

Will the US Re-ignite a ‘Syrian Revolution’ to Punish Russia in Ukraine?

By [Abdel Bari Atwan](#)

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The US and its allies have already set the scene for Revolution 2.0 in Syria. The question is whether their plan is to extract concessions from Russia over Ukraine, or to go full out and risk a West Asia-wide conflagration.

With new political, military, and economic tensions escalating between the United States and its NATO allies on the one hand, and China, Russia, North Korea and Iran on the other – including the Taiwan front in East Asia, and Ukraine in central Europe – we are now witnessing accelerated plans to activate new crises in West Asia, from Syria to Iraq to the war on Yemen.

Let us leave the situation in Iraq and Yemen aside, temporarily, and focus on Syria. The country has experienced an atmosphere of relative calm, or rather a ‘stalemate,’ in the past few years, after the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) regained more than 70 percent of its territory.

This period of calm has also seen the decline of the so-called Syrian opposition, both politically and militarily, in the city of Idlib and its vicinity, as well as in other areas in northeastern Syria, currently under the umbrella of US forces.

There are, however, several international and regional indications that the dormant Syrian ‘opposition’ is on its way to being reactivated again.

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It is likely this reactivation may appear in a more ferocious form than the militancy that was unleashed at the beginning of the Syrian crisis in March 2011. Numerous indications of this have already emerged:

First, Russian foreign intelligence on Tuesday unveiled US plans to support armed groups in Syria, and ‘Islamic’ extremists in particular, to intensify their attacks against Syrian, Russian

and Iranian forces in Tawaz, while igniting and encouraging 'peaceful' protests deep within Syria.

Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) [reported](#) that US government agencies are "planning to task extremist 'sleeper cells' in Damascus...and Latakia province [by] staging pinpoint attacks against Syrian law enforcers, and Russian and Iranian military personnel."

Russia's Deputy Envoy at the UN **Gennady Kuzmin** told the [UN Security Council](#) on Wednesday that

"The problem of terrorist threats in northeastern Syria is pressing. The US troops that are illegally deployed there cannot bring order. Or they don't want to."

In what appears as a reference to the mass ISIS jailbreak in Hasakah from a US-controlled area in late-January, Kuzmin added that "the atmosphere of a power void and impunity around the US forces' deployment areas serves as a nourishing ground for terrorists of all stripes."

The second indicator points to the statement issued by the Russian Intelligence Service, which says that the US administration is seeking to maintain its military presence in northeastern Syria, prevent the stability of Syria, rehabilitate the leadership of the Syrian opposition, and unite its ranks, Kurdish or Arab.

The US plan will be carried out through the exploitation of the current decline in economic conditions, basic services, and a significant weakening in the price of local currency, due to the suffocating US blockade.

According to the statement, the US will launch a "vast media campaign" on Arabic-speaking social media to incite Syrians to again take to the streets and squares, in the capital Damascus, and the cities of Aleppo, Homs and Latakia to push the regime to use the 'violent' iron fist in the face of 'peaceful' protests.

In other words, a re-play of the Deraa scenario in early 2011.

The third indicator was the two-day conference that took place last Saturday in Qatar's capital city, Doha, which re-united various Syrian opposition figures on the subjects of reform and the future of Syria.

The conference - a culmination of a series of workshops held in a selection of European capitals - was launched by the renegade former Syrian prime minister, **Riad Hijab**, and included the representatives of Qatari, Arab, and international research centers, as well as more than 60 Syrian opposition figures.

Qatari authorities provided full support for this seminar, which Al Jazeera and its sister channels covered with remarkable intensity.

The fourth indicator relates to Algeria's multiple efforts to hold an Arab summit in which Syrian **President Bashar al-Assad** will participate, and Syria's seat in the Arab League will be restored. These efforts have failed, in part because Qatar has been the most fierce opponent to the rehabilitation of Syria at the Arab League.

And finally, fifth, is the out-of-the-blue assassination of the leader of the Islamic State, **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi**, at the hands of US special forces in Turkish controlled areas in Syria.

Al-Quraishi was attacked in his home, in the north of Idlib, in an attack that has no documented audio or image evidence, similar to the previous assassinations of **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** and, before him, **Osama bin Laden** – but entirely unlike the execution of **Saddam Hussein** and the killing of his two sons.

This ‘assassination’ may, of course, just be a cover for the new US plan to restart covert communications with and support for radical Islamist militants, while publicly suggesting that the US continues to target them as ‘terrorist organizations.’

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Quraishi’s sudden killing in Syria during the dangerous stand-off between NATO and Russia raised some questions in Washington as well. Former US Air Force Special Operations Joint Terminal Attack controller, **Ethan Brown**, pondered aloud in [The Hill](#) about “its “timing and the curious proximity to the crisis in Ukraine.”

Brown asks whether “the execution of a [US] military operation outside of a declared war zone in the Middle East...is somehow a credible deterrent to Russian actions elsewhere.” Then straight-out declares: “Make no mistake, the two unique situations are intertwined.”

On Tuesday, **Lt. Gen. Erik Kurilla**, tapped to be the next commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), [told](#) the Senate Armed Services Committee that if Russia invades Ukraine, it could create broader instability in West Asia, including Syria.

This week, the Israelis struck Syria heavily again, just two weeks after the Russians and Syrians launched their [first](#) joint jet patrols over the Syrian-Israel border. This time, Moscow reacted strongly, [calling](#) Tel Aviv’s actions “a crude violation of Syria’s sovereignty” that “may trigger a sharp escalation of tensions.”

The escalation in Syria, likely connected to Washington’s Ukraine strategy, has already started. The question is whether the protagonists will merely stage some events as a threat – or go all out.

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The Syrian opposition launched its first ‘movement’ 11 years ago in Doha, and it seems that the attempt to revive it will also take place in the same place.

The official statement of the meeting outlined its “aims to try to find mechanisms of action to promote the performance of the opposition and discuss how to get the political transition out of the current global warming.”

“The Biden administration wants 2022 to be the year of qualifying Syrian opposition forces to be ready to replace the regime in any change that may occur,” Syrian opposition media outlet *Orient Net* stated in a report broadcast two months ago.

The report also revealed that US **Deputy Secretary of State Eitan Goldrich** had met with

Syrian opposition leaders in Istanbul, Qamishli, and Gaziantep late last year to prepare for the new US scenario in Syria.

Will this new US plan work in Syria? Has the suffocating US blockade on Syria, imposed for this purpose 11 years ago, reap its harvest? Will this attempt fare any better than the first? Will funding come from Gulf financiers themselves? And how will the axis of Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and Syria respond?

We leave the answer for the coming weeks and months.

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