

West Asia at the threshold of a new era¹

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The Al-Aqsa Flood military operation on October 7, 2023, will go down in the annals of history not only for the brief military humiliation it inflicted on the Israeli army and the genocide that followed it, but also for the watershed it marked in regional politics.² More precisely, rather than the Al-Aqsa Flood per se, the chain of events triggered by October 7 and the responses (or lack thereof) by regional actors led, as I will argue here, to a momentous shift in West Asian (Middle Eastern) politics. In this article, after briefly recalling the unfolding of events and major turning points in the last two and a half years or so, I will resume, under several distinct but interlinked titles, the major shifts under several distinct but interlinked titles of the fall of the Axis of Resistance as the defining political project of the post-Nasser era, the so-called Periphery Doctrine consolidating itself as the strategy of the Zionist enemy in the region and reactionary competition replacing the hostility to imperialism as the defining conflict line in the region.

Basic outlines of West Asian developments since October 7

Let me start with a qualification. While offering a bird's-eye view of the developments in post-October 7 West Asia, I will not be providing an in-depth account of the suffering and resilience of the Palestinian people, facing as they are what should be considered the most horrifying human suffering so far in the 21st century,

1 This article was written in December 2025 and January 2026, before the US-Israeli aggression on Iran. In the meantime, only very minor modifications have been made, mostly for stylistic purposes.

2 On this issue, also see; Kutlu Dâne, "Zionist genocide and resistance in Palestine following the Al Aqsa Flood", *Revolutionary Marxism* 2025, pp.203-233.

created by the genocidal Zionist project and its current-day executors. The reason, needless to say, is not a lack of interest in the genocide itself – to which several pieces in this journal have already been dedicated and against which we wage a struggle as part of the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) of Turkey and the Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism platform – but rather the need use this article to discern the region-wide and long-term dynamics at play. This practice is part of an effort to contribute to a revolutionary strategy, grounded in a precise analysis of the situation in our region, with the aim of contributing to the victory of a socialist West Asia as well as the defeat of the Zionist project and the imperialist hegemony over our region. Similarly, a range of other issues, from the disarmament drive against various organizations in the region, from Hezbollah and Hamas to PKK and its offshoots, as well as the recent Syrian/HTS push to militarily nix Rojava, the semi-autonomous northeastern region of Syria governed by Kurdish-led forces³, will not be tackled in this article. This piece intends to establish, so to speak, the new tendencies in the regional grand strategy. On this basis, we intend to dedicate other articles to the above-mentioned, and unquestionably crucial questions.

The crux of the matter, after the start of the genocidal attack on Gaza, was the relative military success. To be clear, the meaning of victory for resistance forces in Palestine – led by Hamas’s military wing al-Qassam Brigades, in addition to the al-Quds Brigades of Islamic Jihad, the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the National Resistance Brigades of the Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine, among others – as guerilla forces facing one of the best funded conventional armies on earth differed significantly from that for Zionist enemy. The former had to maintain its organizational structure and ensure it regularly inflicts significant damage on the enemy to render a long-term occupation unfeasible. The latter could only claim victory if the main resistance organizations, and primarily Hamas, were destroyed or rendered incapable of fighting. In other words, and to quote from one of the more influential figures in shaping imperialist understanding of colonial wars, as well as being one of the most despicable war criminals of the 20th century, Henry Kissinger, “the conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose.”⁴

In that regard, for the first stretch of the war, some ten months or so, the Palestinian resistance fought both bravely and brilliantly. Not only could the Zionist

3 One of the best expressions of the internationalist, Leninist position in this regard could be found in this statement of the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) in Turkey; “As Tie-Wearing Takfiris Advance in Syria, Imperialism Wins! All Peoples Lose!”, *RedMed*, January 21, 2026, <https://redmed.org/article/tie-wearing-takfiris-advance-syria-imperialism-wins-all-peoples-lose>.

4 Cited in Britannica Online Encyclopaedia’s “Asymmetrical Warfare” entry: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/asymmetrical-warfare>

occupier not score any big political points by recapturing the Israeli prisoners in the resistance's hands – no small feat in a stretch of land no bigger than one quarter of London – but also military forces of resistance were undertaking regular and highly-efficient operations against the occupation forces and publicizing their exploits with highly-sophisticated propaganda videos. So much so that the sweeping underground tunnel networks used by resistance forces – reminiscent of the tactics used by the Vietminh in Vietnam, but more condensed due to geographical limitations – were touted even by imperialist institutions and their media as a “subterranean fortress”, showing that “future wars will be fought underground.”⁵

The bravery of the resistance endures to this day. Yet eventually, and perhaps inevitably, given the lack of international military support for the resistance and its abandonment for the Zionist occupier, the military success gradually started to shift. The pace of military actions by the resistance forces began to decline. More crucially, Zionist aggression started to reach the military and political leadership of the resistance. Successful, high-profile assassinations by the occupying Zionist army were the exception from October 7 to the summer of 2024, the most notable being the killing of a top Hamas leader, Saleh al-Arouri, in Beirut in January 2024. However, things took a turn that summer. From July 2024 to the end of October, a series of high-ranking political and military leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah were killed by the enemy, including Ismail Haniyeh, Mohammed Deif, and Yahya Sinwar for the former, and Fuad Shukur, Nabil Kaouk, Hashem Safieddine, and most importantly, the General Secretary Hassan Nasrallah for the latter. The next summer, other high-profile assassinations took place, including the head of Iranian Revolutionary Guards Hossein Salami during the 12-day war, but also al-Qassam spokesperson Abu Ubeida and the figurehead of the Ansarullah government, Ahmed al-Rahawi, in Yemen.

In addition, open war has fast expanded beyond Palestine to target the other forces of the Axis of Resistance. Following sporadic military exchanges with Hezbollah and other resistance forces in Lebanon⁶, Israel felt comfortable enough to expand the scope of the conflict and launch a full-blown war against Hezbollah

5 Adam Goldman et al., “Israel Uncovers More of a Subterranean Fortress Under Gaza” *New York Times*, January 16, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/16/us/politics/israel-gaza-tunnels.html>; James Stavridis, “Hamas tunnels show future wars will be fought underground”, *Stars and Stripes*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.stripes.com/opinion/2024-09-05/hamas-tunnels-future-wars-underground-15077952.html>. (unless stated otherwise, all links to online newspapers in this article were accessed on January 15, 2026).

6 It is important to note that while Hezbollah clearly bore the brunt of the warfare, a range of other actors, including the Lebanese branches of Palestinian organizations like Hamas and the PFLP, as well as Lebanese groups like the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, have been involved in the resistance operations from Lebanon and lost fighters in those combats.

in Lebanon. Unlike 2006, when Hezbollah forces had been able to inflict a stunning defeat on the Zionist occupier in southern Lebanon⁷, this time the occupation forces seemed to have the edge. Particularly important was the mass assassination of hundreds of Hezbollah cadres in two waves of attacks by exploding their beepers, which were apparently commercially provided to Hezbollah by no other than the Zionist intelligence services, using a shell company. This was followed by waves of assassinations against the leadership of the organization, as mentioned above, including the killing of Hasan Nasrallah, who had arguably been the utmost symbol of anti-Zionist resistance in the 21st century. The result, notwithstanding the brave resistance the Hezbollah fighters were able to put up for weeks, was the signing of an extremely lopsided truce. Among other points, such as Hezbollah forces' withdrawal beyond the Litani River, the agreement gave Israel carte blanche to target Lebanon at will, which it continues to do so in full impunity, while strictly forbidding Hezbollah to engage in any military action in return. In addition to the implications of this rather humiliating agreement for Hezbollah's standing in internal Lebanese politics, the result was the collapse of the relative balance of power between the two sides as well as the de facto rules of military engagement between Hezbollah and Israel, established on virtually equal footing for the last two decades.

