

Brief Analysis of the Current Status of NE Syria (Jazeera Region)

12-22-2018

The following analysis helps provide more context to the maps provided and so extra perspective on this quickly evolving situation.

- Three Major Scenarios currently exist:
- 1) Force Protection from other Anti-ISIS Coalition Allies step in to shelter the current SDF Zone and supplement enough of what the US was providing to deter Russian/Iranian/Assad aggression, while simultaneously providing guarantees to Turkey.
- 2) Force Protection from other Anti-ISIS Coalition Allies does not materialize and the SDF is forced to cut a deal with Russian/Iran/Assad that would result in large transfers of territory to direct Assad Regime control, while providing semi-autonomy to Kurdish majority areas. Assad would likely demand the following in such a deal: a) Manbij pocket, b) most of Kobani district, c) All of Raqqah Province below the M-4 highway, d) all of SDF controlled Deir Azzour Province, e) lower Hasakah province below Hasakah City to Deir Azzour Province border. In exchange, the DFNS retains semi-autonomous control of Kobani city and the stretch of countryside north of the M-4, Tal Abyad District of Raqqah Province, and most of Hasakah Province.
- 3) Russia/Iran/Assad make a deal with Turkey to divide up Jazeera Region between the two sides and dismantle the region and the SDF zone with Turkey taking Manbij pocket, and the entire northern swath of Raqqah and Hasakah Provinces. Russia/Iran/Assad take the rest of Deir Azzour Province, lower Hasakah Province up to Hasakah City, the rest of Raqqah Province (including Raqqah City) up to the M-4 highway line.

There are a myriad of scenarios that have shades or similar contours to these three scenarios, but lets stick with these for now. **All of these scenarios cannot account for the reconstitution of ISIS, and its ability to take advantage of power vacuums, infighting and the repressive nature of a Assad Regime re-occupation of crucial areas of Raqqah and Deir Azzour provinces that would lead to local civilians feeling they need to support ISIS as a last resort to fight the Assad Regime and Iranian Proxy militia occupation.**

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Lets review the objectives of the main players on the ground:

What are the main objectives of the Assad Regime:

- To take back oil rich Northern Deir Azzour Province to help provide additional cash flow to it's sputtering economy.
- To take back the Tabqa dam which provide a large quantity of hydro-electric power to the country.
- To take back enough territory to reinforce the image that the Assad Regime is the only power capable of holding the country together moving forward.
- To take back major roads and thoroughfares that connect the country together, such as the M-4, and the two major roads following the Euphrates River from Aleppo Province all the way to the Iraq border.
- Controlling massive tracts of rich farmland capable of helping stabilize the country.

What are the main objectives of Iran:

- To take back oil rich Northern Deir Azzour Province to help provide an avenue to circumvent current sanctions on its economy and provide a domestic reason for being involved in a costly war in Syria.
- Stabilize the Assad Regime and ensure it has staying power for the longterm.
- Creating a firm "land-bridge" that runs from Iran, through GOI controlled Iraq, through Syria, all the way to Lebanon.
- Formalizing its "militia-ization" of Syria as it has done in Iran and Iraq as a means of longterm control over the country, as it is now competing with Russia for influence and control on the ground and for control of the Assad Regime's institutions and security apparatuses

What are the main objectives of Russia:

- To take back areas of economic importance and value to the Assad Regime so they can stop bankrolling the Regime in the long-term.
- Solidify itself as the international "king-maker" in Syria, and extend its influence and capacity and effect change across the Middle East via its *consistent* position in Syria.
- Ensure it has a permanent military presence in Syria which establishes its ability to operate in the Mediterranean and project power in the long-term.

