

## Syria: Imperialist Barbarism Flares Up Again

***As the date indicates, the article below was written by our Italian comrades before the fall of the Assad regime, but has been updated since. It gives some indication as to what this latest piece of the imperialist puzzle might mean for the future.***



The civil war has restarted in an already devastated Syria. The perpetrators of this renewed war against Assad come from the jihadist galaxy of the entire Middle East, such as the former al-Qaeda members led by Hayat Tahrir al Sham and Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, "disciple" of al Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraqi territory, and of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the caliph who proclaimed himself a descendant of Mohammed and head of the Islamic State before he met his death. They are the ones who lead the military coalition of groups such as the pro-Turkish ones, the various jihadist militants from the Caucasian areas, Uzbek militiamen, remnants of ISIS and even the Muslims (Uighurs) from Chinese Xinjiang.

This jihadist galaxy which began an assault on Assad's government occupied Aleppo and a vast amount of territory in no time, effectively establishing itself as a powerful army capable of waging a civil war against a central government which is the vassal of Russian imperialism. Obviously, the firepower of the jihadist army and the speed with which it conquered Aleppo was not exactly a bolt from the blue. We are only at the beginning, but the military reorganisation and the apparent ease with which the jihadist militiamen advanced depend on two important factors without which such a military operation would hardly have been successful.

First of all, we have to take into account the internal situation in Syria. The long civil war, which has gone on since 2011, has made material conditions worse in recent years. The very serious economic crisis has been compounded by social and political instability that has made Syria an easy territory to conquer.

Second, the alliance with Russian imperialism that has kept Bashar al-Assad's regime in power is no longer so engaged right now. Not because Syria has lost its strategic role as an important pawn in the Mediterranean with its ports of Tartus and Latakia, indispensable headquarters of the Russian fleet, but because Moscow is heavily engaged in the Ukraine "campaign" and can devote fewer resources to the defence of its historic ally. Although it will continue to give some support, as long as it has the strength, and the course if events allow it do so.

In addition, the military reorganisation of anti-Assad and anti-Russian jihadism has abundantly benefited from financial, military and political aid, albeit from the different imperialist interests of the USA, Israel and Turkey. For the USA, the reason for its support for jihadism is obvious. Biden, before finally leaving his presidency to Trump, wants to create a situation in Syria that will have repercussions for the entire Middle East. Supporting the Islamists (once judged as damned cut-throats and today rehabilitated in the role of "democratic" fighters against Assad's despotism and the Russian invader) means further weakening Moscow and its Iranian ally, which, surprised by the speed of the jihadist advance, failed, as it had promised, to immediately send contingents of Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) to defend Aleppo. And, consequently, this has succeeded in sending a strong signal to the third wheel, China, which is part of this imperialist group and which represents enemy number 1 with which, sooner or later, it will have to deal with in a much larger and more dangerous crisis scenario. In the meantime, the USA wants to maintain a military post on Syrian territory to control some oil wells belonging to their companies, always useful in any war contingency.

Supporting the Sunni jihadism of the Syrian "rebels", who don't hide the fact that, as well as Assad's regime, they have the Shiite forces of Hezbollah and Iran in their sights, is a great opportunity for Israel which, it will fully exploit, despite some reticence. Even before the formal declaration of a ceasefire in Lebanon between Beirut and Tel Aviv, which never actually came into force, Netanyahu had already begun his project to destabilise the entire region, including Syria. The ultimate goal, after having destroyed Gaza, annihilated Hamas and Hezbollah and rendered Syria harmless, is to be able to focus on his main enemy: the Ayatollahs' Iran, in order to create a new imperialist order in which Israel aims to be the new linchpin. In the meantime, the continued possession of the strategic Golan Heights that Israel has occupied continuously since 1967 is ensured.

The jihadist advance in Syria is also to Turkey's advantage. Since 2022, there have already been secret agreements between the Turkish government and Hayat Tahrir al Sham involving financial, military and political protection for these jihadist gangs. Not only that, but when its members, who had organised attacks in Syria and then taken refuge in Turkey, were arrested, they were immediately released. This Turkish government policy was also the subject of a parliamentary inquiry but, as usual, everything was covered up. The Turkish government had every interest in supporting the jihadist advance for a number of reasons. First of all, for Assad's repeated refusal to normalise relations with Ankara. Then, hostility developed over Damascus's failure to hand over Kurdish-Syrian territories to Turkish control during the war against the Islamic State of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Furthermore, Assad has always been accused of having granted hospitality to armed groups linked to the Kurdish PKK. Finally, Ankara has always looked at some Syrian territories with a Kurdish population as a hotbed of terrorists to be annexed to better counter the "nationalist" aims of the PKK. So, what better opportunity to try to take advantage of the crisis in Damascus induced by the advance of the jihadists? Erdogan has thus given the jihadists free rein with the aim of taking over Syrian territories, keeping his Kurdish enemies under tight control and getting rid of millions of Syrian refugees who have taken refuge in Turkey since 2011 thus asserting Turkey's presence across the Mediterranean.

In conclusion, destabilisation is convenient for many, including the US, who, as ever, work behind the scenes. The Washington-Tel Aviv imperialist axis now has the real possibility of inflicting heavy punishment on Iran, and establishing a strong Western imperialist bulwark in the Middle East. The false statement that they "knew nothing about" 7 October served as a premise for this now long-gestating project. We have stated the key facts about Turkey. There seems to be no strong reaction from Moscow, Tehran and Beijing but in reality, Russia has worked in step with Assad's Syrian army by bombing the advancing jihadist militias but without much conviction and zero success. Tehran had promised to send military forces to help Assad. China is silent for the moment, but it cannot help but make its voice heard, if only because its allies, both suppliers of gas and oil (Russia, and Iran which allocates 95% of its energy deposits to China), are in the crosshairs of Western

imperialism. But, as we said at the start of this article, "we are only at the beginning". The fault line of international imperialist rivalry is widening more and more.

## The Fall of Damascus

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Predictably, after Aleppo, Idlib, Hama and Homs, Damascus has also fallen into the hands of jihadist forces. The regime of Bashar al-Assad has melted away like that in Iraq in the face of the advance of ISIS. The president has fled to Moscow, leaving his people at the mercy of the armed "cut-throats", financed and politically supported by the USA, Turkey and Israel, for all the reasons we have already stated. They have sponsored a jihadist victory which puts Russia and Iran, until yesterday allies and sponsors of the Assad regime, in serious difficulty. Now Putin, if he wants to maintain the naval presence in the Syrian ports of Latakia and Tartus, fundamental for his presence in the Mediterranean, will have to deal, with not just the new Syrian government, but Washington, Tel Aviv and Ankara, who, presumably, will make his life difficult. Iran is losing all its tentacles (Hamas, Hezbollah, the Shiite forces in Iraq) and will have to scale down its ambition of playing a decisive role in the Middle East. A situation which benefits many of the internal and external actors in the region but is also, let's not forget, is anti-Chinese, because Beijing remains the real enemy for the US. The Syrian events that will deal a hard blow to Russia, both in the Mediterranean and in Europe, in the war against Ukraine, and to the Iran of the Ayatollahs are setting off alarm bells in Beijing. As an initial conclusion we can say that in the clash between the two imperialist agglomerates, the Western one (USA, Israel, EU) is leading the dance while the Eastern one (Russia, Iran, China) is marking time for the moment.

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