

The Geopolitics of Energy & Terrorism

Part 3

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Introduction

The following chapters are independent essays that were written between July 2015 and February 2016. They appear in random order, and therefore they do not have to be read in the order they appear.

The issue in all the essays is the connection between the energy policies of various countries, their foreign policies, and the wars that break out at various parts of the globe, since all three are closely related. I describe many economic interests and many alliances in my essays. But alliances change and so do economic interest. Therefore what is more important for the reader is to have an idea of the global resources i.e. oil and natural gas in my essays, because global resources change at a much lower pace than economic interests and economic alliances.

The alliances and conflicts I describe in my essays might not exist in the near future, but if you have an idea of the global resources you will be able to see the alliances and the economic interests that will exist in the future.

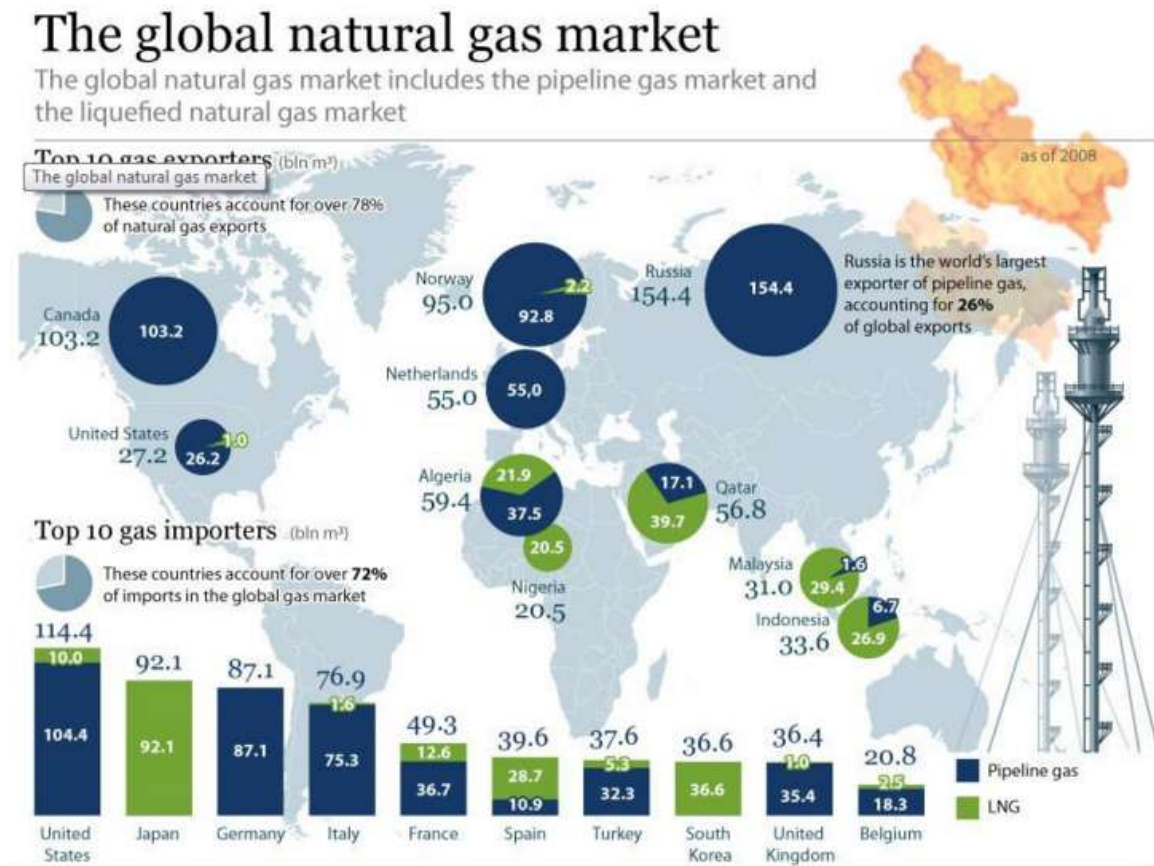
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The Map of Natural Gas

The following map from the Russian news agency Sputnik shows the larger natural gas importers. With blue you can see imports through pipeline networks, and with green imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) through special ships. The larger exporter of gas through pipelines is Russia and the largest exporter of LNG is Qatar. The map refers to 2010. The circles show the largest exporters of natural gas i.e. Russia, Canada, Norway etc.

Map 1 (Sputnik News)

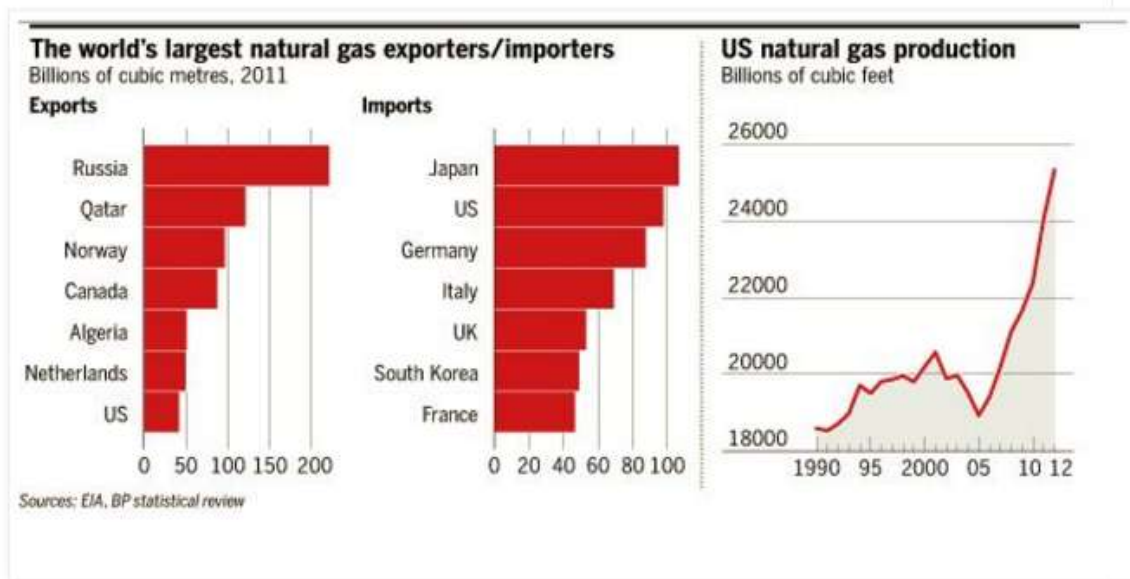


<http://sputniknews.com/infographics/20100426/158748785.html>

Note that the list of the top producers is different from the list of top exporters, because some countries produce a lot and consume a lot i.e. USA, and some others produce a lot but do not consume that much i.e. Russia. Obviously this is something that has to do with the size of the economy.

At the following map from the Financial Times you can see the largest importers of natural gas in 2011, after the nuclear accident of Fukushima (Japan). Now Japan is the top importer of expensive LNG. The table also shows the top exporters. You can see that the United States is included in the list of exporters, because the US exports gas to Mexico and Canada, when this is more convenient geographically, but the US imports far more from these two countries in oil and gas.

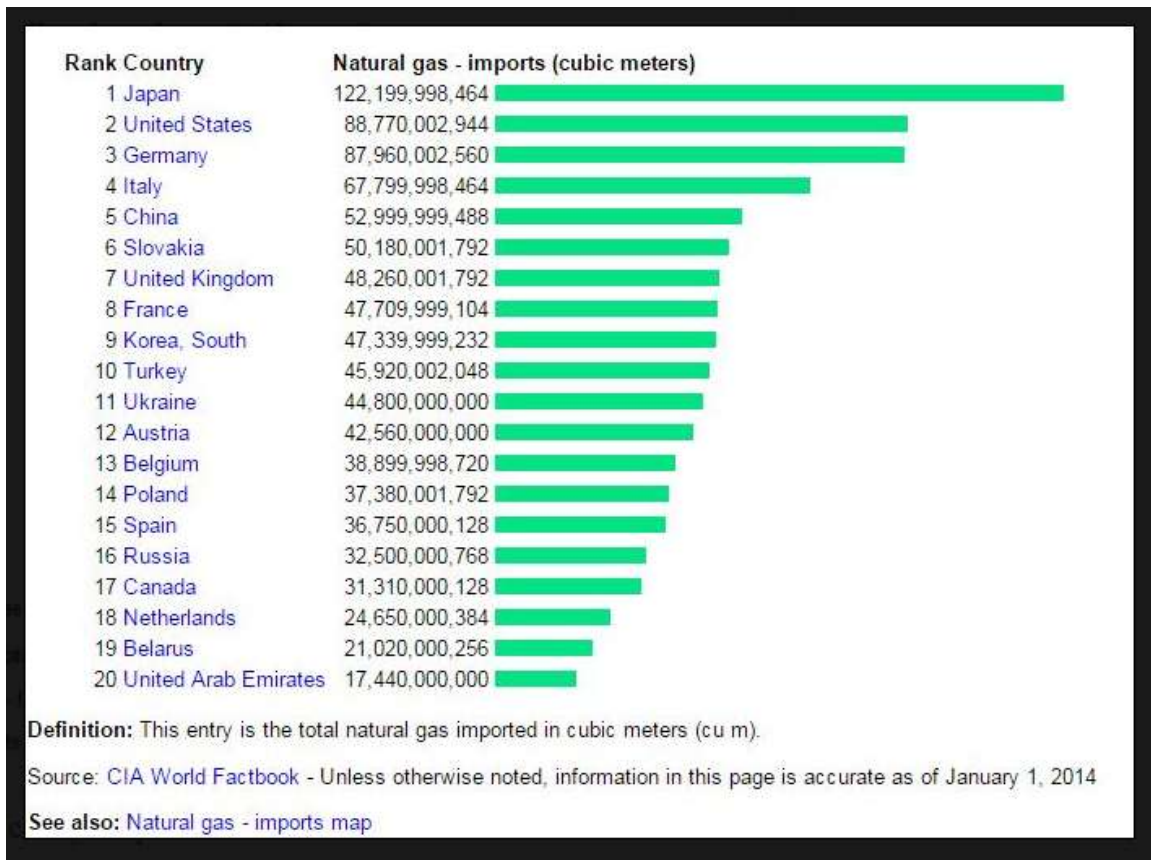
Map 2 (Financial Times)



<http://im.ft-static.com/content/images/f3b16110-b5ae-11e2-a51b-00144feabdc0.img?width=564&height=264&title=&desc=>

At the following map from Indexmundi you can see the top importers of gas in 2013 (1st January 2014). You can see Russia and the Netherlands in the list, because even though they are among the top exporters they also import gas i.e. Russia from Turkmenistan and the Netherlands from UK and Norway

