

## Answer to a Question

### The Latest Developments in the Syrian Arena

#### From Erdogan's Announcement of his Plan to Attack East Euphrates to Trump's Declaration to Withdraw his Troops from Syria!

(Translated)

##### Question:

Erdogan's statements about the attack on east of the Euphrates, then postponing the attack, then re-declaring the attack, etc., and then rushing to Russia to coordinate the operations, after the Kurdish request for protection from the Syrian regime took place. Then Trump announced that he would withdraw the American troops from the east of the Euphrates ... and then it was followed by talks on filling the vacuum and so on ... The question is: What is behind Erdogan's hesitation to attack east of the Euphrates? Are these actions and statements by Erdogan in coordination with America or without coordination, indicating a difference in policy between Trump and Erdogan? And what is the motive for the withdrawal of the US military from Syria? Sorry about the length of the question, may Allah reward you with the good.

##### Answer:

By scrutinizing the events since Erdogan announced his plan to attack east of the Euphrates and Trump's declaration to withdraw from Syria until today, it is clear that:

**First:** Erdogan's policy is in accordance with the US policy, it does not depart from it, but as is said it follows it to the letter, this is how:

1- US envoy to Syria James Jeffrey arrived in Ankara and met with Turkish officials on 7/12/2018, and drew up the US plan in Syria for this period, especially in Manbij and Idlib. Jeffrey stressed that cooperation on Manbij became a model for peace in Syria, **"It is not possible to find a final solution there without close cooperation between the United States and Turkey."** On cooperation with Kurdish militants, he said: **"We always confirm that our work with the Syrian democratic forces against ISIS is temporary and tactical..."** (RT Online, 8/12/2018), and four days after that visit Erdogan announced his new plan of east of the Euphrates in a speech broadcasted on television, the Turkish President said: **"We will launch a military operations, within days, to evacuate the eastern Euphrates from separatist terrorists, "referring to areas controlled by" People's Protection Units."** (BBC 12/12/2018)

2- Hours following the announcement of the new Turkish military campaign on east of the Euphrates, there were US statements opposing it. It was from the Pentagon, **Commander Sean Robertson, spokesman for the Pentagon, said in a statement, "Any unilateral military action in northeast Syria would be a "grave concern", as it could potentially jeopardise US troops working with the SDF in the region." He added, "We would find any such actions unacceptable."** (New Gulf Post, 13/12/2018). After this opposition, which was based in the Pentagon and by prominent Republicans in the US Senate, Turkey has found itself between two different views emanating from Washington, so the Turkish plan stopped pending the final opinion in Washington! Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday, 17/12/2018: That his country may launch a new military operation in Syria at any time ... Erdogan said in a speech in the region of Konya in the center of the country, **"We officially announced that we will start a military operation east of the Euphrates"** he added: **"We discussed this with Mr. Trump and his response was positive."** (Reuters, 17/12/2018)

3- President Trump suddenly announced on Wednesday 19/12/2018 the withdrawal of US troops from Syria, and that it was based on the completion of the task, which is defeating "ISIS" Trump said: **"After historic victories against ISIS, it's time to bring our great young people home!"** (Russian Sputnik News Agency, 20/12/2018). With this withdrawal, America appeared as

if it is leaving the east of Euphrates to Turkey, and immediately Erdogan's plan came to life, according to the same source: The Turkish army sent reinforcements to its units near the border with Syria, South of the country.

4- The US President's announcement of the withdrawal from Syria has caused a storm of protests among American politicians in Washington, and it was opposed by prominent members of the Republican Party, and due to its impact it led to the sudden resignation of the Secretary of Defense "US Defense Secretary James Mattis resigned from office. In his letter of resignation, Mattis strongly hinted at differences in policy with President Trump ..." (BBC, 21/12/2018). With this embarrassment in Washington, the Turkish president said in a speech in Istanbul, "**We decided last week to launch a military incursion east of the river Euphrates ... We spoke by telephone with President Trump and there were contacts between diplomats and security officials, America issued statements, which pushed us to wait for a while.** Erdogan added: "**We have postponed our military operation against the "Kurdish fighters" in the east of the Euphrates River so that we can see on the ground the result of the US decision to withdraw from Syria,**" (Reuters, 22/12/2018).

