

Why Kurds and Israel must align on combatting Turkey - opinion

The Kurds present themselves as the most natural ally for Israel in this shifting landscape. They are politically aligned, militarily capable, and strategically located.



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TURKISH PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan meets with Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Antalya, Turkey.(photo credit: Murat Cetinmuhurdar/PPO/Reuters)

By **MEM HUSEDIN**

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Seth Frantzman is well-recognized among the Kurdish intelligentsia and in political circles. A journalist and a security analyst, he has spent considerable time alongside Kurdish forces in both Iraq and Syria. In his latest piece published in *The Jerusalem Post*, he highlighted the perceived [Turkish threat against Israel in Syria](#), particularly in the context of the anticipated US retreat from the region.

A concerning issue, not limited to Syria but extending across the wider region, is [Turkey's growing political ambition](#) to become the dominant power of the Eastern Mediterranean. A casual observer might attribute this ambition to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but those familiar with Ankara's political doctrine know it is deeply rooted and widely shared.

With the exception of the now-defeated non-interventionist doctrine of Mustafa Kemal, founder of modern Turkey, nearly all sides of the political spectrum in Ankara – both secular and Islamist – believe it is Turkey's geopolitical destiny to be the “game-maker” of the Eastern Mediterranean. This vision stretches from the Adriatic coasts in Bosnia and Albania all the way to Somalia, drawing inspiration from both the Ottoman and Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empires.

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Whether this is a realistic ambition is a separate discussion. The fact remains: There is near-universal consensus in Turkey regarding this “divine role” assigned to the Turkish nation. The first agreed-upon step in achieving this objective is the absorption of Kurdish regions in Syria and Iraq, followed by strategic advances into Mosul, Aleppo, and Damascus.

Damascus, in particular, is seen as a crucial milestone, offering not only symbolic capital but strategic access to Syria's Mediterranean coast and a pathway to Lebanon.



Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa attends an interview with Reuters at the presidential palace, in Damascus, Syria March 10, 2025. (credit: REUTERS/KHALIL ASHAWI/FILE PHOTO)

The issue is not the ambition itself but the fact that it is already being implemented. Since the 1990s, Turkey has established over 40 military outposts in the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq. These positions are not temporary; there is no indication that Ankara plans to withdraw.

As Frantzman rightly mentioned, Turkish forces have invaded and now control parts of northern and western Syria, administering them with near-complete autonomy from Damascus. Turkish governors oversee these territories, Turkish postal services operate within them, and the Turkish lira is used as currency.

If not for Israel's preventive posture and limited strikes, Turkey would have likely established a military base near the ancient Roman city of Palmyra, equipped with Russian S-400 air defense systems. As a reminder, the S-400 was designed to neutralize F-35 fighter jets. There is only one country in the region currently operating the F-35 – Israel – and only one other, the United States, capable of deploying them.

It is important to recognize that, in the current geopolitical map, Turkey sees two primary obstacles to its expansionist ambitions: the Kurds – who physically hold the territory between [Damascus](#), Aleppo, and Mosul – and Israel, a regional power vigilant about its security and invested in a Middle East balance that ensures its long-term survival.

Frantzman captures this point well when he discusses “the US influence and how it helped to create a counterweight to the influence of anti-Israel actors.” Today, the main anti-Israel actor in the Middle East is not Iran but Turkey. As he continues, “The question now is what comes next and how the US will manage its redeployment of forces.”

The Kurds certainly do not want to see a US withdrawal from [Syria](#). Such a move would immediately trigger deeper Turkish incursions, resulting in occupation and, inevitably, ethnic cleansing campaigns against the Kurdish population. However, the Kurds have very limited sway over US strategic decisions.

What is more concerning is that Israel, too, appears to have little faith in the current US administration's willingness to leave even a symbolic troop presence in Syria to deter Turkish aggression.

What options remain for Israel?

The Kurds present themselves as the most natural ally for Israel in this shifting landscape. They are politically aligned, militarily capable, and strategically located. Kurdish communities are sympathetic to Israel's security needs, recognize the shared threats they face, and value any support, military or political, that Israel might extend in return.

Critically, they are the indigenous population of the lands that block Turkish access to regions that, if occupied, would pose a direct and existential threat to Israeli security.

The United States may indeed pull its troops out of Syria. But working alongside the Kurds, Israel still has an opportunity to form a new deterrent and block the Turkish agenda of dominating the Eastern Mediterranean.

The author, born in Iskenderun and based in Vancouver, British Columbia, is a writer on international politics, the Middle East, and Kurdistan. He is vice president of the Canadian Kurdistan Confederation and hosts the podcasts Rojava Kurdistan and Nation on the Rise. On X/Twitter @mhusedin.