The background of the page is a faded, light-colored photograph of an oil pumpjack in a desert landscape. The pumpjack is a large, complex metal structure with a long arm and a counterweight, used for extracting oil from a well. The desert is sandy and flat, with some distant structures and utility poles visible under a clear sky. The overall tone is warm and slightly hazy.

**An Outlook to North
and East Syria (NES)
Oil Agreement: Oil for
Stability and Security
Program**

An Outlook to North and East Syria (NES) Oil Agreement: Oil for Stability and Security Program

Abstract

The long standing crisis in Syria still carrying its hectic times. Despite the withdrawal of US forces from various areas of North and East Syria US is still one of the main game player in Syria in mean of military and political power. Not only leading in CJF-OIR in terms of keeping the security and stability of the region but also building the future of Syria is among the priority of US policies in the region. Partnering with SDF and AANES is the main sign of the following the strategic goals against fundamentalism and jihadism.

This document shed a light to the agreement between AANES and US Delta Crescent and analysis the impacts of the agreement in terms keeping security and sustaining the stability in Northern and Eastern part of Syria. The oil agreement was announced by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in order to assure the support of United States of America. On the hand, there are proxies and regional power who are in their best effort to cancel or deteriorate the stability and security mechanism that was shaped by coalition forces under the leadership of SDF in AANES region.

The paper also recommends;

- 1- AANES has overcome most of the problems it has faced and has been able to keep strategic oil regions of Syria.
- 2- 400K barrel oil may not be so important for the international economic system but it will be worth it becoming a part of the proposed pipeline Arab-European pipeline.¹
- 3- The Oil for security and stability agreement and program must be guaranteed by the UN in order to strengthen article 2254 of UNCHR for resolution.
- 4- Al Hawl² and other camps of ISIS members requires millions of dollars each month to maintain security, health and living conditions. The cost of keeping ISIS members and their families from radicalism is increasing day by day. The UN should also use “Oil for Security and Stability Program” for de-radicalization of ISIS Members and their families

¹<https://www.forbes.com/sites/uhenery/2019/10/29/energy-security-after-abandoning-the-kurds-and-killing-baghdadi/>

²<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/31/inside-al-hawl-camp-the-incubator-for-islamic-states-resurgence>

and start an initiative for rehabilitation and community building. The program should also enforce the rehabilitation initiative for ISIS families' camps.

- 5- The agreement has a potential to open doors for international investments for re-building and re-construction of infrastructure and trigger development aids for reconstruction and humanitarian purposes.
- 6- There is a need for re-construction and rehabilitation of the region after the destruction of the region in the fight against ISIS. International Joint Forces building a secure corridor for the people of the region. However, there is a need for rebuilding-reconstruction aid similar to Marshall Plan³ to recover the NES region for stability, security and sustainability. UN and US led coalition can play a prominent role for integration of NES to EU external policy and development aid from developed countries that are part of US led anti-ISIS coalition.

³ De Long, J. Bradford, and Barry Eichengreen. The Marshall Plan: History's most successful structural adjustment program. No. w3899. National Bureau of Economic Research, 1991.

Table of Content

- Abstract 1
- Table of Content..... 0
- An Outlook to North and East Syria (NES) Oil Agreement 3
 - 1. Short Background of Regional Geopolitics of NES 3
 - 2. Energy sources Under AANES Control..... 4
 - 3. Key Actors in the Region Related with AANES Oil Agreement..... 13
 - a. Russia..... 13
 - b. USA 14
 - c. Turkey..... 14
 - d. Iran..... 15
 - e. Assad Regime 16
 - f. Kurdish Actors in the Region 17
 - g. Non-State Actors and Fundamentalists..... 17
 - 4. Possible Impacts of Oil Agreement 18
 - h. On Stability 18
 - i. On Security 19
 - j. On Economy 20
 - k. On Politics..... 20
 - l. On Energy Policies 20
 - 5. Challenges 20
 - m. Local Challenges 20
 - n. Regional Challenges..... 21
 - o. Global Challenges 21
 - 6. Consequences and Policy Recommendations: Oil for Security and Stability Program 22
 - 7. References..... 24

Map 1: Syrian Oil and Energy Infrastructure with Pipelines 5

Map 2: November 2019 Syrian Military Control and Oil Sources Map..... 9

Map 3: Syrian Civil War Map - 2013..... 10

Map 4: Syrian Civil War Map - 2020..... 11

Map 5: Kurdish Populated Areas Map in the Middle East 16

Map 6: Central Asia and Middle East Oil Map..... 19

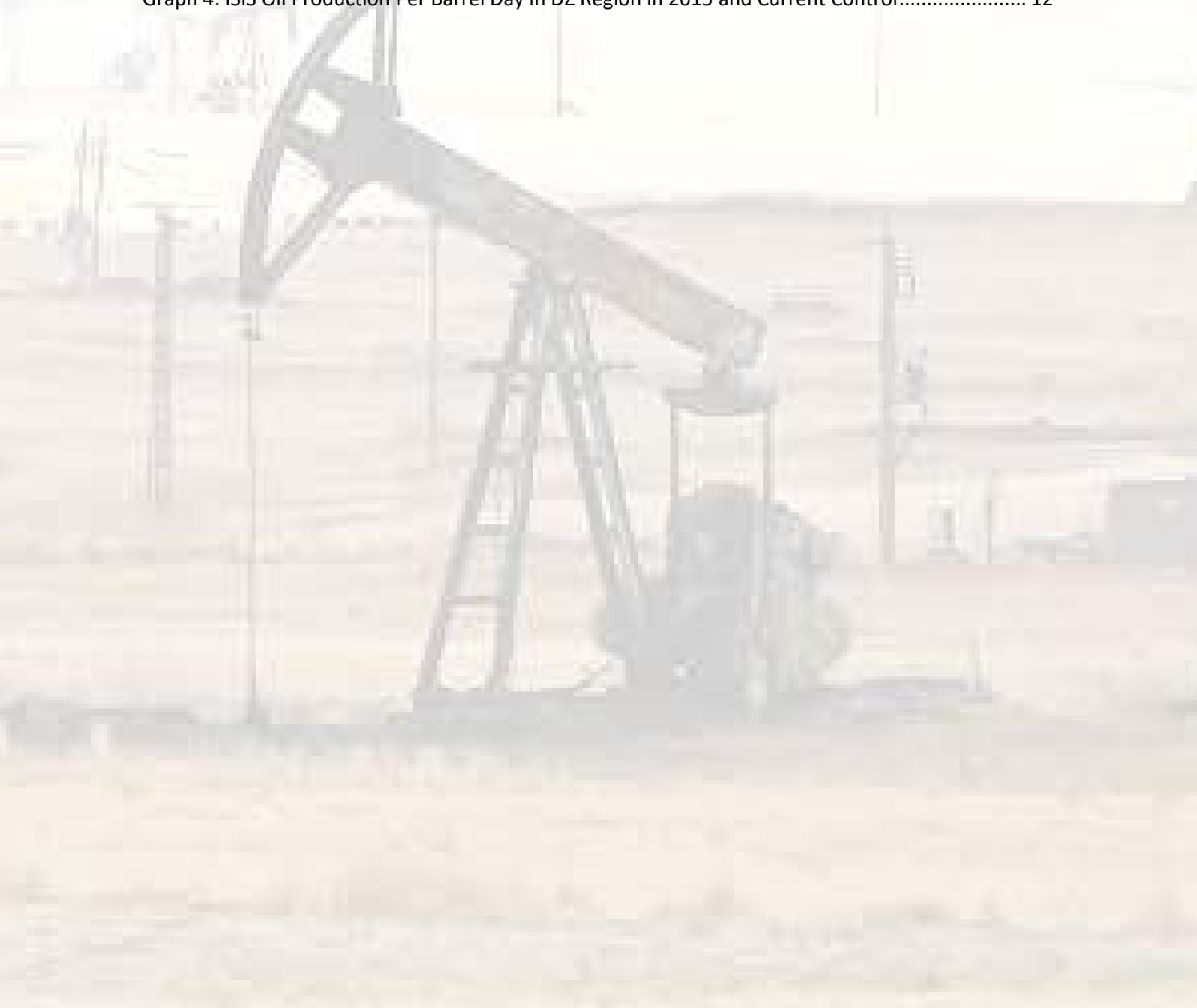
Graphs

Graph 1: Syrian Total Petroleum Balance Between 1980 and 2014 6

Graph 2: Syrian Total Oil Flow between 2004 and 2013..... 7

Graph 3: Syrian Crude Oil Exports by Destinations 8

Graph 4: ISIS Oil Production Per Barrel Day in DZ Region in 2015 and Current Control..... 12



