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What is the Significance of the Reopening of the UAE Embassy in Damascus. Syria's "Pivot" towards "Reconciliation" with Saudi Arabia?

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Global Research, November 08, 2018

Region: Middle East & North Africa
Theme: Intelligence
In-depth Report: SYRIA

It would be foolish to believe that the uber-wealthy UAE needs war-torn Syria more than the reverse, so the reported reopening of the Emirati Embassy more than likely signals a significant change in policy on Damascus' behalf and not Abu Dhabi's, the ramifications of which could be far-reaching for the entire region and especially Iran.

Planning A Pivot

Al-Masdar Al-'Arabi ("The Arab Source", also known as AMN), an Alt-Media website that basically functions as an unofficial outlet for the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) or at least a faction of it, dropped a bombshell report on Wednesday about how the planned reopening of the Emirati Embassy in Damascus is part of Syria's reconciliation with that country and its GCC allies in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Considering how close AMN is regarded as being to some of the people in Syria's military-intelligence community (which forms part of its "deep state"), this exclusive information shouldn't be treated lightly, nor as "disinformation" from an "unfriendly source". Rather, there's every reason to believe the report and analyze the far-reaching regional ramifications that it could have if this actually comes to pass. So as not to be accused of misportraying its contents, here's the entirety of what AMN revealed to the world on Wednesday:

> "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic are working through back channels via the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to reach a political reconciliation, a source in Damascus said on Wednesday. According to the source, the Syrian government has been in discussions with the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia regarding political reconciliation. The source said that the Syrian government and the Gulf nations have been in discussion about the Muslim Brotherhood's presence in the region and their need to defeat their ideology. The first step in this reconciliation was the reopening of the UAE embassy in Damascus after closing more than six years ago. When asked about Syria's relationship with Iran, the source said that the Persian Gulf nation was not involved in the talks. With the war winding down in Syria, Damascus is hoping for the Arab League to lift their suspension and resume efforts to champion the peace settlement."

What's particularly interesting about this report is that it specifically alleges that Iran wasn't involved in these talks, suggesting that this might have been done truly independently of Syria's military ally and representative of a sort of pivot at its perceived (key word) strategic expense. After all, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are infamously bombing Iran's "kindred spirits"

in Yemen and Riyadh even dispatched an emergency military force to Bahrain in 2011 to quell an uprising by Iran's fellow co-confessionals there, so entering into talks with this overtly anti-Iranian alliance would understandably perturb Tehran. That said, it's Syria's sovereign right to conduct its diplomacy however it feels fit to pragmatically advance its national interests, and "rebalancing" towards the GCC wouldn't be surprising when bearing in mind that Damascus used to be particularly close to the bloc before 2011. In fact, President Assad even received the prestigious "Order of King Abdulaziz" in 2009 that was also bestowed upon Putin, Obama, and Trump.

Required Reading

Before going any further, it's very likely that the typical Alt-Media consumer is totally taken aback by what AMN reported because of how heavily they were indoctrinated over the years into believing simplistic dogma about International Relations, such as the supposed impossibility of Damascus ever entering into a rapprochement with some of the very same countries that were responsible for the Hybrid War of Terror on Syria in the first place, let alone at the perceived (key word) strategic expense of its Iranian ally that solidly stood by its side this entire time. The fact of the matter is that global affairs are infinitely more complex than how they're usually presented to the masses, especially by websites that stay in business by catering to their readers' wishful thinking and earning advertising revenue from their repeated visits, to say nothing of the donations that they receive from people who are basically paying to keep their preferred "echo chamber" a "safe space".

For those who are interested in getting a grip on the nitty-gritty strategic details of what's really been going on in Syria over the past year, the author strongly recommends reading or at least skimming through three of his most recent analyses:

- "Chaos Theory, Hybrid War, And The Future Of Syria"
- "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 main idea being conveyed is that Syria is truly at a political crossroads right now that's much more profound than how many have portrayed it. Although the kinetic (military) phase of the country's conflict is drawing to a close, the non-kinetic (political) one is rapidly heating up as all sides compete to influence the ongoing constitutional reform process that will determine "the rules of the game" for decades. The three most important points of contention are the post-Daesh rivalry between "Israel" and Iran in the Arab Republic, the enormous task of funding the country's reconstruction, and the question of "decentralization", all of which are currently being managed through Russia's adroit "balancing" act between all players but which nevertheless need a definite solution one way or the other as soon as possible. The present state of affairs cannot carry on indefinitely, so Syria's possible pivot to the GCC might be Damascus' envisioned way out of this dangerous impasse.

