

The “Arab NATO” to Make Syria’s “Internal Partition” a Reality

The possible introduction of “Arab NATO” troops to northeastern Syria might have the effect of forcing Damascus to make a decision in the near future, though this will probably be the opposite of what the US-backed “coalition”.

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

Global Research, May 06, 2018

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

Theme: [Military and WMD, US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The possible deployment of Saudi-led GCC and other fellow “coalition” troops to northeastern Syria would formalize the de-facto “internal partition” of the Arab Republic and represent the fulfillment of the RAND Corporation’s plans to “contain” Iranian influence in the region, thus forcing President Assad to finally decide on the post-Daesh military fate of his country’s most loyal ally.

The Mideast has been abuzz for the past couple of weeks about the possibility of Saudi-led GCC and another fellow “coalition” troops (the so-called “[Arab NATO](#)”) deploying to northeastern Syria ever since the US dropped several clear hints that there’s a distinct chance of this happening, and the Egyptian Foreign Minister just [confirmed](#) that this proposal is being seriously considered “during discussions and deliberations amongst officials of states”. Should it come to pass, then the US would essentially be “[Leading From Behind](#)” by calling in its military allies to do some of the “heavy lifting” in what’s partially being presented as “containing” Iran, at least according to one of the three main objectives that the US’ Representative to the UN Nikki Haley [spoke about pursuing](#) in the middle of last month.

Old News For Those In The Know

The scenario of foreign powers carving a “[Kurdistan](#)” and “Sunnistan” out of Syria for use as proxy buffer states against Iran isn’t new but was actually predicted by the author in a [two-part](#) analysis from October 2015 titled “The Race For Raqqa And America’s Geopolitical Revenge In ‘Syraq’”, after which the influential RAND Corporation published the [third part](#) of their “Syrian peace plan” in February 2017 describing “Agreed Zones of Control, Decentralization, and International Administration” to be presided over by a US-backed coalition in this very same region. The author also documented this and other think tank plots in a March 2017 analysis titled “[SYRIA: Approaching the Finishing Line, Geopolitical ‘Jockeying for Position’ Intensifies](#)”, proving that the possible occupation of northeastern Syria was planned long ago.

Yemen 2.0? Yeah Right!

While some might mock this as being nothing more than a disastrous repeat of the Yemeni quagmire, that example isn’t all that relevant to prognosticating the future success of this

possible operation. Unlike in the South Arabian country where the majority of the inhabitants are fighting against the occupying forces that utterly destroyed their homeland, some of the people in the landlocked desert region of the Mideast might actually welcome a more robust international military presence and the billions of dollars of foreign aid that look likely to accompany it. The US-backed Kurds ethnically cleansed Arabs from Raqqa and other cities, and there's indeed an incipient multisided "Rojava Civil War" simmering, but the West and its Arab allies have more than enough experiencing dividing and ruling others to be able to manage this.

Money Talks

It's indeed possible that "Arab NATO" leaders Saudi Arabia and the UAE might enter into a "friendly competition" with one another in northeastern Syria over who ends up wielding more proxy influence over the Arabs and Kurds just like they're already doing in Yemen when it comes to Hadi's government and the [South Yemeni separatists](#), with each wealthy monarchy pouring billions of dollars into rebuilding the capabilities of their preferred group. In addition, money - which is sorely missing from Yemen - won't just pour into this part of the Arab Republic from the Gulf, but also from the US, which recently [passed a bill](#) that allows Washington to only fund reconstruction projects in areas that aren't controlled by the democratically elected and legitimate Syrian authorities, which will likely prompt the Europeans to implicitly follow suit too.

New Cold War Standoff

This means that the remainder of Syria where the bulk of the population resides will have to court aid from supportive powers such as Russia, China, and Iran, which is already forthcoming but will lead to a crystallization of the New Cold War divide between the unipolar and multipolar "blocs" along the Euphrates River "deconfliction line". It will naturally become much more challenging to bridge this de-facto "internal partition" line the longer that time goes on and the two parts of the country begin moving along totally separate geopolitical trajectories, though existing UNSC Resolutions such as 2254 will ensure that Syria remains nominally united, though it will probably never again exist as the constitutionally centralized state that it once was. Accordingly, the only realistic "solution" is to "decentralize" or "federalize" the country.

Divide And "Balance"?

The Russian-written "[draft constitution](#)" for Syria that Moscow unveiled in January 2017 leaves open this possibility via a collection of [very vague clauses](#) that in hindsight might have been included precisely for this reason, especially seeing as how the "[progressive](#)" [faction of Moscow's "deep state"](#) is visibly succeeding in its quest to make their Great Power the 21st-century's supreme "balancing" force in the Eurasian supercontinent and that this political outcome is best suited to advancing its grand strategic designs. The only "obstacle" standing in the way to its implementation and the peaceful "compromised" end to the war is Syria's legitimate and sovereign right to refuse to recognize the foreign occupation of its territory by Turkey, the US, France, pro-"Israeli" proxies, and possibly soon even the "Arab NATO", but there's also the interlinked Iran-Hezbollah factors as well.

