

# The Conflict in Syria Was Always Israel's War

Because Israel has staked first its survival and ultimately its growth into a dominant regional power on the disunity of its neighboring nations, it comes as no surprise that, faced with a winding-down of the Syrian conflict, it is now moving sharply against that development.

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*After years of fomenting the Syrian conflict from the shadows, the U.S. has recently seemed to [back away](#) from its push to militarily intervene in the embattled nation, instead choosing to focus its saber-rattling and destabilization efforts on other theaters. The consequence of this has seemingly been the winding down of the long-running conflict, now entering its seventh year.*

Buoyed by Russia, Iran and Lebanon, the Syrian government led by **President Bashar al-Assad** has managed to retake vast swaths of territory, all while surviving and growing stronger over the course of a largely foreign-funded onslaught. As a result, many of the governments that were instrumental in funding and arming the so-called “moderate” opposition have begun to extricate themselves, unwilling to further test the resilience of Assad or the Syrian people.

With some anticipating the [long-awaited conclusion](#) of the Syrian conflict, recent threats from Israel's government to assassinate Assad by bombing his residence seemed to appear out of the blue. According to [the Jerusalem Post](#), a senior Israeli official accompanying Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** on a recent visit to Russia warned the Kremlin that if Iran continues to “extend its reach” in Syria, Israel would bomb the presidential palace in Damascus.

Israel's comments should come as no surprise, however, as the foreign-funded and manufactured conflict in Syria was always Israel's war. The only real surprise is Israel's growing isolation in pushing for the further escalation of the conflict.

## WikiLeaks sheds light on the origins of the war

Though it has successfully avoided being labeled a major player in the effort to oust Assad, Israel has long been the mastermind of the plan, which stems in large part from the long-standing hostilities between the two nations as well as Israel's own regional ambitions. State Department diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks have shown that in 2006, five years before the conflict in Syria manifested, the government of Israel [had hatched a plan](#) to overthrow the Assad government by engineering sectarian strife in the country, creating paranoia within the highest-ranks of the Syrian government, and isolating Syria from its strongest regional ally, Iran.

Israel then passed this plan along to the United States, which would then involve Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and Egypt in fomenting the “breakdown” of the Assad regime as a way of weakening both Iran and Hezbollah — with the effect of empowering both Israel and the Gulf monarchies, two seemingly disparate forces in the region that are becoming [increasingly allied](#).

Leaked emails belonging to former **Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** further reveal Israel’s role in covertly creating the conflict and its clear role in securing the involvement of the U.S. and other nations in executing its plan for Assad’s removal. [One email](#), forwarded by Clinton to her advisor **Jacob Sullivan**, argues that Israel is convinced that Iran would lose “its only ally” in the region were Assad’s government to collapse.

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It further stated that “The fall of the House of Assad could well ignite a sectarian war between the Shiites and the majority Sunnis of the region drawing in Iran, which, in the view of Israeli commanders would not be a bad thing for Israel and its Western allies.” This possible sectarian war was perceived as a potential “factor in the eventual fall of the current government of Iran.”

Another [Clinton email](#) released by WikiLeaks stated”

The best way to help Israel deal with Iran’s growing nuclear capability is to help the people of Syria overthrow the regime of Bashar Assad,”

Adding

Bringing down Assad would not only be a massive boon to Israel’s security, it would also ease Israel’s understandable fear of losing its nuclear monopoly.”

The email also notes:

A successful intervention in Syria would require substantial diplomatic and military leadership from the United States” and states that “arming the Syrian rebels and using western air power to ground Syrian helicopters and airplanes is a low-cost high payoff approach.”

### **Read the full Wikileaks release below:**

Stated plainly, the U.S.’ decision to spend over [\\$1 billion](#) until 2015 to arm Syria’s terrorist-linked “rebels” — and to invoke the assistance of Wahhabi terrorism exporters like Saudi Arabia and Qatar in funneling weapons and funds to these same groups — was spurred by Israel, which not only drafted the original blueprint for the Syrian conflict but guided U.S. involvement by exerting its powerful influence over the foreign policy of that country.

### **Aiding the Rebels**

Israel did more, however, than covertly instigate and guide the funding of opposition

“rebels” — having secretly funded and aided opposition groups, including ones with overt terrorist affiliations, over the course of the six-year-long conflict.

Israeli involvement in direct funding and aiding the Syrian “rebels” was suspected for years before being officially made public by the Wall Street Journal in June of this year. [The report revealed](#) that Israel, since the beginning of the conflict, had been “supplying Syrian rebels near its border with cash as well as food, fuel, and medical supplies for years, a secret engagement in the enemy country’s civil war aimed at carving out a buffer zone populated by friendly forces.” Israel has also frequently brought wounded “rebels” into Israel for medical treatment, a policy it often touts as a “humanitarian effort.”

These “friendly” forces were armed groups that formed part of or were allied with al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch, known for committing atrocities against thousands of Syrian civilians and slaughtering religious and ethnic minorities. Since 2013, al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups [have dominated](#) the “eight-square-kilometer separation zone on the Golan.” Israel has stated officially that these fighters are part of the U.S. coalition-supported Free Syrian Army (FSA). However, it has long been known that the vast majority of the groups comprising FSA [have pledged allegiance](#) to the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front, and that those who still fight under the FSA banner [meet with al-Nusra on a daily basis](#).