Hezbollah's defeat shifted the military equilibrium not only in Lebanon proper but also across the region where the organization had established itself as a major player over the years. Nowhere was this more visible than in Syria, where Bashar al-Assad's rule had been able to turn the tide of the civil war thanks at least in part to the involvement of war-hardened Hezbollah forces on the ground against the imperialist-backed jihadi forces – in addition, of course, to the Iranian and Russian involvement.⁸ What followed was a somewhat unexpected onslaught launched by the Takfiri HTS forces from the Idlib enclave in December 2024, in which they had been contained for the better part of a decade, with direct Turkish military assistance and probably implicit Zionist and imperialist approval. With Hezbollah's wings clipped and Russian forces focused on Ukraine, the Ba'ath Party's rule in Syria came tumbling down like a house of cards. Despite years of respite they benefited from, the Syrian army could not hold its ground against the Takfiri offensive for more than a few days. The results – unexpectedly, perhaps even for the HTS forces themselves and their leader, Sharaa – were the triumphal entry of the Jihadi forces, which had seemed doomed to irrelevance just a year before, into Damascus.

⁷ There is a book in French that provides a brief yet almost blow-by-blow account of the 2006 war; Michel Goya and Marc-Antoine Brillant, *Israël contre le Hezbollah: Chronique d'une défaite annoncée*, Paris: Rocher, 2014.

⁸ On the Syrian Civil war, see; Levent Dölek, "Phases, lessons and future of the civil war in Syria", *Revolutionary Marxism 2018*, pp. 15-47.

Bashar al-Assad was quickly evacuated to Moscow by his Russian allies, and the de-Ba'athification of the state started right away. One of the first acts of the new rulers of the country, entirely in keeping with the US-backed Takfiri posturing in the region, was a declaration of their intent to establish normal relations with Israel, just as Israel was moving to annihilate the entire Syrian arsenal, facing virtually zero resistance. With the Syrian state now safely controlled by HTS forces in a solid alliance with Turkey and in a more uneasy one with imperialism, the land connection through which Iranian arms could reach Hezbollah was also cut off.

Emboldened by these successful initiatives, Israel then moved to force a reluctant Iran into full-blown war. Following a surprise raid by the Israeli air forces in the summer of 2025, the Zionists waged a devastating war against Iran. After shaking off the stupor of the heavy losses incurred on the first day, Iran was able to put up a fight, with its missile salvos particularly effective in reaching Israeli targets despite the much-vaunted Israeli air defence system. Yet, by the end of this so-called 12-day war, Israel clearly displayed its military advantage and was able to strike strategic Iranian positions as well as military leaders and scientists with a surprising and upsetting ease. US imperialism also followed suit, to benefit from this moment of weakness for Iran, and bombed the Natanz, Isfahan, and most importantly, Fordow nuclear sites – the latter being the crowning jewel of the Iranian nuclear program – using its most advanced weaponry. This move, in addition to striking a blow to the Iranian nuclear program, was probably also meant to give Israel an “out,” so that they could finish the war by claiming victory, before it turned too politically costly for US imperialism and the imperialist order as a whole.

This last assertion, that the rising political costs at least partially incentivized imperialists to force Israel to cut its war short, could also serve us as a starting point to discuss the political side of the almost curious detachment between the military and the political results of Israel's genocidal war. As it transpired, while the military odds of Palestinian resistance grew dimmer over the last two and a half years, political support for the Palestinian cause rose exponentially, a development never before witnessed. Here, it is also worthwhile to warn against a spurious conclusion that the popular masses simply cheer for the disfavoured party, which seems to be suffering. This is belied not only by the historical precedent – military defeats and the ensuing human suffering of Palestinian and Arab forces in 1948 and 1967 never triggered any sort of mass mobilization beyond the Arab or Islamic world – but also risks overlooking the qualitatively new aspect of the support for the Palestinian cause. To be sure, an international solidarity with Palestinians always existed on the international left. Yet it never succeeded in spreading beyond, and in making mass mobilization for Palestine a force to be reckoned with on its own, outside of the left or the Arab diaspora. This is exactly what is happening now, with a whole genera-

tion politicizing directly through Palestine. Scantly one could walk in any Western city without seeing streets covered in pro-Palestinian stickers and posters or without running into youth donning the Palestinian kufiyah. A similar trend of an international cause defining a whole generation of political militancy would harken back to Vietnam becoming the defining issue in the 1960s and 1970s, with other prominent examples, such as mobilizations in support of the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa or against the US war in Iraq in 2003, remaining somewhat more limited. Already, the direct impact of this political trend should not be underestimated. The constant popular support for the Palestinian cause significantly reduces the political wiggle room of imperialist governments. This way, to avoid backlashes from their own public, a range of imperialist countries either already find themselves with limited options to support Zionism or even face the need to rein it in at times. But beyond its immediate impact in the current juncture, this new ally of the anti-Zionist resistance in the West is bound to be an integral part of any revolutionary strategy for West Asia in the future. *The generation-defining mobilization for Palestine is the irrefutable proof that a liberation project in our region led by the right leadership can have a formidable ally in the belly of the beast.*

2024 as the second 1967: From post-Nasser to post-Nasrallah West Asia

Beyond the factual details, these developments reveal new dynamics that might come to define the foreseeable future in West Asia. The first concerns the role of the so-called Axis of Resistance as the main center of gravity in the anti-Zionist politics in the region. To be blunt, I believe 2024 is best understood as the 1967 moment of this political current.

Let me expand on this historical analogy. As is known, in 1967 Israel launched a surprise attack on Egyptian forces across Sinai. The Zionist armies scored a big victory against the Egyptians and their Arab allies – most importantly Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. The military and geopolitical implications were horrible: the Egyptian air force was practically wiped out at the beginning of the war, and the Zionist occupier came to control the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, the Golan Heights in Syria, and the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem in Palestine (hitherto controlled by Jordanian forces). But equally decisive was the impact on the prospects for the political movement led by the Egyptian state and its charismatic leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser. After taking power in 1952 in a coup by the so-called Free Officers who toppled the pro-British monarchy, Nasser initially took up the role of an eminence grise while Mohammed Naguib was the figurehead of the Free Officers movement.⁹ Nasser

⁹ For a study that locates 1952 revolution in Egypt in the modern history of revolutions in the

soon became the movement's undisputed leader, and in 1956 he orchestrated a spectacular victory by nationalizing the Suez Canal after a speech in which he openly declared that Egypt was receiving arms from the Soviet Union, thus adding insult to injury for the British imperialists. The same year, a tripartite invasion attempt by the British, French, and Israeli forces failed, which in turn gave Nasser an unparalleled status in the Arab world. As Nasser's Egypt showed, so the thinking went, one could stand against the former colonizers and the Zionists – militarily and politically – and carry the day. From there on, Nasser would come to be the face of the aspiration of re-found Arab dignity, including a potential Arab unity but also – and as importantly – of settling the score with Israel, after the region-wide humiliation of losing against it in 1948, and standing helplessly against the Nakba, the great Palestinian catastrophe where hundreds and thousands were forced out of their homeland. What followed was twofold, in and beyond Egypt. In Egypt, particularly with Soviet assistance, a rapid modernization of the economy and the army began. In the rest of the Arab world, a range of Nasserist and Free Officers movements started to dot the political scene, either taking power or emerging as serious contenders for it. Despite the presence of other mass anti-imperialist actors in the region, such as the Ba'athists and the communists, Nasser and his movement were the unrivalled leaders of this new historical period.

