

Will Damascus Fall? Mike Whitney

By [Mike Whitney](#)

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

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

#Israel is waiting... for #Homs to fall in order to annex the south of #Syria and call it a "buffer zone to protect against jihadists", the same thing it has been supporting for many years. @Netanyahu is not hiding his ambition that helps his image domestically by adding more stolen territories to the "greater Israel". —Elijah J. Magnier @ejmalrai

In a matter of days, **a small army of battle-hardened jihadists have swarmed across Syria shattering a fragile truce and threatening the regional balance of power.** The surprise Blitz has sent the stunned Syrian Army into full retreat while mostly foreign militants have seized the country's industrial hub, Aleppo, and its fourth largest city, Hama. The unexpected rout has delivered a knockout blow to the government of **Bashar al Assad** who must now appeal to Russia, Iran and Hezbollah to deploy troops and weaponry to stave off the devastating offensive and prevent the fall of Damascus. But allies must move quickly if they plan to save the regime and stop the relentless advance of the Turkish-backed invaders. Enemy forces are now gathering just 100 kilometers from the Capital suggesting that their intention is to topple the present government and install a regime that is aligned with its foreign benefactors; Turkey, Israel and the United States.

On Friday, Turkish **President Tayyip Erdogan** tacitly congratulated the terrorist militias that are on the verge of toppling Assad without explicitly admitting his role in the treachery. This is from an article at *Reuters*:

Erdogan said on Friday he hoped Syrian rebels will continue their advance against President Bashar al-Assad's forces in Syria.... Erdogan told reporters after Friday prayers he was closely following the push which he said was heading to the Syrian capital....

"The target is Damascus," he said. "I would say we hope for this advance to continue without any issues..."

"These problematic advances continuing as a whole in the region are not in a manner we desire, our heart does not want these. Unfortunately, the region is in a bind," he said, without elaborating....

Ankara has for years supported Syrian opposition forces looking to oust... Assad, but also views some regional players as terrorists, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist former Al-Qaeda affiliate that is part of the rebel force. [Turkey's Erdogan Hopes Syrian Rebels Will Advance, but Raises Alarm About Some Fighters](#), *US News and World Report*

There it is in plain English; **Erdogan supports the jihadist advance on Damascus and welcomes the ousting of the government.** In truth, the war on Syria has been a long-

term project for Erdogan dating back more than a decade leading to the splintering of the state into multiple parts controlled by the US, the Kurds (SDF), Israel, and a number of disparate militant groups under the control of Ankara. This latest onslaught poses the greatest threat the government has ever faced and it is increasingly likely that it will be unable to withstand a powerful and well-organized assault on the Capital. This, of course, puts Washington and Tel Aviv closer to realizing their dream of a “New Middle East” where the flow of critical resources to rival China is controlled by powerbrokers in the US and where Israel establishes its primacy over a vast area of the Arab world. If Damascus falls, the only obstacle to the long-awaited neocon plan, would be Iran which will be dealt with when Trump takes office.

Spearheading the ongoing rampage across Syria is Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) which is an offshoot of al Qaida, the shadowy confederation of Sunni terrorists whose origins are linked to the western intelligence agencies. According to *antiwar.com*:

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) offensive has been backed strongly by the Turkey-backed rebels from the country’s northwest. **There have been multiple reports that Turkey is backing the offensive, and indeed that Turkey may even be the driving force in the recent push.** HTS fighters seem increasingly well-equipped and confirmed as using tanks in their assault on Hama.

With Hama taken, many analysts say that the next major target would be the city of Homs. That would be an obvious next step, as HTS continues their offensive south along the major M5 highway from Aleppo. Homs is just 25 km south of Hama. **If Homs fell too, it is likely the capital city of Damascus would also be under major risk. ...**

...while HTS is labeled a terrorist organization broadly internationally, countries including Turkey and Israel are showing increased comfort in openly working with them against the Syrian government. **The HTS has reportedly offered to open Israeli embassies in Damascus and Beirut if and when they conquer Syria and neighboring Lebanon.** [Al-Qaeda Linked Militants Seize Major Syrian City of Hama](#), *antiwar.com*

Let me get this straight: HTS is supposedly an Islamic militia that would rather devote its energy to overthrowing a secular Arab leader that opposes US and Israeli hegemony in the region, then contribute to the war effort against the genocidal state of Israel and its biggest enabler, the United States?

Is that what we are supposed to believe? Here’s how political analyst Alon Mizrahi summed up Erdogan’s pro-terror policy:

what Turkey is doing, when aligning itself with Israel and the US, and allowing itself to be perceived as the enemy of Palestine and the Syrian people - what Turkey is doing is alienating itself from its neighbours, and antagonizing itself to the powers that will shape the future.

By moving into Syria, Turkey enrages Iran and Iraq, two of its immediate neighbors. It opens a new Syrian front for internal oppression, constant bloodshed and risk of terrorist attacks. But it is also, and most importantly, is working against the interests of both Russia and China – the two regional and global giants, who are becoming more powerful and dominant.