List of Abbreviations

AANES	Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolution
EIA	US Energy Information Agency
FSA	Free Syrian Army
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
ISIS	Islamic State Iraq and al Sham
KDP	Kurdistan Democrat Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NES	North and East Syria
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan- Kurdistan Workers Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SNA	Syrian National Army (FSA transformed to SNA)
UAE	United of Arab Emirates
UN	United Nation
UNCHR	United Nation Council of Human Rights
UNSC	United Nation Security Council
US(A)	United States (of America)
YPG	People's Defense Units- Yekîneyên Parastina Gel

An Outlook to North and East Syria (NES) Oil Agreement

1. Short Background of Regional Geopolitics of NES

Control over Syrian energy resources has always been a key issue during the Syrian Civil War which started in 2011 just after Arab Spring uprisings in Arab World in 2010. The tough resistance of YPG (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* in Kurdish and *People's Defense Units* in English) forces against ISIS has paved the way for alliance with the US-led anti-ISIS coalition in late 2014. The Kurdish-American alliance succeeded in defeating ISIS in the Kurdish territories but the US wants Kurds to push ISIS deeper into Arab-populated territories in Central and East Syria. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a military partner of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) against ISIL established in 2014, was founded in 2015 as a US and International Coalition -backed Kurdish-Arab-Armenian-Assyrian alliance against ISIS and partly the Syrian regime too. With the victory of Baghouz, in March 2019, the SDF ended ISIS' territorial control. Prior to this, the SDF had founded civilian councils and declared North and East Syria Federation and formed self-governance of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria Region (AANES) in 2018 to rule the regions under the control and military protection of their forces.⁴ Territories under the control of the SDF is the unique part of Syria with steady stability and secure regions as it has the lowest civilian casualties and human rights violations throughout Syria.⁵The population within the AANES is believed to be between 2 to 2.5 million. Population density in the SDF controlled regions are low due to the desert climate, having said this, it is still the hub for agricultural products for the whole of Syria. Territories under the control of SDF in the Jazeera region are considered to be Syria's agricultural production hub with 40 million decares of arable lands. As well as being a hub for agricultural production, the AANES controls strategic Syrian oil fields and crude oil production. Both oil and agricultural production have strategic importance for the population of Syria and the SDF is the main actor who controls both in Syria. This study focuses on oil production of the AANES and sheds a light on the agreement between the Delta Crescent of US and the autonomous administration in NES.

⁴<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/10/07/brief-history-syrian-democratic-forces-kurdish-led-alliance-that-helped-us-defeat-islamic-state/>

⁵"World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Syria." Human Rights Watch, 29 Jan. 2020, www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/syria.

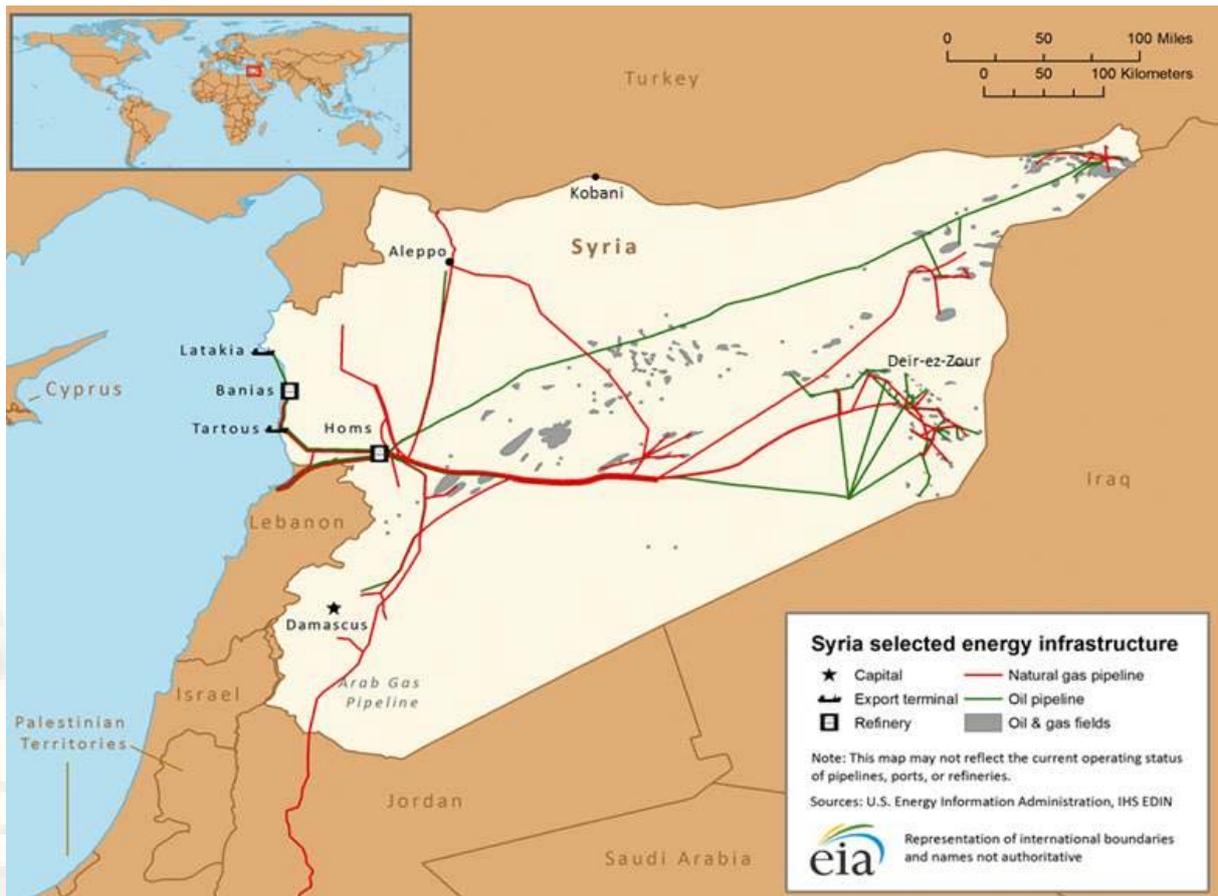
2. Energy sources Under AANES Control

In August 2020, US senator Lindsey Graham announced an oil agreement between AANES-General Commander of Syrian Democratic Forces(SDF) Mazloum Abdi and US based oil company Delta Crescent Energy LLC regarding modernization and operating oil fields under the SDF control.⁶The Syrian Kurdish-American alliance against ISIS was one of the most efficient tactical military partnership for both sides. Despite the successful military partnership the US did not intend to expand this into a strategic partnership by taking steps towards political relations or recognition. The announcement of an oil agreement between a US based company and local Kurdish authorities led to lots of expectations about the future of US-SDF relationships such as the official recognition of Syrian Kurdish authority in North and East Syria. This paper aims to outline the potential effects of the agreement on regional geopolitics in terms of security, stability and energy policies and hence impacts on the relations of regional powers.