Then came 1967. Despite years and years of build-up, the prospect of a salvation that would come with the Egyptian army was destroyed by the Zionists in one swoop. Nasser resigned and then returned to power following mass demonstrations in his favour, only to pass away three years later. Most importantly, political horizons that were once set upon the strength of Nasser and Egypt – as should be recalled, at that point Egypt was the Arab country with by and far the biggest population, biggest economy, biggest army, and the greatest cultural clout – were up for a hard reckoning. Nasserist parties and pro-Nasser military movements did not disappear overnight, but their image and influence took a hit from which they would never recover. Not for nothing, it was after 1967, that is to say, the end of hopes for Egypt to lead the charge for the Palestinian liberation, that a major turn took place in the history of Palestinian resistance. It was only after this ominous and regrettable defeat that Palestinian organizations themselves came to spearhead the anti-Zionist struggle, filling the void left by Nasser. Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Fatah¹⁰, replaced Nasser as the

region, see Sungur Savran, "Revolution as the driving force of history in the Middle East", *Revolutionary Marxism 2018*, pp. 71-92.

10 Palestinian Liberation Organization was an entity created by none other than Nasser's Egypt as a diplomatic tool. After 1967, it would come to serve as a united front of the main Palestinian resistance organizations, most importantly Arafat's Fatah, the PFLP led by George Habash, its

symbol of Palestinian liberation. This was to be the beginning of the post-Nasser West Asia, not due to his physical disappearance but because of the demise of his political project as the hegemonic force in the region. The remnants of this project, did linger in the Middle Eastern political scene, not necessarily as progressive forces, but certainly as states that were significantly more likely to come to blows with Zionism and American imperialism. Qaddafi's Libya, and Ba'athi (of different strands) Syria and Iraq were the most concrete examples of these relics. It is no coincidence that all these governments were toppled – in Muammar Qaddafi's and Saddam Hussein's cases, their leaders were also killed, either by American occupation or by American-led or approved operations. These episodes, either before the imperialist-Zionist war on the Axis of Resistance (in Libya and Iraq), or as part of it (in Syria, which was by then, even as a remnant of the Nasserist-Ba'athi wave, part of the Axis of Resistance), were moves where the imperialist-Zionist enemy eliminated its enemies in the region.

Without going into the details of the ups and downs of the PLO and its internal factions, it is important to recall that another gradual shift took place under the dual impact of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Due to the first, Islamist factions all across the Arab world emerged as major players. First, the ideological impact of the Iranian revolution was substantial, initially reaching even beyond the Shia groups and serving as a center of gravity for various groups, Shia and Sunni alike.¹¹ Once the collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in the end of Soviet military and financial support for resistance organizations, Iran's status as a state capable of arming various factions gave the Islamists a particular edge. Thus started the rise of groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Amal and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Hamas (an Arabic abbreviation for the Islamic Resistance Movement) initially emerged as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. The organization had the explicit goal of Islamicizing Palestinian society through proselytism, explicitly eschewing armed resistance against occupation. Then came the First Intifada, and another Islamist group, which would come to be known as Islamic Jihad, took up arms and started to outflank Hamas. This new setting meant increasing pressure on Hamas from its own base to move away from its quietism and join the armed struggle. When it did so, drawing strength from its years-long rank-and-file organization work, Hamas proved to be a much more effective armed force than Islamic Jihad, quickly becoming the face of the new Palestinian resist-

splinter DFLP led by Nayef Hwatmeh, in addition to the pro-Syrian As-Saiqa, and the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front.

¹¹ Also see, Burak Gürel, "Islamism: A comparative-historical overview", *Revolutionary Marxism 2017*, pp. 77-101.

ance and of groups refusing Fatah's capitulation in Madrid and Oslo in the early 1990s. Hamas's rise was meteoric; by the Second Intifada (2000-2005), it could compete with Fatah as the leader of the movement, and once it ended its boycott of the Palestinian Authority's elections, it scored an easy victory in 2006, making one of Hamas leaders, Ismail Haniyeh, Yasser Arafat's prime minister for a few months. Yet the Hamas-Fatah relationship was fraught from the outset, and coexistence within the same institutional framework proved impossible. In the brief intra-Palestinian civil war that followed, Hamas was able to purge Gaza of Fatah, while the latter proved to be the stronger party in the West Bank. The result was twofold. Palestinian fragmentation (a consolidating Gaza-West Bank divide) created a highly disadvantageous position for the Resistance, a divide that Zionist Israel strives to perpetuate. But also, its unbridled power in Gaza gave Hamas a quasi-state position, with all the logistical and financial advantages it entails. From there on, despite the existence of other Resistance factions in Gaza and Hamas's implantation beyond Gaza (in the West Bank, as well as Palestinian camps in Lebanon and Syria), Gaza and Hamas almost became conflated for many outside observers.

Hezbollah's rise followed a similar and interlinked path. Initially emerging as a loose collation of various Shia forces in Lebanon with the intention of fighting the Israeli occupation there after 1982, Hezbollah established itself as a formidable military force with Iranian help. Competing with the Lebanese Communist Party and its military branch, Popular Guards, as well as the rival but pro-Syrian Shia group Amal for Lebanon's Shia population's support, its military effectiveness gave Hezbollah the upper hand. The group's leading military role in the process leading to the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 and its defensive victory over Israel in 2006 propelled it to hard-to-rival prestige. The organization's military capacities also rose progressively, compared by Israelis themselves to a mid-sized army.¹² Beyond the military realm, it also ran an apparatus in southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut (known as "Dahiya", which means suburbs) that approximated the capabilities of a state, with its own health, banking, and social security infrastructure.¹³

During this process, taking place in the watershed period from the 1980s to the 2000s, two connected and crucial transformations gradually took place. First, the leadership of the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist resistance in Palestine and in Lebanon, two countries at that point partially or fully under direct Zionist oc-

12 Amos Harel, "Israel's Military Now Sees Hezbollah as an Army in Every Sense", *Haaretz*, March 4, 2026, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2016-03-04/ty-article/israel-sees-hezbollah-as-an-army-in-every-sense/0000017f-e61d-df2c-a1ff-fe5d6f920000>.

13 Joseph Daher, *Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God*, London: Pluto Press, 2016.

cupation, switched from left-wing forces – PLO factions in Palestine and Jammoul factions in Lebanon – to Islamist groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, as the second crucial development, during these transformative years, Palestinian and Lebanese Islamists did not remain as they were. Not only did they come to undertake a leading role in their respective national resistances, but they also ideologically moved away from a supranational project based exclusively on the Islamic Umma toward what could be termed an Islamic nationalism. In this new orientation, their priorities and political projects lay squarely in Palestine and Lebanon. In other words, instead of being transnational Islamists who happened to be in Lebanon or Palestine – as was the case in the wake of the Iranian Revolution –, they became Palestinian and Lebanese forces whose political project was Islamic. The difference was subtle yet substantial. Tellingly, both Hamas and Hezbollah recanted on their refusal to take part in national political institutions – including taking part in elections – in 2006 and 1992, respectively.¹⁴ Islamic Jihad still does not take part in Palestinian elections, but this is the result of an anti-colonial intransigence, refusing to acknowledge institutions based on a compromise with Israel, instead of a refusal on religious grounds. Equally telling is the fact that neither Hamas nor Hezbollah admits fighters from outside Palestine and Lebanon, respectively, unlike transnational Takfiri groups such as Daesh, Al-Qaeda, and even HTS, with their multinational fighter body, although this is at least partially a security measure. Notably, Hezbollah even sporadically ran small-scale multi-religious armed groups, named Lebanese Resistance Brigades, showing its tendency to organize itself as a Lebanese national force.

