

The Syrian Democratic Forces and Iran: A Lesson for Those Who Reflect

(Translated)

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US Special Envoy to Syria, Tom Barrack, tweeted on 20 January 2026: "The original purpose of the SDF as the primary anti-ISIS force on the ground has largely expired." (Aleppo Today, January 19, 2026)

Meanwhile, the US military is amassing an unprecedented naval force in the waters of the Middle East, coinciding with an escalation in US threats against the Iranian regime, which has long served US policy in the region.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF / QASAD) were officially formed on October 10, 2015, as a military alliance comprising several factions, not as a single, unified force from the outset. Their formation aimed to unite various local forces, primarily to confront ISIS, with direct support from the US-led international coalition. The US provided them with comprehensive support, in terms of funding, training, and weapons, all to advance its own interests in the region, under the pretext of fighting ISIS. After its role ended, US President Trump withdrew American forces from the region, and allowed the Syrian regime to expel the SDF from the areas it had previously controlled. Thus, America abandoned them, and the SDF's dreams were shattered.

Many Kurds, on social media, described this entire incident as a betrayal, as if the United States bore a moral obligation and strategic responsibility towards them, in return for the services they had rendered!

On the Iranian side, the disputes between Iran and America have entered their fifth decade. What is the true nature of these relations?

To understand this, we must examine several key moments in this relationship:

To avoid jumping ahead, we should consider the origins of the Iranian regime, as revealed in several American documents declassified in mid-2016.

It was reported that, at Khomeini's request and after his pledge to cooperate with the United States, the American administration, through General Robert E. Huyser, then deputy commander in chief (DCINC) of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), directly oversaw the removal of senior Iranian military commanders loyal to the Shah. They then supervised the Shah and his family's departure from Iran into exile in mid-January 1979, and subsequently gave Khomeini the green light to travel to Tehran, where he was flown by a French plane, to assume power in Iran.

Beyond ensuring the flow of Iranian oil to global markets, America achieved two strategic objectives:

Firstly, after Khomeini consolidated his power, he eliminated two key allies in his opposition to the Shah's rule: the Iranian communist party (Tudeh Party of Iran حزب توده ایران) and other leftist factions. He banned them in 1983, arrested their leaders, and subjected their members to executions and torture. This effectively distanced Iran from the Soviet Union, especially given its adoption of Islamic slogans.

Secondly, a year after Khomeini seized power, war broke out with Iraq. This conflict took on a sectarian character between Sunni and Shia and escalated into open warfare. This occurred after America allowed Iran to expand its influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, thus ensuring further division and fragmentation among Muslims.

The second stage in this relationship was the understandings reached between America and Iran regarding Iraq. According to Zalmay Khalilzad's book, "The Envoy: From Kabul to the White House, My Journey Through a Turbulent World," the nature of this relationship was summarized in his account of Mohammad Javad Zarif's pledge not to target American aircraft should they violate Iranian airspace. He noted that their meetings continued after the invasion, during which they discussed the future of governance in Iraq. Iran strongly supported the formation of a government from the exiled opposition, the eradication of the Ba'ath Party, and the rebuilding of the Iraqi security forces, all of which were achieved.

As for Afghanistan, the Bonn Conference represents the culmination of US-Iranian cooperation, as Trita Parsi points out in his book, "Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy." Parsi states that this cooperation reached its peak during the conference held in

Bonn on December 10, 2001, when the new plan for governing Afghanistan was approved. The United States and Iran had carefully laid the groundwork for this conference weeks prior.