Control on Syrian oil reserves is important for all actors given the geo-strategic position of the region on the greater Middle East map as it runs across important energy transition routes, mainly towards Europe for keeping Europe's energy safety.⁷

⁶<https://eaworldview.com/2020/08/us-oil-company-syria-deal-kurds/>

⁷<https://countercurrents.org/2019/11/how-controlling-syrias-oil-serves-washingtons-strategic-objectives/>



Map 1: Syrian Oil and Energy Infrastructure with Pipelines

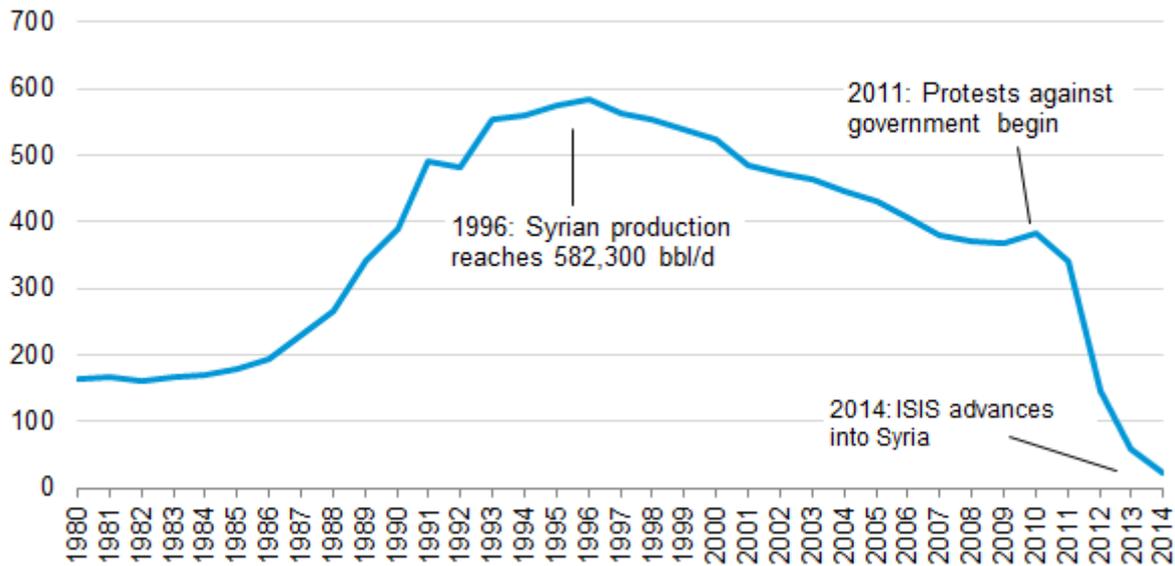
Source: US Energy Information Agency (EIA), 2020

Syria is not considered to be a main oil exporter by OECD, as the Syrian regime is believed to have 2.5B barrels of oil reserves and producing only 385,000 barrels per day which makes %0.5 of global production before the civil war erupted in 2011. Most of the countries that used to import oil from Syria are EU countries such as Germany, Italy, France, Netherlands, Austria and Spain. Syrian regime is not allowed to export oil due to the lack of control on oil fields and sanctions by USA and EU since 2011.⁸

⁸<https://www.bbc.com/news/50464561>

Syria crude oil and condensates production, 1980-2014

thousand barrels per day



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.

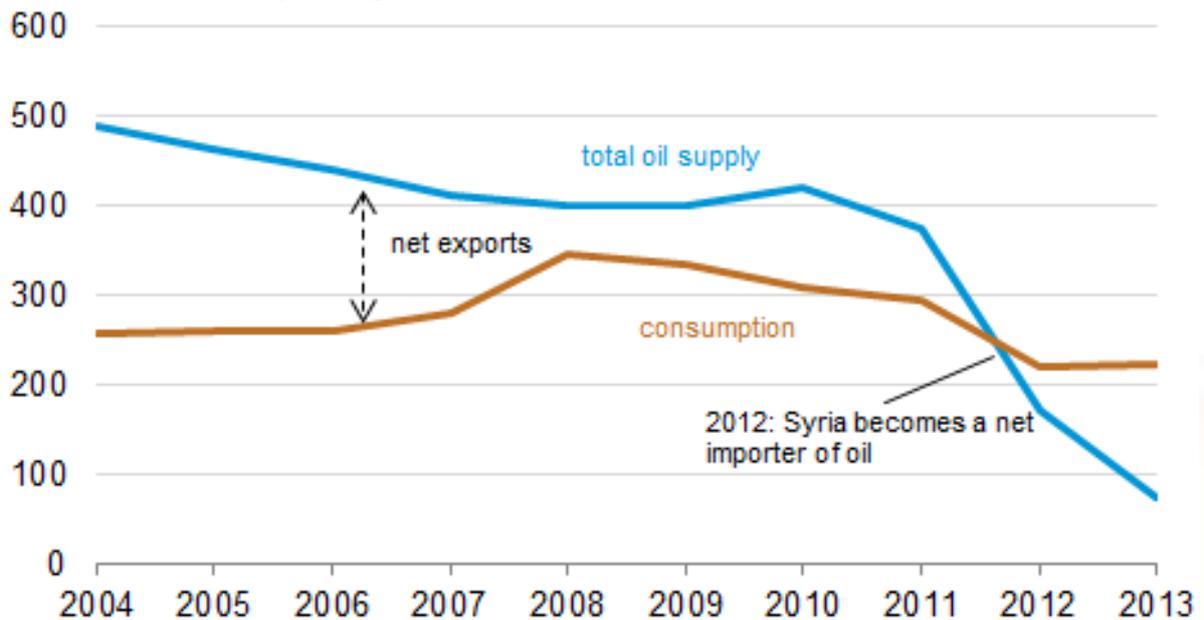
Graph 1: Syrian Total Petroleum Balance Between 1980 and 2014

Source: US Energy Information Agency (EIA), 2020

Syria's average oil production from 2008—10 was stable at approximately 400,000 b/d, but since the combined disruptions of military conflict and economic sanctions began, the country's production dropped dramatically. The latest U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates indicate that Syrian crude oil and condensates production has fallen to barely 25,000 b/d—including production outside the control of the Syrian government. This level is a drop of roughly 90% since the conflict began in March 2011.