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Continued review the objectives of the main players on the ground:

What are the main objectives of Turkey:

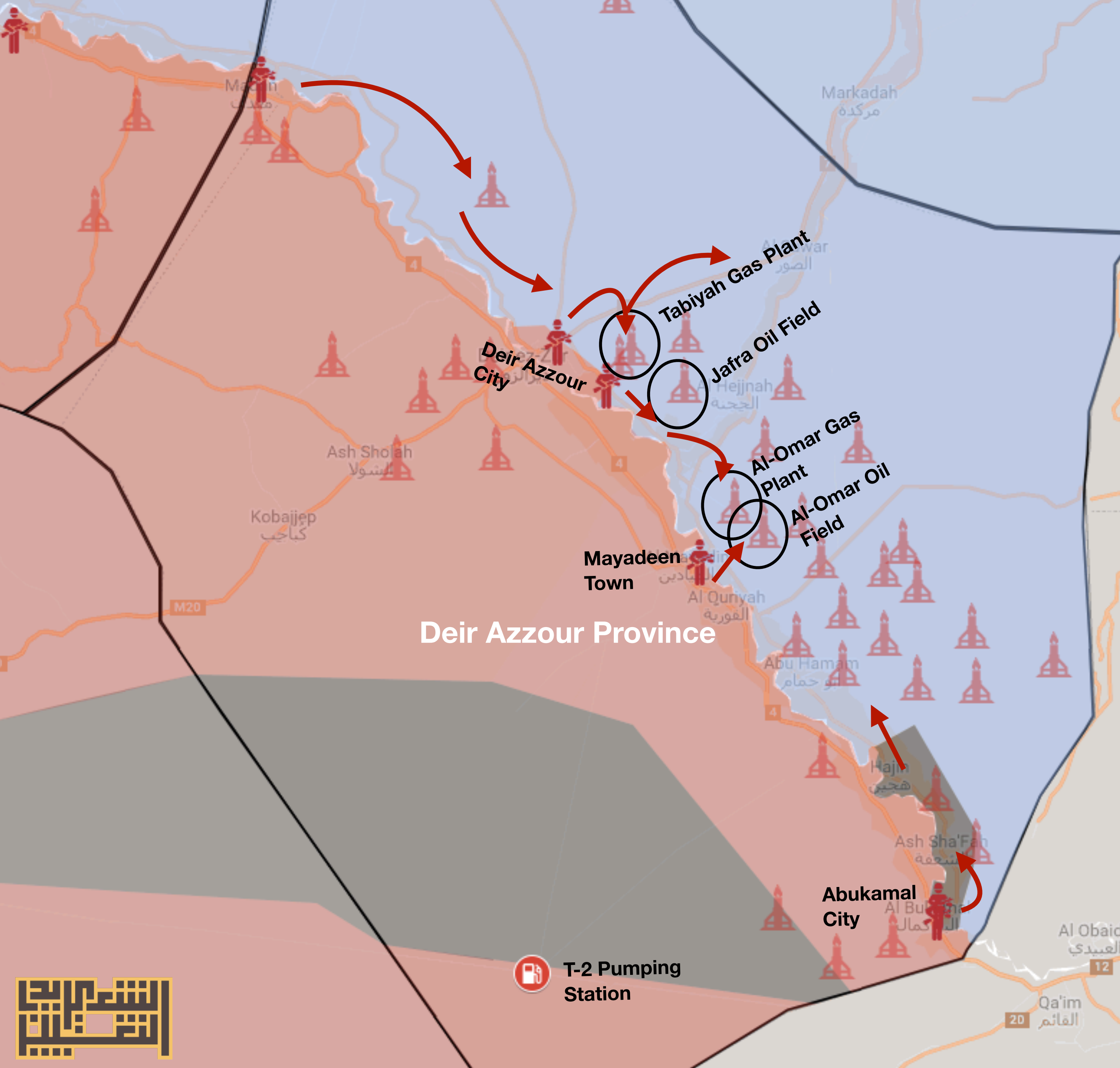
- Mitigate and destroy perceived PKK presence and influence within NE Syria (this is Turkey's public stated goal).
- Extend its influence and territorial control to the extent that it will benefit Turkey's position within Syria and allow it to continue playing a major role in Syria's future.
- Obtain more territory and land that could allow the return of a large portion of it's Syrian refugee population back to Syria and reduce the current domestic and economic pressures being felt by hosting such a large refugee population.
- Obtain a potential economic opportunity through control of a large swath of Northern Syria.

