

# Withdrawal of US Forces from Syria - II

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## What is the issue?

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- US national security adviser John Bolton recently outlined conditions for a U.S. troop departure from Syria.  $\n$
- This has given way to the recent tussle between US and Turkey.  $\space{\space{1.5}n}$

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## What is the dispute?

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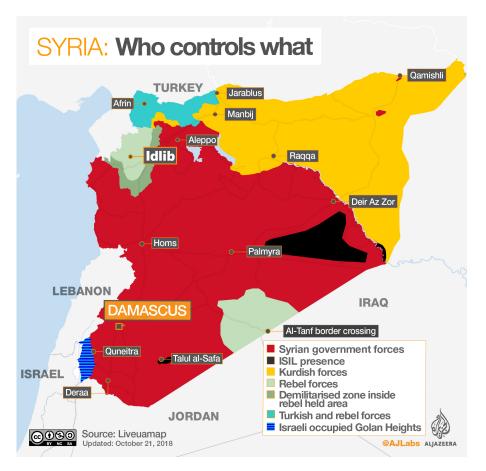
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- The US national security adviser said the troops would leave the war-torn country after the Islamic State is beaten.  $\n$
- He also said Kurds, U.S. allies in the fight against the IS, should be protected.
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- This contradicts with Trump's insistence that the withdrawal would be immediate and without any pre-conditions.
- Turkish President Erdogan refused to John Bolton's suggestions for an orderly exit and the plan to protect the Syrian Kurds.  $\n$
- Turkey considers the Syrian Democratic Forces, the official military wing of Syrian Kurdistan, an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party.  $\n$
- The Kurdistan Workers' Party is, indeed, deemed a terrorist group by Turkey and the U.S.  $\n$
- Turkey sees an autonomous, militarily powerful Kurdistan on the Syrian side

of the border as a threat to its territorial integrity.

- But Turkey was limited by U.S. presence in the Kurdish-populated region in pursuing its own military options.  $\gamma_n$
- It is highly likely that Turkey could attack the Kurds as soon as the U.S. troops leave.

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# What is the implication?

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• Tensions were so high that Mr. Erdogan refused to meet Mr. Bolton, who was in Turkey.

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- The U.S. is now in a dilemma.  $\normalized{\label{eq:linear} \label{eq:linear} \label{eq:linear} \label{eq:linear}$
- Its President has announced the withdrawal. But it cannot just exit Syria without considering the existing geopolitical equations in the region.  $\n$

• Part of the problem is with the way Mr. Trump announced his decision to withdraw troops.

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- He should have held talks with the stakeholders, including Turkey, Russia and Kurds, before taking a decision.  $\n$ 

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- He could have at least used his intent to pull out from Syria as a bargaining chip to extract concessions from other countries involved in the civil war.  $\n$ 

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### What could be done now?

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• The U.S. could go ahead with the unilateral pull-out irrespective of what Turkey does.

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• This would leave the Kurds at the mercy of Mr. Erdogan and the Turkish troops.

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• Otherwise, Trump can wait on his decision and continue to station troops in Syria.

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- This can influence, at least partially, the outcome of the civil war.  $\n$
- But this is unlikely, given his aversion to keeping troops indefinitely in Syria (and other West Asian conflict zones).  $\n$
- In the third case, the U.S. can stagger the withdrawal and pursue talks with Turkey, Russia and the Syrian government.  $\n$
- It can try reaching an agreement to guarantee the protection of the Kurds and the defeat of the IS in Syria.  $\n$
- US should continue to keep diplomatic channels open to ensure that the pullout is done in an orderly fashion.  $\n$

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### **Source: The Hindu**