Syria flows of petroleum and other liquids

thousand barrels per day



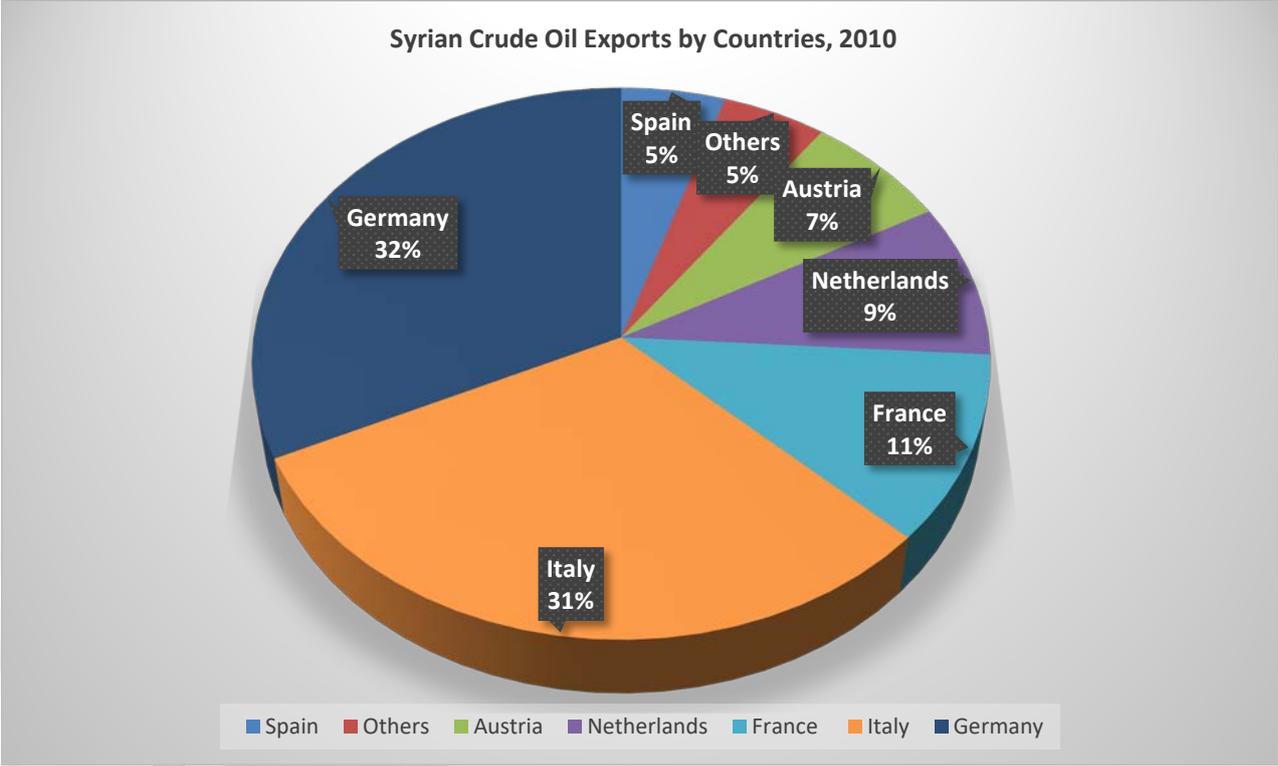
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Graph 2: Syrian Total Oil Flow between 2004 and 2013

Source: US Energy Information Agency (EIA), 2020

Syria has two state-owned refineries, one in Homs and the other in Banias. The combined nameplate capacity of the two refineries at the beginning of 2015 was slightly less than 240,000 b/d according to the Oil & Gas Journal⁹; a total capacity that met only three-fourths of Syria's pre-conflict demand for refined products.

⁹ Oil & Gas Journal, Worldwide Refining Survey, January 1, 2015.