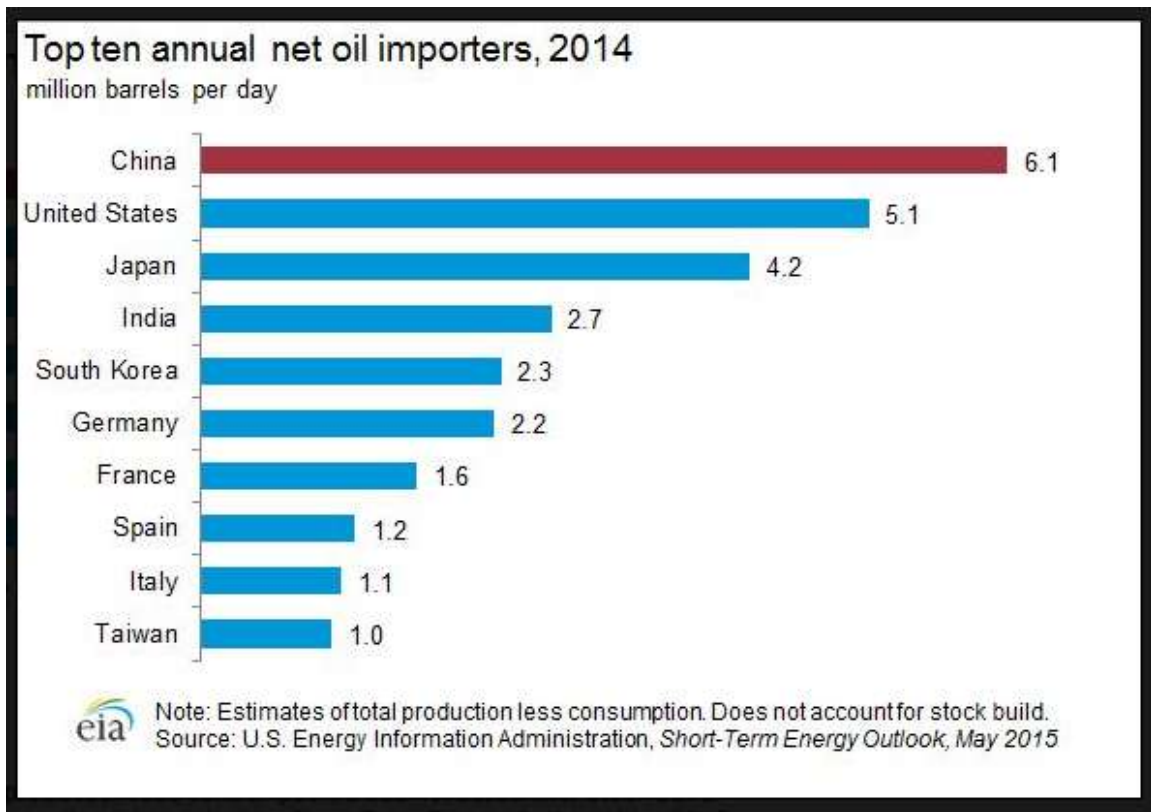
Image 3 Indexmundi



<http://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?v=139&t=20>

At the following table from the Energy Information Administration you can see the top importers of oil in 2014.

Image 4

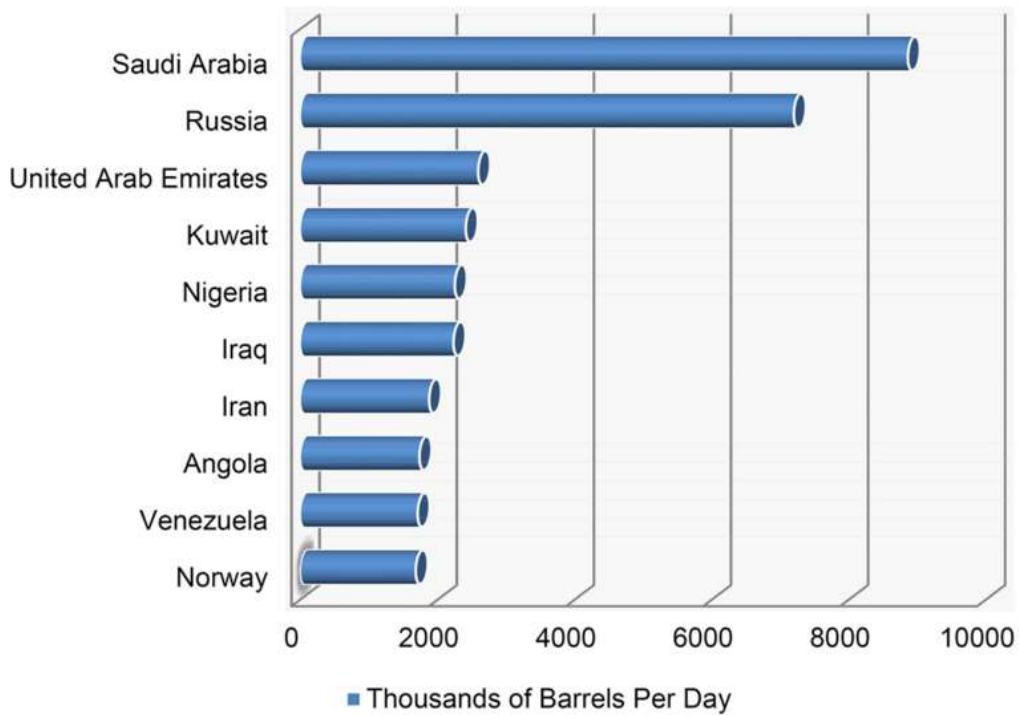


https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/China/images/top_ten_oil_importers.png

At the following map from the American think tank Institute for Policy Innovation (IPI) you can see the top oil exporters in 2012.

Image 5

Top World Net Oil Exporters 2012



http://www.ipi.org/imgLib/20140311_OilExportChart3at300.jpg

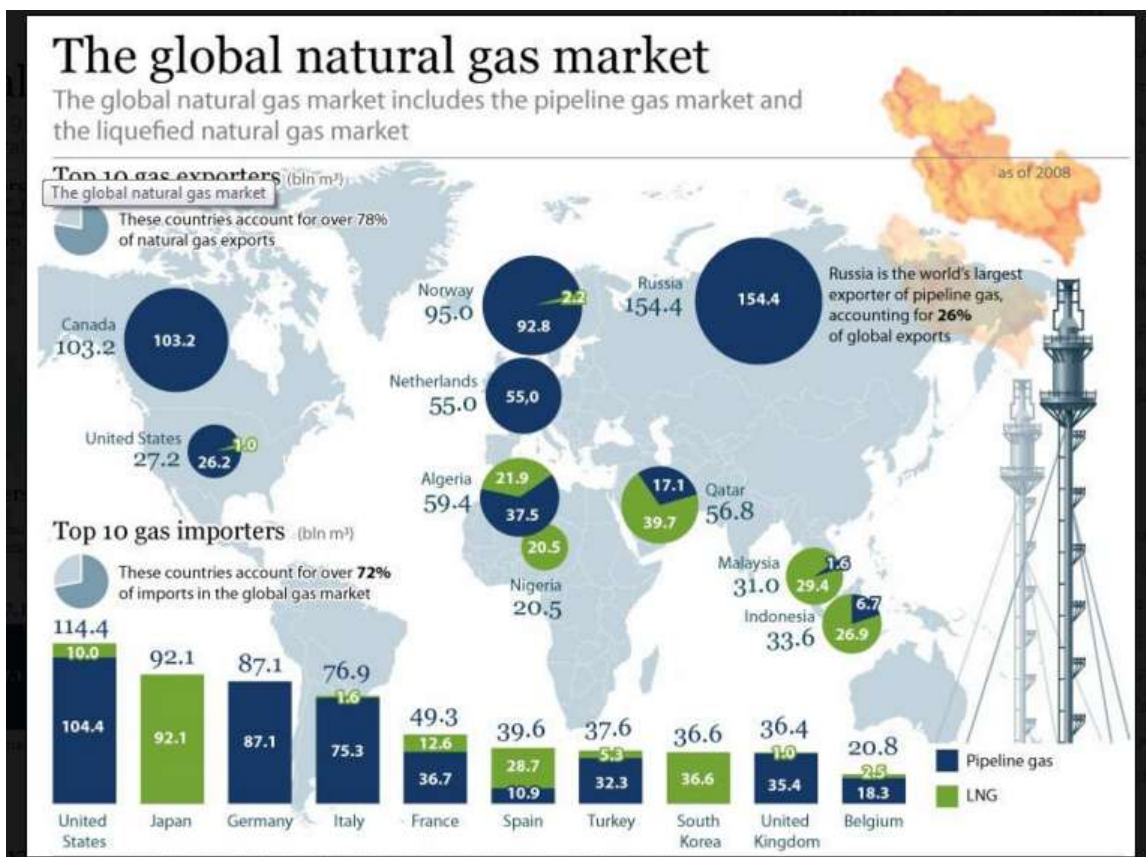
“The global natural gas market”, April 2010

<http://sputniknews.com/infographics/20100426/158748785.html>

The Map of War

I upload once more the following natural gas map, with the largest importers and exporters, because this is more a map of war rather than a map of natural gas. With bars you can see on the map the top importers of gas, who import approximately 600 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year i.e. USA, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Turkey, South Korea, United Kingdom and Belgium.

Map 1 (Sputnik)



<http://sputniknews.com/infographics/20100426/158748785.html>

With circles you can see on the map the major natural gas exporters i.e. the countries that provide these 600 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year, and they are Russia, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Algeria, Qatar, Nigeria, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The figures refer to 2010 and they do not include Turkmenistan and Australia, countries that have become significant gas exporters, and also China and India, countries that have become significant gas importers. Iran, even though the second richest country in natural gas reserves after Russia, it does not export gas, because due to the economic sanctions Iran finds it very difficult to satisfy its domestic demand.

The wars of the 21st century mainly refer to the natural gas supply of Europe, through North Africa (Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya), Turkey and Russia, and also the supply of East Asia, through Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. If on this map you put a similar map for oil you can explain all the wars.

What is strange is that while the wars of the 20th century were mainly oil wars, the wars of the 21st century are mainly natural gas wars. I am not of course saying that oil does not matter. Oil matters a great deal, and most of the revenues still refer to oil exports. However natural gas is becoming of growing importance, it is environmentally friendlier, and it is an economic solution when supplied by pipelines. All the wars of the 21st century refer to natural gas pipelines from Africa, the Middle East, the Caspian Sea and Russia, towards Europe and Asia. The wars are not for oil and oil pipelines as was the case in the 20th century, even though the two are closely related,

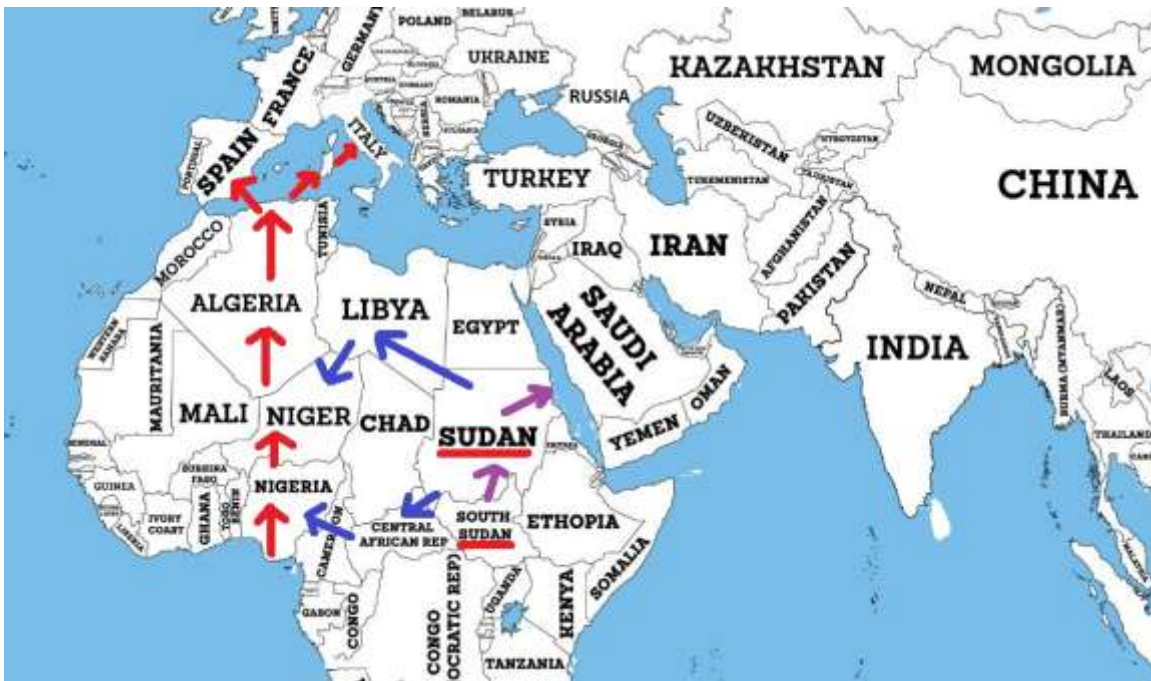
because once a natural gas pipeline is constructed, an oil pipeline could follow.