All in all, when the fateful breaking point of October 7 came, a coalition of Islamist groups, having developed a resistance strategy heavily based on nationalism and either controlling states – as in the case of Iran – or having established quasi-state status – Hezbollah and Hamas – were at the helm of the anti-Zionist resistance.¹⁵ As importantly, with the spectacular Hezbollah victory over Israel in 2006, Iran’s expanding military arsenal and the broadening networks of its allies from Yemen to Iraq, and finally culminating in the military savvy of the al-Aqsa Flood operation led by Hamas developed real hope, most particularly “on the Arab street”,

¹⁴ These were no easy decisions for organizations that time and again emphasized their refusal to be part of the said institutions. So much so that Hezbollah’s decision to stand in elections triggered a high-profile schism in the organization led by Subhi al-Tufayli, the organization’s first Secretary-General.

¹⁵ As a side note, it should be recalled that this coalition had its ups and downs in the past. During the Syrian civil war, Hamas openly sided with the so-called Syrian opposition, mostly composed of Western-backed Sunni Islamists, which led to an open rupture between them and Iran and Hezbollah, themselves actively involved on Bashar al-Assad’s side. With the civil war slowing, the rifts were mended in the last few years.

that this anti-Zionist coalition could hold its ground against the Zionist enemy.

However, the two and a half years of war since the Al-Aqsa Flood have laid bare some of the shortcomings of this leadership. The first concerns the internal coherence of the Axis of Resistance as an international force. Despite the bravery of its resistance, one of the main factors contributing to the Zionist victories was the fact that for most of the ongoing war, it was the Zionist-Imperialist bloc that chose when and where the decisive battles would be fought, the only exception being the day of October 7, when the Resistance itself unleashed the war. Different groups of the Axis undoubtedly provided crucial logistical assistance and undertook symbolic military actions. But nevertheless, when push came to shove, Israel could choose who to fight and benefit from the limited involvement of other Axis of Resistance forces in one another's wars. Most concretely, Hezbollah's symbolic involvement in the first phase of the war gave Israel a chance to concentrate its forces on Hamas and its Palestinian allies. Once feeling safer on that front, the Zionists moved to open a full-blown front in Lebanon, this time being able to focus exclusively on Hezbollah. It was only after securing the Palestinian and Lebanese fronts that Israeli aggression dared to start its open war against Iran. We do not include the Ansarullah forces in Yemen and various Iranian allies in Iraq in this equation, despite the unparalleled commitment shown particularly by Yemeni forces, given that, due to their distance from Palestine and lack of advanced weaponry in their hands they could not be anything but secondary actors in the confrontation. Admittedly, allies being trigger-shy in the face of a formidable enemy and sundry domestic considerations is not an Axis of Resistance exception, with plentiful examples in similar situations across history. Yet, the entire edifice of the Axis of Resistance was built to make sure that the depth of resistance forces across different scales – Hamas and Hezbollah taking the war into Israeli borders, Iran serving as a long-distance deterrent – would force Zionists to avoid confronting them, or be forced into an unfavourable war. Yet while this approach could have possibly worked if Zionists attacked Iran first, with minor actors mobilizing for the leader of the Axis, since October 7, we have witnessed that ***bigger actors within the Axis were not willing to cross the Rubicon to support their smaller allies***. This unwillingness certainly facilitated the Zionist enemy's task.

Another shortcoming in the current leadership displayed itself in how the increasing support for the Palestinian cause worldwide, beyond West Asia, failed to translate into mass support for the main resistance factions beyond parts of the Arab diaspora and the hardliners within the international solidarity movement. The support for Palestine could also express itself as support for Hamas in predominantly-Sunni countries of the region, but it was significantly more muted for Hezbollah, Iran and even Ansarullah. This stands in stark contrast to how the popularity of

anti-colonial leadership fared in other contexts like Algeria and Vietnam, where the support for Algerian and Vietnamese revolution came also without fail with support for the Algerian FLN and Vietnamese Vietminh/Vietcong. Clearly, part of the explanation has to do with the criminalization in the West of any sort of support for the Palestinian resistance. However, there is also no doubt that the religiously – and even, at times, sectarian – oriented line of the *current leadership is inherently less capable of mobilizing support beyond the same religious and sectarian lines*. Whereas any internationalist revolutionary worthy of this name is duty-bound to support the anti-Zionist resistance regardless of any criticism towards the current leadership, it is similarly important to draw the lessons from this structural weakness of the religious leadership.

The stakes and consequences of the defeat experienced by Hezbollah, Iran, and, in different ways, by Hamas and Syria, could only be truly understood in this context. More than a simple military setback, the defeats that destroyed the leadership structure of the resistance groups and disenchanted broad masses about their military capabilities against the enemy, just like that of the Nasserian defeat in 1967, delivered a decisive blow to their capacity to attract support as a force that could feasibly contain the Zionist menace. It does not follow from this affirmation that these forces will immediately disappear into thin air, nor that they should be considered done for. At the risk of forcing the analogy, let me also recall that even Egypt, after the humiliating defeat of 1967, was able to put on a rather impressive military showing against Israel in 1973, eventually losing its military advantage after that surprise attack, but certainly showing that it still had some cards up its sleeve. Similarly, not by any stretch of imagination do we claim that the forces constituting the Axis of Resistance will stop being actors of importance in the region, neither immediately nor any time soon. Yet their momentum as the force capable of almost monopolizing the anti-Zionist political space and singlehandedly spearheading the Palestinian cause – their *raison d’Etat* in many ways – took a major blow. This new configuration could open up political space for alternative groupings to fill. It is not certain, but possible and even probable, that a political force or a set of actors would come to fill in this gap in the region. *While standing in fullhearted solidarity with all fighters of the resistance, West Asian revolutionaries are now duty-bound to make sure that the resistance does not cease to exist for a second to rebuild the resistance on a more solid base, with revolutionary leadership.*

Daydreaming about Pax Israeliana: Periphery Doctrine redux

Admittedly, but unfortunately, the latest wave of war gave Zionist Israel an edge over its enemies. Following a series of victories over Hezbollah, (indirectly) Syria, and Iran, it is clear that the Zionists are daydreaming about a certain Pax Israeliana,

a regional setup where Israel and its junior allies serve as the ultimate decision-makers, and no substantial shift against Israeli interests is feasible.