"Inconvenient" Context

It's not popular to say, but Syria cannot realistically continue to rely on Iran's military assistance forever. As a sovereign state, Syria naturally wants to reacquire the ability to ensure its own security with minimal foreign assistance, and Iran's military intervention there at the democratically elected and legitimate government's request has pretty much

already fulfilled its official anti-terrorist purposes. That's also why AMN recently reported that the SAA is preparing to discharge thousands of troops who performed more than five years of service "as the military attempts to shift to post-war Syria, which will rely more on police units and less on infantry and armored personnel." That's understandable for both practical "peacekeeping" reasons and the very likely possibility that Iranian funds to the SAA are expected to dry up after the US' reimposed sanctions begin to affect its target's economy, so it's better to begin the decommissioning process now while there's still time to execute it in an organized fashion.

Another point to keep in mind is that "Israel" ramped up its rhetoric against Syria over the past week by threatening to strike it once again on the alleged basis that the IRGC and Hezbollah are carrying out activities there against its "national" interests (e.g. building missile factories, etc.), even going as far as hinting that it would attack the S-300s if they target its jets irrespective if Russian servicemen are present at the time. As "politically incorrect" as it is to say, Russia and "Israel" are still allies even in spite of the tragic spy plane incident that transpired in mid-September, as proven by their continued military coordination with one another, ongoing free trade talks with the Eurasian Union, and even Russia finalizing an agreement to allow "Israelis" to adopt its children (a privilege that it wouldn't ever grant to a "hostile" entity). It's therefore inconceivable that Russia would stand in "Israel's" way the next time that it chooses to bomb Syria on its alleged anti-Iranian and -Hezbollah pretexts and escalate regional tensions, so Moscow's preferred "solution" is obviously to "encourage" Syria to remove those said pretexts.

President Putin's unofficial peace plan for Syria aims to have Damascus request the "phased withdrawal" of Iranian and Hezbollah forces from the country on the "face-saving" basis that they're leaving as heroes following the successful conclusion of their anti-terrorist mission, which would satisfy "Israel's" "security concerns" and could also see Russia's new Saudi and Emirati partners moving in to "fill the void". The GCC's leaders might also importantly provide much-needed reconstruction aid to the country that Iran is incapable of granting, and Russia could have even clinched a deal with the UAE to play a more important role in its Soviet-era "sphere of influence" over South Yemen in exchange for facilitating the Emirates' entry into Syria and possibly getting Damascus to "decentralize" control over the Gulf-influenced Northeast. Furthermore, as noted in AMN's original report, the GCC might help Syria eliminate the last ideological remnants of the Turkish-backed Muslim Brotherhood, which is in their collective interests.

Concluding Thoughts

While the reopening of an embassy might not ordinarily seem like much, the case of the UAE's plan to reportedly do just that in Damascus is actually much more important than the casual observer might think, particularly after the Syrian "deep state"-connected AMN revealed that this might be the opening stage of a much larger pivot to the GCC countries. While appearing at first glance to be against Iran's interests, the opposite might be true if one accepts that Tehran cannot continue indefinitely funding its military mission to the Arab Republic under the US' sanctions pressure and that its post-Daesh presence there is "provoking" Russia's "Israeli" ally to escalate the situation to the point of possibly reversing all the stabilizing gains that were made in the country over the past three years. The argument can be made that it's better for Syria to request Iran's "phased withdrawal" under the "face-saving" pretext of leaving as heroes than to bear the consequences of keeping its forces in the country after their original mission has been completed.

Iran cannot afford the military and economic costs of fighting a lopsided proxy war with "Israel" in Syria even if it serves the political purpose of temporarily distracting its population from the predicted worsening of their living conditions throughout the course of the US' reimposed sanctions regime, nor does Damascus even want this conflict to take place on its territory precisely at the point when so much has been achieved over the past few years and a so-called "political solution" is finally within sight. Syria isn't "betraying" Iran because the two already signed a military deal over the summer and will continue to cooperate in a "normal" capacity, but it's just that Damascus might have reached the conclusion that the reconstruction assistance that it could obtain from the GCC is worth downscaling that specific facet of its strategic partnership with the Islamic Republic if it was already proving to be "troublesome" as it is. Simply put, this potentially Russian-brokered pivot might save Iran money, lead to a windfall of aid for Syria, and enduringly "stabilize" the situation.

There are also multisided "balancing" strategies at play here too, provided that Syria does indeed pivot towards the GCC like AMN suggested. Just as Russia is proving itself to be a masterful "balancer" in bringing together and managing a diverse set of actors in ways that always work out to its own benefit, so too might Syria be following in its main "patron state's" pioneering footsteps by seeking to emulate this Hyper-Realist interests-driven "balancing" strategy. Damascus would be diversifying its international partnerships beyond its erstwhile binary "dependence" on Moscow and Tehran, following the former's lead in downscaling the military dimension of its ties with the latter in order to court generous reconstruction aid from the GCC and position itself to more effectively counter the Turkish-backed Muslim Brotherhood's influence that still remains in the country. By its very nature, and being careful not to present this as being anti-Iranian in any shape of form, this pivot would open up plenty of post-war strategic options for Syria and is probably why it's being pursued.

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This article was originally published on Eurasia Future.

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