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looks on as a Syrian rebel fighter is treated in an IDF field hospital. (Photo: Kobi Gideon/GPO)

Israel’s support for terrorist groups went far beyond medical treatment, food supplies and cash. The Israeli army [was also found](#) to have been in regular communication with these terrorist groups and even helped “pay salaries of fighters and buy ammunition and weapons.” In addition, when the positions of the “rebel” groups it funded, armed and paid were in danger of being overtaken by Syrian government forces, Israel stepped in to directly bomb Syrian targets. For instance, in June, [Israel attacked](#) several Syrian military positions after claiming a stray mortar had landed within the boundaries of the Golan Heights, part of Syria that has long been occupied by Israel. However, the attack tellingly coincided with Syrian army advancements against the “rebel” groups that Israel has long cultivated as part of the so-called “buffer zone.”

Furthermore, Israel has launched attacks inside Syria “dozens and dozens of times,”

according to [a recent admission](#) by Netanyahu. Earlier this year, Israel [also threatened](#) to “destroy” Syrian air defenses after the Syrian army fired missiles at Israeli warplanes striking targets within Syria.

Also very telling has been Israel’s position on Daesh (ISIS). In June of last year, Israel’s military intelligence chief, Major General Herzi Halevi, [openly stated](#) that Israel does not want to see Daesh defeated in Syria — expressing concern about the offensives against Daesh territory and lamenting their “most difficult” situation. Prior to Halevi’s comments, Israeli officials had [regularly noted](#) that Daesh conquering the whole of Syria would be preferable to the survival of the Assad government. These comments have been echoed by Israeli and NATO-affiliated think tanks, one of which [called Daesh](#) “a useful tool in undermining” Iran, Hezbollah, Syria and Russia — despite Daesh’s barbaric tactics, war crimes, enslavement of women and ethnic cleansing efforts.

### **Israel’s larger geopolitical agenda**

Though Israel’s support of Wahhabi terrorists like Daesh (ISIS) and al-Nusra may seem counter-intuitive, Israel’s overarching purpose in expelling Assad from power is based on strategic geopolitical and economic goals that Israel is determined to meet at any cost. While Israel frequently mentions Iran as the pretext for its involvement in Syria, the strongest motivators for Israel’s participation in the destruction of its northern neighbor are oil and territorial expansion.

One of Israel’s clearest reasons for being interested in the destabilization of Syria is its ability to assert further control of the Golan Heights, an area of Syria that Israel has illegally occupied since 1967 and annexed in 1981. Despite filling the area with illegal settlements and military assets, Israel has been unable to convince the international community, and even its close allies such as the U.S., to recognize its sovereignty over the territory. However, the conflict in Syria has proven beneficial to this end, [allowing Israel to send](#) even more settlers into the Golan, an estimated 100,000 over five years.

Israel is largely interested in gaining control over the Golan for economic reasons, owing to the occupied territory’s oil reserves, which are estimated to contain “[billions of barrels.](#)” Under the cover of the Syrian conflict, the Israeli branch of an American oil company — whose investors include Dick Cheney, Jacob Rothschild and Rupert Murdoch — has been drilling exploratory wells throughout the region, as the Heights’ uncertain territorial status prevents Israel from financially exploiting the resource.

Despite the prohibitions of international law, Israel is eager to tap into those reserves, as they have the potential to “[make Israel energy self-sufficient.](#)” Israel has even offered, per [the Galant plan](#), to “rebuild” Syria with billions in U.S. taxpayer dollars in exchange for the Golan Heights — though the plan received a tepid reception from all involved parties other than Israel itself.

As it stands, Assad’s removal and replacement with a government friendly to Israeli and Western interests is Israel’s only real means of claiming the Golan Heights’ energy resources for itself.

### **Pawns blocking Israel’s endgame**

Aside from the oil and the territory it seeks to gain in the Golan Heights, Israel is also

seeking to expand well beyond that territory in order to more widely exert its influence and become the region's "superpower." This ambition is described in the Yinon Plan, [a strategy](#) intended to ensure Israel's regional superiority in the Middle East that chiefly involves reconfiguring the entire Arab world into smaller and weaker sectarian states. This has manifested in Israel's [support for the partition](#) of Iraq as well as Syria, abetted by [its support for](#) the establishment of a separatist Kurdish state within these two nations.

This goal, in particular, largely explains Israel's obsession with curbing Iranian influence in the Middle East, whether in Syria or elsewhere. Iran – more than any other nation in the region – is the most likely to threaten the "superpower" status that Israel seeks to gain for itself, as well as Israel's loss of monopoly as the region's only nuclear power.

Given Israel's compound interests in seeing the removal of Assad and the partition of Syria, it is hardly surprising that Israeli political rhetoric has reached new heights of saber-rattling as Tel Aviv becomes increasingly concerned that the conflict it masterminded could backfire. Prior to the explosive comments regarding Israeli threats to bomb Assad's residence, an anonymous Israeli government minister [blamed the U.S.](#) for backing out of Syria, a move he argued sacrificed Israeli interests:

The United States threw Israel under the bus for the second time in a row. The first time was the nuclear agreement with Iran, the second time is now that the United States ignores the fact that Iran is obtaining territorial continuity to the Mediterranean Sea and Israel's northern border [through Syria]."

Not only that but Israel has recently [vowed to "nullify"](#) the ceasefire deal [brokered between](#) Russia and the U.S. with Syrian and Iranian support if it fails to comply with Israel's needs — an ultimatum based on rather subjective terms given that "Israel's needs" are hardly static. Israel's response again shows the perception among officials in Tel Aviv that the Syrian conflict is of primary importance to Israeli geopolitical interests.

Furthermore, given that the response suggested so far by Israeli officials – on [more than one occasion](#) – has been to assassinate Syria's democratically-elected President – the contemplated means of Israel "nullifying" the ceasefire deal will likely have explosive implications. Israel — apparently refusing to accept that the conflict it orchestrated is not going, and may not end, as planned — is now willing to escalate the situation militarily, with or without allies, resorting to dangerous brinkmanship with global implications.

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