Thus, it is clear that the Turkish military operation east of the Euphrates returned after only two days to the stage of waiting again, because it revolves around upcoming decisions from Washington, activating it or suppressing it. The declaration of attack and postponement were necessitated by American considerations since Jeffrey's visit and the subsequent visits. That is, Turkey has no policy in Syria separately from what comes from Washington, almost making it revolve in the orbit of America, making it close to an agent. The regime in Turkey looks out for the interests of America more than its own interests, this happened many times, as in the operations of the Euphrates Shield of the and Olive Branch! And it was bound by American red lines as it was in Manbij when Operation Euphrates Shield approached, and stepped away from them!

**Secondly**, the motive behind Trump's withdrawal decision can be understood from the following:

1- After the disappointment as a result of the American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, President Obama defended earlier a new form of intervention that excluded or reduced the participation of US troops, and strongly relied on allies to provide them with troops in combat. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, America has mobilized its followers in the region, such as Turkey, Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, as well as the European Union to play an active role in aborting the revolution against Assad. When that was not enough, the United States openly sought Russia's help in finding a diplomatic solution through the Geneva Accords. However, America did leave militarily from Syria.

When Trump arrived, he focused on this issue. And decision to withdraw on 19/12/2018 was taken. Trump defended his decision. He wrote several tweets on 20/12/2018 on Twitter: "**He is fulfilling a pledge made during his election campaign on 2016 to exit Syria.**" Getting out of Syria was no surprise. I've been campaigning on it for years, and six months ago, when I very publicly wanted to do it, I agreed to stay longer. Russia, Iran, Syria & others are the local enemy of ISIS. We were doing there work. Time to come home & rebuild." **Trump said in a tweet on his official Twitter page: "We were originally going to be there for three months, and that was seven years ago - we never left."** He continued: "**When I became President, ISIS was going wild. Now ISIS is largely defeated and other local countries, including Turkey, should be able to easily take care of whatever remains. We're coming home!**" (Russia Today 22/12/2018)

At the same time, he thanked Russia, Iran, the Syrian regime and Erdogan for their great service to the United States in the Sochi Agreement on Idlib, on 17/9/2018, reminding that it was he who wanted to hold this agreement and they answered his request... He knows that Russia and Iran and its party in Lebanon and its supporters, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the followers from organizations and others are ready to fight for the same American objective; to prevent the fall of the Syrian regime and to prevent the return of Islam, they made a secret and public commitment to the Geneva, Astana and Sochi agreements and in the United Nations and Security Council resolutions relating to Syria and in particular Resolution 2254 submitted by America to the Council,

which got consensus; all these parties and others called for its application. We have mentioned in the answer to a question on **29/7/2018** that one of America's plans:

“Relying on regional forces "for peacekeeping", and they may bring Egyptian, Saudi and Turkish troops for this purpose. This is not new news...This American perception of the solution in Syria that calls for the recruitment of troops from abroad... the administration of President Donald Trump is planning to replace American forces with Arab forces in Syria to maintain stability in the north-east of the country after the defeat of ISIS.”

2- Trump's mentality is that of a businessman, which is dominated by the idea of profit and loss. He wants to save American soldiers' expenses on the US Treasury. Although Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates paid most of the expenses of the Kurdish soldiers and of arming them, and also contributed to the costs of the international coalition: “Saudi Arabia and the UAE, recently were the most important soft power player in Syria, against the background of media reports that mentioned Riyadh's support to the Syrian Kurds, on the Turkish border.” (Al-Arabiya-Egypt on 4/12/2018). Saudi Arabia also announced on December 14th, 2018, the payment of an amount to the international coalition led by America. *"Saudi Arabia has contributed \$100 million, while the UAE has committed \$50 million in new funding,"* US State Department spokesman Heather Nauert said.” (Khaleej Online, 17/12/2018)

However, he wants to cover all the expenses of his soldiers and the costs of their movements and weapons because he considers these expenses a loss in his knowledge as a businessman, and he wants to give his role to someone else, and this is apparent not hidden in his statements quoted by Reuters 20/12/2018 following his decision to withdraw from Syria; ***“Trump added: Does the USA want to be the Policeman of the Middle East, getting NOTHING but spending precious lives and trillions of dollars protecting others who, in almost all cases, do not appreciate what we are doing? Do we want to be there forever? Time for others to finally fight...”*** All of this shows that America wants others to carry out its wars, so their blood is shed instead of America's, and their treasuries spent instead of America's!