Particularly crucial in this drive is the disarmament push in the entire region. To recall, since 1967, various organizations – PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah, among others – rather than states spearheaded the anti-Zionist resistance. Accordingly, the current push to disarm the said organizations, particularly Hamas and Hezbollah, transparently aims to remove wayward military actors that could impede or complicate reactionary compromises to be brokered between collaborationist regimes and Zionism. The earthquake of October 7, when the military operation at the very least significantly set back, maybe even thwarted, an Israeli-Saudi “normalization,” is a potent reminder of how these organizations are able to act as makers and breakers of regional politics. Disarmament will not be an easy process. It may not even be achievable. However, Hamas has already committed to some form of disarmament in the latest truce it signed with Israel. Hezbollah has been fighting tooth and nail to keep its arms, but its growing isolation in Lebanon and the Blad al-Sham region drives it to a dead end. It was recently reported that Iran and Hezbollah started considering the option of giving up Hezbollah’s arms for political reforms that will ensure the Shiite organization more clout in the country without the force of arms.¹⁶

First and foremost, it is imperative to recall that, even if the enemy succeeds in disarming the biggest battalions of resistance, a conjectural success does not mean a lasting victory for the Zionists. To paraphrase the eloquent and perceptive reminder of Lev Trotsky at the darkest hour of Nazi occupations across Europe, Zionists cannot “attach a soldier with a rifle to each” Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Jordanian worker and peasant, hence it is all but inevitable that the resistance, even if in another shape or form, will rise again.¹⁷

Yet exactly the need to build, and if necessary rebuild the resistance, also comes with the sine qua non condition of having a precise understanding of the enemy’s strategy. The Israeli push for this Pax Israeliana will be one of the central tenets of the latter. The strategy stands on pillars: preserving the Israeli military edge over other regional players and putting together a set of alliances that ensure the longevity of Israeli superiority.

The author of this piece is the furthest from a military expert; hence, I will not get into that in any detail, focusing rather on the political aspect. However, there

16 Mounir Rabih, “Possible brèche dans le mur : le Hezbollah passe du refus de toucher aux armes à la négociation du prix”, *L’Orient-Le Jour*, January 11, 2026, <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1491109/une-breche-dans-le-mur-le-hezbollah-passe-du-refus-de-toucher-aux-armes-a-la-negociation-du-prix.html>.

17 For the quote: Leon Trotsky, “We do not change our course”, June 1940: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1940/06/course.htm> (accessed on March 6, 2026).

are also signs that Israel, long enjoying an unparalleled military superiority in the region thanks to overwhelming imperialist assistance, might run into some hiccups on that front. A particularly important development is the increasing Saudi leverage, cultivated, not least, by a Chinese opening, and the Israeli difficulty in keeping the kingdom from obtaining cutting-edge military technology. In a noteworthy development, the Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman was able to obtain a promise – but so far only a promise – for the F-35s it long coveted from US president Donald Trump, and this despite a pronounced pushback from Israel and its allies in the US. One cannot count on this promise being honoured – the UAE has been waiting for the F-35 they were promised for the last 6 years and counting. However, even in this promise made despite Israeli objections, we could discern at least a partial US unease about the complete dedication to Israel, an alliance whose political and financial costs proved more than what some in the US establishment are comfortable with. To avoid any possibility of a misunderstanding, what is at stake is not an imperialist abandonment of Israel. But rather, the increasing unwillingness to rebuff important factors such as Saudi Arabia, with its economy more than twice the size of that of Israel, simply in order to keep the latter as the *only* center of the US imperialist interests in the region. Whereas the short-term impact of this tendency would be negligible, an eventual erosion of the Israeli military edge would put the outsized Zionist ambitions in the region on precarious ground.

In this context, perhaps more crucial for Israel is the establishment of a regional structure that provides it with the necessary allies and at the same time undermines any viable anti-Zionist project. To this end, and at a time when the 19th-century Monroe Doctrine is coming into full force in US politics, the Zionist state seems to revitalize an old strategy of theirs, known as the Periphery Doctrine. Initially meant as an alliance of the region's peripheral countries – as opposed to the “Arab core” – this doctrine envisioned, first and foremost, a close alliance among Israel, Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia (the latter mostly as a tool to surround Nasser's Egypt). The same doctrine gradually came to involve not only the non-Arab states but also various minorities in the region. Particularly crucial in this latter aspect were the ties with Maronite Christians in Lebanon, especially during the Lebanese Civil War, and the relations with Molla Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which reached a zenith following the debacle of the 1970 Kurdish opening under the Iraqi Ba'ath.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution destroyed one of the pillars of this strategy by turning a pro-Israeli Iran into an Israeli nemesis. Turkey never broke away from Zionism's orbit, but the period of relative cooling following the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010 made some observers hear the death knell of the Periphery Doc-

trine.¹⁸ That diagnosis was arguably wrong even when it was uttered, but there was indeed a moment where brokering alliances with Quisling governments in the Arab core became more crucial for Zionists in the face of periphery countries becoming either outright hostile or less amenable. The recent turn of events, on the other hand, indicates that the so-called Periphery Doctrine is coming back into full force, albeit with an important twist. However, the return of the periphery operates without excluding the Zionist efforts to penetrate deeper into the core at the same time.

To reiterate, this time around, the Periphery Doctrine comes with a twist, or rather, it is turned on its head. What I mean is that national and religious minorities in the region, as well as breakaway polities, come to the fore this time, instead of simply complementing a strategy based on non-Arab states. Israel's move to form alliances with various Kurdish, Druze, and even Alawite actors, as well as the recent Israeli recognition of Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia, are clear indications of this tendency.

The latter is a mind-boggling example of the cynical nature of the Zionist foreign policy. The breakaway region, which has been reclaiming its independence since 1990, has not been recognized by any other state before. There is scant doubt that recognizing Somaliland is purely a move with the intention of having a foot on the other side of the Ansarullah-controlled Yemen, and to limit the Turkish clout in Somalia. Turkey has a massive footprint in Somalia, operating the Camp TURKSOM, where more than 5,000 Somalian soldiers have so far been trained, in addition to positioning a part of its naval fleet in Mogadishu. On the other hand, Somaliland's Berbera city hosts a UAE military camp, which will undoubtedly soon start to serve Israel as a counterweight against Turkish forces operating in Mogadishu and Ansarullah operating across the Red Sea – if this was not already the case, that is.

The most well-developed connection is the one with various strands of the Kurdish movement. Israeli ties with the KDP in Iraq date back to the 1960s, including two secret visits by Molla Mustafa Barzani to Israel in 1968 and 1973.¹⁹ To consolidate these connections, a new range of initiatives seems to be afoot, including a joint Kurdish-Jewish Congress that took place in Berlin in September 2025.²⁰ More crucial, at least recently, has been the push to establish ties with the PKK tradition and particularly the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces, and eroding this political tendency's once-cherished ties with the Palestinian liberation, established also in

18 Leon Hadar, "The collapse of Israel's 'Periphery Doctrine'", *Foreign Policy*, June 26, 2010, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/26/the-collapse-of-israels-periphery-doctrine/>.

19 Ofra Bengio, *The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012, pp. 74-75.

20 "With the participation of the Kurdistan Independence Movement, the first Kurdish-Jewish Congress was held in Berlin", *Kurd Nation*, September 15, 2025 <https://en.kurdnation.com/2025/09/15/the-first-kurdish-jewish-congress/>

the trenches they shared fighting side by side against Zionists in Beirut.²¹

With the Druze, the sectarian massacres against the Syrian Druze community in Suweida after the HTS takeover in late 2024 gave the Zionists a significant opening. This was further facilitated by the existence of several alternative political strands within the Druze leadership, but the fact that Israel could position itself as the defender of the Druze minority in Syria following the said massacres gave a significant edge to the leadership of Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif, representing a pro-Israeli orientation within a Druze community where attachment to Syrian nationalism remains strong. Not for nothing – for reasons that will be clearer in the next subsection – Mowafaq Tarif also made Abu Dhabi one of his habitual stops recently.²² Another important Druze leader, Hikmat al-Hijri, recently gave credit to Zionists for saving the Druze from a genocide and called for the division of Syria.²³