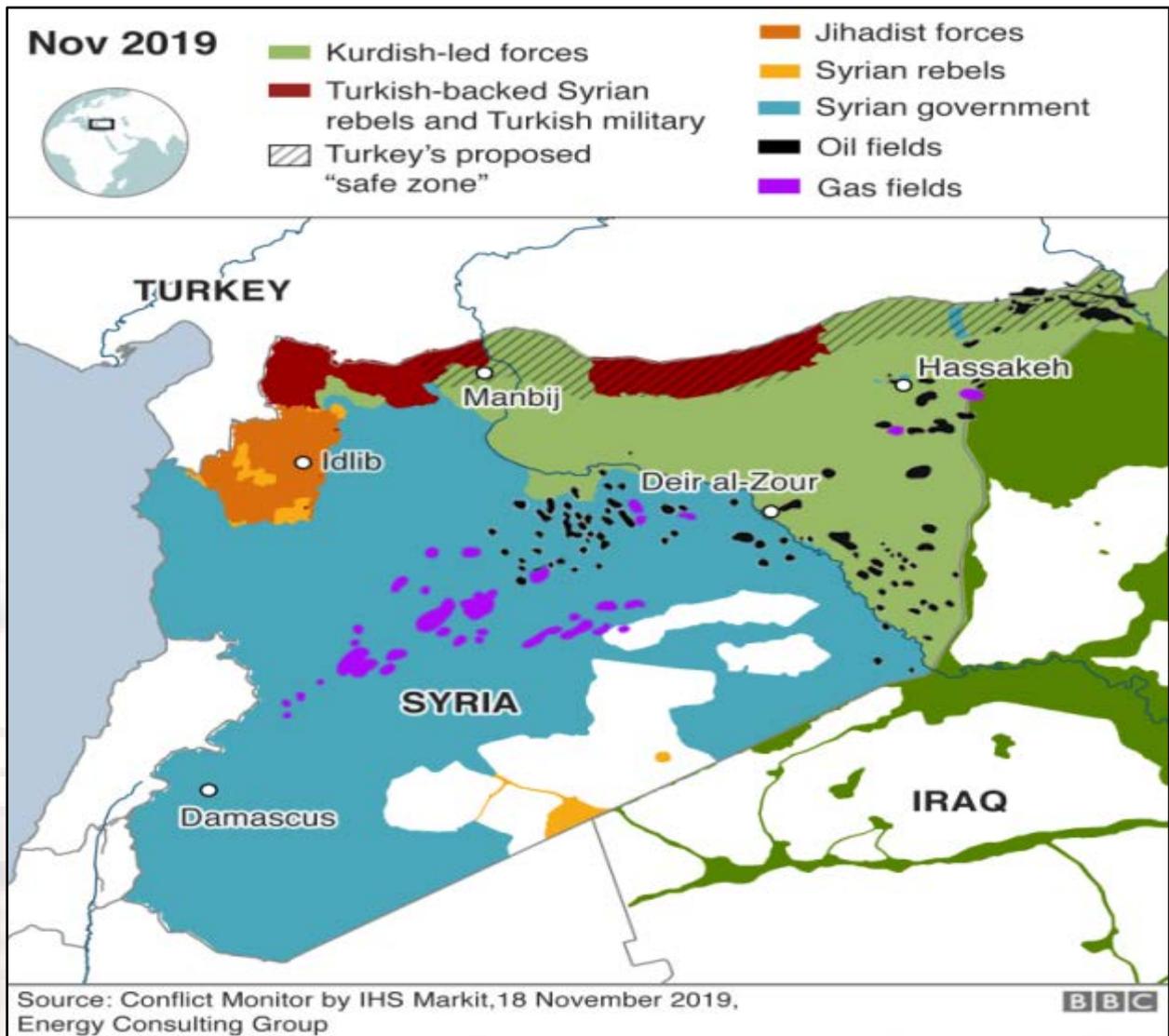


Graph 3: Syrian Crude Oil Exports by Destinations

Source: US Energy Information Agency (EIA), 2020

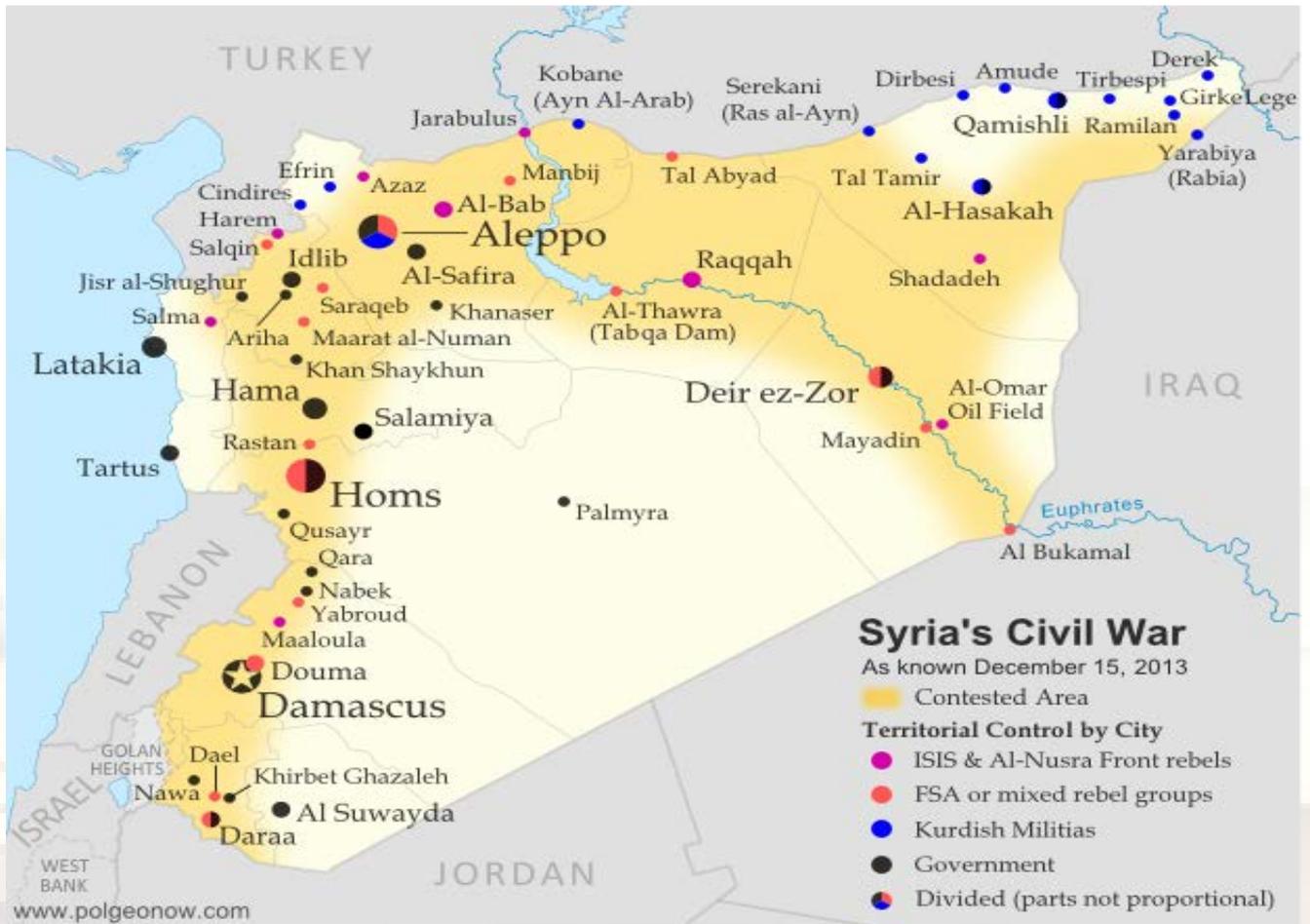
According to the data provided by the IMF, oil-production was about 25% percent of the Syrian government’s total income in 2011. When the civil war began, Syrian loyalist forces (including Assad-backed militia and SAA) adopted a war strategy to only keep strategic oil regions in central Syria and Shiite populated Western Syria.¹⁰ Regime forces and loyalists lost most of its positions in oil-rich Central Syria to ISIS during the clashes between 2014 and 2015. ISIS control quickly spread, like a pandemic, over the Syrian oil industry in mid-2014 and the Syrian regime lost one of its main income sources. Oil production by the Syrian regime officially fell to less than 50K barrels per day in 2014. ISIS became the new dominant producer and in control of Deir ez-Zor(DZ) oil fields till the end of their territorial reign.

¹⁰<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1086.pdf>

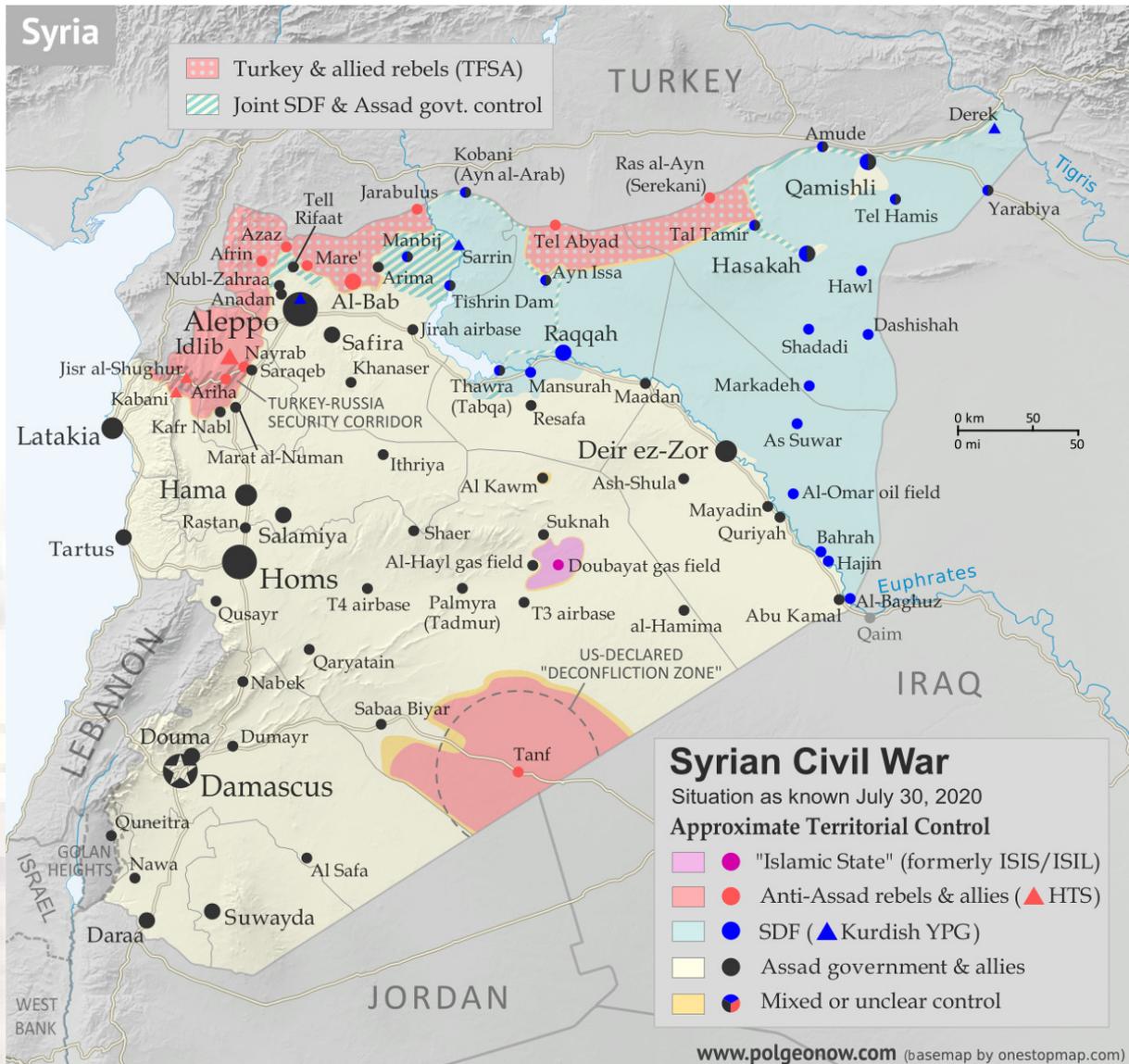


Map 2: November 2019 Syrian Military Control and Oil Sources Map

Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, 2020



Map 3: Syrian Civil War Map - 2013



Map 4: Syrian Civil War Map - 2020

Source: <https://www.polgeonow.com/2020/07/syria-controlled-areas-map-2020.html>, 2020

Oil smuggling was one of most important sources of income for the self-claimed Islamic State from 2013 to 2015. Buying Syrian and Iraqi oil from ISIS has always been a hot topic among countries. Russia and Israel publicly alleged that Turkey is buying oil from ISIS¹¹. Airstrikes and military operations to ISIS-held oil facilities in Iraq and Syria led to a decline in ISIS oil incomes from \$1.5 million per day in 2014 to \$660,000 per day in 2016. ISIS was believed to produce 34,000 to 40,000 barrels per day from DZ major oil fields and also some smaller ones in Hasakah region which are now mostly under the control of AANES and protected by SDF and

¹¹<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-russia-turkey/russia-says-it-has-proof-turkey-involved-in-islamic-state-oil-trade-idUSKBN0TL19S20151202>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35415956>,

USA joint military forces.¹² The table provided below shows oil production per oil-field by ISIS in primitive conditions and currently controlled by NES self-government administration.