In this context, former Iranian President Rafsanjani said, "If it weren't for our forces' assistance in fighting the Taliban, the Americans would have been bogged down in the Afghan quagmire." (Asharq Al-Awsat, February 9, 2002). Similarly, Mohammad Ali Abtahi, former Iranian Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs under Mohammad Khatami, stated at the "Gulf and the Challenges of the Future" conference held in Abu Dhabi on January 13, 2004, "If it weren't for Iranian cooperation, Kabul and Baghdad wouldn't have fallen so easily. But instead, we received a reward: we were labeled part of the 'axis of evil!'" (IslamOnline, January 13, 2004). President Ahmadinejad reiterated this sentiment during his visit to New York for the United Nations meetings, in an interview with The New York Times on September 26, 2008, saying, "Iran offered assistance to the United States regarding Afghanistan, and the result of this assistance was direct American threats of a military attack against us. Our country also provided assistance to America in restoring calm and stability to Iraq."

America allowed Iran to expand its regional influence and pursue its nuclear program until it became a threat to the region. Then, it quickly labeled Iran part of the "axis of evil," imposed an economic blockade that caused Iran to lose more than 80% of its currency's value, and launched a military attack. Today, it maintains a suffocating blockade, threatening to topple the Iranian regime. What is happening?

America acts according to its own interests and its own pragmatic assessment of the situation. Iran is considered a "functional adversary," just as there are countries America classifies as "functional allies." America has achieved several objectives from its declared hostility toward Iran, including: justifying its presence in the region, compelling Gulf states to rely on it for security, securing billions in arms purchases, engaging in financial extortion, and managing the region through a policy of "fear, not stability."

The list of regimes that America used and then discarded is long. For example, there was Gaafar Muhammad an-Nimeiry of Sudan, who deported the Ethiopian Jews (Falashas) to the Jewish entity at America's behest, yet America still pressured the Egyptian regime to obstruct his return from America to Khartoum, until his rule collapsed. Similarly, there was Omar Al-Bashir, who separated South Sudan at America's behest and received nothing but empty promises until his regime fell. Then there was Hosni Mubarak, Bashar al-Assad, the Afghan fighters who fought alongside America, and many others. Despite this dark history of American influence, the agent rulers and self-serving politicians in Muslim countries continue to fawn over America, hoping for its favor. They are not deterred by the fate of those who came before them, nor by the Words of Allah (swt) Who said, **﴿وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۗ وَلَئِن آتَيْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَبُرْتُكَ بِهِمْ﴾** **“Never will the Jews or Christians be pleased with you, until you follow their faith. Say, “Allah’s guidance is the only true guidance.” And if you were to follow their desires after all the knowledge that has come to you, there would be none to protect or help you against Allah.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 120].

Shouldn't these people, instead of turning to America, have turned to the Lord (swt) of America and all humanity? Instead of perpetuating division and disunity, which has brought them weakness and humiliation, why don't they respond to the call of their Lord (swt), **﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً ۖ وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ﴾** **“Indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord,”** and unite their banner under one leadership, the Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate), to bring them glory instead of humiliation. Allah (swt) said, **﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾** **“Indeed, glory belongs to Allah and to His Messenger and to the believers.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Munafiqoon: 8]?

Is it not time for the sons of this Ummah to take hold of their rulers, to compel them to adhere to the truth, and to restrict them to it, as the Prophet (saw) said: **﴿كَلَّا وَاللَّهِ لَتَأْمُرُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَلَتَنْهَوُنَّ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، وَتَتَأَخَذُنَّ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْ الظَّالِمِ، وَتَتَأَطَّرُنَّهُ عَلَىٰ الْحَقِّ أَطْرًا، وَتَقْضُرُنَّهُ عَلَىٰ الْحَقِّ قَصْرًا، أَوْ لَيُضْرِبَنَّ اللَّهُ بِقُلُوبِ بَعْضِكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ، ثُمَّ لَيَلْعَنَنَّكُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَهُمْ﴾** **“No, by Allah, you must enjoin good and forbid evil, and you must seize the hand of the oppressor and compel him to adhere to the truth, and you must restrict him to the truth, or Allah will cause the hearts of some of you to turn against others, and then He will curse you as He cursed them.”** [Narrated by Abu Dawud and Al-Tirmidhi]?