

Opinion | Syria's Fragile Hope Is Being Battered by Israel's Predatory Campaign of Destruction

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Predatory birds are now circling around in Syria's skies, smelling the stench of the corpses lying around and descending to get their share. Israel's air force is bombing and destroying the Syrian army, with Israel's land army seizing chunks of its territory

Israeli soldiers gather near the cease-fire line between Syria and Israel, Monday. Credit : Ammar Awad/Reuters

Like water seeking the lowest place, Israel has found another opportunity in the multitude of options appearing on its path lately, destroying Syria's army and [taking territory](#) as this beaten and bruised country awakens from the nightmare of the previous regime, facing an unknown future.

Ostensibly, there is some logic to Israel's move. The circumstances are favorable for destroying the military capabilities of another enemy. No one can at present stand in its way in the post-traumatic Syria which has [just undergone a coup](#). But one should not ignore the fateful damage which this ugly pillage could entail in the long run. The prophet Isaiah was instructed to give one of his sons a name depicting rapid pillage. Then too, this was a reference to the imminent destruction of Damascus (and the Israelite capital of Shomron). Rapid pillage seems to also be Israel's operational plan 3,000 years later.

New hope is now breaking through in Syria. It may be false hope, most likely it is, but the first days of the regime now taking shape give some basis [to this hope](#). The rebel leader seems judicious and wise, so far. In contrast to the coup in Iraq, the coup in Syria does not include destruction of the old order ; there is no wholesale bloodshed and destruction of infrastructure. Abu Mohammed al-Golani is for now doing everything to stabilize the situation and build a framework for ruling. Israel is for now the last of his worries. His past doesn't bode well, but he may have changed. The Syrian people deserve that.

While Syria is groping its way in the dark, Israel has come in aggressively and forcefully, as is its wont, bombing and taking territory, a real hero against the weak and bleeding. It may benefit from its actions, but it's possible that Syria will recover and not forget who attacked it in its difficult hour, without pretext, without legitimacy.

An opponent in a time of weakness is ostensibly an opportunity for attacking, but it could also be an opportunity for extending a hand. This may turn out to be futile, possibly rejected with disgust. But when events unfold so quickly and dramatically, no one can tell what lies in store.

Residents welcoming anti government fighters after they took control of Hama, Syria, on

Thursday.Credit : Bakr Alkasem/AFP

Israel should at least have tried. Instead of threatening Syria, nothing would have been lost if it had called for the opening of a new chapter. Cynics will say that this is madness, but the real madness lies in not even trying, precisely at this time.

The Syrian people will not forget who exploited its weakness and destroyed its country. In a demonstration supporting the coup in the Israeli Druze town of [Majdal Shams](#) on the Golan Heights this week, one of the residents told me : « If Syria's fate were left only in the hands of its people, hope would stand a chance. But Israel is already intervening and stirring the pot, leaving the Syrian army with only Kalashnikov rifles and bullets. »

Israel is not only destroying the Syrian army ; it is also taking pieces of Syrian land at an unknown depth and scope. Let's leave aside the unbelievable arrogance and insolence of trampling the sovereignty of another country without any pretext while mocking international law. The damage to Israel resulting from seizing this territory is certain to come. These territorial swipes will be the pretext for another war. Just like the Shebaa Farms on the Golan Heights, Israel's questionable conquests are never temporary. Nothing is more everlasting. They end up as a sore that never heals.

Israel will not hurry to withdraw from territory it has now seized. Such withdrawal will be perceived as surrender. The right will object, as will the left. Israel is telling the new Syria to forget about a new chapter. We will continue to fight you forever. To Israel, this sounds logical, even a reason for hope.

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P.-S.

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