Oil-field	Production Barrel Per Day	Current Control
Al-Tanak	11,000-12,000	DZ, SDF
Al-Omar	6,000-9,000	DZ, SDF
Al-Tabqa	1,500-1,800	Raqqa, SDF
Al-Kharata	1,000-1200	DZ, SDF
Al-Shoula	650-800	DZ, SAA
Deiro	600-1,000	DZ, SDF
Al-Taim	400-600	DZ, SDF
Al-Rashid	200-300	DZ, SAA
Total	21.350-25.700	All

Graph 4: ISIS Oil Production Per Barrel Day in DZ Region in 2015 and Current Control

Source: Solomon, Erika; Kwong, Robin; Bernard, Steven (11 December 2015). "Inside Isis Inc: The journey of a barrel of oil". Financial Times. Retrieved 27 December 2015.

Alongside destructive aerial campaign by USA and Russia, ISIS destroyed most of the oil facilities during their retreat and territorial losses. Most of the oil facilities lost their infrastructures during the clashes and remained unrepaired due to the lack of proper maintenance equipment and expertise. This situation has not only deteriorated oil production but also caused very serious environmental issues which could not be repaired without professional intervention. The SDF was believed to produce 15,000 to 30,000 barrels of oil per day in late 2019 both from DZ and Hasakah oil fields.¹³ Internal consumption of oil in power plants to produce electricity is on the highest level due to war conditions, but SDF still have some oil as export commodity. Although the AANES is almost fully independent from the Syrian government, the status is only a de-facto one and doesn't allow the AANES to act as an independent actor in international trade and cease deals on economic, trade and big infrastructure projects. The current status quo and the lack of international market demand led to an oil-trade between AANES and the Syrian regime. There are not any big refineries (only small handmade or mobile refineries) in the SDF controlled regions, therefore most of

¹²<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/10/02/u-s-coalition-slashes-isis-oil-revenue-more-than-90/717303001/>

¹³<https://www.bbc.com/news/50464561>

the sales consist of crude oil and exports to Syrian regime. This oil trade between these two parties was a source of trouble for the Western actors like the US and the EU.¹⁴The SDF declared that it is not willing to trade oil with the Syrian Regime if US officials find another way to trade oil.¹⁵Finally, shortly after the US strengthened economic sanctions on the Syrian Regime with the Ceasar Syria Civilian Protection Act, the oil agreement between the US based company Delta LLC and the SDF was revealed by US officials. Despite the lack of knowledge in relation to the specific details of the agreement, the agreement shows regions under the control of the North and East Syria Autonomous self-government is considered to be a separate-special administration from the Syrian government territories both economically and politically. DZ region is considered to be the most Western junction of all Middle Eastern oil hence why the EU has an interest in the stability of the region.

3. Key Actors in the Region Related with AANES Oil Agreement

a. Russia

Russia, as successor of the USSR, has a long history with Syria. The Syrian regime and Bashar Al-Assad has mainly enjoyed financial and military support from Russia since 2015 which includes an oil agreement between Russia and the central government of Syria. Therefore, Russian approaches to the AANES mostly focuses on and is interested in Syrian sovereignty but does not exclude Kurdish basic rights. Russia agrees that the main operating force is the US-led coalition in Northern Syria but uncertainty and sharp changes in US policy towards the AANES has also led to uncertainty in Russia's approach. The agenda of Russia regarding Northern Syria is a pragmatic type of balance policy among AANES, Syrian Regime and Turkey. Furthermore, Russia is the biggest oil and natural gas supplier of Europe and does not want to lose this strategic position to the Arab countries. However, Russia accepts it is not able to overcome Western-Arab-Kurdish alliance in the region and so plays a wafting game.¹⁶ Shortly after the US forces retreated from their positions in the SDF-held territory, Russia did not hesitate to fill the gaps but the US withdrawal was not certain as US policy for the region is unpredictable. Russia did not succeed in controlling oil fields in Central Syria as some US troops

¹⁴<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/0b078a0a-836e-4564-aaaf-c0d30add8307>

¹⁵<https://rojavainformationcenter.com/2020/07/the-national-interest-can-the-u-s-stop-syrias-kurds-from-selling-oil-to-assad/>

¹⁶<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/12/20/russia-recruits-syrian-kurds-to-replace-us-led-forces-voa-a68701>

are still in control of oil-fields with the SDF.¹⁷ Russia is also seeking a new pact about developing economic ties with Damascus whilst also acknowledging the reality on the ground that the AANES controls more oil fields and agricultural lands in Syria.¹⁸

b. USA

USA is the main sponsor and military partner of the SDF since the Battle of Kobanê in 2014. Although there has been military partnership, assistance and supportive airstrikes against ISIS, US policy towards the administration of the region stays unclear for a long time. US president Donald Trump announced that US forces would withdraw from the Turkish-AANES border in late 2019 which resulted in a Turkish military incursion with 30 KMs in depth and 200 KMs in width inside AANES territory. This led to lots of anger and objections in the US domestic politics.¹⁹ Under the pressure of both public and politics, President Donald Trump has to update his announcement and claiming that US forces will keep oil fields alongside SDF in Northern Syria.²⁰ US forces withdrew from most of their posts and Russia filled the gaps. The US brokered a peace deal between different Kurdish parties in June 2020²¹ and finally authorized a US-based oil company to trade with AANES. After these developments there is a concrete positive shift in US policy regarding the political recognition of the AANES. The USA was used to force the SDF to work with elements of the FSA against the Assad regime and Kurdish authorities insisted on a third way policy. US policies are also a tool of encouragement of corporation between Arab states-world (KSA,²² UAE,²³ Egypt²⁴) and AANES.

c. Turkey

Turkey is in a hostile position against the Syrian Regime but also consider SDF/YPG as terrorist organizations linked with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Turkey rejects any Kurdish political entity in Northern Syria. There is a perception of significant risk on the part of the Turkish administration about the potential impacts a Kurdish political entity in Northern Syria could have on the Kurdish-populated South-Eastern Turkey. Turkey was the first country that

¹⁷<https://imrussia.org/en/analysis/3153-u-s-oil-deal-in-syria-angers-the-kremlin>

¹⁸<https://www.krqe.com/news/world/russian-delegation-in-syria-to-expand-trade-economic-ties/>

¹⁹<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/10/trump-betrayed-kurds-whos-next/600004/>

²⁰<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/nov/13/donald-trump-syria-oil-us-troops-isis-turkey>

²¹<https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/170620202>

²²<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/b51aa096-797d-4e2e-95b2-9dd3b1286003>

²³<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/51cb0f4d-ece7-45fe-b5c5-a9dc2627b4dd>