What are the main objectives of ISIS:

- Maintain its ideological relevance through continued positioning as "the only savior of the Sunni Arabs of Syria."
- Potentially regain territory should a power vacuum occur which neither the Assad Regime/Iran nor Turkey can completely fulfill due to the geography and politics of controlling all of NE Syria.
- Enrich itself through local resources and solicitation of outside funding which could increase once they show a new heightened capacity and lethality.
- Have a base of operations that allows a more sustained outreach and PR campaign to convert followers abroad through social media platforms and the wider internet.
- Continue to plan and conduct terror attacks against regional neighbors such as Jordan, Iraq, Turkey Lebanon, Israel; and other region abroad including Europe, North America and Australia.

The objectives of the US and the SDF are not listed, because the purpose and mission for both groups has been clear until now:

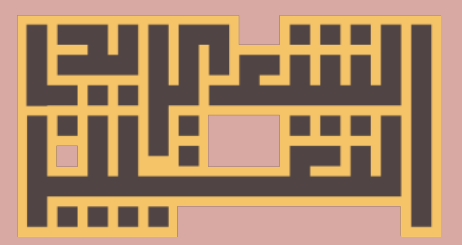
1) Prevent the spread of ISIS and other extremist organizations; 2) stabilize a vital region of Syria that needs to be stable and peaceful in order for Syria long-term to be cohesive, and for the sake of allowing Iraq to be stable as well; 3) create an example of what a Syria not under the Assad Regime could look like, and provide a model for governance moving forward; 4) prevent and mitigate Iranian expansion within Syria and the wider MENA; 5) force the Assad Regime and Russia to return to the Geneva Framework for sustained and serious discussions that could result in the end of the Syrian conflict writ large.