“The global natural gas market”, April 2010

<http://sputniknews.com/infographics/20100426/158748785.html>

Sudan's Role in the War for Africa

Omar al-Bashir is a Sunni Muslim, an Arab, and Sudan's president. The International Criminal Court has issued a warrant for al Bashir's arrest, because he is the man responsible for the genocide of Darfur. More than 300 thousands of the non Arab population have been killed in Darfur.



Until 2011 Sudan and South Sudan were one country, but due to the civil war Sudan was separated to Sudan and South Sudan. Even after the separation of the country the relations between the Arabs of Sudan with the non Arabs of South Sudan did not improve. The country's oil is located in South Sudan, but this oil can only be exported to Asia through the pipeline network that runs through Sudan and ends in Port Sudan and the Red Sea (purple line). It is very difficult for Sudan and South Sudan to find a way of sharing oil profits.

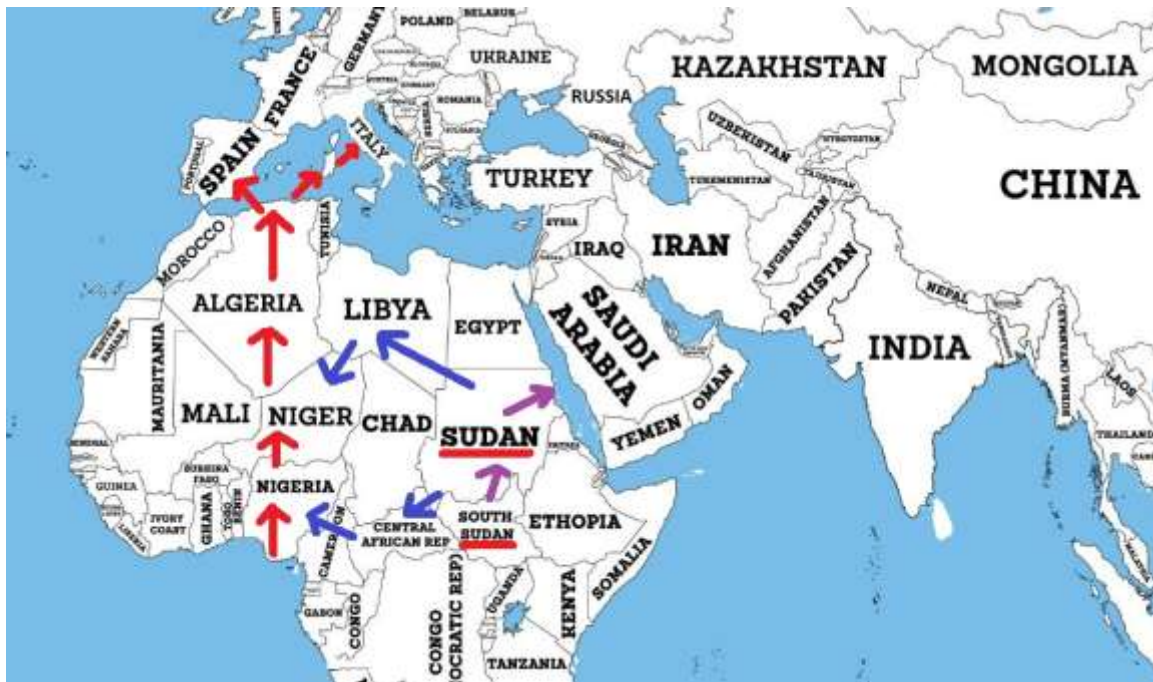
During the last two decades Omar al-Bashir had very close relations with Iran, but he also had very good relations with Turkey and Qatar. Sudan has been Iran's most significant base in Africa. Iran needed Sudan in order to support through the Central African Republic (CAR) the terrorist organizations that cooperate with the Iranians in West Africa. Nigeria is located in West Africa, and she is a country very rich in oil and natural gas reserves, and one of Iran's competitors.



Moreover Nigeria has agreed with Niger and Algeria on the construction of the Trans-Saharan natural gas pipeline, which will send Nigeria's natural gas to Europe through Algeria. Algeria is another natural gas producer, and she is already connected to Europe through a pipeline network. The Trans-Saharan Pipeline will hurt Russia's economic interests in Europe, since Russia is Europe's largest natural gas supplier. The Trans-Saharan would

also hurt Iran, because Iran wants to supply Europe with natural gas, as soon as an agreement is reached between Iran and the West, about Iran’s nuclear program.

Finally the Trans-Saharan would hurt Turkey, because Turkey wants to provide Europe with an alternative to the Russian natural gas and oil. Turkey is very poor in oil and natural gas reserves, but the oil of the Middle East and the Caspian Sea can reach Europe through Turkey. That way Turkey could generate huge transit fees, and she would also see a dramatic rise in her geopolitical importance.



As a result the USA and the EU are hunting Omar al-Bashir, while Russia, Turkey and Iran have an excellent cooperation with him. At the following article from Sudan Tribune, titled “Erdogan invites Sudan’s Bashir to visit Turkey”, August 2014, you can read about the smooth cooperation between

Turkey's leader Tayip Erdogan and Omar al Bashir, and Erdgogan's invitation to Omar al Bashir, in order for the latter to visit Turkey. Please note that Omar al Bashir is not allowed to travel to Europe and the US.

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article52017>

At the following Guardian article, titled "Sudan president Omar al-Bashir leaves South Africa as court considers arrest", June 2015, you can read that Omar al Bashir had to suddenly abandon South Africa during a visit in 2015, because the US and the EU tried to issue a warrant for his arrest.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/15/south-africa-to-fight-omar-al-bashirs-arrest-warrant-sudan>

China is one more country that has very good relations with Omar al Bashir. You can read about China's very warm welcome to Omar al-Bashir at the following Guardian article, titled "China welcomes Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir", June 2011.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/16/china-welcomes-sudanese-president-omar-al-bashir>

Moreover, as you can read at the following article of Sudan Tribune, titled "Russian FM says Moscow plans to boost military ties with Sudan", December 2014, Russia wishes to strengthen her military cooperation with Sudan and Omar al Bashir. Normally Omar al Bashir should be seen by Russia as an enemy, because Omar al Bashir has been a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is mainly backed by Turkey and Qatar, two

countries that are a big problem for Russia's energy policy. See "Russia vs Turkey: The Geopolitics of the South & the Turk Stream Pipelines".

However Sudan is not an important country for Russia's energy policy. On the contrary the attacks carried out in West Africa by the Islamist organizations that are supported by Iran, Turkey, Qatar and Sudan, they are very useful for Russia. Also note that Russia had attempted to take part in the Trans-Saharan pipeline but her efforts did not bear fruits.

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53220>

At the following Wall Street Journal article, titled "African Nations Sign Deal for Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline", July 2009, you can read about the agreement for the Trans-Saharan Pipeline between Nigeria, Niger and Algeria (red line on the map).

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB124663481393592621>

Also note that the Islamists that are supported by Iran and Sudan in Africa can sometimes be useful for China too. China has very strong ties with both Iran and Sudan, and at the same time China does not have military forces in Africa. On the contrary France has military bases in Africa, as you can read at the following article of the Business Insider, titled "France's Military Is All Over Africa", January 2015. See also the following map. As you can read in the article France has military bases in Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

4th Paragraph

Currently, France has over 3,000 troops spread across five countries in Africa — Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad — as part of Operation Burkhane. Based in Chad, the operation aims at disrupting potential militants threat across the Sahel region of the continent.

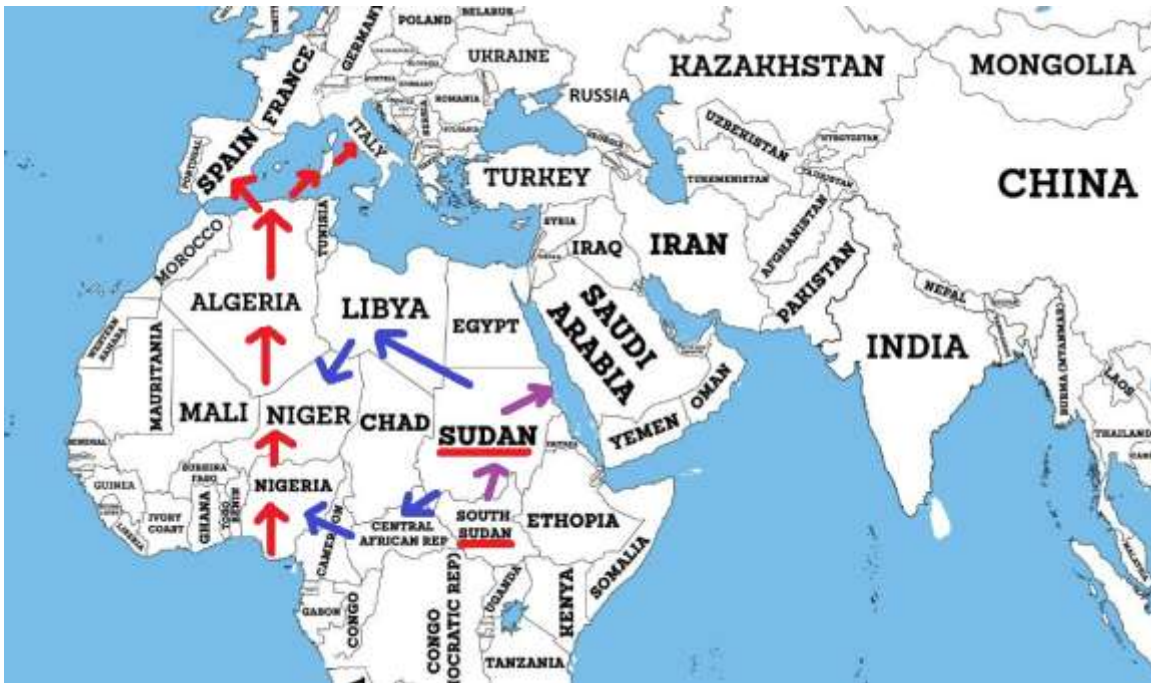
<http://www.businessinsider.com/frances-military-is-all-over-africa-2015-1>



China and Iran are challenging France in Niger. Niger is one of the largest producers of uranium, and for the last decades Areva, the French state owned nuclear energy producer, has been the only producer of uranium in Niger. France covers most of her energy needs with nuclear energy, and therefore Niger is of vital importance for France's interests. For the competition between China and France for the uranium of Niger you can

read the following Financial Times article, titled “China to expand Niger operations”, May 2010.

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3eac7388-5d17-11df-8373-00144feab49a.html#axzz3eXGfqIrl>



France is carrying out many military operations against the Islamists that are supported by Iran, Turkey, Sudan and Qatar. As you can read at the following article of the state owned France24, titled “Is Qatar fuelling the crisis in north Mali?”, January 2013, Marin Le Pen accused Qatar for the terrorist attacks against France in Mali. And keep in mind that Qatar is one of the largest investors in France. But every geographical location is different, and economic interests can coincide in one place but diverge in another.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20130121-qatar-mali-france-ansar-dine-mnla-al-qaeda-sunni-islam-doha>

In order to reach West Africa, Iran and Sudan use Libya and the Central African Republic (CAR). France had intervened militarily in CAR in order to combat the Islamists, as you can read at the following article of the Spiegel, titled “Central African Republic: French Intervention Risky for Hollande”, December 2013. Moreover the French are helping the Egyptian President al Sisi to combat the Islamists in Libya.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/french-intervention-in-central-african-republic-risky-for-hollande-a-937595.html>

It must be mentioned that the war between France and the Islamists in Africa led to the terrorist attack in Charlie Hebdo, and many other terrorist attacks in France.