Perhaps more puzzling is the inclusion of Alawites in this picture, given that during Bashar al-Asad's rule, a power based on the Alawite community was one of the principal adversaries of Zionism. In this regard, the context of increasingly unchecked sectarian attacks in the post-Ba'ath Syria against the Alawite community, particularly in the so-called coastal area from Latakia to Tarsus and in parts of Hama, is key. The situation is further worsened by the fact that the other major neighboring state, Turkey, as the overlord of new Syria, is abetting and at times even encouraging the anti-Alawite massacres. In this context, the Alawite population is stuck between a rock and a hard place, with Zionists' involvement being a means of survival for them. Israeli Defense Minister Katz clearly showed the Zionists' intent to exploit the situation, with declarations following the massacres by jihadists against the Alawite community in Syria.²⁴

Beyond the Zionist strategy, even the relative success that its pushes found in different contexts should also serve as a damning verdict of history on the nationalist and sectarian policies of bourgeois leaderships in the region. These policies, often wrapped in a spurious anti-Western rhetoric, had no use but letting Zionists and imperialists make headways among marginalized minority groups. This picture should serve as a stark warning that ***anti-imperialist liberation in our region cannot but come through a policy of internationalism, including the right of nations***

21 Jose Lev Alvarez Gomes, "Israel's Quiet Bet on Syria's Kurds", *Times of Israel Blog*, December 25, 2025, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israels-quiet-bet-on-syrias-kurds/>

22 Ohad Merlin, "Abu Dhabi hosts second International Dialogue of Civilizations and Tolerance Conference", *The Jerusalem Post*, February 27, 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-843970>.

23 "Al-za'em al-durzi Hakmat Al-Hijri: Israil anqidhatna min al-ibada wa al-taqsim huwa al-hal", *Al Jazeera*, January 13, 2026, <https://tinyurl.com/n9eknf6r>.

24 Shaina Oppenheimer, "Explainer: Why is Israel pushing for ties with Syrian minority groups?", *BBC Monitoring*, March 21, 2025, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b0003jp0>.

to self-determination, including the right to establish one's own state.

The role of non-Arab states in the new orientation is secondary compared to the doctrine's first iteration under David Ben-Gurion, but it is not nonexistent. A crucial part of the new strategy, both as a counterweight to Iran and a source of cheap energy, is Azerbaijan. It is remarkable, but at the same time deeply disturbing, that from 2016 to 2021, Israel accounted for 69 percent of all Azerbaijani arms imports while Azerbaijan provided 40 percent of Israeli oil needs during the genocide in Gaza.²⁵ Turkey, despite emerging lines of contradiction with Israel (see below), keeps showing its willingness to rekindle its alliance with Zionism under the right conditions. Not for nothing, the US ambassador for Turkey, Tom Barack, predicted an "alignment from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean" when talking about Turkish-Israeli relations, implying nothing less than an Israeli-Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance as the central node in the region.²⁶ This goes to remind the revolutionaries in the region, particularly those in Turkey and Azerbaijan, that a struggle against the new doctrine of Zionism will have to splice proletarian internationalism towards the region's minorities to deprive Zionists of the opportunity to drive a wedge between our peoples, but also to fight against the Zionist-compatible despotic regimes in our own countries.

Reactionary competition as the defining regional dynamic in the short term

As I hinted above, it is entirely possible that new forces, or even splinters of the old, would come to gain increasing political prominence in the anti-Zionist struggle over the years to come. However, at this low point for resistance organizations (but definitely not for anti-Zionist sentiments in the region or worldwide), the most immediate dynamic is quite different. More than anything, at this point, what is at play is the replacement of the contradiction between Zionism and its enemies by a rivalry between competing, but ultimately reactionary forces. The internal math of this transformation, so to speak, is rather straightforward. So far, despite clear and periodically resurfacing tensions between various reactionary and pro-imperialist forces in the region (Turkey-Israel, Saudi-Qatar tensions, for instance), the existence of a mighty force – the Axis of Resistance led by Iran - that propagated hostile-

25 Rovshan Mammadli, "Azerbaijan in the Abraham Accords: A new phase in Baku's alliance with Israel?", *The New Arab*, April 22, 2025, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/azerbaijan-abraham-accords-bakus-deepening-israel-ties>; Yousef Bardouka, "Azerbaijan supplied Israel with 40% of its oil during Gaza war, report finds" *OC Media*, November 20, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/azerbaijan-supplied-israel-with-40-of-its-petrol-during-gaza-war-report-finds/>.

26 "Turkey and Israel will not be at war with each other: US ambassador", *Turkish Minute*, November 3, 2025, <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/11/03/turkey-and-israel-will-not-be-at-war-with-each-other-us-ambassador/>.

ity against Zionist and imperialist interests in the region played a mitigating role. When all was said and done, four centers of the pro-imperialist camp in West Asia – Tel Aviv, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Ankara – were better disposed to line up, overtly or covertly, with one another in the case of open conflict with the Iranian camp. The fact that Israel showed extensive tolerance towards Sunni jihadi militias operating right across its northern border in Syria while they fought against the Baathi power, or the fact that Gulf countries and their Egyptian as well as Jordanian allies showed particular eagerness in shooting down Yemeni or Iranian missiles targeting Israel are irrefutable proof of what could be called a latent complicity even at times of tension.

However, the consequent defeat of Hezbollah, Ba'ath, and Iran – even if those defeats took different forms – left an Iran-sized hole in this matrix. With Iran relegated to a non-primary – if not quite secondary – role in the region, both with its own military losses and the fall of its allies, the region started facing the prospect of the above-mentioned Pax Israeliana. In this new setup, Israel seems poised to reshape the regional architecture, both with the military muscle that it is more than willing to flex and with the new allies it found in the region. In the face of this daunting prospect – where Israel and Israel alone call the shot in the region – out-competing Israel will assume an ever more important role for a number of other actors.

As a starting point, it should be noted that the newfound Israeli geopolitical clout does not fail to produce its lackeys. In this regard, the United Arab Emirates holds the dubious honor of leading the pack. Let us recall that the UAE was the first signatory of the infamous Abraham Accords in 2020, and it developed the most extensive ties with the Zionist state. In addition to quashing any sort of anti-Zionist voice within the country – a PhD student at the New York University's Abu Dhabi campus was swiftly detained and deported in 2024 after using his graduation speech to protest the ongoing genocide against the Palestinians²⁷ – the Israeli ties are not only accepted but also actively cherished by the state: unlike other “normalizing countries”, in the UAE high-profile celebrations could be seen with people dancing with UAE and Israeli flags in the wake of Abraham Accords. In addition, it was widely reported that when the Ansarullah government controlling parts of Yemen (commonly and somewhat derogatively called the Houthis) imposed a de facto blockade to the commercial ships faring through the Red Sea to Israel, the UAE mobilized its exceptionally well-developed port and shipping infrastructure – a sector in which the UAE is one of the world leaders– to welcome the commercial ships headed to

27 “UAE deported student who wore Palestinian keffiyeh at graduation ceremony”, *Middle East Eye*, July 21, 2024, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-deported-student-who-wore-keffiyeh-graduation-ceremony>.