3- Trump wants other parties to engage in political solution as America wants and not in military actions at least in the current circumstances. He did this by stopping the Russia army and the regime forces from attacking Idlib because he wants to secure a political solution according to his plans above all, and we referred to that in the answer to the question we issued on **22/9/2018**:

“Russia has become aware of this American policy...this is why it could not complete the attack it prepared for to end the crisis in Idlib in its way because Turkey objected (pushed by America) and Iran remained silent ... Thus, the meeting of Iran on 7/9/2018 failed to approve Russia's plan to attack Idlib and end the crisis in Russia's way. It has only been a few days since the Erdogan-Putin meeting and the attack was replaced by the establishment of a demilitarized zone! This was by the American blessing, Novosti news agency quoted an American official on 18/9/2018 saying to the agency: "We welcome and encourage Russia and Turkey to take practical steps to prevent the military attack from the government of Assad and its allies on the province of Idlib...”

Thus, Russia stopped its shelling of Idlib and returned its ships, which conducted the military exercises in the Mediterranean, and it is still begging America directly or through Turkey to resolve the issue of Idlib militarily before the political solution. But America wants a political solution before any military solution in Idlib, to use it as a pressure card to blackmail Russia on its military bases in Syria and then make the opposition raise the subject of the bases in the political solution ... That is, the interest of Turkey and the US behind it to stop Russia's attack on Idlib was primarily for the benefit of America and not to prevent the regime from reaching Idlib or to protect civilians, but rather at the time that America enforces the solution that it wants and subject Russia to it. Then they will not be concerned of the blood of Idlib, civilians or non-civilians, demilitarized or non-demilitarized ... and their history speaks of this in different areas of Syria, and their crimes are well known...” **End quote**

Thus, Trump taking the decision to withdraw has made the parties closer to this goal, he has deceived Turkey and made it think it will fill the vacuum after the withdrawal of US forces ... And

instilled fear in the hearts of the Kurds now that they face the Turkish threat, and so the Kurds rushed to the regime asking it for protection, which is what the regime wants. In the face of Turkey's threats to the Kurds in Manbij, the regime is moving its forces to the Manbij area ... and because Russia supports the regime and at the same time agrees with Turkey, it becomes difficult for Turkey to fight the regime in Manbij unless new relations are established in the region ... Thus, Trump left the parties with no choice but to start the talks of the settlement, according to what America wants! Some parties have begun to speak publicly and others are talking privately:

A- A spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry said that ***“Washington's decision to withdraw troops from Syria must contribute to a comprehensive settlement of the situation, noting the lack of clarity in the timetable for withdrawal from Syria.”*** (Sputnik Arabic 26/12/2018).

B- Sources of Al-Mudun ***confirmed that the process of control of Manbij, which was announced two days ago, is halted at the request of the Turkish side, and was postponed with the aim of further Turkish negotiations with Russia and America.”*** (27/12/2018) End.

Therefore, Trump was able to transform the efforts of the parties to the settlement that he paved the way for by the decision of the withdrawal that he stated ... leaving the parties with no option but the American scheme to settle the crisis in Syria.

4- The electoral factor is also one of Trump's most important reasons. Trump has an old personal position against external wars, according to the campaign "America First" that made him win the elections. Therefore, calling for the withdrawal of troops from Syria and Afghanistan is beneficial to him personally, for the upcoming election campaign of 2020. Therefore he is interested in the return of 2000 US troops from Syria (The Guardian, 19/12/2018) and 7,000 from Afghanistan, (NPR, 21/12/2018) and then he gains the popularity of the American people in general and gets support in re-election in 2020:

**Thirdly:** Trump has created a headache rather a strong one to his agents and followers, as a result of his decision to withdraw even before the slow implementation that may take months, if it completed in full ... reflecting on what happened and is taking place. It turns out that Trump does not give weight to the agents and the followers, if they are aware they would leave him, but they do not understand! He used them to implement his schemes by humiliation and deception even Russia and Europe were not spared:

