

The Israeli Occupied Golan Heights: An Occupation for Natural Resources. Water, Land and Oil

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent a “clear message” to the international community about the Golan Heights (an area that was originally part of Syria and now occupied by Israel since 1967) being part of Israel. Netanyahu called for a cabinet meeting on April 17th to declare that the Golan Heights will be under Israeli sovereignty indefinitely. What was insulting to the Syrian people was not only Netanyahu’s declaration that the Golan Heights belonged to Israel; it was the same day Syria celebrated the 70th anniversary of ‘Evacuation Day’ or Syria’s ‘Independence Day’, which was the end of the French occupation when its forces left the country in 1946. Now the Syrians have to suffer another occupation by led by Israel. According to an RT news report, Netanyahu told his cabinet members “I convened this celebratory meeting in the Golan Heights to send a clear message: The Golan will always remain in Israel’s hands. Israel will never withdraw from the Golan Heights.” Netanyahu continued:

It is time that the international community recognized reality,” Netanyahu was quoted as saying by The Times of Israel. “Whatever happens on the other side of the [Syrian] border, the border itself will not move.” “And secondly,” Netanyahu added, “the time has come after 40 years for the international community to finally recognize that the Golan Heights will remain under Israeli sovereignty forever



The Israeli government claims that the Golan Heights is a strategic territory for Israel's security, but it is also a fact that a third of Israel's water supplies comes from the occupied territory. It is also important to note that 25% of Israeli wines are produced in the Golan Heights and between 30-50% of certain fruits and vegetables are also grown in the occupied territory. Water in the Middle East is similar to the value of gold since water is becoming a scarce commodity. According to the *World Resources Institute* (www.wri.org):

Fourteen of the 33 likely most water stressed countries in 2040 are in the Middle East, including nine considered extremely highly stressed with a score of 5.0 out of 5.0: Bahrain, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Lebanon. The region, already arguably the least water-secure in the world, draws heavily upon groundwater and desalinated sea water, and faces exceptional water-related challenges for the foreseeable future

Oil is another commodity just discovered in the Golan Heights. According to RT news, a 2015 report by an Israeli business website (www.globes.co.il) said that a discovery of oil in the Golan Heights will make Israel "self sufficient." *Globes* stated what the latest oil discovery would mean for Israel:

After more than a year of round-the-clock drilling, large amounts of oil have been found on the Golan Heights. Estimates are that the amount of oil discovered will make Israel self sufficient for very many years to come. Afek Oil and Gas chief geologist Dr. Yuval Bartov told Channel 2 News, "We are talking about a strata which is 350 meters thick and what is important is the thickness and the porosity. On average in the world strata are 20-30 meters thick, so this is ten times as large as that, so we are talking about significant quantities. The important thing is to know the oil is in the rock and that's what we now know."

Three drillings have so far taken place in the southern Golan Heights which have found large reserves of oil. Potential production is dramatic - billions of barrels, which will easily provide all Israel's oil needs. Israel consumes 270,000 barrels of oil per day

Another important fact to consider is that Israel's military uses more than 240, 000 BPD for its war machine according to various estimates. With Israel's aggressive posture towards Syria, Hezbollah, Iran and the Palestinians, oil is an essential commodity especially for its military. If war between Israel and its adversaries were to take place today, oil production can be affected especially in the Iraqi Kurdistan which recently started to import more than 75% of its oil to Israel or in the Gulf States including Saudi Arabia (an Israeli Ally). Any disruption of oil imports to Israel can affect its military projections in the Middle East; therefore the occupation of the Golan Heights is in their best interests in terms of hegemonic power.

The Six-Day War: An Israeli Offensive War for Land and Water

The Golan Heights known as the 'Syrian Golan' has been at the center of conflict between Syria and Israel decades before the Six-Day War took place. In 1949, the Golan Heights was partially demilitarized by the *Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement* to officially end the 1948 *Arab-Israeli War* between Israel and its Arab neighbors including Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria which did establish armistice lines or the "Green Line" between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Jordanian-Iraqi forces. After the signed agreements by both parties,

thousands of violent incidents occurred by both sides of the borders which violated the armistice agreement due to disagreements over the legal status of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and disputes over land and water resources.

After the Six-Day War, The IDF gained control over the Golan Heights and the Upper Mount Hermon which has given Israel unlimited access to the Upper Jordan River's water supplies. Then the Yom Kipper War of 1973 began where Egyptian and Syrian forces collaborated in the invasion of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights which was still under Israeli control. Washington approved foreign aid in the form of arms shipments to Israel and the former Soviet Union supplied Egypt and Syria with arms during the conflict. The U.S. and the Soviet Union was at the height of the cold war. After the Yom Kipper War, Israel agreed to return about 5% of the Golan Heights for Syrian control with the agreement that a demilitarized zone was declared a ceasefire zone. The ceasefire zone extended east under the United Nations Peace Keeping forces. In 1981, Israel officially annexed the Golan Heights which was not internationally recognized.

According to author Tanya Reinhart who published *'Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948'* spoke about an interview with former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan on April 27th, 1997 in the *Yediot Aharonot* regarding Israel's aggression towards Syria. The interview was conducted after the 1973 Yom Kipper War where Dayan claimed that the attack on Syria was a grave mistake in regards to any future peace agreements between Israel and Syria:

In a 1976 interview, Moshe Dayan, who was the defense minister in 1967, explains what led to the decision to attack Syria in the war of 1967. In the collective Israeli consciousness of the period, Syria was conceived as a serious threat to the security of Israel, and a constant initiator of aggression toward the residents of Northern Israel. But according to Dayan, this was "bullshit"- Syria was not a threat to Israel before 1967. "just drop it," he said as an answer to a question about the northern residences. "I know how at least 80 percent of all the incidents with Syria started. We were sending a tractor to the demilitarized zone and we knew that the Syrians would shoot, if they did not shoot, we would instruct the tractor to go deeper, till the Syrians finally got upset and started shooting. Then we employed artillery, and later also the air force...I did that...and Yitzhak Rabin did that, when he was there (as commander of the Northern front, in the early sixties)"

According to Dayan, what led Israel to provoke Syria this way was the greediness for the land-the idea that it was possible "to grab a piece of land and keep it, until the enemy gets tired and gives it to us." The Syrian land was as he says, particularly tempting, since, unlike Gaza and the West Bank, it was not heavily populated. Dayan insisted that the decision to attack Syria in 1967 was not motivated by security reasons. "The Syrians, on the fourth day of the war, were not threatening us." He adds that the decision was also influenced by a delegation sent to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol by the northern kibbutzes, "who did not even try to hide their greed of that land." The 1967 war brought Israel much land (and water)

The Syrian population of the Golan Heights before the Israeli occupation was estimated at 130,000 people, today the population is at around 36,000 people including 16,000 Syrian Druzes and more than 20,000 Jewish settlers.

International Condemnation Takes Center Stage

The Jerusalem Post reported Hezbollah's reaction to Netanyahu's declaration "saying that the vow is evidence of Israel's "expansionist character." Hezbollah also said that "This move affirms the Zionist aggression against our nation and its people," according to the report. Can Netanyahu's arrogance lead to a new war? Hezbollah said "It shows that the only way to face the enemy is by resistance, using all possible means to struggle, first and foremost through popular uprising as we have seen today when the Golan's inhabitants resisted the Zionist meeting in the area." Press TV also reported that Iran, the Arab League, Germany and the U.S. (which means little when you consider Washington's unbreakable bond with Israel) all reject Israel's claim to the Golan Heights:

The Islamic Republic of Iran, Germany, the Arab League and the United States have joined Syria in rejecting Tel Aviv's claim over the occupied Golan Heights, a day after the Israeli premier said the region will be part of Israel "forever"

Israel knows full well that the U.S. economy is in collapse mode; therefore, it is vital that Israel remains in the Golan Heights for its vast natural resources if it wants to maintain its power in the Middle East. Netanyahu's reckless claims ignited a call for Arab unity in declaring that the Golan Heights is Syrian and that the illegal Israeli occupation is a Zionist plan to expand its territory across the region. Israel knows how to provoke its neighbors; Moshe Dayan clearly stated how the Six-Day War began.

Time is short for the U.S. Empire and Israel knows this. Israel wants another war to solidify its position in the Middle East even if it means using its nuclear weapons. Let's hope that Israel's leadership is not run by madmen willing to use nuclear weapons on its adversaries, then again if you look at Israel's history since 1948, all of its leaders were zealots including Netanyahu himself. The question is how to we stop Israel's expansionist policies? The world has to demand Washington breaks its "unbreakable bonds" with Israel once and for all. Will Washington listen to the international community?

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