

US and Turkey: The Balkanization of the Middle East

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Introduction

For the past 20 years Washington has aggressively pursued the age-old imperial strategy of ‘*divide and conquer*’ throughout the Middle East, Southwest Asia and East Africa. Frustrated at its inability to control national policy of various independent nation-states, Washington used direct and indirect military force to destroy the central governments in the targeted nations and create patchworks of tribal-ethno-mini-states amenable to imperial rule. Tens of millions of people have been uprooted and millions have died because of this imperial policy.

Washington’s strategy of fragmentation and secession follows closely the “*Greater Israel Plan*” set forth by Israeli politico-military writer Oded Yinon in February 1982 and published by the World Zionist Organization. Yinon maintained that the key to Israel’s domination of the Middle East rested on *fostering ethno-religious and regional divisions*. Following the Yinon Plan, in the first instance, Tel Aviv signed accords with Jordan and Egypt to break-up Arab regional support for the Palestinians. It then proceeded to fragment what remained of Arab-Palestine into small warring enclaves between the West Bank and Gaza. Israel then sub-divided and settled wide swatches of the West Bank with the collaboration of the corrupt ‘Palestinian Authority’ under Mahmoud Abbas.

Israel's 'divide and conquer' strategy toward the Greater Middle East depended on its placement of '*Israel First*' officials in top policymaking positions of the US Defense, State and Treasury Departments and the power of the Zionist Power Configuration's (ZPC's)-- the so-called "*Israel Lobby*" – to control the US Congress and Presidency in matters related to Israel.

The Israeli Mid-East strategy of fragmenting and weakening pro-Palestinian governments thus become the official US policy toward Arab countries.

This policy has not been limited to the Arab Middle East: Israel and US policymakers intervened to undermine the 'pro-Palestinian' government of Sudan by supporting a secessionist war to create a huge resource-rich 'Southern Sudan' conglomeration of tribal warlords, leaving a devastated region of mass murder and famine.

Somalia, Libya and Ethiopia were also riven by regional wars financed and armed by the US with overt and covert Israeli operatives and advisers.

Israel's policy to weaken, fragment and destroy viable developing countries, differed from the traditional policies of colonial regimes, which sought to conquer and exploit unified nation-states. Washington has blindly followed Israel's imperial 'model' without assessing its impact on US interests and thus undermining its past practice of economic exploitation of viable nation states.

'*Israel First*' officials within the US federal administrative policy-making bodies played a decisive role in fabricating the pretexts for the 2003 US invasion and destruction

of Iraq. They pushed fake ‘documents’ alleging Iraqi ‘weapons of mass destruction’ and they promoted a plan to sub-divide the country in three ethnically ‘cleansed’ regions: Kurds (as Israel’s allies) in the North, impoverished Sunnis in the center and easily controlled Shia tribal leaders in the South.

The policy of dismantling a central government and promoting regional fragmentation backfired on the US authorities in Iraq: Sunni insurgents, often trained by experienced Baathist (former Iraqi Army) officers, formed the ‘Islamic State’ (ISIS), which took over major cities, slaughtering all non-Arab, non-Sunni residents, and threatened to establish an independent state. The Shia-led government in Baghdad turned to Iran for support, forcing the US, Israel and the Kurds to declare war against ISIS, while trying to retain the weakened Sunni tribal clients. No viable central government remains in the once powerful multiethnic republic of Iraq.

The US joined Saudi Arabia in invading and bombing Yemen to destroy the Houthi rebels and favor the Sunni Salafist groups allied to al Qaeda. The goal was to weaken Yemen and prevent popular Yemeni revolts from spreading to Saudi Arabia as well as undermining any Houthi alliances with Iran and expression of support for Palestine.

The US directly invaded Afghanistan expecting to easily conquer and ‘neatly’ subdivide that enormous region and ‘skillfully’ pit the various regional ethno-tribal groups against each other – while setting up a lucrative and militarily strategic site for launching future wars against US (and Israeli) rivals in Iran, Central Asia and China.

The battle-hardened Afghan Islamist Pashtun guerrilla-fighters, led by the Taliban, and unified by ethno-religious, national, tribal and extended family ties and customs, have successfully resisted this divide and conquer strategy. They now control most of the countryside, infiltrating and influencing the armed forces and police and have driven the US forces into garrison airbases, reliant on dropping mega bombs from the stratosphere.

Meanwhile, blinded by the media propaganda reports of their ‘successes’, Washington and the NATO powers launched a bloody surrogate war against the secular nationalist government of Syria, seeking to divide, conquer and obliterate an independent, pro-Palestine, pro-Iran, ally of Russia.

NATO’s invading armies and mercenary groups, however, are sub-divided into strange factions with shifting allegiances and patrons. At one level, there are the EU/US-supported ‘moderate’ head-chopping rebels. Then there are the Turkey and Saudi Arabia-supported ‘serious’ head-chopping al Qaeda Salafists. Finally there is the ‘champion’ head-chopping ISIS conglomeration based in Iraq and Syria, as well as a variety of Kurdish armed groups serving as Israeli mercenaries.