Israel. The ships were reportedly unloaded at Emirati ports and then reshipped to Israel, with Jordanian trucks.²⁸

Now, this cordiality between the UAE and Israel seems to be taking another turn, paving the way for a still somewhat tacit yet strategic alliance, not unlike the first stages of the Israeli-Azerbaijani ties, before they were acknowledged openly. It is already asserted that the UAE has been building a joint military base with Israel in Socotra, a Yemeni island that remained under Emirati control for several years, before nominally being transferred to pro-Emirati Yemeni groups.²⁹ Notably, when Israel recognized Somaliland as a sovereign state, as I discussed above, the UAE refused to sign the joint statement led by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran condemning the move. However, it was not the only Arab country to refrain from doing so, as Bahrain and Morocco – fellow Abraham signatories – as well as Syria and Lebanon also broke ranks. But more telling was another silent move: the UAE reportedly started accepting Somaliland passports on its visa platform, a move that came merely days after Israel’s recognition and meant nothing less than UAE’s recognition, even if it came with significantly less fanfare.³⁰ With this move, the UAE becomes the first state to openly break ranks within this Arab and even Islamic front and align with Israel by extending de facto recognition to Somaliland. It should also be recalled that, beyond simply piggybacking the Zionists, there is a clear alignment between the two sides’ interests. It seems that the UAE is not simply following suit but is actively advising Israel, as it was widely reported that the UAE was part of the talks that led to Israel recognizing Somalia’s breakaway region.³¹ It would be wise to remember that since 2017, the UAE has been operating a naval base out of Somaliland in Berbera, and a military base. In this regard, the alignment between Israeli and Emirati interests is evident.

Yet, it is equally important to emphasize that the Emirates practically operates as a co-sponsor of Israel’s Periphery Doctrine. In coming years, we should anticipate seeing more breakaway movements across the region, sponsored by the UAE and supported by Israel. Beyond the Somaliland case, what is currently unfolding

28 Sharon Wrobel, “Houthi bypass: Quietly, goods forge overland path to Israel via Saudi Arabia, Jordan,” *The Times of Israel*, February 14, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/houthi-bypass-quietly-goods-forge-overland-path-to-israel-via-saudi-arabia-jordan/>.

29 “UAE Fast-Tracks Development of Joint Military Base with Israel in Yemen’s Socotra,” *Emirates Leaks*, August 8, 2024, <https://emiratesleaks.com/uae-fast-tracks-development-of-joint-military-base-with-israel-in-yemens-socotra/?lang=en>.

30 “UAE ‘Quietly’ Accepts Somaliland Passports but Not Somali Documents: Report,” *The Media Line*, January 6, 2026, <https://themedialine.org/headlines/uae-quietly-accepts-somaliland-passports-but-not-somali-documents-report/>.

31 Lokman Abdullah, “Somaliland and the Israel–UAE Project in the Red Sea,” *Al-Akhbar English*, December 30, 2025, <https://en.al-akhbar.com/news/somaliland-and-the-israel-uae-project-in-the-red-sea>.

in Yemen is another textbook example of this dynamic. As, I will develop more a bit below, in December 2025, the so-called Southern Transition Council (STC) declared that it was launching an independence process for South Yemen – only to be rebuffed militarily by Saudi Arabia. But here, to understand the UAE’s role as an Israeli lackey within the Arab world, it is important to note that, in ***a crucial declaration, the STC leadership stated that, once they are independent, they would join the Abraham Accords.***³² This move was patently made in the UAE, as the STC is known as an Emirati proxy, and even the celebrations involved the Southern Yemeni and Emirati flags side by side.

In other cases, the Israeli ties sometimes, and probably only for now, remain hidden. This is mostly because agreements with Israel are still taboo, especially among the population in the Arab world, even in the countries that signed the Abraham Accords. One would be ill-advised to play that card too soon – hence the UAE is much better positioned for leading the push for more breakaway regions in the periphery of the Arab world. It is no secret that the UAE has been serving as the main backer of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, who have been waging a genocidal war. Some expect the RSF to put its challenge for the control of the Sudanese state to the back burner – main cities, including the capital Khartoum-Um Durman are now controlled by Burhan al-Fattah’s army – and declare a Darfur-based breakaway state, half-jokingly called the Tasis state.³³ Moreover, Algeria is also in the midst of a diplomatic crisis with the UAE, after the revelation that the Abu Dhabi government has been underhandedly funding a separatist Kabylia movement in the country.³⁴ The verdict should be clear at this point: in the upcoming period, the UAE will be Israel’s co-sponsor in the Periphery Doctrine.

In this context, one can expect a partial reshuffling of regional alliances. As Zionists are seeking to forcefully redesign the region, with the UAE openly on its bandwagon, this orientation started to clash with the interests of other crucial actors in the region. Turkey and Saudi Arabia figure as the main players who take

32 Amberin Zaman, “From Red Sea to Horn of Africa: How Yemen exposed the Saudi-UAE divide”, *Al-Monitor*, January 7, 2026, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2026/01/red-sea-horn-africa-how-yemen-exposed-saudi-uae-divide>.

33 Jennifer Hollies, “Sudan: Is a rival government splitting the country in two?”, *Deutsche Welle*, January 8, 2026, <https://www.dw.com/en/sudan-is-a-rival-government-splitting-the-country-in-two/a-73483875>; Andrew McGregor, “RSF Establishes Rival Government as Sudan’s War Spirals”, *Jamestown*, November 20, 2025, <https://jamestown.org/rsf-establishes-rival-government-as-sudans-war-spirals/>; Jonathan Fenton-Harvey, “How the fall of El-Fasher could cement Sudan’s partition”, *The New Arab*, November 3, 2025, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/how-fall-el-fasher-could-cement-sudans-partition>.

34 Malik ben Salem, “Peur sur la Kabylie” : le MAK s’appête à déclarer l’indépendance”, *Courrier International*, December 11, 2025 https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/algerie-peur-sur-la-kabylie-le-mak-s-apprete-a-declarer-l-independance_238382.

objection. The tragedy of the novel situation is the fact that even the ones trying to push back against the new Zionist drive do so not out of sheer hostility to Zionism – unlike Iran, Hezbollah, or Hamas – but due to tactical considerations and refusal to be relegated to a secondary role. In other words, while trying to compete with the Zionist project, sometimes even forcefully, they wholly remain within the pro-Imperialist camp and are even willing to broker a compromise with Zionists under the right conditions. The root of the current competition is the lack of these right conditions that could lead Zionists to compromise. Hence, in the new upcoming period, the *hostility between the imperialist-Zionist camp and its enemies* is being replaced by a *competition between a Zionist-led project and its rivals within the imperialist camp*. The new conflict, due to both parties' alliance within the broader imperialist camp, could easily turn into a brokered compromise in the medium term.

So far, the competition has been unfolding in a series of constellations. In different theatres of conflict, whether Syria, Yemen, or Sudan, different sets of actors have been facing one another in head-on confrontations. In Syria, Turkey's uneasy cooperation with Ahmad al-Sharaa's HTS in the organization's Idlib days, when Turkey was more heavily invested in the group called Syrian National Army, gave way to a strategic alliance after the HTS takeover of the country in December 2024. Even though Turkey is going to great lengths to project the image of a fully independent Syria, it is no secret that it has been acting almost like Syria's overlord in many regards. It was widely reported that the chummy scenes between the US president Donald Trump and Syrian president Ahmad al-Sharaa in Washington were brokered through the good offices of Erdogan's government, including Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan making a surprise visit to Washington, D.C. at the same time.³⁵ In addition, a flurry of new agreements has been signed between Turkey and Syria, in many ways incorporating the latter into the former's infrastructure. Yet the Zionists did not shy away from using military means to rebuff the Turkish advances in Syria. Without going into details, the most notable were a range of bombardments to nix the establishment of Turkish military bases in Syria and the open occupation of parts of southern Syria.