Sudan is important for Turkey, Qatar and Iran for one more reason. All these countries want to overturn the Egyptian President al Sisi, a Saudi ally, in order to bring back to power the Muslim Brotherhood. These three countries attack Egypt from Libya, Sudan, and Gaza, with the use of the Islamists groups that are backed by them.

Obviously the Saudis have been very unhappy with the cooperation between Sudan and Iran. In 2013 the Saudis forbid al Bashir from even flying above Saudi Arabia during one of his trips. You can read about it at the following article of the state owned Qatari news network Al Jazeera, titled “Sudan's Bashir barred from Saudi airspace”, August 2013.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/08/20138413204714869.html>

However after two decades of close cooperation with Iran, Sudan has moved closer to Saudi Arabia, as you can read at the following article of the US News, titled “Al-Bashir starts new term in office as Sudan shifts away from Iran, inching closer to Saudi”, June 2015. In the article you can read that after two decades of close cooperation with Iran and of problematic relations with Saudi Arabia, Omar al Bashir recently moved closer to the Saudis.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/06/02/sudan-swears-in-president-bashir-wanted-in-war-crimes>

In the article you can also read that in the war that broke out between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen, Omar al Bashir supported diplomatically Saudi Arabia, even though he did not offer any military assistance. However that does not mean that Sudan and Iran will stop cooperating in Africa. In international relations it is very common for two countries to fight each other in one geographical location and cooperate in another.

The Balkanization of Western Europe

Catalonia is a Spanish province, but the Catalans do not consider themselves Spanish, and they want Catalonia to be independent. Catalonia is autonomous and also has its own parliament. On September 27th 2015 the pro-independence coalition won the Catalanian elections, as you can read at the following Guardian article. “[Catalan elections: secessionists claim victory – as it happened](#)”, September 2015.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/sep/27/catalonia-goes-to-the-polls-live>

Catalonia is one of Spain’s richest and most industrialized regions, as you can read at the following BBC article, titled “[Catalonia profile](#)”, January 2015.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20345071>

80% of the Catalans believe that Catalonia pays too many taxes to support Spain, and they also believe that the investments of the central Spanish government to Catalonia are very small when compared to Catalonia’s tax burden and contribution to the Spanish GDP.

See “[Catalonia's tax burden: If you put up with it, they keep taking your money](#)”, November 2012,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/20/catalonia-tax-burden-independence>

The discussion between the Spanish and the Catalans resembles the discussion between the northern Europeans and the southern Europeans,

with the Catalans accusing the rest of Spain for not trying enough, and the rest of Spain accusing the Catalans for a lack of solidarity. The Catalans are not the only ones to claim independence in the European Union. There is the issue of Scotland in Great Britain, of Flanders in Belgium, of the Basque Country in Spain and of Venice in Italy. See the following maps.

Map 1 (rough) Catalonia



Map 2 The Basque Country



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a2/Basque_Country_Location_Map.svg/300px-Basque_Country_Location_Map.svg.png

Map 3 Flanders



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flanders#/media/File:Flemish_Community_in_Belgium_and_Europe.svg

Map 4 Scotland (Great Britain)



<http://blog.mapsofworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/uk-map-if-scotland-referendum-passed-in-2014.jpg>

Map 5 Venice (Italy)



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venetian_independence_referendum,_2014#/media/File:Veneto_in_Italy.svg

The European Union and NATO see with great anxiety all these separatist movements, because they could destabilize and Balkanize Western Europe. For Russia on the other hand all these separatist movements are a gift from heaven. The Basque, the Catalan and the Venice independence would destabilize Northern Spain and Northern Italy and would make it harder for the Algerian and Libyan natural gas and oil to travel to Europe and compete with the Russian state owned giants Gazprom and Rosneft. The Nigerian

natural gas can also travel to Europe through Algeria, Spain and Italy if the Trans-Saharan pipeline manages to pass from the Sunni Islamist terrorists organization of Boko Haram.

Map 6 Catalonia, Basque Country and Venice (rough map)



Actually Russia and Spain have a long rivalry that goes back to the 1930s and the Spanish civil war, when Hitler and Mussolini were supporting General Franco's nationalist socialists and Stalin was supporting the Spanish communists. The nationalists finally won the war in 1939. After the end of the Second World War, Spain and Russia had very problematic relations. In the 1960s the Russian-Spanish relations were improved, and in 1977 Spain and Russia established full diplomatic relations. However in 1982 Spain joined NATO and relations between the two countries deteriorated again. The Spaniards were accusing the Soviets of supporting ETA, the Basque terrorist organization which stands for Basque independence, as you can

read at the following New York Times article, titled “Premier says foreign states foment terror in Spain”, May 1981.

4^η, 5^η, 6^η, 7^η, 8^η Παράγραφος

He said others "want deceitfully to prevent our people from reaching the objectives of a peaceful and modern life, crowned with liberties, in the place that corresponds to us as a free nation."

A high Government official said later that the Prime Minister was referring to "the Soviet Union and its satellites," which the official said included Cuba, Libya and Algeria.

For some time, Spanish politicians and others have speculated that the Soviet Union might be assisting the Basque terrorist organization E.T.A., hoping to precipitate a military coup that would prevent Spain from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. But Mr. Calvo Sotelo was the first to make the accusation, however veiled, in public. 2 Soviet Aides Expelled

Since Mr. Calvo Sotelo took office - the formal vote installing him was interrupted Feb. 23 by an aborted military coup - relations with the Soviet Union have markedly cooled. Two high-ranking Soviet officials have been expelled, and 20 other Soviet citizens have been told that their residence permits will not be renewed. The Government has also taken measures to reduce the Soviet fishing fleet near the Canary Islands.

A central feature of Mr. Calvo Sotelo's program has been a commitment to bring Spain into NATO, a process he hopes to start this year by a vote in Parliament.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/09/world/premier-says-foreign-states-foment-terror-in-spain.html>

However there was something uniting Spain and the Soviets, and that was the conflict between the Spaniards and the English over Gibraltar. Gibraltar is of great strategic importance for controlling the straits connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

Map 7 Gibraltar



<http://media-2.web.britannica.com/eb-media/62/64662-004-7BF54BC3.jpg>

Gibraltar has been under English control since 1713, but the Spanish want to regain its control, as you can read at the following Financial Times article, titled “UK accuses Spain of ‘clear violation’ of Gibraltar’s sovereignty”, Augusts 2015.

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4b2138ce-3eda-11e5-9abe-5b335da3a90e.html#axzz3n1Z32U3V>

The conflict between Spain and England over Gibraltar was the main argument of the Spanish left which wanted Spain aligned with the Soviets outside NATO. However in 1982 Spain joined NATO under the leadership of the center-right Spanish Prime Minister Leopoldo Sotelo. One of the main arguments for joining NATO was that it would help Spain to join the European Union. And indeed in 1986 Spain joined the European Union too.

I have mentioned in the past that Spain wants to provide Europe with an alternative to the Russian natural gas. Spain has the largest LNG facilities in Europe as you can read at the following Bloomberg article, titled “Gas Carousel Making Spain Europe’s Biggest LNG Exporter”, April 2014.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-04-10/gas-carousel-making-spain-europe-s-biggest-lng-exporter>

Spain is also connected to Algeria with the Maghreb and Medgaz pipelines, and can be connected to Nigeria if the Trans-Saharan pipeline is constructed at some point (Nigeria-Niger-Algeria-Spain + Italy).

Map 8 Spain-Algeria-Natural Gas



However Spain is not yet connected with the rest of Europe with pipeline networks, but that can change if the European Union decides to finance such

pipeline networks. As you can read at the following Euractiv article, titled “[Spanish MIDCAT pipeline to replace 10% of Russian gas imports](#)”, [January 2015](#), at the moment there is only one pipeline connecting Spain and France, the Larrau pipeline, which can only transfer 5 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year. In the same article you will read that Spain expects from the European Union to finance the MIDCAT pipeline, which will connect Spain and France and will reduce Russian imports to the EU by 10%.

“[Spanish MIDCAT pipeline to replace 10% of Russian gas imports](#)”, [January 2015](#).

1st and 2nd Paragraphs

Spain's sophisticated gas infrastructure could help Europe reduce its dependence on Russian supplies once projects to pump gas across the Pyrenees become a reality, the head of a Spanish gas association said yesterday (27 March).

Europe's most highly diversified gas importer has vast untapped import capacity which it could use to route gas into France and beyond. But underdeveloped pipeline links with other countries have effectively made Spain a gas island.

5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Paragraphs

Spain, meanwhile, does not receive any of its natural gas from Russia and was entirely shielded from the EU gas crises of 2006 and 2009 when rows over unpaid bills between Kyiv and Moscow led to the disruption of gas exports to western Europe.

Strategically positioned on the Mediterranean, about half of its gas comes from Algeria and the remainder from ten different countries around the world, mainly in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG) which is shipped on tankers.

Spain spent billions of euros on its gas infrastructure during an economic boom. With seven LNG regasification plants, it has more capacity to turn liquefied natural gas back into gas than any other European country.

Now it is lobbying the EU to forge ahead with plans for a new pipeline, called MIDCAT, to transport gas into Europe.

MIDCAT, which is currently on the European Commission's list of strategically important projects, would put Spain's interconnection capacity with France at 14 billion cubic metres a year (bcm/y). The 190-km pipeline is planned to run along the Mediterranean coast.

"With this pipeline Spain could replace 10% of what Europe currently receives from Russia," Peris of Sedigas said.

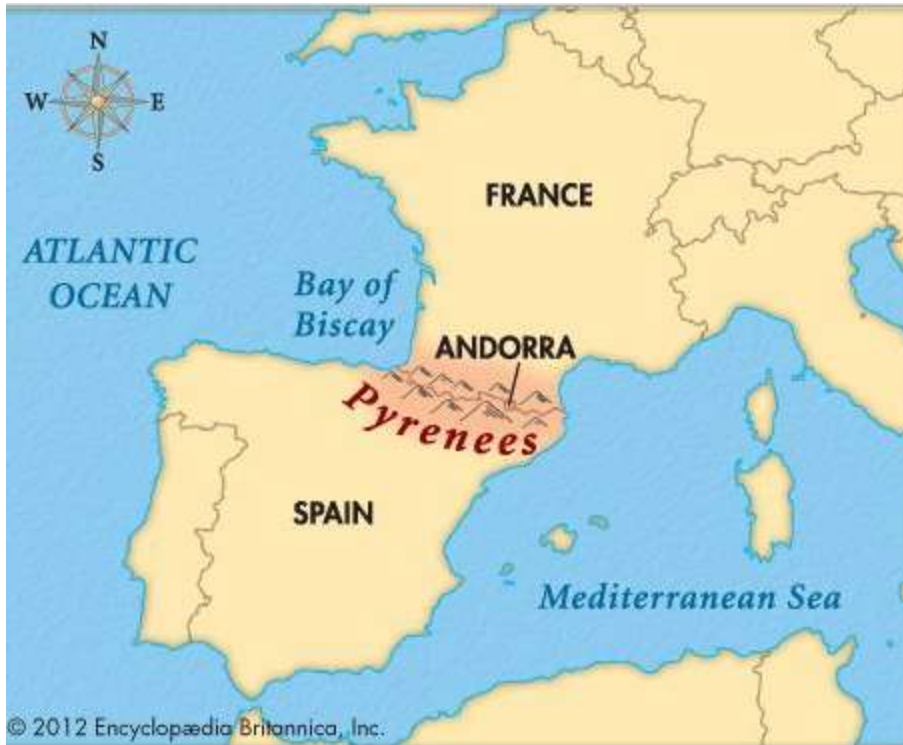
Right now there is only one gas pipeline between Spain and France, called Larrau, which can transport 5.2 billion cubic metres (bcm/y), a fraction of the 462 bcm of gas consumed by the EU last year.