The US-EU efforts to conquer and control Syria, via surrogates, mercenaries and terrorists, was defeated largely because of Syria’s alliance with Russia, Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

Syria has effectively been ‘chopped up’ by competing imperial and regional powers leading to a possible confrontation among major powers. The US-Kurdish-

Turkey conflict provides the most immediate danger of serious open warfare among major nations.

Among the myriad surrogate groups that Washington supported in its seemingly contradictory policy of violently overthrowing the Syrian government in Damascus while seizing territory from ISIS, Pentagon strategists have relied most heavily on the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (YPG). The US escalated its military support for the YPG, promising heavy arms and increased US ground and air support. Meanwhile, the YPG expanded its control of the Kurdish regions in Syria especially along the Turkish border, creating a powerful territorial tie of Syrian-Kurds with Turkish-Kurds and Iraqi-Kurds. The US generous supply of heavy weapons to the YPG has increased the Kurds capacity to fight Turkey for the establishment of a contiguous ‘Greater Kurdistan’. Moreover, the US government has publicly informed Turkey that its armed forces will provide a ‘shield’ to protect the YPG – and indirectly the PKK – from Turkish attack.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is acutely aware that the YPG’s goal is to partition Southeastern Turkey and Northern Syria and form a Kurdish state with Iraqi Kurdistan. US Defense Secretary James Mattis’ pledge that ‘*Washington is committed to protecting its NATO ally (Turkey)*’ is ambiguous at best and most likely a hollow promise. Washington is counting on the Kurds as a strategic ally against both Damascus and ISIS. Only after accomplishing their twin goals in Syria might the Pentagon turn against the Kurds and support the Turkish government.

Complicating this scenario, the Israelis have long-standing ties with the Iraqi Kurds as part of their own divide and conquer strategy. Meanwhile, Tel Aviv has been

bombing Damascus, aiding ISIS fighters in southern Syria (with material and ‘humanitarian’ medical treatment) while supporting YPG against the Syrian and Turkish militaries.

The Erdoğan regime is in a quandary: A victory for the Kurdish YPG and their occupation of territory along its border will materially threaten the ‘unity of the Turkish state’. An armed, unified Kurdish presence in this region will result in enormous pressure on Erdoğan from the nationalist political parties and supporters and the Turkish Armed Forces. On the other hand, if Erdoğan launches cross border attacks on the Pentagon-supported YPG it will directly face US ground and air power.

President Erdoğan is clearly aware that the US was involved with the silent ‘Gulanist’ permeation of the Turkish state leading up to the 2016 abortive Gulanist coup. Erdoğan’s scheduled meeting with US President Donald Trump in mid-May may not resolve the impending Turkish-Kurdish confrontation in Syria where the US is committed to protecting the YPG.

Washington hopes to convince President Erdoğan that the YPG will hand this strategic territory over to an amorphous, minuscule puppet Arab-led militia, presumably made up of non-Kurdish collaborators of the US-NATO-Saudi war against Damascus. It is hard to imagine the veteran politician Erdoğan believing a Pentagon plan for the YPG to just hand over its territorial patrimony after having fought and died to secure the region. The US is in no position to force the YPG to surrender its gains because the YPG is crucial to the Washington-Israeli-Saudi plan to destroy the central government in Damascus and fragment Syria into weak tribal mini-states.

Erdoğan's imminent failure to get Washington support for his war with the Kurds will force him to play his 'nationalist' card: There will be more pro-Palestine rhetoric, more opposition to a Cyprus accord, more pro-Russia posturing and the 'discovery' of more and greater '*internal threats*' to the great Turkish State.

Will Erdoğan be able defuse the hostility among his own and independent nationalist supporters?

One point is clear: A territorially-based powerful Kurdish militia, armed by the US, will be far more formidable threat to the unity of the Turkish state than the previous ill-armed rag-tag guerrillas in the mountains of northern Iraq.

It will be a humiliating defeat if Erdoğan surrenders to Pentagon demands and tolerates a US-YPG alliance on Turkey's border. Erdoğan has some powerful options of his own: Turkey might deny the US Armed Forces access to its huge airbases in Turkey thus weakening NATO's 'southern flank'. A Turkish threat to withdraw from NATO altogether would have greater repercussions. Even the slightest hint of exercising these options would set off a 'second coup' against Erdoğan. This would involve a more serious US-NATO-backed uprising by senior Turkish officers, 'nationalists', democratic secularists and Kurds in major urban centers with 'Gulanist' politicians and bureaucrats waiting in the wings.

President Trump and the Pentagon may gain a foothold against Damascus with Kurdish surrogates in Northern Syria, but the loss of Turkey will be a strategic setback. Behind all of this confusion and devastation the partition of Syria and, eventually of

Turkey, fits in very well with Greater Israel's '*Oded Yinon Plan*' for subdividing Muslim countries.