Après Iran, Le Déluge

Russia is the only foreign actor that accepts Syria's decision to invite Iran and its Hezbollah

ally into the Arab Republic for anti-terrorist assistance, but Moscow recognizes that their continued presence there after the defeat of Daesh is serving as a trigger for expanded [“Israeli” military intervention](#) that dangerously risks transforming the [Hybrid War](#) into a conventional state-to-state proxy one fought on Syrian territory. That’s why Russia is predisposed to [“lean on” Syria and attempt to “convince” it](#) to “compromise” on its relationship with the “Resistance” in the interests of regional peace, notwithstanding that Damascus has both the moral and legal right to continue cooperating with its anti-terrorist allies no matter what anyone—let alone the US, Saudi Arabia, and “Israel” ([“Cerberus”](#)) – thinks about it.

Damascus also realizes that the phased removal of the IRGC and Hezbollah from Syria would almost immediately lead to what already appears to be the inevitable “decentralization” or “federalization” of the state after the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) loses its last hope (key word) to have ever stood a chance at regaining what President Assad previously promised would be “every inch” of the country. That’s already all but impossible as it is because Russia refuses to overstep its strictly anti-terrorist military mandate in directly intervening to support the SAA in confronting the dizzying array of foreign occupiers all across the Arab Republic, but the patriotic population nevertheless believes that Iran and Hezbollah might help them with this anti-imperialist effort, however unlikely it is to succeed for all practical intents and purposes.

“Multi-Aligning” In A Neo-Realist World

The deployment of “Arab NATO” troops to northeastern Syria will make this even much more difficult than ever before, crushing the last glimmer of hope that many may have had for this liberation scenario to succeed, thereby – as the US-backed “coalition” probably anticipates – putting even more pressure on Iran to downscale its military commitment to the country. It’s [ultimately Syria’s choice](#) whether the IRGC and Hezbollah remain or leave, but Damascus has an economic-strategic self-interest in retaining their support in order to avoid overreliance on any one partner, in this case Russia. “Multi-alignment”, as the Indians call it, is the zeitgeist of contemporary International Relations, so it’s reasonable for Syria to believe that it can use Iran to “balance” Russia as well as reward Tehran for its loyalty throughout the war.

From the Neo-Realist perspective of the “19th-Century Great Power Chessboard” paradigm that’s powerfully shaping Russia and other similarly important countries’ strategic calculations at the moment, that would become much harder to pull off if Iran’s elite forces and their Hezbollah allies were requested to leave the Arab Republic, as the remainder of Syria not under the occupation of foreign forces and solidly under the SAA’s control would then fall almost entirely within Moscow’s de-facto “sphere of influence”. Instead of “provoking” the neighboring countries by entering into joint projects with their Iranian rival, Russia would more likely cooperate with China here instead, thus possibly representing the loss of future economic dividends that Tehran may have counted on to help compensate for the financial costs that it bore in supporting Syria throughout the war.

Syrian “Stubbornness”

President Assad is aware of this geostrategic reality and has accordingly operated with it in mind, ergo why he has yet to “comply” with what can be presumed has been Russia’s “gentle suggestion” behind the scenes to progressively disengage from his country’s wartime alliance with Iran and Hezbollah for the “greater good”. Syria’s leaders don’t want

to accept that they're powerless to reverse the occupation of their country's periphery by the US, France, Turkey, pro-"Israeli" proxies, and possibly soon the "Arab NATO", nor do they want to make themselves almost entirely dependent on Russia after some of them feel that Moscow should have "done more" to prevent this from happening and/or are incensed that it's leveraging this development to its grand strategic advantage in advancing multipolarity as it understands it.

There's almost nothing that Syria can realistically do at this point to reverse the de-facto "internal partition" dynamics that have already set in, with or without IRGC and Hezbollah support, but as the saying goes, "hope dies last", and no patriot wants to be forced to confront the fact that there's no longer any chance of this happening. President Assad is, therefore, loathe to limit his country's excellent relations with Iran and Hezbollah because he understands the importance of keeping hope alive among his people, but he also knows how the optics of it would look in the sense of them being framed to make it appear as though he's "submitting to foreign pressure", something that's totally unacceptable to his base that have fought, struggled, and died for over seven years to prevent this from happening.

Concluding Thoughts

Syria is therefore stuck in a state of strategic paralysis at the moment and would probably prefer not to have to make any decision in this regard, though it accepts the Catch-22 dilemma that it's in and is aware that there is no "good move" in this case, with the choice between both options - allowing the IRGC and Hezbollah to remain, or requesting their phased removal - essentially being over which of the two is the "least bad" for the country's long-term interests. The possible introduction of "Arab NATO" troops to northeastern Syria might have the effect of forcing Damascus to make a decision in the near future, though this will probably be the opposite of what the US-backed "coalition" and, it can be said, maybe even Russia at this point, expects, with President Assad potentially throwing down the gauntlet and daring the world to do something about his two most loyal allies.

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This article was originally published on [Regional Rapport](#).

Andrew Korybko is Moscow-based political analyst, journalist and a member of the expert council for the Institute of Strategic Studies and Predictions at the People's Friendship University of Russia. He specializes in Russian affairs and geopolitics, specifically the US strategy in Eurasia. His other areas of focus include tactics of regime change, color revolutions and unconventional warfare used across the world. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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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.

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