A new pipeline called Biriadou, running from Spain's Basque Country into France, could add another 2 bcm/y of interconnection capacity when it is completed in 2015, Peris said.

<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/energy/spanish-midcat-pipeline-replace-10-russian-gas-imports-301205>

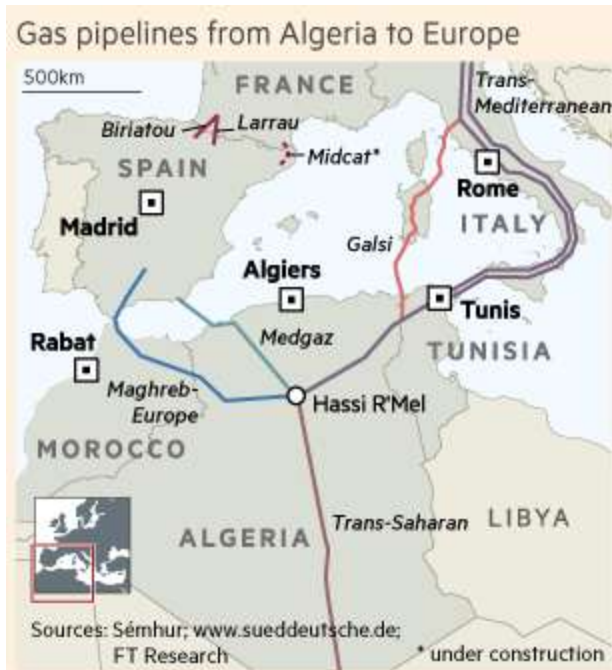
As you can read at the following Financial Times article, titled “[France, Spain and Portugal look to unlock Algeria gas exports](#)”, June 2015, France, Spain and Portugal are promoting a plan which will bring the Algerian gas to Europe through the Pyrenees Mountains. The Pyrenees Mountains are the natural border between France and Spain.

Map 9 Pyrenees Mountains



<http://media.web.britannica.com/eb-media/22/89922-004-015A28C3.gif>

Map 10 Algerian Pipelines to Europe



Source: FT

“France, Spain and Portugal look to unlock Algeria gas exports”, June 2015.

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/056e89b0-19b1-11e5-a130-2e7db721f996.html#axzz3n1Z32U3V>

I hope that it is by now obvious how useful it would be for Russia, Turkey and Iran if there were disputes in northern Italy and Spain. These disputes would make much harder the transfer of Algerian and Nigerian gas to Europe.

Map 11 The Basque Country, Catalonia and Venice



Spain is a NATO member, and if the Basques and the Catalonians were to gain their independence, problems would probably arise between them and the Spanish government. Maybe the Basques and the Catalans would have to turn to Russia for help since Spain is a NATO member. For the Basques of ETA that would not be a tough decision because they are communists. That's why the Russians have so much enthusiasm over the Basque and Catalan issues, even though they try not to show it in order not to spoil their relations with Spain. Russia and Spain have descent relations even though they have somewhat antagonistic interests.

At the north of Spain, there is the issue of Flanders in Belgium. Most Belgians at the south of the country are of French origin, and most Belgians at the north of the country are of Dutch and German origin. If the Flemish people decide to go for independence problems between France and Germany could arise, and that would push Germany closer to Russia.

For Scotland the situation is almost the same. Since the 1970, when oil and natural gas was discovered at the North Sea, the Scottish people started asking for their independence. But the prices of oil and gas exhibit significant fluctuations and the Scottish people are not sure whether an independent Scotland will be able to finance her public spending. That's why the Scottish people vote against Scottish independence as you can read at the following BBC article titled "[Scottish referendum: Scotland votes No to independence](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-29270441)", September 2014. However if oil and gas become scarcer, and prices rise, for example due to a new war in the Persian Gulf, the Scottish people might come back with a new referendum for independence.

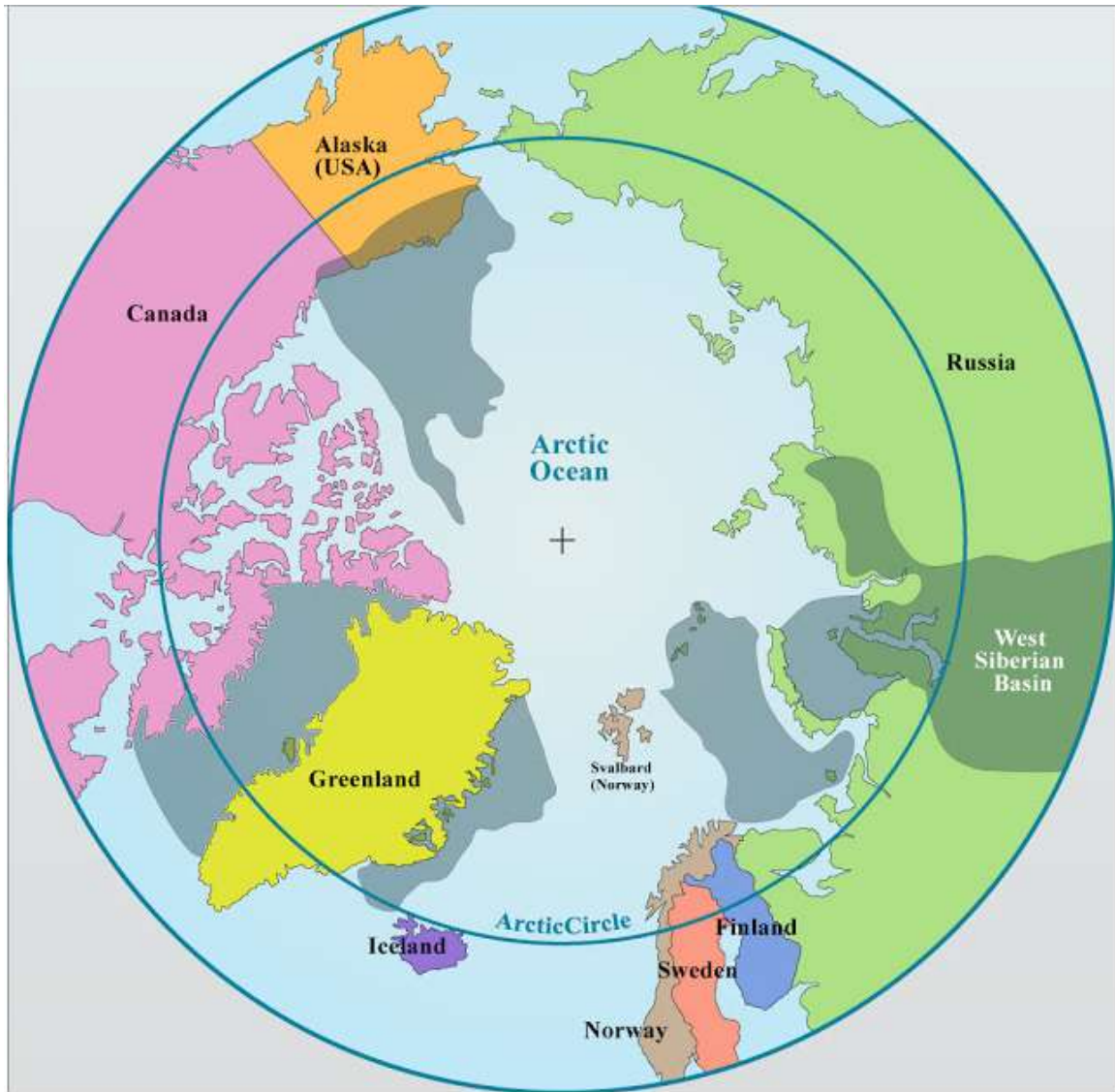
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-29270441>

See also "The Oil and Natural Gas of the North Sea : The Case for Scottish Independence"

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/the-oil-and-natural-gas-of-the-north-sea-the-case-for-scottish-independence/>

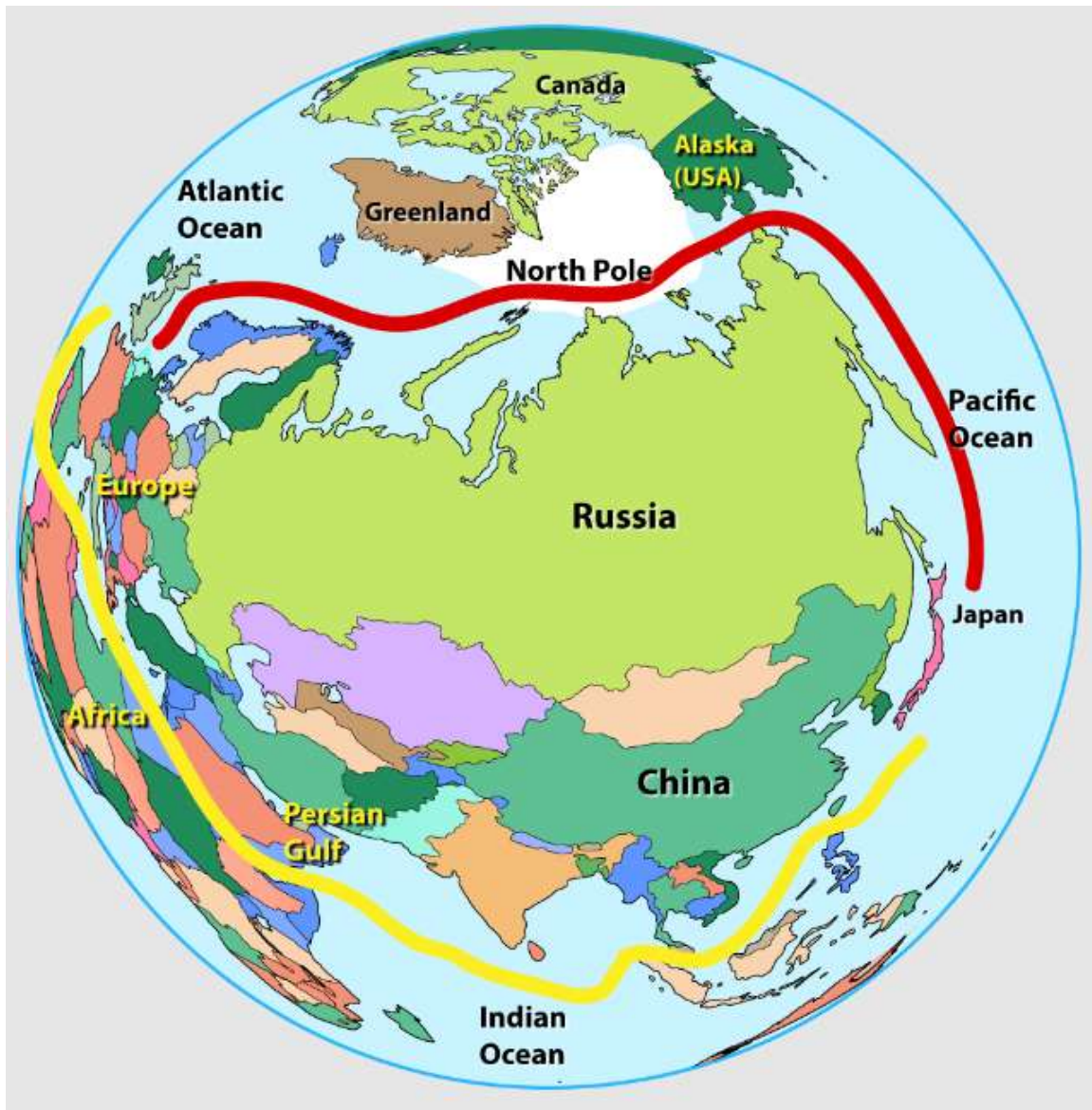
The Arctic Ocean is very rich in oil and natural gas, and USA (Alaska), Norway, Denmark (Greenland), Canada and Russia, have conflicting claims over these oil and gas reserves. With gray you can see the oil and natural gas reserves of the Arctic region.