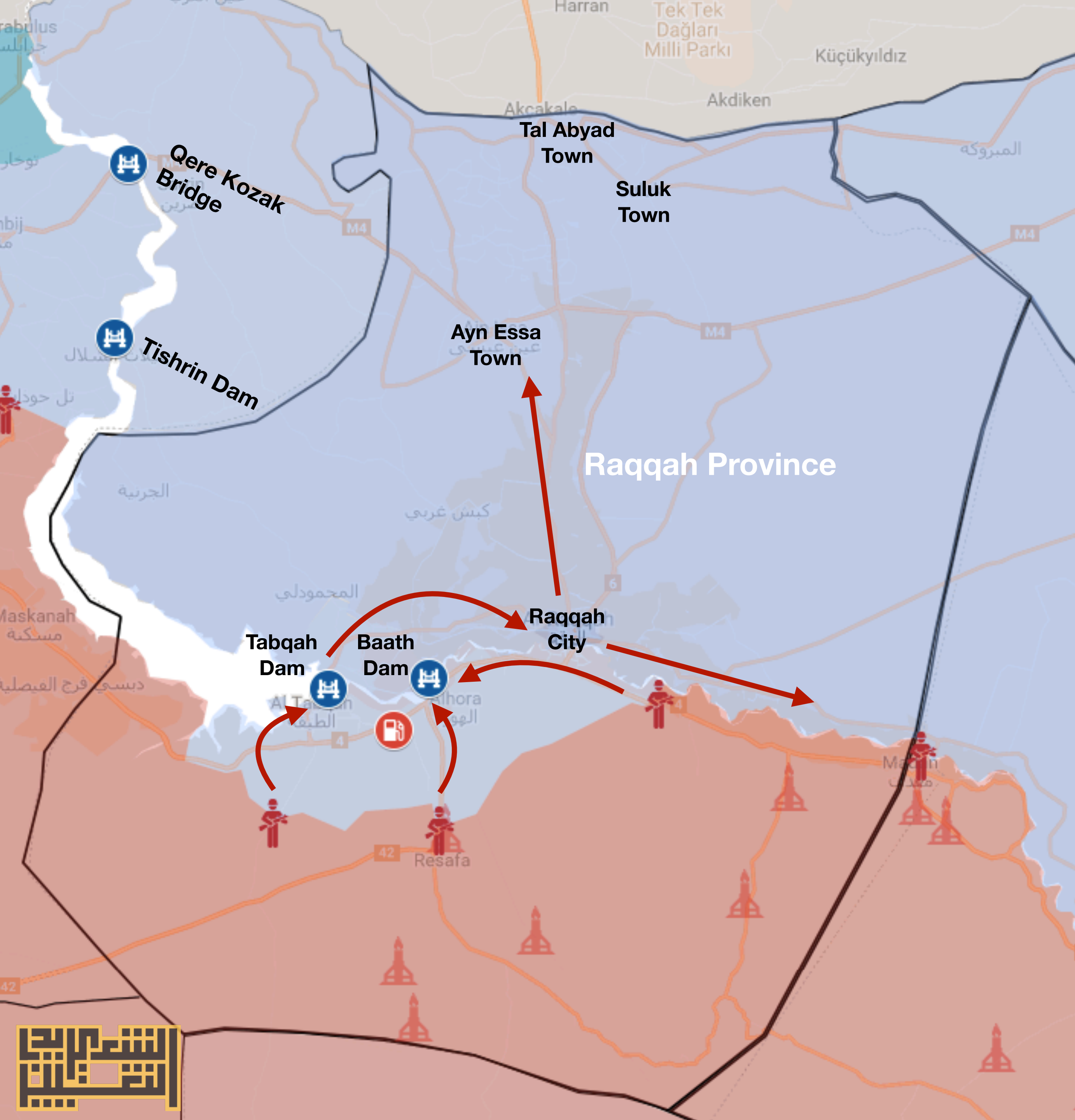


| Map Key | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Current Turkish Control |
| | Current SDF Control (with American Presence) |
| | Current Syrian Arab Republic Government (SARG) Forces and Iranian Proxy Control |
| | Mixed Syrian Opposition Forces, HTS Control/TIP control/ HaD Presence |
| | Current ISIS Control/Presence |
| | Potential & Current SARG and Iranian Proxy Buildup of Forces |
| | Bridges/Crossings/Dams |
| | Oil Field and Gas Plants |

Potential Invasion by SARG & Iranian Proxies of Deir Azzour Province

- If there is no agreement with SDF and there is no force protection from the Anti-ISIS Coalition, the Assad Regime and it's Iranian Proxies likely attack Northern Deir Azzour Province first as it is the hardest place for the SDF to defend, and it is where Iranian interests are the highest. An attack would come from multiple sides to maximize the pressure on the SDF, and would focus on taking several key oil fields and gas plants (listed on the map).



