

Foreign players in Syria after Assad

The rapid fall of Syrian *President Bashar al-Assad* has blindsided just about every foreign power, leaving them wary about what comes next

TÜRKİYE

■ Since start of Syria's civil war in 2011, Ankara has deployed troops across border and supported rebel factions – most under banner of *Syrian National Army (SNA)*

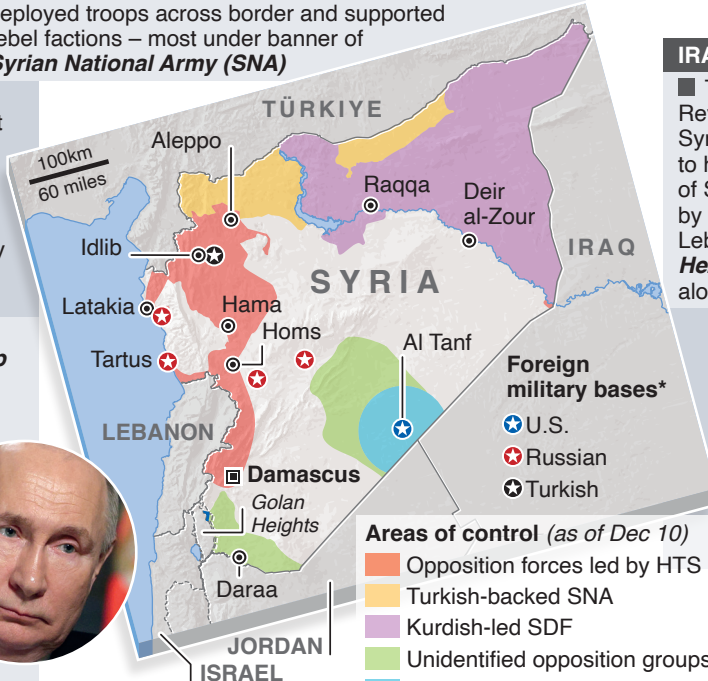
■ Türkiye's main goal is to contain *YPG* – biggest militia in Kurdish-led *Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)* alliance – seen by Ankara as extension of domestically banned Kurdish rebel group – *PKK*

■ Analysts believe President *Recep Tayyip Erdogan* gave tacit approval to offensive led by *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)* that ousted Assad

RUSSIA

■ Moscow launched air campaign and sent thousands of troops in 2015, decisively shifting conflict in Assad's favour. In return, Russia received 49-year leases for two bases, which provide crucial hubs for transferring military contractors in and out of Africa

■ Russia, whose war in Ukraine weakened support for Assad, has suffered one of biggest geopolitical setbacks in quarter-century rule of President *Vladimir Putin*



Areas of control (as of Dec 10)

- Orange: Opposition forces led by HTS
- Yellow: Turkish-backed SNA
- Purple: Kurdish-led SDF
- Green: Unidentified opposition groups
- Light Blue: Al-Tanf deconfliction zone
- Dark Blue: Israel Defence Forces (IDF)
- Grey: Lost Syrian regime territory

ISRAEL

■ Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu* has capitalised on power vacuum to bomb targets across Syria, including military infrastructure, naval fleet, and weapons production sites, saying it aims to keep weapons away from extremists

■ Israeli forces have also seized demilitarised buffer zone in Golan Heights for “defensive purposes”

IRAN

■ Tehran deployed Revolutionary Guards to Syria as early as 2012 to help Assad. Thousands of Shia fighters financed by Iran – mostly from Lebanese militant group *Hezbollah* – also fought alongside Syrian army

■ Downfall of Assad – likely hastened by Hezbollah losses in Lebanon – has dealt serious blow to “axis of resistance” – central pillar of Supreme Leader *Ali Khamenei's* foreign policy

U.S.

■ In 2014 U.S. launched air strikes and deployed special forces to help Kurdish-led SDF capture territory from *Islamic State (IS)* group. U.S. maintains force of around 900 troops in Syria – centered in north-east – and *Al Tanf* garrison

■ President-elect *Donald Trump*, has said Syria is a “mess” U.S. should stay out of