Map 12 Oil and Gas Reserves of the Arctic Ocean



The United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway, are all NATO members, and even though they have some internal disagreements they are united against Russia. If Scotland becomes an independent state and has disputes with England, Scotland might have a motive to turn to Russia, since England is a NATO member. Something like that would greatly destabilize NATO in the Arctic region.

Mar 13 Arctic Ocean and North Pole



At the following Guardian article, titled [“Russian ambassadors: next we'll take Catalonia, Venice, Scotland and Alaska”](#), April 2014, you can read that a conversation between the Russian ambassadors of Eritrea and Zimbabwe was recorded. In this conversation the two Russian diplomats were saying that Russia must take Crimea, Catalonia, Scotland, Venice and Alaska. The

conversation does not really matter because the two ambassadors were just kidding, but it shows what the Russian interests are.

“Russian ambassadors: next we'll take Catalonia, Venice, Scotland and Alaska”, April 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/04/russian-ambassadors-catalonia-venice-scotland-alaska-annex-crimea>

The European Union is worried with the possibility of a balkanization of Europe, and has clearly said to Scotland and Catalonia that if they become independent states they will have to wait in the queue in order to join the European Union. See the following Euractiv article, titled “Brussels says an independent Catalonia would need to leave EU”, September 2013.

<http://www.euractiv.com/video/brussels-says-independent-catalonia-would-need-leave-eu-307234>

Moreover as you can read at the following article of the Independent, titled “Catalan independence: Voters head to polls in 'de facto referendum' on seceding from Spain”, September 2015, Barack Obama and the United States are very devout supporters of Spanish unity. The article also mentions that the British Prime Minister David Cameron said that Catalonia will have to wait in the queue if she becomes an independent state.

3rd Paragraph

The government of Spain and a host of political leaders across Europe have said that an independent Catalonia will have no automatic right to join the European Union or other institutions. Last week, Barack Obama threw his weight behind Spanish unity.

10th Paragraph

At the heart of the issue is any future Catalan state's membership of the European Union, which Mr Mas and his allies say is automatic. Mr Rajoy has moved to scotch this idea

and has persuaded other European leaders, including David Cameron, to say that Catalonia would be forced to “take its place at the back of the queue”, of EU accession countries. Speaking to reporters last week Mr Rajoy said that Catalans would “lose the rights they have as Europeans and Spaniards” if Catalonia became an independent state.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/catalan-independence-voters-head-to-polls-in-de-facto-referendum-on-seceding-from-spain-10513213.html>

Therefore it seems that the Scottish, the Catalonian, the Basque and the Flemish independence could significantly destabilize Western Europe, which for the moment is Europe’s safest part. For Russia on the other hand this destabilization could be a great gift as I explained.

I must also mention that the Russians have tried to purchase a stake in the Spanish energy giant Repsol, as you can read at the following article from the Russian state owned Sputnik, titled “Gazprom looks at buying 20% in Spain's Repsol”, November 2008.
<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20081112/118273458.html>

In the past the Russians also tried to purchase Sonatrach, the Algerian state owned energy giant. See “Gazprom VS NATO : The War for Europe”.
<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2015/08/19/gazprom-vs-nato-the-war-for-europe/>

With all the above I do not mean to say that Russia and Spain are in some kind of war as it is the case with Russia and Turkey. Russia and Spain have conflicting economic interests. Actually when the socialists were in power in Spain, the Spaniards and the Russians made some energy deals as you can read at the following Reuters article, titled “Russia, Spain sign energy deal,

smoothing investments”, March 2009. Socialists do not have many concerns about national interests and they are always easy prey for the Russians.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/03/03/gazprom-repsol-idUKL357888920090303>

Map 14 Catalonia, Basque Country and Venice



Why Aleppo is so Important for ISIS and Turkey

Assad forces, with the support of the Russians, have almost conquered Aleppo in Syria. The Turkish President Tayip Erdogan said that what is happening in Syria cannot be tolerated for too long, and he said that Turkey might have send troops in Syria. See Bloomberg “Erdogan Signals Turkey Prepared to Join Syria War If Asked”, February 2016.

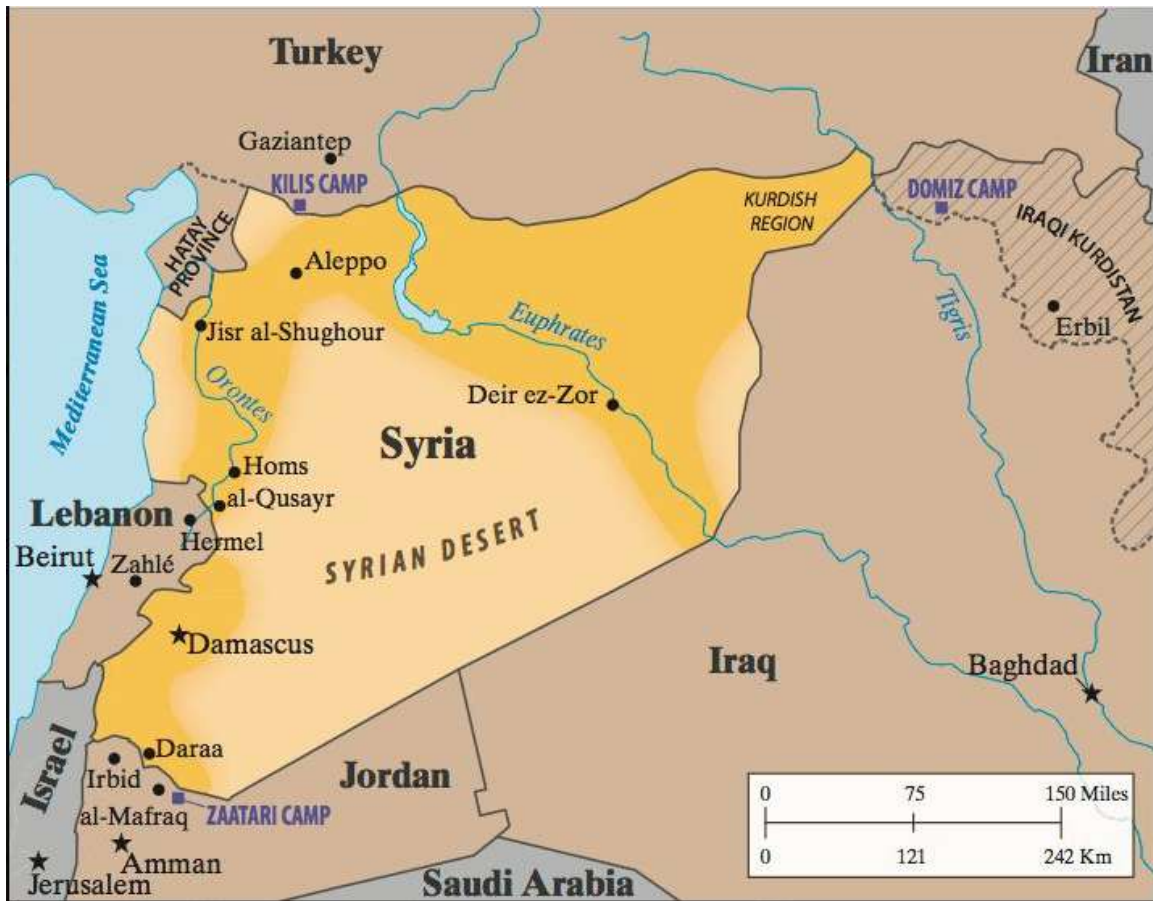
In the meantime, the Saudis have already said that they are ready to send troops to Syria. See Independent “Saudi Arabia ready to send ground troops to fight ISIS in Syria if US-led coalition agrees”, February 2016.

The United Arab Emirates have also said that they are ready to send troops to Syria together with Turkey and Saudi Arabia. See Al Jazeera “UAE says it is ready to send ground troops to Syria”, February 2016.

As you can see at the following two maps, Aleppo, which is the second largest city of Syria, and the most important one economically, it is of strategic importance for the communication between ISIS and Turkey. When I say ISIS I refer to the Sunni Islamists of Syria and Iraq. At the following two maps you can see the two limitations that Erdogan and Turkey are facing in their efforts to support ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

At the first map you can see the desert of Syria, which is a natural barrier for the communication between ISIS and the Arabs of the Gulf from the South i.e. for example Qatar, which is a very strong ally.

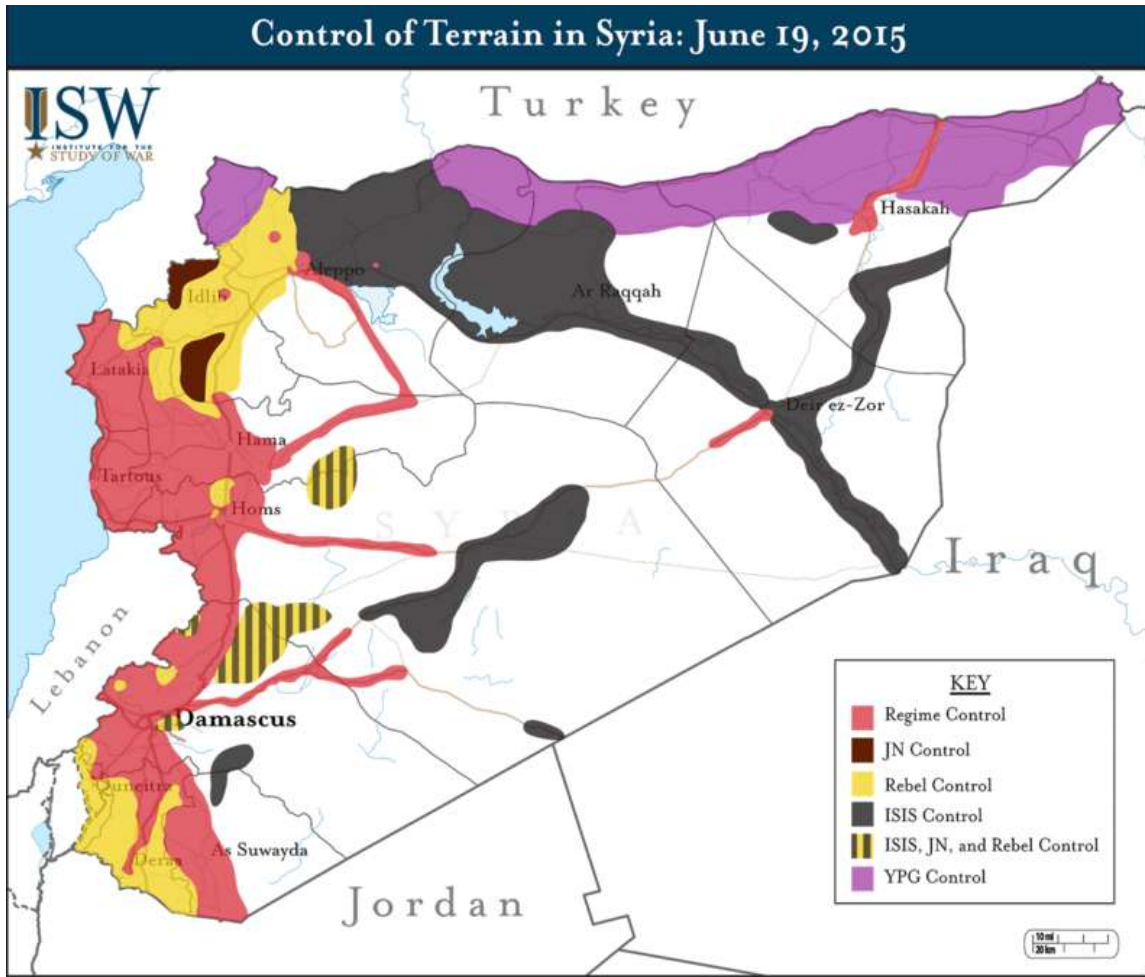
Map 1 The Desert of Syria



<http://www.nybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/syria-map-101013.png>

At the second map you can see the limitations that Erdogan faces on the North, and that is the Kurds, who form a wall between Turkey and ISIS. With purple you can see the areas controlled by the Kurds at the Turkish-Syrian borders. With black you can see areas controlled by ISIS.