Will Turkey be accepted into BRICS after this? Will it be granted a favourable trade status by China? I have serious doubts about that.

So, what is Turkey set to gain from this? Territory it doesn't need and won't be able to control? Severe reputational and diplomatic implications (seriously? Choosing to now stand with Israel's genocide???) The hate of Muslims the world over, and the eternal rage of its neighbors? **More tyranny at home, instead of more freedom? An assured economic disaster? A destabilized population, exposed to terrorism, economic hardship, and loss of young men in a stupid war? ...With no possible upsides and a guaranteed huge diplomatic, economic and military drawbacks, Turkey's Syria move must be the dumbest ever.** [Alon Mizrahi @alon_mizrahi](#)



If there is some intangible benefit to Turkey, we don't see it. What we see instead, is a **geopolitical gun to Putin's head forcing him to get more deeply involved in the Syrian campaign to prevent a US-Israeli takeover of the region thereby laying the groundwork for more mischief in the future.** One can only wonder, why China—which aspires to a leadership role in the creation of a 'new global security architecture'—remains on the sidelines while the Middle East is incinerated right below its nose? Why? If Xi Jinping assumes that China's explosive economic growth is enough to ensure its 'top spot' in the world order without providing "rough men with guns" to achieve that objective, he's got another think coming. The world is not run by clever merchants selling low-price widgets but gruff men with big fists who don't mind using them. This is from an article at *RT*:

Beijing is willing to aid Damascus to prevent the situation from deteriorating further, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian has said.

"China is deeply concerned over the situation in northwestern Syria and supports its effort to uphold national security and stability," Lin told a press briefing on Monday. **"As Syria's friend, China is willing to make an active effort to avoid further deterioration of the situation in Syria,"** the official said...

China's ties with Syria have been growing closer in recent years. Last September, Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Syrian counterpart **Bashar Assad inked a "strategic partnership" deal, pledging to work together in order to "jointly safeguard international fairness and justice" in the face of the "unstable and uncertain international situation."** [China vows support for Syria, RT](#)

Okay, so China has agreed to help Syria. What are they waiting for? The wolves are at the

door and there's no time to waste. This is from a post at the Iran Observer:

Timeline before the attack on Aleppo:

November 18, Israel's Shin Bet Chief met with Turkey's intelligence agency

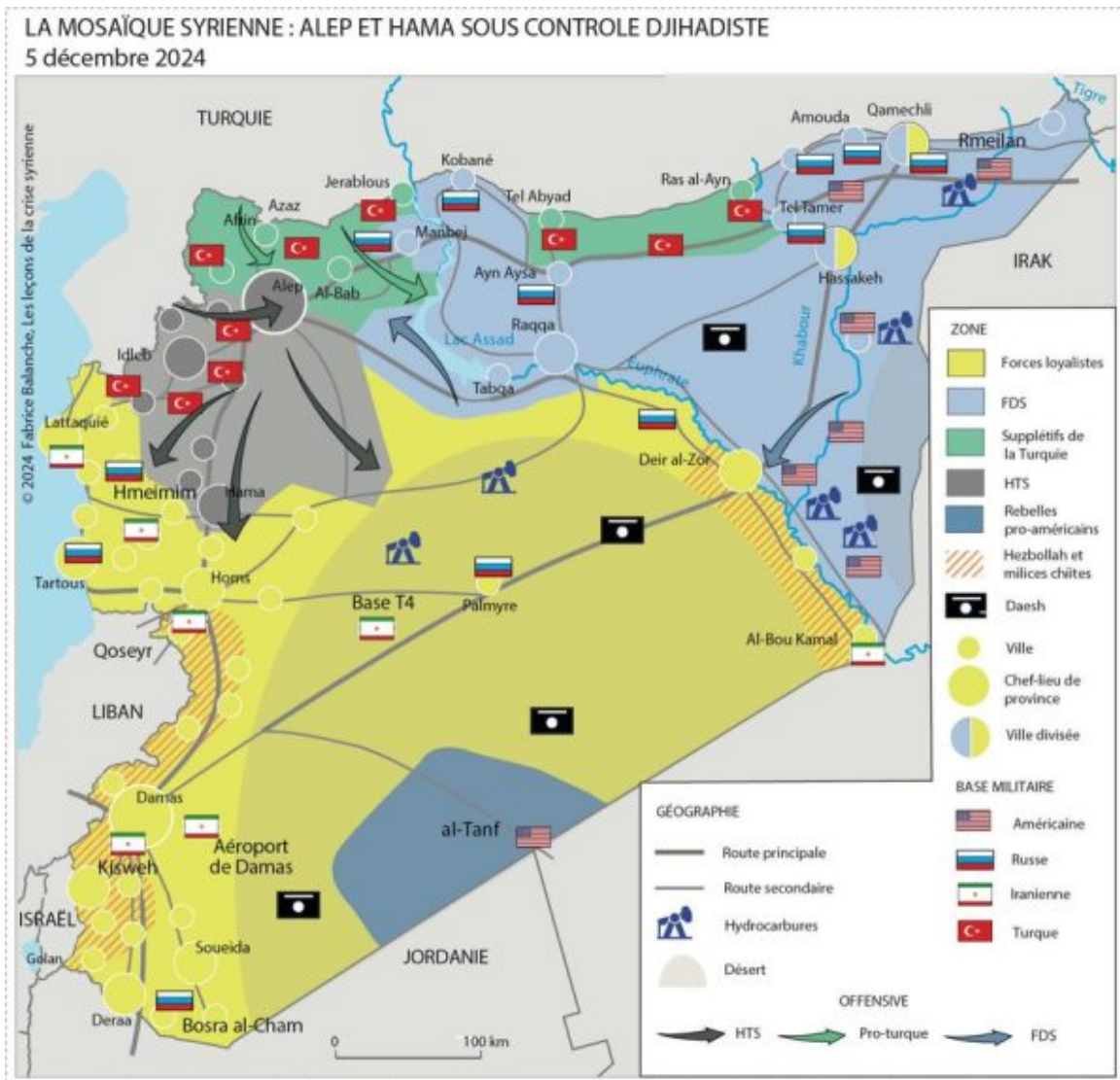
November 25, NATO Chief met with Erdogan

