

The Middle East in Unstable Balance

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The October 7 attack drastically altered the face of the Middle East. The events that followed redrew the regional map: the invasion of Gaza, the dismantling of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the takeover of Syria by Salafists, the hasty withdrawal of Iran-backed Shiite militias, Israeli control over the northern and northeastern border areas, Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, and Western retaliation. Adding to this already volatile situation is an unpredictable factor: the return of Donald Trump to the White House, revealing a leader even more unsettling than expected.

Syria's Minorities: A Ticking Time Bomb

The hour of vengeance has come for the Sunnis, who have not forgotten the years of repression under the Alawite regime. Syria's Christians now fear the Salafist militias, especially since the new government has placed former Al-Qaeda and ISIS officials in key positions, particularly in Defense and Justice.

Determined to prevent Salafist expansion, Israel has extended support to the Druze of southern Lebanon, whom radical Islamists consider heretics. In response, Syria's new ruling power has formed a political alliance of minorities, including the Kurds. Yet, distrust prevails – neither the Alawites, the Kurds, nor the Druze are willing to disarm in the face of an uncertain future.

Lebanon Under Pressure

Once the undisputed master of Lebanon and operating freely in southwestern Syria under Bashar al-Assad's presidency, Hezbollah now finds itself at war with the post-Assad Syrian regime. Instability is growing: both Christians and Shiites fear for their future, while Donald Trump has

threatened to cut U.S. aid to Lebanon unless Hezbollah is dismantled. The south of the country remains under the watch of the Israeli army, determined to prevent any resurgence of the Shiite armed organization.

Iran Losing Ground

Iran had patiently woven an extensive sphere of influence, linking Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, parts of Yemen, and the Gaza Strip. But after fourteen years of massive investment, this so-called “Axis of Resistance” lies in ruins. The once-omnipresent pro-Iranian Shiite militias are now in disarray, and the tens of billions of dollars poured in by Tehran have gone up in smoke. Yet, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei refuses to concede defeat and continues to activate his proxies, particularly the Houthis in Yemen, whom he has armed with ballistic missiles.

Turkey Advancing Its Agenda

Turkey, which occupied parts of northern Syria, is now seeking to expand its influence within the new Syrian entity, openly pursuing an Ottoman-inspired vision. It has effectively abandoned the Astana agreements signed with Russia and Iran and has played a role in expelling Russian and Iranian forces from Syrian territory. A symbol of this rupture is the construction of a 320-kilometer wall along the Turkish-Iranian border.

Israel on High Alert

Determined to prevent the rise of a Salafist army on its doorstep, Israel has adopted a proactive strategy: securing strategic control of Mount Hermon, destroying the last remnants of Syria’s military arsenal, and carrying out preemptive strikes against any pro-Iranian presence. In Gaza, negotiations with Hamas remain deadlocked, as the list of hostages—whether alive or dead—has never been disclosed. Traumatized by the events of October 7, 2023, Israel prioritizes forceful action to recover them. However, these measures could, in the long term, jeopardize any potential reconciliation with populations that might have been inclined toward peace.

Global Powers Tested by Chaos

Europe, overwhelmed by the influx of Syrian refugees, hopes for the establishment of a stable government in Damascus. However, this prospect seems distant.

Meanwhile, Russia has redeployed much of its military force to Ukraine, leaving a weakened presence in Syria despite its crucial role in sustaining the Assad regime. Nevertheless, Moscow clings to its Mediterranean military bases, the last vestiges of its regional influence.

In the United States, Donald Trump is rewriting the rules. No American president has ever wielded such unchecked authority: he has dismissed the military leadership, bypassed judicial constraints, imposed arbitrary tariffs, and reshaped geopolitical alliances based on pure transactional logic. John Bolton, his former National Security Advisor, describes him as a chess player who thinks only one move ahead, without a comprehensive strategic vision.

Despite the chaos, one thing is clear: Trump has placed Iran under maximum pressure. He has tightened sanctions and held Tehran accountable for the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea.

Will Iran Take the Threat Seriously?

The Iranian regime has historically backed down only under credible threats. In 1980, it hastily released American hostages on the day of Reagan's inauguration; in 1988, following the accidental downing of an Iranian civilian airliner by the U.S. Navy, it ended an eight-year war with Iraq, fearing direct U.S. involvement; in 2003, in response to the American invasion of Iraq, it immediately froze its nuclear program. Iran resumed its nuclear program in 2006 and armed anti-American insurgents in Iraq.

Iran only retreats when faced with a real and imminent danger. Trump's warning to Tehran has been blunt and unmistakable.

Nonetheless, while Iran remains a major obstacle to regional stability, it is far from being the only barrier to lasting peace.