²⁴<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/arabic-press-review-egypt-coordinating-support-kurdish-led-troops-syria>

condemned the oil agreement between the US based company and AANES.²⁵ Turkey's preliminary objective in Syria used to be destroying the Syrian regime in support of the FSA/SNA but now it prioritizes the prevention of recognized Kurdish status in the region.²⁶ Turkey has become closer with Iran, Russia and Syria regarding the Kurdish policy of the US in Syria despite its historical alliance with NATO.²⁷ Turkey is now considered to be in a strategic dead-end because it has two options; it should either recognize the Syrian regime as a sovereign and legitimate state or recognize Kurdish entity in Syria²⁸. Additionally, the Syrian regime and Turkey was and is in direct conflict around the Syrian city of Idlib where the air-space is controlled by Russia. The relationship between the USA and the SDF is a major problem for Turkey and Turkey accuses the US with aiding terrorist organizations and creating a Kurdish energy corridor²⁹ to the Mediterranean for European Energy security.³⁰ Turkey received a green light from the US to intervene and control the formerly SDF controlled Afrin, Serê Kaniyê and Tel Abyad-Girê Spî regions as an appeasement policy. During this aggression of Turkey towards AANES security and stability zones, UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria prepared reports that collected evidence that convicts Turkey-backed SNA committed the war crimes in Syria.³¹

d. Iran

Syria is a strategic location-land for Iran's anti-Israel operations and campaigns. Despite the sectarian differences between the Syrian Regime and the Iranian regime, Iran is mostly concerned about the activities of the US in Northern Syria and with the activities of Kurdish forces in Syria coming under the control of the Syrian regime.³² Having said that, it should be noted that Iran has its own Kurdish population and its own Kurdish question which means that the Kurdish rise in Northern Syria is also a risk for Iran too. However, the SDF defines its strategy in Syria as the "Third Way" and position in sectarian conflict is neutral, that's why Iran

²⁵<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-condemn-us-syria-oil-deal-sdf>

²⁶<http://www.diken.com.tr/cengiz-candar-2015-yilinda-kurt-karsitligi-turkiyenin-kirmizi-cizgisi-olmak-zorunda/>

²⁷https://npasyria.com/en/blog.php?id_blog=2907&sub_blog=15&name_blog=Russia,%20Turkey,%20and%20Iran%20reach%20understanding%20on%20Turkish%20military%20operation%20in%20Syria%E2%80%99s%20Ei n%20Issa:%20Security%20sources

²⁸<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/09/world/middleeast/kurds-turkey-syria.html>

²⁹<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fa/originals/2017/05/turkey-united-states-will-guns-open-kurdish-corridor.html>

³⁰<https://www.voanews.com/europe/turkey-determined-destroy-terror-corridor-syria>

³¹ <https://mojust.org/un-commission-of-inquiry-on-syria-turkey-backed-may-have-committed-the-war-crimes/>

³²<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/9d411b9e-61e9-4196-8119-30438c1ee009>

prefers Kurdish control in central Syria rather than Jihadist FSA groups or Turkey. Therefore, Iran is not categorically rejecting any Kurdish political entity in Syria but at the same time it is working closer with Turkey on anti-Kurdish campaign to limit Kurdish-American alliance and possible Kurdish rise in the whole region.³³



Map 5: Kurdish Populated Areas Map in the Middle East

Source: CIA Factbook, 2020

e. Assad Regime

Ideological position of Syrian Regime is a kind of secular Arab nationalism and they claim the Kurdish population in North Syria are refugees from Turkey. Syrian Arab Republic denies every demand from the Kurdish side regarding autonomy and focuses on sovereignty of the regime over all sources. The Syrian Regime considers agreement between the US based company and AANES as an act of theft and aggression but has no power to fight against both SDF and USA

³³<https://www.ft.com/content/7ffb06e-a9b6-11e7-ab55-27219df83c97>

in the field.³⁴ The regime is aware about the military and financial power of the SDF and does not directly describe the SDF as an enemy since most of the agricultural production and energy resources are coming from the region under the control of the self-government administration of NES³⁵.

f. Kurdish Actors in the Region

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has been a long-term ally of US foreign policy for many years even under the governance of the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Therefore, most US policy makers focus on the point that a KRG-like political entity in Northern and Eastern Syria will strengthen the US interest policy in the region.³⁶

KRG's main operating parties KDP and PUK are both political rivals of the Kurdish led entity in Northern Syria as it is clearly impressed by the ideology of Abdullah Öcalan's democratic confederalism.³⁷ However, both have interests in growing Kurdish power in Syria for their own stability and strength despite long-standing rivalries and time-to-time intra-Kurdish conflicts.³⁸ The position of PUK towards AANES is more constructive than KDP's because they saw the existence of the SDF as a preventive measure which would help maintaining security, stability and sustainability of the KRG against any possible intervention of Mosul and Kirkuk oil by Turkey. KDP is more Turkey-oriented and eager for annexation of Hasakah region to KRG via KDP-affiliated political parties in the AANES.³⁹

g. Non-State Actors and Fundamentalists

Despite the defeat of ISIL the refugee camps of families and children of ISIS members is still an imminent potential of resurrection and insurgence of ISIS in camps like Al-Hawl⁴⁰. The camp is becoming a hub for a possible imminent resurgence.⁴¹ The camp is one of the main threads

³⁴<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/syria-slams-firm-oil-deal-sdf-null-void-200802162047125.html>

³⁵<https://www.krqe.com/news/world/russian-delegation-in-syria-to-expand-trade-economic-ties/>

³⁶<https://dinc.pinar.org/> "The Kurdish Movement and the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria: An Alternative to the (Nation-) State Model?." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22.1 (2020): 47-67.

³⁷<https://www.insanokur.org/rojawa-toplumsal-sozlesmesi/>

³⁸Yılmaz, Arzu, Kürt Siyasal Alanı Durum Muhasebesi, Birikim Dergisi, 2020.

<https://www.birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/10071/kurt-siyasal-alani-bir-durum-muhasebesi>

³⁹<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/5/12/turkeys-long-term-interest-in-kirkuk-and-mosul>

⁴⁰https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Al%20Hol%20Snapshot_26Jul2020.pdf

⁴¹https://npasyria.com/en/blog.php?id_blog=2695&sub_blog=4%20&name_blog=Remittances%20for%20ISIS%20women%20in%20northeast%20Syria%E2%80%99s%20al-Hawl%20camp%20trigger%20imminent%20resurgence%20of%20the%20jihadist%20group

for the security and stability of the region and hence costs a lot to keep the security. Both the security and stability of the camps is governed and overseen by the SDF with the very limited support of OHCHR-UN Human Rights.

4. Possible Impacts of Oil Agreement

AANES had cease a deal with a US based oil company in July 2020 and the agreement to market oil in territory controlled by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces was signed “with the knowledge and encouragement of the White House.⁴² That was an important step since civil war erupted in 2011 in Syria and a new step for partners that are collaborating to defeat ISIS. Despite the erosion of trust between White Houe and AANES after green light from white House to let incursion of Erdogan regime to Norhern Syria, there is a new era for building trust and confidence between partners in the region. The possible impacts of the oil agreement can vary but there are key issue which needed to be pointed out.

h. On Stability

Most of the problems that the Kurdish authority in Northern Syria faces is due to the uncertainty of regional and global powers even though the AANES is a self-government administration with full internal sovereignty; the future of the region is not clear yet for international and internal actors. Especially after the Turkish incursion into AANES territory in 2019, most of the citizens in the region are afraid of a new wave of incursions. Additionally, ISIS used to be in control of two thirds of the current SDF held territories and had damaged everything in the region. The region needs lots of investments to rebuild cities and rural areas but it is not possible due to political instability and the risks stemming from possible incursion of neighboring countries.

That agreement means the AANES can build a path to be a partner of European Economic Zone for securing Europe energy safety as the SDF keeps a strategic bridgehead in the Arab oil reserves and proposed pipelines map.⁴³ This will lead to more institutional state-building and new opportunities to repair the remnants of oilfields from ISIS and Syrian Regime.

⁴² <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/us-oil-company-deal-syria-kurds-kobani-turkey-russia-sdc-sdf.html>

⁴³<https://www.thenational.ae/business/comment/why-north-eastern-syria-is-so-critical-1.925421>



Map 6: Central Asia and Middle East Oil Map

Source: https://mapsontheweb.zoom-maps.com/post/91739965330/middle-east-oil-corridor-hitchinvertigo?is_related_post=1

i. On Security

The SDF is currently fighting against both ISIS elements (sleeping cells) and Turkish backed groups. There are lots of ISIS prisoner camps and SDF does not have enough equipment or funding to rehabilitate these people due to the embargo by Turkey and other regional powers. Regular income from the oil and rising European interest in the region will increase the military capabilities of SDF to protect the region's economic facilities and people.⁴⁴ Camps of ISIS families with the children contains a very high risk of resurgence of ISIS. The cost of keeping security of camps like Al-Hawl positively correlates with keeping the security of the whole of the NES region economically, socially and politically. The agreement will guarantee the presence of US led International Coalition forces and prevent the possibilities of insurgencies of ISIS and sustain the security and stability of the region.