In Sudan, the new shift in the civil war is increasingly bringing the UAE and Turkey to loggerheads. As already noted, the Emirates have been acting as the main backer of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by the infamous Hemedti and formed on the basis of the no-less-infamous Janjaweed forces, from the very outset of the war. However, despite intense support by the UAE, RSF's initial success gave way to a relative stabilization of the front between it and the Sudanese army. Whereas

35 Ezgi Akin, "Turkey's Fidan joins Trump-Sharaa talks at White House", *Al-Monitor*, November 10, 2025, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/11/turkeys-fidan-joins-trump-sharaa-talks-white-house>.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia have been siding with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) that belonged to the central government from the beginning, Turkey had been sitting on the fence for the first year or so of the war. Its muscular involvement in the war since late 2024, particularly with drone shipments after August 2024,³⁶ seems to have tilted the balance. Not for nothing, it was in early 2025 that the SAF was able to dislocate the RSF from the country's capital as well as adjacent regions such as al-Jazeera state. According to an evaluation by Africa Defense Forum, "Turkey's drones have helped turn the tide in the SAF's favor."³⁷ As a sign of simmering tensions between Turkey and the UAE in Sudan, a UAE-supported RSF attack on the city of Port Sudan reportedly injured several Turkish drone operators in May 2025, an action that came in response to the destruction of a UAE airplane and killing of several UAE soldiers a day earlier in Nyala – the de facto RSF capital – by drones provided by Turkey.³⁸

In Yemen, this time, the Saudi and Emirati sides came to a rather spectacular collision. Whereas the two sides worked together in the first stages of the Yemeni civil war in fighting against Ansarullah forces and supporting the central government, the UAE abruptly dropped out of the war in 2019. Even at that stage, there were reports that the Saudi leader, Mohammad bin Salman, perceived this move as a treason of sorts. But more crucially, while ceasing open military involvement, the UAE continued its extensive collaboration with the Southern separatist forces centred in Aden. To recall, from 1967 to 1990, a socialist South Yemeni state had existed with its capital in Aden, until the collapse of the workers' state in Europe forced them to reunite with the North, under highly unfavorable conditions. Now, capitalizing on these southern grievances – but, needless to say, this time freed from its socialist content – the UAE had been patronizing a coalition of forces known as the Southern Transition Council. This low-profile effort came to the limelight when the STC moved its forces to capture the Hadramout region in Yemen and declared its intention to start the self-determination process for the South. The move was particularly painful for Saudi Arabia, which would not only find itself neighboring a UAE puppet state, but also an STC-controlled Hadramout would relegate the Saudi-backed central government practically to irrelevance in Yemen, squeezed between

36 "A Turkish arms firm helped fuel Sudan's brutal civil war, reports show", *Washington Post*, March 7, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/03/07/sudan-war-turkey-baykar-rsf-saf/>.

37 "Drone Attacks in Darfur, Port Sudan Reflect Growing Turkey-UAE Tensions", *Africa Defense Forum*, June 17, 2025, <https://adf-magazine.com/2025/06/drone-attacks-in-darfur-port-sudan-reflect-growing-turkey-uae-tensions/>.

38 Ragıp Soylu and Oscar Rickett, "Sudan's shadow war: Drone strikes reveal escalating tensions between UAE and Turkey", *Middle East Eye*, May 15, 2025, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/shadow-war-sudan-drone-strikes-reveal-escalating-tensions-between-uae-and-turkey>.

the hammer of Ansarullah and the anvil of the STC. What followed was a furious statement from Saudi Arabia, openly naming the UAE as the source of the STC offensive. Afterwards, the Saudi side quickly made it clear they meant business. First, Saudi Arabia bombed a shipment of arms from the UAE to Mukalla, the biggest city in Hadramout.³⁹ Then, the Saudi-backed Presidential Leadership Council – the central government – dissolved the defense pact it had with the UAE, and gave the latter an ultimatum to withdraw all its forces in Yemen within 24 hours.⁴⁰ Possibly realizing that it could not openly fight the Saudi military might, the UAE agreed to withdraw entirely from Yemen, and the Saudi-backed forces overtook the entire Hadramout region within a few hours. Whereas the UAE seems to have accepted that it tried to bite off more than it could chew at this time and conceded defeat in this battle, this remains exactly that: a battle in what might become a protracted war.

While acknowledging that we are still far from fully formed blocks colliding, a genuine realignment between Saudi-Turkish and Israeli-Emirati interests is becoming increasingly evident. Because of this shared interest, an accelerated warming of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia should be expected. It is also no coincidence that the media recently reported Turkey's intention to join the Saudi-Pakistani "Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement" that was signed in September 2025.⁴¹ As a further sign of growing military cooperation, Saudi Arabia and Turkey held their first-ever naval cooperation meeting in Turkey in early 2026.⁴² While Ankara and Riyadh constitute the main poles of power, it is likely that they would bring their Qatari and Egyptian allies into the fold. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is a considerably less significant factor after its heyday in the 2010s also facilitates this rapprochement by removing a particularly thorny issue, given that the organization was the bane of the Saudi-Egyptian side but a crucial ally for Turkey and Qatar.

Conclusion

Since the earth-shattering chain of events triggered by the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, our region, West Asia, stands as one of the central fronts, not to say the

39 William Christou, "UAE promises to withdraw forces from Yemen after bombing by Saudi Arabia", *The Guardian*, December 30, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/dec/30/saudi-arabia-bombs-yemen-over-weapons-shipment-alleged-uae>.

40 "Saudi Arabia reveals details of Yemen bombing, as UAE set to withdraw", *Al Jazeera*, December 31, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/31/uae-to-pull-forces-out-of-yemen-as-tensions-rise-with-saudi-arabia>.

41 Selcan Hacaoglu et al., "Turkey said to seek membership of Saudi-Pakistan defense pact", *Bloomberg*, January 6, 2026, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-01-09/turkey-said-to-seek-membership-of-saudi-pakistan-defense-pact?embedded-checkout=true>.

42 Fatma Zehra Solmaz, "Türkiye, Saudi Arabia hold 1st naval cooperation meeting", *Anadolu Agency*, January 8, 2026, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiye-saudi-arabia-hold-1st-naval-cooperation-meeting/3793128>.

centermost, in the spasmodic acceleration of the drive towards a world war. It is there that we see some of the clearest alignments of international powers, with world imperialism in one corner and a motley crowd of forces resisting it. It also stands to reason that West Asia, along with Ukraine and the South China Sea, is the most likely place where a miscalculated spark can end up triggering a worldwide conflagration, unless working-class and popular revolutions can arrive in time to save humanity from a potentially nuclear disaster. Two different phases of Arabi revolutions in the region (2011 and 2019), as well as persistent waves of mobilizations in Iran, in addition to the popular rebellion in Turkey in 2013, clearly prove that a strategy built on popular agency in the region has concrete and solid bases, and is not simple wishful thinking.

The region is in the midst of a protracted crisis with some setbacks, such as the strategic defeat of the current leadership of the anti-Zionist resistance, and an imperialist-Zionist push for more, from the full disarmament of resistance organizations to the Periphery Doctrine coming back into full force. In this immediate context, the prospect of a reactionary competition between various forces within the imperialist camp is poised to become the defining geopolitical factor in the region. Yet, neither setbacks nor sundry reactionary forces being in the forefront can indefinitely trump over national and class contradictions waiting to burst into the scene. It is the utmost duty of the region's revolutionaries to get ready for the protracted fight that lies ahead of us, and ensure that when the imperialist-Zionist yoke in the region comes apart at the seams, they are able to pick up the banner of anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist struggle.