

# The Coming Clash Over Syria: Israel and Turkey Are on a Collision Course

by [David Makovsky \(/experts/david-makovsky\)](/experts/david-makovsky), [Simone Saidmehr \(/experts/simone-saidmehr\)](/experts/simone-saidmehr)

May 6, 2025

*Also published in Foreign Affairs*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[David Makovsky \(/experts/david-makovsky\)](/experts/david-makovsky)

David Makovsky is the Ziegler Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations.

[Simone Saidmehr \(/experts/simone-saidmehr\)](/experts/simone-saidmehr)

Simone Saidmehr is a research assistant with The Washington Institute's Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations.



Articles & Testimony

---

**After a stunning blow to their mutual Iranian enemy, Israel and Turkey should use close defense and intelligence dialogue to navigate Syria's extraordinary period of flux and craft a new regional order.**

In December, a consortium of rebel factions unexpectedly toppled the dictator Bashar al-Assad, whose family had ruled Syria for five decades. Two of the country's neighbors, Israel and Turkey, have taken advantage of the resultant power vacuum by establishing a presence there—and have already begun to butt heads. For years, Ankara indirectly assisted the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham by operating a buffer zone in northern Syria that protected the faction from Assad's forces. Now Turkey wants even more influence in Syria so it can quash Kurdish hopes for autonomy and engineer the return of the three million Syrian refugees. Yet Israel wants more influence in Syria, too. It views Assad's ouster as a strategic windfall with regard to Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah, and officials are racing to take advantage of his removal by establishing buffer zones and informal spheres of influence in the south. Israel is particularly concerned by Turkey's presence in the country because it fears Ankara will encourage Damascus to harbor anti-Israeli militants...

**[Read the full article on the Foreign Affairs website. \(https://www.foreignaffairs.com/syria/david-makovsky-simone-saidmehr\)](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/syria/david-makovsky-simone-saidmehr)** ❖

---

## RECOMMENDED

---



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [President Trump's Gulf Visit: Setting the Stage for Strategic Wins](#)

May 8, 2025, starting at 11:00 a.m. EDT (1500 GMT)



Dennis Ross,  
Emile Hokayem,  
Joyce Karam

(/policy-analysis/president-trumps-gulf-visit-setting-stage-strategic-wins)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [Syria Trip Report: Next Steps for U.S. Policy](#)

May 7, 2025, starting at 12:00 noon EDT (1600 GMT)



Aaron Y. Zelin,  
Gareth Browne,  
Caroline Rose

(/policy-analysis/syria-trip-report-next-steps-us-policy)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

### [Iraqi Oil and the Iran Threat Network](#)

April 2025



Michael Knights

(/policy-analysis/iraqi-oil-and-iran-threat-network)

## TOPICS

[Arab-Israeli Relations \(/policy-analysis/arab-israeli-relations\)](/policy-analysis/arab-israeli-relations)

## REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Israel \(/policy-analysis/israel\)](/policy-analysis/israel)

[Syria \(/policy-analysis/syria\)](/policy-analysis/syria)

[Turkey \(/policy-analysis/turkey\)](/policy-analysis/turkey)