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The Middle East and Central Asia now bound to the US by the Abrahamic Accords: Is Syria the US' new backyard?

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An overarching geopolitical question crossed my Byzantine mind as I methodically contemplated, across continents, the overlay of maps, with newly concluded treaties on the one hand, and geopolitical moves on the other: Is Syria now the new backyard for the US, a kind of mini-Central America, geopolitically speaking? My answer is a tentative Yes. Tentative because the varsity of this geographically counter-intuitive conclusion will be contingent on the implementation of many treaties and understandings, and on the speed of that implementation, principally by the US itself.

THE ABRAHAMIC ACCORDS ARE ALSO A GEOECONOMIC PLATFORM

A key starting inquiry with regards to global US strategy is this: Are the Abrahamic Accords principally peace agreements between the Arabs and the Israelis, or are they rather excellently devised strategic tools, by the US, to be used as a geopolitical, military, diplomatic and influence platform that would yield both strategic and military advantage as well as geoeconomic benefits for the US across the Greater Middle east and Central Asia? If the answer is Yes to the latter question, then the principal protagonists, Israelis and Arabs alike, have been employed by the US as springboards for this brilliant grand strategic move.

The recent accession of Kazakhstan to the Abrahamic Accords, during the US-Central Asian Republics summit in Washington, DC, on 6 November 2025, is a clear indication that the US views the Abrahamic Accords not merely as a political peace agreement between the Arabs and Israelis. Rather, it seems clear that the US sees them as a strategic and geoeconomic platform across the Greater Middle East and into the great Asian steppes of the five Central Asian republics. In the parlance of deal-making, there was a "back-to-back" agreement between the US and the five Central Asian Republics on resources, trade, investment and connectivity.

It is clear that the Abrahamic Accords are an economic development and partnership platform as much as they are about creating peace. It is also becoming clear that the political peace treaty is meant to be between the wider Muslim world (i.e. Muslim-majority states anywhere in the world) and Israel, and not only the Arab states. In a sense, this is a 21st century take on a Marshall Plan for a new regional cluster stretching from the Greater Middle East to Russia's borders with the block of the five Central Asian republics.

China as well as Russia must be feeling unsettled by this deep incursion by the US into their traditional playground. This incursion is manifested by the US's successful attempts at entering into strategic agreements on rare earth and critical minerals with these republics (as well as with ASEAN states during President Trump's recent visit to Asia in October, 2025). This trans-continental geoeconomic and geopolitical pincer movement by the US is clearly aimed at closing the wide gap with China in the sourcing of these essential resources, after having neglected the strategic importance of doing so over the past two decades or so. And the strategy is clearly working

Who is next to join the Abrahamic Accords? Indonesia? Malaysia? Pakistan? And where does that leave IMEC (the much talked about India-Middle East Corridor) as its access to the Mediterranean is currently blocked by the war in Gaza and its aftermath? Will it transform itself into a number of corridors, rather than one main corridor, skirting the troubled zones of the Levant and into, for example, Egypt? What about the giant Iraq-Turkey corridor, the giant so called "Development Road Project" connecting the Grand Faw Port at the top of the Gulf with Turkey and into Europe? Will the Abrahamic Accords become the platform that will actualise these economic development and connectivity projects, whilst also being a geopolitical vehicle for the US to create a new order north and east of Suez?

US ENERGY STRATEGY NOW GOES BEYOND SECURITY

Moreover, the US global energy posture now goes beyond security and into achieving strategic advantage, wherever possible, globally. The recent reports of US pressure on the various parties to build a gas pipeline from Israel to Cyprus and Greece, and thus to Europe (previously named the EastMed Project), in order to replace Russian gas, is a clear indication of the US's direct strategic engagement in the Levant and the eastern Mediterranean. The US has expressed its support for the project politically and potentially financially. A number of Gulf states are also supportive. The Abrahamic Accords have effectively bridged the Gulf geopolitically and geoeconomically into the Eastern Mediterranean. As such geopolitical and geoeconomic definitions of the Eastern Mediterranean can no longer be confined to the riparian states, but must extend to include the Gulf states that have signed the Abrahamic Accords.

There are also the giant LNG gas terminal at Alexandroupoli in Greece, as well as the US military base there, considered a key strategic hub. The recently announced agreement between Exxon, Energean and HelleniQ Energy Gas to explore for natural gas in the northern Ionian Sea (in which Exxon has a 60% stake) can only be an indication of the deepening US interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is the first off-shore exploratory drilling in Greece in 40 years. It is clear, therefore, that the Eastern Mediterranean has already become a strategic focus for the US.

ENTER SYRIA

Barely a couple of days after the meeting the Presidents of the five Central Asian republics, President Trump received Ahmed Al-Sharaa, the Syrian President, and publicly praised him and his leadership. There must be a strategic reason for this presidential interest in Syria.

Investing in the geography of critical resources throughout history generated two military engagements: defending and protecting those investments and sources; and securing the supply routes. Enter the Middle East: forever, by the grace of geography, either a source of wealth and minerals, or a natural geographic bridge (and, therefore, ideal as a location for military bases), or both. It will be, therefore, very surprising indeed if the US wouldn't be seeking what Russia has sought since the late18th Century: military bases in the Levant.

Syria is currently the only state in the Levant in search of a new strategic positioning vis-à-vis global and regional powers, capitalising on its key strategic position on both the maritime and continental maps. That means finding a condominium with the greatest of all the great powers: the US. This is where the opportunity arises for the US, as the Syrian-Russian erstwhile alliance morphs into an as yet undefined weak relationship leaving a vacuum. Geopolitics abhors vacuums. And change is often the harbinger of opportunity – in this case for the US.