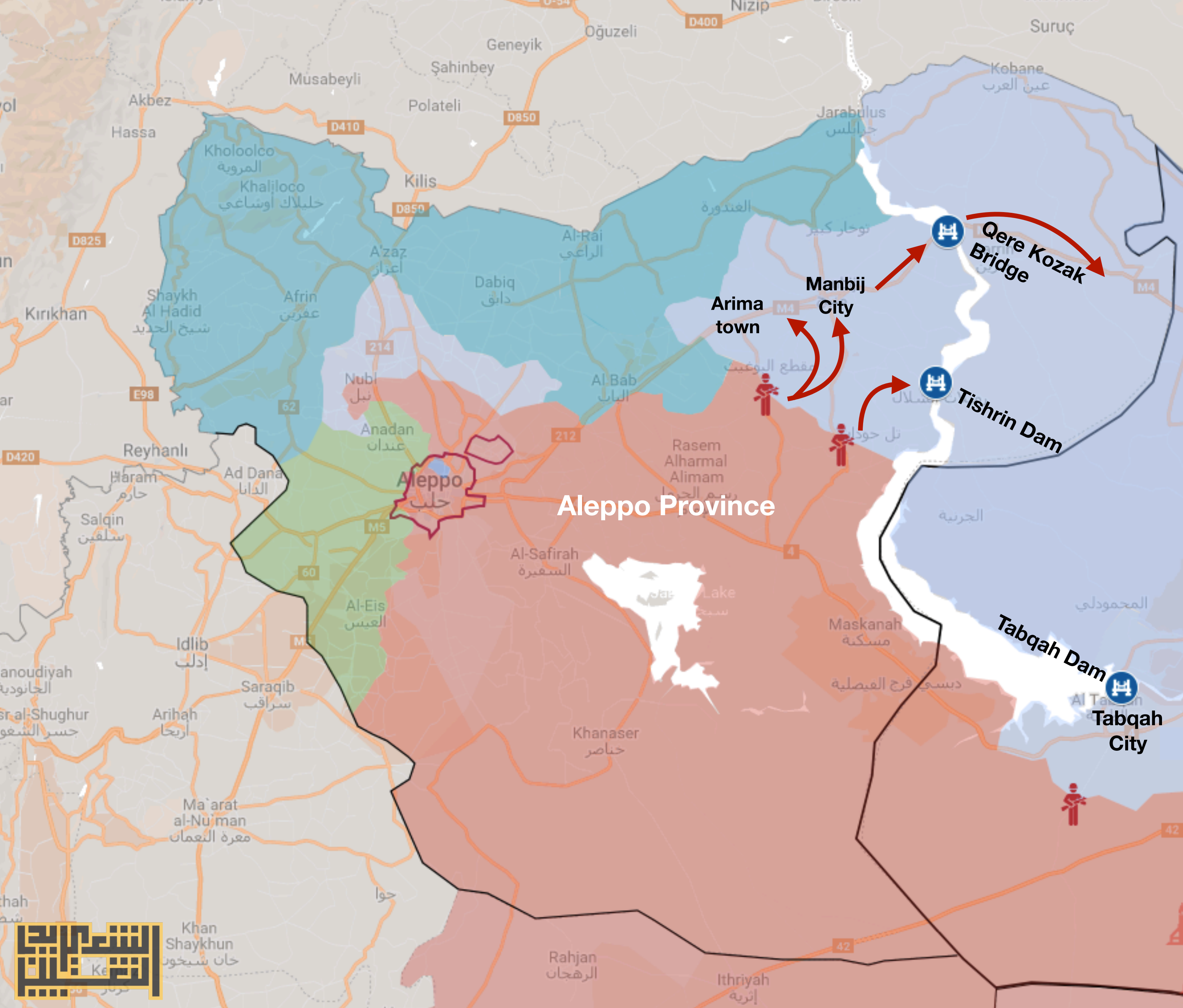


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Potential Invasion by SARG & Iranian Proxies of Raqqah Province

- If there is no agreement with SDF and there is no force protection from the Anti-ISIS Coalition, the Assad Regime and it's Iranian Proxies will first attempt to take control of Tabqah City, Tabqah Dam and Baath Dam. Because the bridges into Raqqah City are still destroyed, they must first cross the northern side of the river for a quicker entrance into Raqqah City. From there, they will consolidate control over the northern side of the Euphrates River which is rich farming land, and then move to control the middle valley running from Raqqah City North towards Ayn Essa town and the M-4 highway.



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Potential Invasion by SARG & Iranian Proxies of the Manbij Pocket and Kobani District

- If there is no agreement with SDF and there is no force protection from the Anti-ISIS Coalition, the Assad Regime and it's Iranian Proxies will race to try and take the Manbij pocket before Turkey can enter the space, and its main targets will be Manbij City, Arima town, control of the M-4 and control of the two crossing into Kobani District, the Were Kozak Bridge and Tishrin Dam.