November 26, Al Qaeda and ISIS launched an attack against the Syrian state

[@IranObserver0](#)

What does it mean?

It means that Erdogan hammered out the details of the attack plan (on Syria) with officials from Israel and NATO. It means that Erdogan got the 'green light from foreign opponents of Assad. It means that Erdogan is a double-dealing, back-stabbing serpent who cannot be trusted and who disparages Israel in public while doing their bidding behind closed doors. That's what it means.



Events on the ground are now moving so fast that this article will probably be obsolete before it ever goes to print. A Friday afternoon report from *The Cradle* states that panic has

overtaken Homs sending thousands of civilians fleeing south for safety. Check it out:

Tens of thousands of people are fleeing in fear from Homs, Syria's third largest city, as foreign-backed armed extremists continue to advance south from the town of Hama.

The joint operations center for **Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a UN-designated terrorist organization and offshoot of Al-Qaeda which has long enjoyed US, Qatari, Turkish, and Israeli support,** announced its militants have taken two towns, Rastan and Talbisseh, along the strategic M5 highway and are now within five kilometers of Homs.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) also reported that militants from HTS had taken the two towns and are threatening Homs. The SOHR said Russian warplanes had bombed a bridge in Rastan to block the extremists' advance....

Turkish President Recip Tayyip Erdogan acknowledged his support for the SNA and HTS on Friday, stating that the extremist invasion was in response to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's refusal to agree to Turkish demands in the Astana negotiations....

HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, who was formerly an Islamic State of Iraq emir, continues to receive positive coverage in the Western and Gulf press - despite the atrocities his previous organization committed in Iraq and Syria, in particular against Christians, Yezidis, and Shia Muslims, but also against fellow Sunni Muslims.

Aaron Y Zelin, a terrorism researcher working for an Israeli-funded think tank, published an article in the UK Telegraph on 3 December describing **Jolani's HTS as "diversity-friendly jihadists"** who want to secure the rights of Syria's minorities.

On Friday, Jolani granted *CNN* an "exclusive interview" at an undisclosed location in Syria. **The extremist leader said that his goal is to topple President Assad and the Syrian government, which has been a long-time US and Israeli goal.** Jolani claimed his plan was to create a government based on institutions and a "council chosen by the people." [The Cradle](#)



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These are the people the United States is supporting in the war against Assad; Jolani and his barbarian head-choppers. Bibi and Erdogan are both on-board the program, in fact, each believes that—their ultimate objective of toppling Assad and moving on to Iran—is now within their reach. Fortunately, we think their plan could be derailed by the unexpected involvement of Iran and Russia, but it is too soon to say for sure.

What we do know is that the jihadist blitzkrieg is gaining pace and now just 100 kilometers from Damascus. We know that **“Egypt and Jordan have called on Bashar al-Assad to leave Syria and form a government in exile.”** (Wall Street Journal) We know that **“Israel has informed Iran that it will attack any attempt to send weapons or forces to Syria.”** (Israeli *i24News Channel*) We know that **armed jihadists have taken over the southern city of Daraa...** after they reached a deal with the army to secure its orderly withdrawal. (*Reuters*) And we know that officials from the IDF said Friday it was

“reinforcing aerial and ground forces” in the occupied Golan Heights in response to sweeping advances by opposition forces in Syria. (*Times of Israel*) In other words, **the IDF is gathering the forces it needs to invade southern Syria if Homs falls.**

So, we can assume that the next 24 to 48 hours will be nerve-wracking, chaotic and violent. Either Assad will summon the resources to defend his country from the devastation his enemies have in mind, or we will see the US-Israel-Turkey Axis succeed in their perfidious plan to topple another sovereign government in the Middle East plunging the region deeper into anarchy, ruin and desperation.

It might be a good time to recall what Tom Paine said on a similar occasion:

“THESE are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.” [Thomas Paine](#), *The American Crisis*, 1776

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