⁴⁴<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/190-prospects-deal-stabilise-syrias-north-east>

j. On Economy

The agreement will help AANES to boost internal economy and increase the quality of public services. Most of the land is cultivable and oil revenue will be crucial to repair agricultural and oil sector damaged by ISIS. International investments are expected as Delta LLC will modernize oil fields and produce approximately 400K barrel oil per day in AANES oil fields.⁴⁵ Not only value chain in oil and gas sector but also value chain in strategic sectors will develop around the agreement.

k. On Politics

The economic relations between AANES and companies based in the US and the EU expectedly will lead to a political partnership as well to protect common interests of parties. Relationships with Western powers has always been a source of legitimation in Middle Eastern politics. Therefore, we expect that the prestige of the AANES among citizens and regional countries will rise. Expectedly, the Syrian Regime will recognize the new status quo in the NES regions and adopt some governmental reforms to avoid total collapse due to economy and war.

l. On Energy Policies

Kurdistan Region of Iraq and AANES territorial sovereignty can lead a transit and hub for energy transition to Europe through Turkey and Mediterranean routes. The security and stability of the region is the guarantee of safe energy routes.

5. Challenges

m. Local Challenges

Kurds were used to be the second class citizens during the Baath sovereignty in Syria.⁴⁶ Today, the Kurds are in a key position that rules most of the important positions under AANES governance. Having said that, this improvement in the status and significance of the Kurds in the region did lead to some ethnic tension among Arab tribes against the Kurds.⁴⁷ Additionally, anti-ISIS operations by the SDF and coalition forces deep inside DZ desert also caused problems between tribes and the government. Some of the tribes are still loyal or linked to ISIS. The Syrian Regime and Iran sees it as a change to destabilize the region for the SDF.

⁴⁵<https://www.iraqoilreport.com/news/oil-exports-into-iraqi-kurdistan-give-syrian-kurds-a-financial-lifeline-42495/>

⁴⁶<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24356349>

⁴⁷<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/12/syria-raqqa-deir-ez-zor-tension-arabs-kurds.html>

Although, overall relationships with Arabs are generally good even though there is still some small scale protests and opposition against SDF authority in the Arab regions.⁴⁸

n. Regional Challenges

If Turkey is unable to control the DZ region on its own, it favors siding with the Syrian Regime and Iran. However, the USA and other Western powers are quite clear about Kurdish-led control in the region and categorically reject any intervention from any of the actors. Turkey is pushing forward to control strategic mountainous Iraqi regions between Hasakah and Iran from Kurdish insurgency to weaken Kurdish position in the greater region.⁴⁹ Additionally, there are small PKK linked units in Iraq's strategic Sinjar region which connects Mosul-Kirkuk oil fields to Hasakah-DZ oil fields. Turkey is also concerned about PKK activities in this region and bombs these units inside Iraq.⁵⁰

o. Global Challenges

Whilst AANES is politically closer to the US and has militarily relied on US air cover current US diplomacy suggests a move towards a more isolationist policy. Although globalization was the trend over the last 20 years, the populism which promises more protectionism and less interest towards other parts of world is rising. This led to expansionist eastern forces like Russia, China and Turkey to exploit this populism as an opportunity to gain power and support to be able to intervene in other countries beyond their capabilities for their irredentist ambitions. It is something new for global politics and will have impacts on AANES policies too. AANES is diplomatically constructive-pragmatist force and focuses on the benefits of people rather than enlarging old contradictions. Despite the expansionist and irredentist policies of Eastern powers like China, Iran, Turkey and Russia, the West is not eager to mess with Middle Eastern politics. The AANES is ideologically closer to Western alliance in this picture sewing all ties with pragmatist-constructive multi-layer diplomacy.

⁴⁸<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-deir-al-zor/anti-kurdish-protests-grow-in-syrias-deir-al-zor-residents-locals-idUSKCN1SE039>

⁴⁹<https://dayan.org/content/iran-and-turkey-between-cooperation-and-conflict>

⁵⁰<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-iraq/turkish-jets-strike-kurdish-fighters-in-syria-iraqs-sinjar-idUSKBN17R0D2>

6. Consequences and Policy Recommendations: Oil for Security and Stability Program

In August 1990 the UN Security Council adopted resolution 661, imposing comprehensive sanctions on Iraq following that country's invasion of Kuwait. In the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, the Secretary-General dispatched an inter-agency mission to assess the humanitarian needs arising in Iraq and Kuwait. The Oil for Food program by UNSC in 1990 solved the stability and security problems arising from the Gulf Crisis⁵¹. The oil agreement with Delta Crescent is reached under the supervision of USA security officials and means more than just commercial matters and must be a first step for a new program; a program that is guaranteed by the UNSC for a more secure and stable Syria. Energy, Security, Stability policies are complementary to each other. Although all neighboring countries and states are more concerned about oil agreement, the agreement can be a first step for building new relations based on a win-win strategy. The tension and escalations related to the handling of natural gas and oil reserves throughout the region from Central Asia to Europe can also be leverage for bargaining for a win-win solution on the ground. Syrian civil war is also not unrelated with this greater race to keep a strategic position for being a part of new energy based security system. ⁵² Kurdish Region of Northern Iraq with North and East Syria Administrations can act together for empowerment of regional security and stability.

- 1- AANES has overcome most of the problems it has faced and has been able to keep strategic oil regions of Syria.
- 2- 400K barrel oil may not be so important for the international economic system but it will be worth it becoming a part of the proposed pipeline Arab-European pipeline.⁵³
- 3- The Oil for security and stability agreement and program must be guaranteed by the UN in order to strengthen article 2254 of UNCHR for resolution.
- 4- Al Hawl⁵⁴ and other camps of ISIS members requires millions of dollars each month to maintain security, health and living conditions. The cost of keeping ISIS members and their families from radicalism is increasing day by day. The UN should also use "Oil for Security and Stability Program" for de-radicalization of ISIS Members and their families

⁵¹<https://www.un.org/Depts/oip/background/>

⁵²<https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/articles/oil/syria-conflict-energy-security>

⁵³<https://www.forbes.com/sites/uhenergy/2019/10/29/energy-security-after-abandoning-the-kurds-and-killing-baghdadi/>

⁵⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/31/inside-al-hawl-camp-the-incubator-for-islamic-states-resurgence>

and start an initiative for rehabilitation and community building. The program should also enforce the rehabilitation initiative for ISIS families' camps.

- 5- The agreement has a potential to open doors for international investments for re-building and re-construction of infrastructure and trigger development aids for reconstruction and humanitarian purposes.
- 6- There is a need for re-construction and rehabilitation of the region after the destruction of the region in the fight against ISIS. International Joint Forces building a secure corridor for the people of the region. However, there is a need for rebuilding-reconstruction aid similar to Marshall Plan⁵⁵ to recover the NES region for stability, security and sustainability. UN and US led coalition can play a prominent role for integration of NES to EU external policy and development aid from developed countries that are part of US led anti-ISIS coalition.
- 7- Oil for Development and Reconstruction will enhance the Value Chain for Oil Sector. Oil based Value Chain will increase the capacity of NES to rebuild democratic self-governance institutions for developing social cohesion in whole Syria.

⁵⁵ De Long, J. Bradford, and Barry Eichengreen. The Marshall Plan: History's most successful structural adjustment program. No. w3899. National Bureau of Economic Research, 1991.

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