1- The Kurds who the obedient servants of America thought that America is training and arming them to separate from Syria and have their own state that America will guarantee to protect. They began to implement what America wants for the promised state! Thus, they were the front line in every fight America wanted! US Secretary of Defense, then, Ashton Carter praised the Syrian Democratic Forces, the umbrella for the Kurdish factions organised by the United States. ***“They have proven to be excellent partners of ours on the ground in fighting ISIL,” Carter said: “We are grateful for that, and we intend to continue to do that, recognizing the complexities of their regional role.”*** (The Hurriyet Daily News, 18/3/2016). And so the Kurds thought that America will remain supportive of them in secret and public, the statement of James Jeffrey, Special Representative of the United States in Syria mentioned above, did not draw their attention: “On cooperation with the Kurdish militants, he said: ***“We always confirm that our work with the Syrian Democratic forces against ISIS is temporary and tactical ...”*** (RT Online 8/12/2018).

And they continued in their service and this made it easy for America to use them where they want to serve their own interests and not the Kurds! And when America's interest called for withdrawal and leaving their backs exposed to the Turkish threats, America issued the decision without taking into account the interests of the Kurds ... This has pushed them into the arms of the regime, as desired by America to allow the regime back to northern Syria and at the request of the Kurds! “Kurdish leaders, who control most of northern Syria and who have been troubled by the US decision to withdraw from the region, and have urged Russia and its ally Damascus to send troops to protect the border from the threat of a Turkish attack. The Kurds' call for the return of Syrian government forces to the border, which was for years under the control of the Kurds

militants, exposed the depth of their crisis in the wake of President Donald Trump's sudden decision to withdraw the troops." (Sputnik Arabic 27/12/2018)

The Syrian Democratic Forces considered the sudden decision of the American withdrawal from eastern Syria "a stab in the back and a betrayal of the blood of thousands of fighters", on its first comment on the decision on Wednesday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights quoted sources that it described as credible, saying that leading forces in Syria's democratic forces considered the withdrawal of US forces in the event that was carried out, a dagger in the back of Syria's democratic forces and units of protection of the Kurdish people, "which took control over the past months and years over the largest geographical area controlled by ISIS, which is the area of East Euphrates with Manbij. (Tahrir news site, 19/12/2018) End quote

2- Turkey also was left embarrassed, it thought that America's withdrawal will make it fill the vacuum, especially that the decision to withdraw was after Trump's contact with Erdogan through that call. Russia Today reported on 19/12/2018, "A US official exposed that US President Donald Trump has decided to withdraw US troops from Syria as a result of his recent talks with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the US official said in an interview with Reuters on Wednesday that the decision was taken after a telephone conversation between Trump and Erdogan last Friday. The same source said: **"Everything that happened later is being applied according to the agreement that has been reached during this phone call."**

Regarding the telephone conversation between Erdogan and Trump, the Turkish Anadolu news agency reported on 21/12/2018: The Turkish President said: Trump asked us: **Can you eliminate ISIS?** Erdogan said: **"We have eliminated them, and we can continue this in the future ... we only need your logistical support ... In the end, the Americans began to withdraw, and now our goal is to continue our diplomatic relations with them properly."** So Turkey thought it was the one to fill the vacuum ... But what happened was the regime's move to Minbij at the request of the Kurds! "About 1,000 members of the regime's forces, accompanied by tanks and heavy-duty weapons, gathered at the crossing point of Tayheeh, and about 40 members of the regime entered a joint point with SDF village of Al-Yalni, northeast of Al-Arima. It the first assembly point by regime forces after the agreement with the SDF on the deployment of joint forces against the control points of the Free Army and the Turkish forces..." (Al-Mudun site 27/12/2018).

And then a Turkish delegation headed on 29/12/2018, consisting of the Turkish Minister of Defense and Foreign Affairs and the Chief of Staff to discuss the issue. But the statements of some Russian officials were provocative to Turkey: The spokeswoman of the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova, said on Wednesday, 27/12/2018: **"The Syrian authorities must control the lands that the Americans will leave."** She continued: **"Of course, there is a fundamental question: Who will control the areas that the Americans will leave? Obviously this must be done by the Syrian government according to the international law."** Zakharova announced: **"We are coordinating our views closely and implement specific policies on the Syrian file with our Turkish colleagues, both in the direction of foreign policy and in the field of military operations to combat terrorism on the ground."** (Al-Mudun site, 27/12/2018). The prominent Republican Senator Lindsey Graham also said that Trump is committed to ensuring that Turkey does not clash with forces The People's Protection Units after the withdrawal of US troops from Syria and confirmed to Turkey, America's ally in NATO the establishment of a buffer zone in the region to help protect its interests. Turkey considers the People's Protection Units branch of the Kurdish separatist movement in its territory and threatens to attack this faction. (Arabic Post, 31/12/2018).

"The Russian army then re-established the Russian Coordination Center for Reconciliation in Syria in the town of Al-Arima in the countryside of Manbij, after withdrawing from it a while ago." (Al-Mudun site, 27/12/2018). All this created and creates obstacles to Turkey in filling the vacuum!

3- Even Russia the relatively powerful country, America is moving it from one crisis to another. Russia knows that it has sunk into Syria's dilemma since its military intervention in Syria after the Obama-Putin meeting on 29/9/2015. In return Putin was expecting the lifting of sanctions after the

Crimean issue, but it was not lifted ... Then Russia wanted to resolve the issue of Idlib militarily to be relieved of the burden of Syria and get out of that impasse and to take the political solution after that long time. Nothing will cause any harm as long as it was free from the military action in Syria; however, America prevented this, and wanted the political solution first. We mentioned this in the answer to the question issued on 22/9/2018 mentioned above: "Thus, Russia stopped its shelling of Idlib and returned its ships, which conducted the military exercises in the Mediterranean, and it is still begging America directly or through Turkey to resolve the issue of Idlib militarily before the political solution. But America wants a political solution before any military solution in Idlib, to use it as a pressure card to blackmail Russia on its military bases in Syria and then make the opposition raise the subject of the bases in the political solution..."

And then the problem of Trump's decision to withdraw added insult to injury!!! Then what happened afterwards, when Russia had become between the regime and Turkey in Manbij and the rest of the Kurdish areas east of the Euphrates! Russia supports the regime, and Russia and Turkey have agreements, and the crowds of Turkey and the regime forces are approaching, and Russia found itself between them, which makes Russia in trouble if the fighting broke out ... Thus, America is moving Russia from one predicament to another!

4- As for Europe, some countries were involved with the international coalition and the withdrawal of America will leave them embarrassed, they cannot stay alone ... At the same time they wanted America to suffer in Syria and not watch them from afar safely! This is why they objected and attacked the withdrawal decision. The British Prime Minister's spokesman said: "The international coalition against ISIS has made great progress, but there is still a lot of work, and we must not lose sight of the threat posed by ISIS even without land, ISIS remains a threat." (Euro News, 19/12/2018), which negates Trump's reason for withdrawal. The French president, Emmanuel Macron, also criticized the decision of US President Donald Trump of the withdrawal of US troops from Syria, stressing that "the ally must be trustworthy." "I am very sorry about Trump's decision on Syria," he said, speaking from the Chadian capital N'Djamena. "Being an ally means fighting side by side," Macron added that France was doing so with Chad in fighting jihadi armed groups. (BBC 23/12/2018) End.

**Fourth:** Finally, it is painful that the kuffar colonists control our issues, they decide ... and the rulers in the Muslim countries execute ... without being ashamed before Allah Al-Aziz (Mighty) and Al-Hakeem (Wise), and His Messenger (saw), but whenever they are shown the truth they distance themselves from it to please their masters who keep them in their positions. They do not reflect on what became of their predecessors, who were dumped by their masters once their roles ended, thus, they destroyed themselves by their own hands in this world and the Hereafter, because they had distanced themselves from the truth that was shown to them.

﴿وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْأَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾

**“And they prevent [others] from him and are [themselves] remote from him. And they do not destroy except themselves, but they perceive [it] not.” [Al-An'am: 26]**

And then they lose this world and the Last, indeed it is a grave loss.

23 Rabi' Al-Akhir 1440 AH

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