Syria (and potentially Gaza) provide ideal locations for a permanent US military presence projecting power, not only towards the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, but also into the Caucasus and Central Asia. The flight time from Baku to Tel Aviv is under 2 hours, from Yerevan to Beirut is even less than that. The Caucasus is in fact closer to the Levant than to Moscow. Our European "Soviet"-era-driven myopic geographic perception must urgently be corrected. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia border not just on Asiatic Russia, but on Iran, too. Perhaps the "Eastern Neighbourhood" is only one quarter eastern.

The bulk of it is southern, and substantially maritime, not just continental: directly so in the Black Sea region, and indirectly so in the Mediterranean and the Caspian. Southern and maritime, not only eastern and continental! The US is clearly doing just that.

SYRIA AS A NEW "BACKYARD" FOR THE US

If this grand scenario is indeed not a figment of an overly fertile geopolitical imagination, then Syria and the Levant will resemble (adjusting for the all important differences in geographic distance and location) the Caribbean as a US backyard. It will, de facto, become another geopolitical "backyard" for the US in which Russia, Turkey, Israel, and Iran will also be players. The rhetoric (and the US naval action in the Caribbean) surely harks back, way beyond any war on drugs, to the Cold War, when the Soviet Union supported all kinds of movements in Central America to destabilise the Western Hemisphere. It seems plausible that the war on drugs in the Caribbean may be more than meets the eye: rather than a law enforcement operation, it is being conducted by the ultimate instrument of state power in international waters with a military build up close to the Venezuelan coast. Clearly, this is more about geopolitics, perhaps even to counter Russia's renewed and rising influence in the Caribbean, than a mere police action.

In this view of global geopolitics, it is quite plausible that Syria will be the new contact line between the US and its adversaries, as well as its allies Turkey and Israel. The latter two will have at times (though not always) very different strategic objectives in Syria from the US. Russia will seek, and possibly succeed to, establish bases somewhere on the Mediterranean Coast even if they are forced to evacuate Tartus and Hmimim, and thus will continue one way or another to try to bolster its own influence as well as undermine the influence of other powers in the region. For the US strategy (including that of using the Abrahamic Accords as a geoeconomic platform) to work across the Greater Middle East and Central Asia, it will have to succeed in Syria and the Levant, including Gaza.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

So why did I say tentative at the start of this piece? Devil and details come to mind with implementation. The speed with which a stabilisation force will be deployed in Gaza will be a key test for US strategy. A prolonged security vacuum in Gaza will enable Hamas and other militias to rebuild and become more entrenched. It will be difficult to see how the accession of more Muslim-majority states to the Abrahamic Accords will take place if Gaza fails and the killing and war return. The rebuilding of Syria is also key to the success of US grand strategy across the Greater Middle east and Central Asia. Rebuilding does not simple mean that of the economy. There is a host of socio-political issues that will need to be addressed, as well as domestic security arrangements that will need to prove durable. Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Israel are key players in Syria and the Levant. How the US will manage the regional balance of power with its own grand vision, that goes far beyond the narrow confines of the interests of the regional protagonists, will not only determine the outcome, but will also require a bi-partisan, long-term strategic commitment from the US. How the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be settled will determine the political durability and economic viability of any treaties the US manages to conclude in the long run with most Muslim-majority states.

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BRAVE FOR THE EU

The EU has not capitalised on the opportunities presented over the past 20 years in this stretch of geography. It could have done so principally by combining the financial, trade, and laterly the Global Gateway instruments with a geopolitical vision, driven by the need for resources and economic partnerships on the one hand, and an interest-based power play on the other. This approach could have incorporated security, prosperity, and peace but from an enlightened self-interested European perspective. The result is that we in the EU are effectively being sidelined on the big geopolitical trans-continental games table.

This is a departure from our millennia-long geopolitical tradition of deep engagement in the Levant, Greater Middle East, and Central Asia. Whether by accident or design, the US is turning a practical instrument, the Abrahamic Accords, into a potentially mighty strategic and geoeconomic platform. It may or may not work at the scale envisioned. But it will certainly deliver results that will bolster the US' comparative global position. It isn't the first time in contemporary history that this was achieved. The birth of our current EU was such a practical arrangement aimed at creating peace through economic partnership between two perennially warring states. It was called the Coal and Steel Community. The EU should rediscover how these practical deals are done, based on the realties on the ground, and to be agile enough to capitalise on the opportunities that will be created as a result.

A key question arises in the context of Strategic Foresight. This is the art of exploring different futures to probe possibilities and probabilities, and in the process of analysing these arrive at, inter alia, strategic ideas, policies and options but also early warning signs. It is a highly technical analytical process and not at all what is commonly being labelled as "Strategic Foresight". The question is: Should the EU consider acceding to the Abrahamic Accords? Will the benefits outweigh the costs on a dynamic basis rather than simply taking a snapshot view? In the process of exploring such diverse futures, the EU may in fact stumble on its own version of such s strategic instrument.

As the Abrahamic Accords are at their infancy, the EU may yet be able to influence their direction according to our European objectives and norms, be at the negotiating table for an eventual Arab-Israeli peace and its structure, infuse some of our normative thinking, and reap some key benefits, not least by securing precious resources, energy, markets, human resource; and last but not least by adding an additional real anchor for peace on our southeastern flank. It will bind Europe closer to the US, which is good for NATO. It will create a direct economic partnership and cooperation platform with key Gulf and Central Asian states.

Moreover, the resources of the Global Gateway should be put to work not in far away places like the Indo-Pacific, but in the Levant, Greater Middle East, and Central Asia, with clear geopolitical, geoeconomic, military and foreign policy objectives. The window of opportunity is narrow but it is there for the taking now. Fortune favours the brave – and time is of the essence.

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