Map 2 The Kurdish Factor

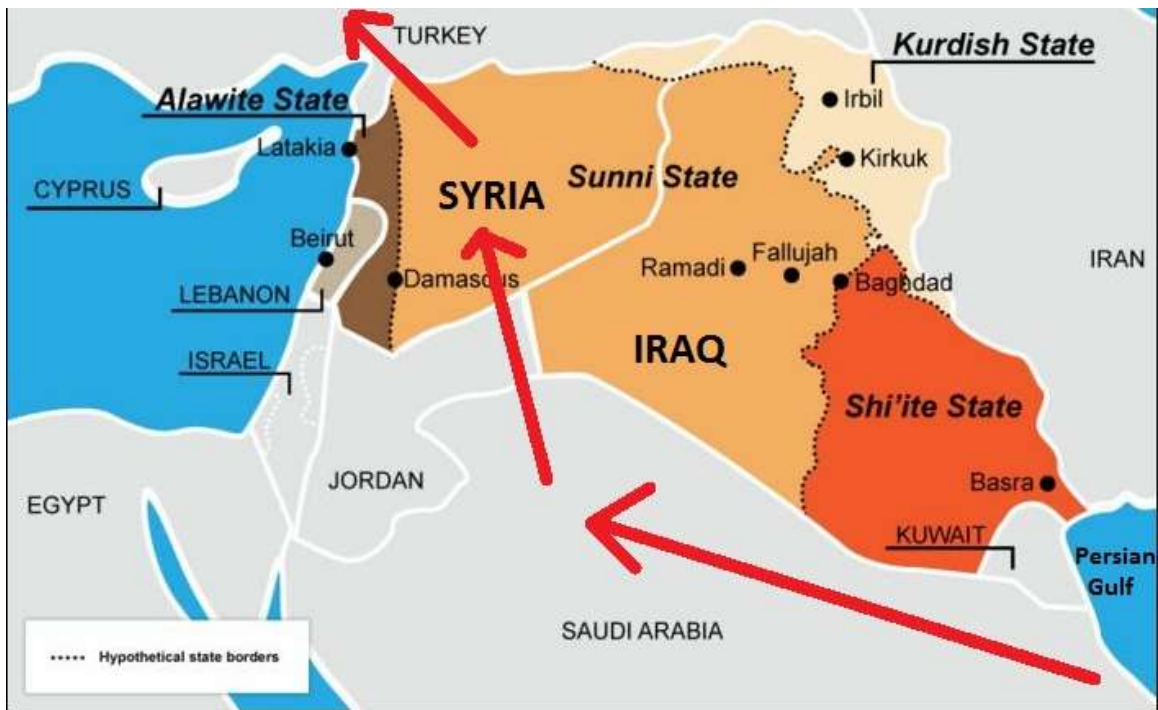


https://cdn2.vox-cdn.com/thumbor/AybknRCZvyks2pdnFLtZRD2y2qc=/cdn0.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus_asset/file/3840286/Syria-Control-Map-18-JUN-15_HIGH-1.0.png

The Kurds have already crossed the Euphrates river (see map 1), the Alawites and the Russians have almost conquered Aleppo, and the Russians are also bombing the thin line connecting ISIS with the Arabs of the Persian Gulf to the South. Basically the Russians are trying to cut supplies of ISIS from the north and the south.

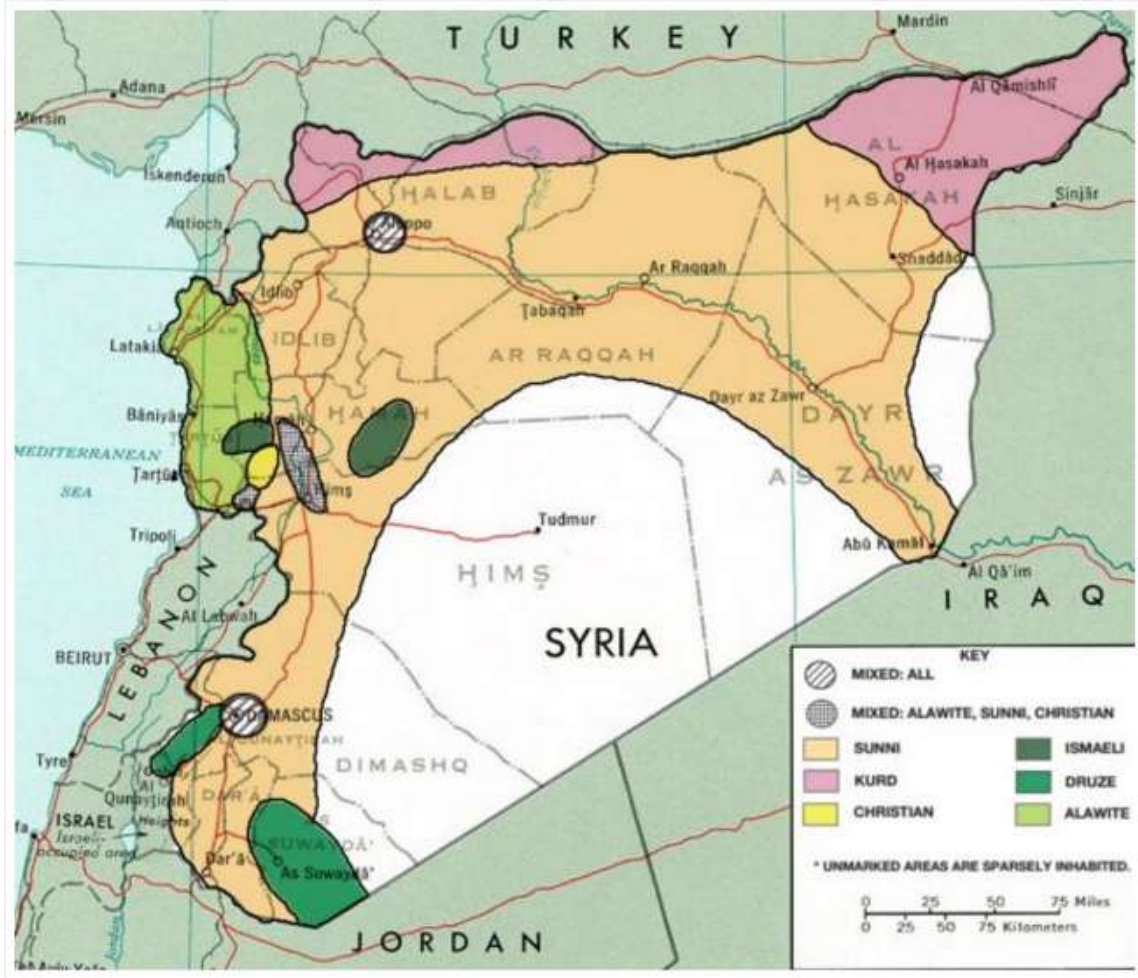
All the above make things very difficult for the Turks and the Arabs, who are hopping to control the Sunni parts of Syria and Iraq, in order to block Iran from reaching the Mediterranean Sea, which hurts the economic interests of Iran, and also in order to construct the Arab-Turkish pipelines, which will send Arab oil and gas to Turkey and maybe to Europe, something that hurts Iran, but it hurts Russia a lot more.

Map 3 Possible Alawite, Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish states in Iraq and Syria given Syria's Demographics



At the following Wikipedia map you can see with light green the Alawite parts of Syria before the war, with somon the Sunni parts, and with pink the Kurdish parts.

Map 4 Demographics of Syria



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria#/media/File:Syria_Ethno-religious_composition..jpg

Articles

“Erdogan Signals Turkey Prepared to Join Syria War If Asked”, February 2016

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-02-07/erdogan-signals-turkey-won-t-stay-out-of-syria-if-asked-to-join>

“The Military and Political Significance of Aleppo”, February 2016

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriacouncil/the-military-and-political-significance-of-aleppo>

“UAE says it is ready to send ground troops to Syria”, February 2016

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/uae-ready-send-ground-troops-syria-160207103946820.html>

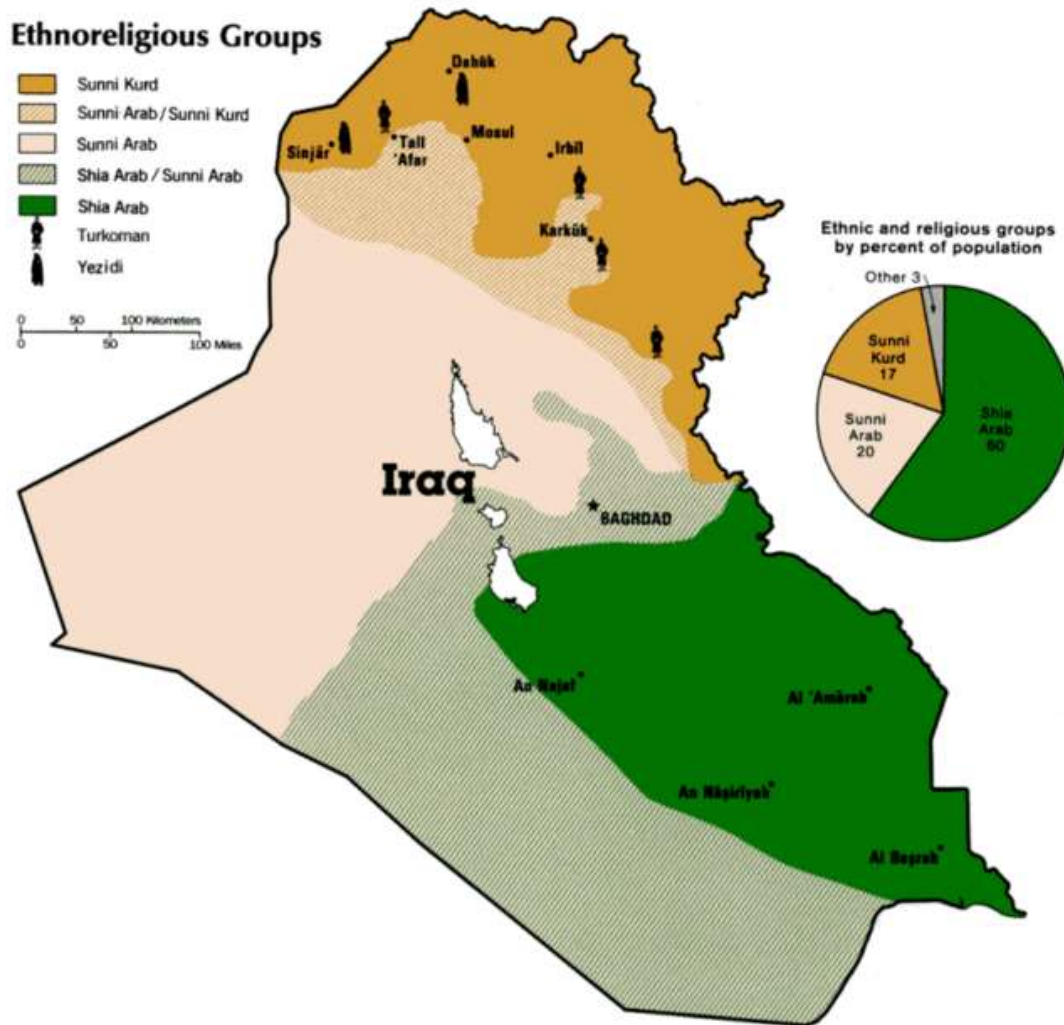
“Saudi Arabia 'ready to send ground troops' to fight Isis in Syria if US-led coalition agrees”, February 2016

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudia-arabia-read-to-send-ground-troops-to-fight-isis-in-syria-if-us-led-coalition-agrees-a6854046.html>

The Truth about the US Invasion of Iraq in 2003

Below you can see a very nice demographic map of Iraq. It shows with green the Arab Shiite part of the country, with pink the Arab Sunni part, and with light brown the Kurdish Sunni part of the country. The map says that Arab Shiites account for 60% of the Iraqi population, while the truth is that they account for 65%, and the Arab Sunnis and the Kurdish Sunnis of Iraq account for 35%, with another 5% non-Muslim part.

