslim Great Powers would be unable to stop the “Israeli”-centric regional processes underway that Russia’s successful “balancing” act in Syria unleashed, meaning that the [Yinon Plan](#)’s objective of “cleverly securing” “Israel’s” existence would have been accomplished. It pretty much already is whether it’s widely recognized or not because the SAA is unable to pose a credible challenge to “Israel” after the Hybrid War of Terror on Syria decimated the nation’s military and the Russian-enforced 140-kilometer “buffer zone” in the southwest of the country makes it all but impossible for Damascus to ever “threaten” Tel Aviv again. That pretty much guarantees the safety of “Israel’s” northeastern flank, thereby making Lebanese-based Hezbollah the only remaining “problem”, albeit one that might possibly be “contained” by “exporting” Russia’s “balancing” model to that country.

Concluding Thoughts

As the title of the present analysis made clear, Russia’s non-denial about brokering Iran’s withdrawal from Syria is a big deal, and not just because of what it would mean for advancing a “political solution” to the country’s long-running conflict, but also due to the game-changing consequences that it could have for building the so-called “New Middle East” after the de-facto success of the Yinon Plan. Nothing “conspiratorial” is being alleged in this article about Russia supposedly “collaborating” with “Israel” “all along” to this end, but what was plainly conveyed in the text is that Moscow apparently believes that its own long-term strategic interests are best served by “balancing” the Mideast in a manner that largely overlaps with the spirit of the Yinon Plan. This isn’t because of any “special affinity” for “Israel”, but is attributable to the geopolitical circumstances that Russia has found itself in.

After conducting a thorough cost-benefit analysis and spending much time weighing the pros and cons, Russia apparently concluded after the tragic mid-September downing of its spy plane that it’s better to remain committed to the “buffer zone” that it carved out for “Israel” in southwestern Syria and continue with the trend of gradually pushing Iranian

influence out of the country, albeit in a respectable “face-saving” and “mutually beneficial” way that might see Moscow “encourage” Damascus to request Tehran’s “phased withdrawal” in exchange for sanctions relief from Washington. If this ultra-ambitious gambit is successful (which remains a “work in progress” and is far from certain), then it would definitely be the first major step in the direction of reshaping regional affairs in a way that would sustainably secure “Israel’s” existence and relatedly improve the odds that Trump’s “Deal of the Century” achieves something tangible for Tel Aviv.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

This article was originally published on [Eurasia Future](#).

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China’s One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Andrew Korybko](#), Global Research, 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Andrew Korybko](#)

About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China’s One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca