



## **Partition of Syria: US and Israel Eye Golan Heights Oil**

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### **Abstract**

Despite the official narrative that US military occupation of Syria is to combat ISIS, the actual rationale is to counter Russia and Iran by keeping Syria weak and partitioned. It is also about taking the oil, with US controlling one third of Syrian territory and oil fields where ninety percent of pre-war oil production took place. But the biggest prize is the 2015 US discovery of oil bonanza in Israeli controlled Golan Heights with the potential of billions of barrels. By partitioning Syria into spheres of influence similar to China in the 19th century, it would facilitate Israeli annexation of the Golan and allow US/Israeli energy companies to exploit the oil reserves.

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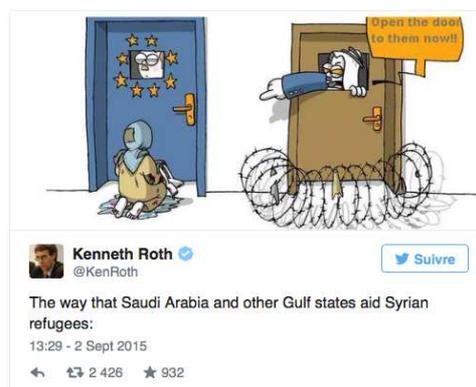


## Analysis

President Donald Trump declared last week that the US will get out of Syria “soon,” on the heels of halting \$200 million<sup>1</sup> of taxpayer money to reconstruct the war-ravaged country. Naturally, this pair of announcements set off alarm bells within the US military, corporate media, and think-tank establishment, as well as among allies that want Washington to maintain its military occupation of Syria and the Middle East.

“We believe American troops should stay for at least the mid-term, if not the long-term,” said the Saudi Crown Prince,<sup>2</sup> who wants to use US military power to counter Iran in their competition for regional hegemony. Israeli and European allies echo that sentiment.

However, Trump wants regional countries such as Saudi Arabia to play a greater role and pick up the bigger portion of the bill in Syria, and for Europeans to do more since displaced Syrians mainly wind up as refugees in Europe. Many Syrians are also fleeing jihad at home to neighboring Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey. With Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and other wealthy Arab Gulf states agitating for regime change and increased military escalation, one ponders how many refugees they have taken? According to director of Human Rights Watch Kenneth Roth, zero.



<sup>1</sup> “Report: Trump Freezes \$200 Million Pledge for Syrian Recovery Efforts”, *The Daily Beast*, March 30, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/report-trump-freezes-dollar200-million-pledged-for-syrian-recovery-efforts>

<sup>2</sup> “Saudi Crown Prince Wants US Troops to stay in Syria”, *Gulf News*, April 7, 2018, <http://gulfnews.com/news/mena/syria/saudi-crown-prince-wants-us-troops-to-stay-in-syria-1.2197154>



Even worse, Riyadh is creating thousands of refugees of its own by bombing Yemen, a campaign that has already killed more than 10,000<sup>3</sup> civilians and wounded 40,000 others, including 135 at a wedding<sup>4</sup> party, mostly women and children.

There are actually various legitimate reasons for Trump to pull back from Syria: a \$21 trillion<sup>5</sup> national debt bomb; the riskiness of the US dollar as a fiat currency that solely relies on confidence in the government and is not backed by actual gold or silver; crumbling<sup>6</sup> domestic infrastructure that needs a complete overhaul; \$5 trillion of taxpayer money spent in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan alone that is projected to top \$12 trillion by 2053; over 40,000<sup>7</sup> homeless veterans throughout the country with many committing suicide while waiting for treatment, many from “regime change” wars in the Middle East; Trump’s pledge to “Make America great again” and not “Make Syria great again” or other nation-building efforts in the Middle East. So why is the Washington, DC establishment pushing for US mission creep in Syria? As Josh Rogin<sup>8</sup> of the *Washington Post* revealed, it’s about taking the oil.

### Take the oil

The current US occupation of Syria is in the northeast and covers 30% of the country’s territory and controls oil fields where about 90% of the pre-war oil production took place. However, according to some Syrian analysts, the amount of oil revenue is negligible and insufficient to even pay for local government. Nonetheless, Syria has a bigger prize located elsewhere – in the Golan Heights.

As mentioned previously in an *Asia Times*<sup>9</sup> article, in November 2015, Afek Oil and Gas, a subsidiary of the US company Genie Energy, discovered an oil bonanza<sup>10</sup> in the Golan Heights “with the potential of billions of barrels.” Genie Energy,<sup>11</sup> boasting an advisory board studded with former US cabinet officials, managed to obtain exploratory licenses despite opposition from environmental and local groups concerned that drilling could pollute the Golan countryside and the Sea of Galilee below, the source of most of Israel’s drinking water. However, the biggest problems revolve around the issue of sovereignty.

Israel annexed much of the Golan in 1981, but it is still regarded internationally as illegally occupied Syrian territory. Israel’s leaders had previously offered to pull back from the Golan, which was captured in 1967, in return for a comprehensive peace treaty with the Syrian government. However, since Syria began disintegrating in 2011, there are efforts to demand recognition of Israeli control of the 1,200 square kilometers it occupies in the Golan Heights.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Hincks, “10,000 People Have Been Killed in Yemen’s Bloody War, U.N. Confirms”, *Time*, January 17, 2017, <http://time.com/4635909/yemen-death-toll-10000-war/>

<sup>4</sup> Zaid Al Alayaa, “Airstrikes hit wedding in Yemen; as many as 135 dead”, *Los Angeles Times*, September 28, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-airstrikes-wedding-yemen-20150928-story.html>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. National Debt Clock: Real Time, <http://www.usdebtclock.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Cadie Thompson, “America’s infrastructure is falling apart—here’s a look at how bad things have gotten”, *Business Insider*, February 12, 2018, <http://www.businessinsider.dG/asce-gives-us-infrastructure-a-d-2017-3?r=US&IR=T>

<sup>7</sup> Leo Shane III, “Number of homeless vets rises for the first time in seven years”, *Military Times*, December 6, 2017, <https://www.militarytimes.com/veterans/2017/12/06/number-of-homeless-veterans-nationwide-rises-for-first-time-in-seven-years/>

<sup>8</sup> Josh Rogin, “In Syria, we ‘took the oil.’ Now Trump wants to give it to Iran”, *Washington Post*, March 20, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/03/30/in-syria-we-took-the-oil-now-trump-wants-to-give-it-to-iran/?utm\\_term=.a64bda065a2c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/03/30/in-syria-we-took-the-oil-now-trump-wants-to-give-it-to-iran/?utm_term=.a64bda065a2c)

<sup>9</sup> Christina Lin, “Oil Bonanza in Golan may help grease wheels for BRI”, *Asia Times*, August 9, 2017, <http://www.atimes.com/ds-oil-bonanza-golan-heights-jezreel-valley/>

<sup>10</sup> “Black gold under the golan”, *The Economist*, November 7, 2015, <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21677597-geologists-israel-think-they-have-found-oil-in-very-tricky-territory-black-gold>

<sup>11</sup> Genie Oil and Gas Strategic Advisory Board, <https://genieoilgas.com/about-us/strategic-advisory-board/>

Indeed, Israel has intensified its defense of the Golan. Last June,<sup>12</sup> when a mortar shell landed in the Golan, the Israeli air force attacked Syrian army positions in the village of Samadanieh al Sharqiyah in Quneitra province.<sup>13</sup> In February, after its F-16 crashed in Syria, Israeli airstrikes took out<sup>14</sup> half of Syria's air defense and fired ground-to-ground rockets from the Golan Heights. It also supports rebel groups<sup>15</sup> as a buffer force to keep the Syrian army and Iran-backed Hezbollah at bay.

### Partition Syria

By maintaining a US military presence in Syria and partitioning<sup>16</sup> the country into spheres of influence<sup>17</sup> similar to China in the 19th century, it would facilitate Israeli annexation of the Golan and allow US/Israeli energy companies to exploit the oil reserves.



Source: North Central College, <http://bhoffert.faculty.noctrl.edu/HST165/16.AgeOfWesternization.html>

In the case of Syria, the US would be in the northeast, Turkey in the northwest, Russia and Iran in the coastal area and large parts of the Syrian desert, Israel and Jordan in the southwest, according to a partition plan by RAND Corporation and first published by the German newspaper *Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten*.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Israel attacks Syrian position after mortar lands on Golan Heights", *Reuters*, June 28, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-syria/israel-attacks-syrian-position-after-mortar-lands-in-golan-heights-idUSKBN19J2RS>

<sup>13</sup> "Fighting intensifies in Syrian Golan Heights", *Al Jazeera*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/fighting-intensifies-syrian-golan-heights-170626033648183.html>

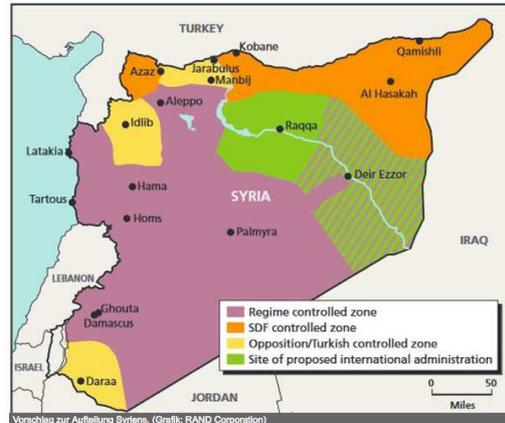
<sup>14</sup> Samuel Osborne, "Israel attacks with jets and ground-to-ground missiles, claims Syrian army", *The Independent*, January 9, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-syria-fire-attack-fighter-jets-ground-missiles-idf-assad-rockets-latest-a8149031.html>

<sup>15</sup> Asa Winstanley, 'Israel is now arming seven rebel groups in Syria', *Middle East Monitor*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180228-israel-is-now-arming-seven-rebel-groups-in-syria/>

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Bick, "Syria is Sliding Towards Partition", *War on the Rocks*, November 2, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/syria-is-sliding-towards-partition/>

<sup>17</sup> "The Age of Westernization—1900-1929", North Central College, <http://bhoffert.faculty.noctrl.edu/HST165/16.AgeOfWesternization.html>

<sup>18</sup> "US-Plan zur Teilung Syriens kann neue Fluchtbewegung auslösen", *Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten*, February 25, 2017, <https://deutsche-wirtschafts-nachrichten.de/2017/02/25/usa-planen-internationale-verwaltung-in-syrien/?nlid=82ffb9fcb>



It is interesting to note that in the US plan, the area of Manbij is in the Turkish sphere of influence. As such, it is unclear whether American troops would continue to support the Kurds there, as Erdogan's army and jihadi<sup>19</sup> shock troops continue to advance towards the area to occupy territory west of the Euphrates.

And despite Syrian government's proclamations that it would reclaim all lost territory, from the current vantage point, it does not seem very likely. Like China, it may need to wait another century.

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**Remarks:** Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author. This article was first published in *Asia Times* on April 4, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Syrian Democratic Force (SDF) accused Erdogan of recruiting ex-ISIS fighters and "The Turkish Army [has been training](#) the most extreme Islamist gangsters it could find as part of the so-called Free Syrian Army that is part of their assault, including members of the [fascist Gray Wolf death squads](#) and [Qaeda affiliates](#), with high-tech weaponry purchased from the United States, Britain and Germany. They are being sent into our country backed by F-16 aircraft, [German-made Leopard tanks](#) and regular Turkish soldiers." Patrick Cockburn, "Turkey accused of recruiting ex-ISIS fighters in their thousands to attack Kurds in Syria", *The Independent*, February 7, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/turkey-isis-aftrin-syria-kurds-free-syrian-army-jihadi-video-fighters-recruits-a8199166.html>; Nujin Derek, "We fought for our Democracy. Now Turkey wants to destroy it", *New York Times*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/29/opinion/turkey-erdogan-syria-kurds.html>