Map 1 Demographic Map of Iraq



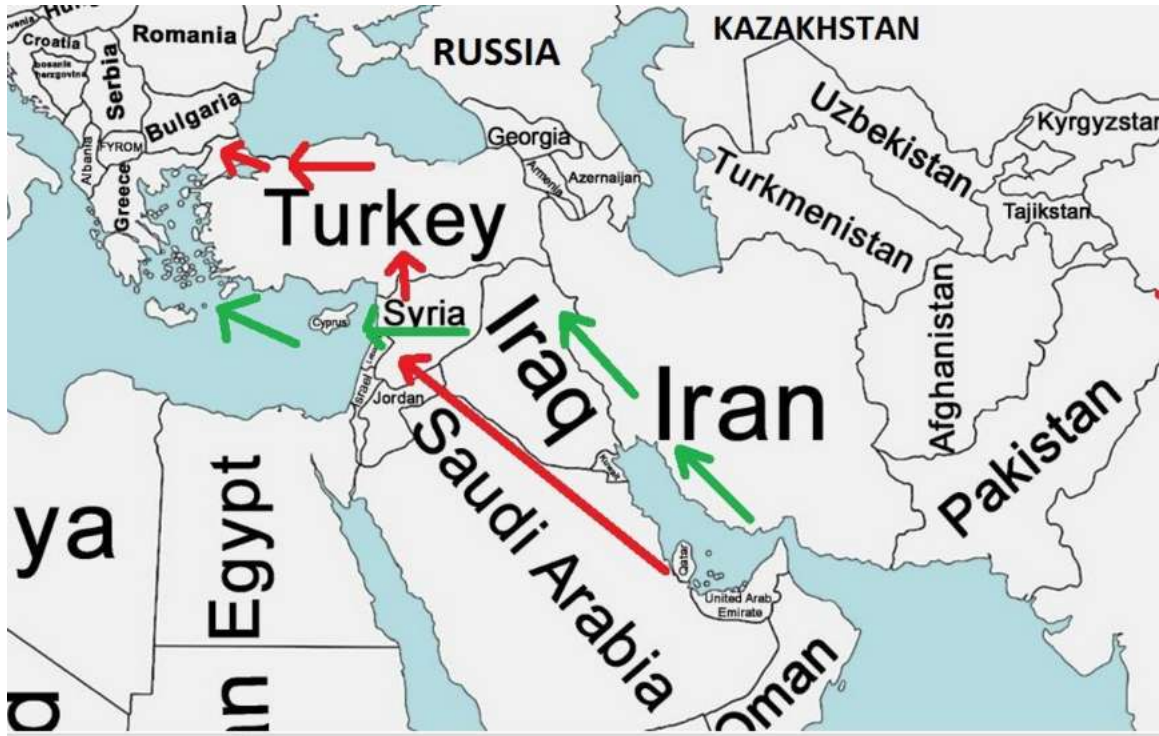
<http://theglobalstate.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/iraq-ethnic-map.gif>

Saddam Hussein, who was overturned by the US in 2003, was a socialist Sunni Arab of Iraq, and he was funding every socialist terrorist organization of the planet. Saddam Hussein belonged to the 20% minority who was oppressing the rest 80% of the Arab Shiites and the Sunni Kurds of Iraq. Saddam was using socialism to decrease the role of religion in Iraq, in order to eliminate this demographic disadvantage. For the Kurds, and for the Shiites of Iraq, the Americans were liberators. But you can see how the dirty journalists, even American ones, accuse the United States for overturning Saddam Hussein.

Journalists accuse the United States for overturning Saddam, when they know that Saddam had carried out so many terrorist attacks against the United States. They don't mind that Saddam was a dictator who belonged to a 20% minority of Iraq. The real reason the rotten journalists did not want Saddam to go was that his overturn would make the Shiite Pipeline possible (Iran-Iraq). This pipeline would obviously hurt the economic interests of the Arabs of the Persian Gulf, and the interests of the Russians too. Both the Arabs and the Russians are famous for doing business with rotten journalists. If the Shiite Pipeline reaches the Mediterranean Sea, through Syria, the Arab and the Russian exports to Europe will be hurt, and Turkey will be bypassed as an energy hub. That's what the rotten journalists care about. They don't give a damn about democracy.

The war broke out because the Turks and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf rushed in Iraq, to chop off its Sunni part, in order to block the Shiite Pipeline, which would hurt the Arabs of the Gulf, the Turks and the Russians. These countries are international terrorists, and it is not the fault of the United States that they are killing whoever reduces their oil and natural gas exports.

Map 2 Shiite Pipeline (green) VS Sunni Pipeline (red)



I must also say that the Arab Shiites of Iraq are natural competitors with the Iranian Shiites of Iran in the Persian Gulf, because they both export oil and natural gas. The thing is that they can cooperate in the Mediterranean Sea. The Iranians can allow the Iraqis to export oil and gas to Europe through their ally i.e. Syria. That is of course if the Iraqi Shiites also allow the Iranians to reach Syria through Iraq. Until now the Iraqi Shiites have chosen to cooperate with the Iranian Shiites. In the future, if they think that the Sunni bloc is stronger, they might decide to change sides. We will have to wait and see.

The problem with the United States is not that they overturn Saddam Hussein. The problem is that they do not overturn every single dictator. They only do it when they have an interest to do so. Otherwise they don't help the people who are oppressed by socialist and Islamist dictators. It is true of

course that in 2/3 of the globe there are socialist or islamist dictatorships, and that makes it very expensive to help people who are oppressed by those regimes.

What is very sad is that even the French and the Germans diplomatically fought the Americans in Iraq. The Germans did it because of their common interests with Russia, and the French did it because of their common interests with the Arabs. Moreover the French have very problematic relations with the Iranians. The Iranians are an enemy of the Arabs, who are French allies, and the Iranians are also fighting the French for the uranium of Africa. The American military operation would obviously help the Iranians, and therefore the French had one more reason to be unhappy.

Now, with the agreement for the nuclear program of Iran, the Iranians will need more uranium, and they will fight more with the French in Africa. France was the country which imposed most of the obstacle in the West-Iranian negotiations for the Iranian nuclear program. Now, with the sanctions against Iran gone, the French might find a way to work with Iran in the energy sector, but they will have to be careful in order not to alienate their Arab allies. They also have to find a solution with Iran in Africa.

The United States and the Islamists

There is a wrong impression that the United States like the Islamists of the Middle East and North Africa. This is due to many years of black and red socialist propaganda. The truth is that the Americans love to have liberals as allies, and when they can, they always advise and push their allies to move towards this direction. I want to describe the framework within which the cooperation between the US and the Saudi Islamists took place in the 20th Century.



At the beginning of the 20th Century (1900), it was clear how important oil would be in during the 20th Century, since it was going to replace coal and the steam engines. At the beginning of the 20th Century the most industrialized countries were England and Germany, followed by France. None of them had oil. The only European power that had oil was Russia.

The English, the German and the French could get oil from North Africa and the Middle East, since the Caspian Sea was controlled by Russia.

Germany, which was not a naval power, wanted to obtain access to the oil of the Middle East through her ally, the Ottoman Empire, and to the oil of North Africa through another ally i.e. Italy. Italy was a German ally at the beginning of WW1, even though it decided not to declare war on France, England and Russia at the beginning of the war, and later, in 1915, she entered the war on the side of the allies. But in 1914 Italy was a German ally. The allies managed to chop the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and the Balkans, and also take Italy on their side, and the German army had no access to oil. The same was true during WW2, when Hitler did not manage to gain control of the oil of North Africa, the Middle East and the Caspian Sea, losing the war too.

After WW2, Germany did not exist as a geopolitical player, and the conflict was transferred between the West and the Soviet Union. The Soviets were very rich in oil, but the West controlled North Africa and the Middle East. However during the period of 1950-1970, Libya, Algeria and Iraq, all came under the control of socialist dictators who were supported by Russia. In 1979, with the Islamic revolution, Iran was lost for the West too. Therefore North Africa and the largest part of the Persian Gulf were lost for the West, and came under the control of socialist dictators who were aligned and armed by Russia. That was a very big change.



In case of war the Soviets would have a clear advantage, and during the peace the Soviets and the socialist dictators in North Africa and the Middle East would act as a cartel in order to reduce production and raise prices of oil, hurting the American and the European economies. It was Saudi Arabia, under American pressure, which would produce more, in order to keep oil prices low. The other Arabs of the Gulf too, but it is Saudi Arabia which has the huge reserves.

As a result, in 1979, after Libya, Algeria and Iraq went under socialist control, and after Iran was lost, when the Russians invaded Afghanistan, in order to keep the communist government in power, the United States brought forward the Carter Doctrine. The Carter Doctrine was very clear, and it was saying that the United States would use military force if her interest in the Persian Gulf were undermined. One has to keep in mind that at the time all the countries of Central Asia i.e. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kirgistan, they were part of the Soviet Union.

Therefore from the oil rich regions of North Africa, the Caspian Sea and the Middle East, which hold more than 2/3 of the world's oil reserves, only the Arabic part of the Persian Gulf was under Western influence, and that excluded Iraq.

What the Americans meant with the Carter Doctrine, was that if Saudi Arabia came under Soviet influence, they would declare war to Russia. No matter how Saudi Arabia would come under Russia influence i.e. with military means or through election etc. The Carter Doctrine meant that the US would not stand still seeing Saudi Arabia coming under Soviet control.

Therefore when we examine the relationship between the Americans and the Saudi Islamists, we have to take into account that in the Middle East and North Africa there are only socialist and islamists. There are no liberals for the Americans to support. Therefore the Americans had to either support the Islamists, who were enemies with the socialists supported by the Soviets, or let the socialist dictators overturn them, as it happened in Libya, Algeria and Iraq. Do you thing the Americans could do something else? Without oil you could not switch your car on. Uncle Sam makes sure that something happens when you turn the key. God bless America silly.



(Russia+Iran) and (Turkey+Israel) ?

The Russian news agency RBTH (Russia Beyond the Headlines), which is funded by the Russian government, reports that Russia and Iran are upgrading their defense and military ties, and also that Iran is going to buy modern Russian military hardware. If that is true the Russian will have to promise the Iranians that they will not allow the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad to fall, as the Turks and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf request. Remember that in the last decades Bashar al-Assad, and his father Hafez al-Assad, were the strongest Iranian allies in the Middle East.

I have said many times that the Russians would not really mind Assad to go, given that they do not really want the Iranians to reach the Mediterranean Sea and export oil and gas to Europe. Three things are in Russia's mind in Syria. The first one is the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline, the second one is the Qatar-Turkey pipeline, and the third one is the Iran-Turkey pipeline.

Map 1 Russia in the Middle East

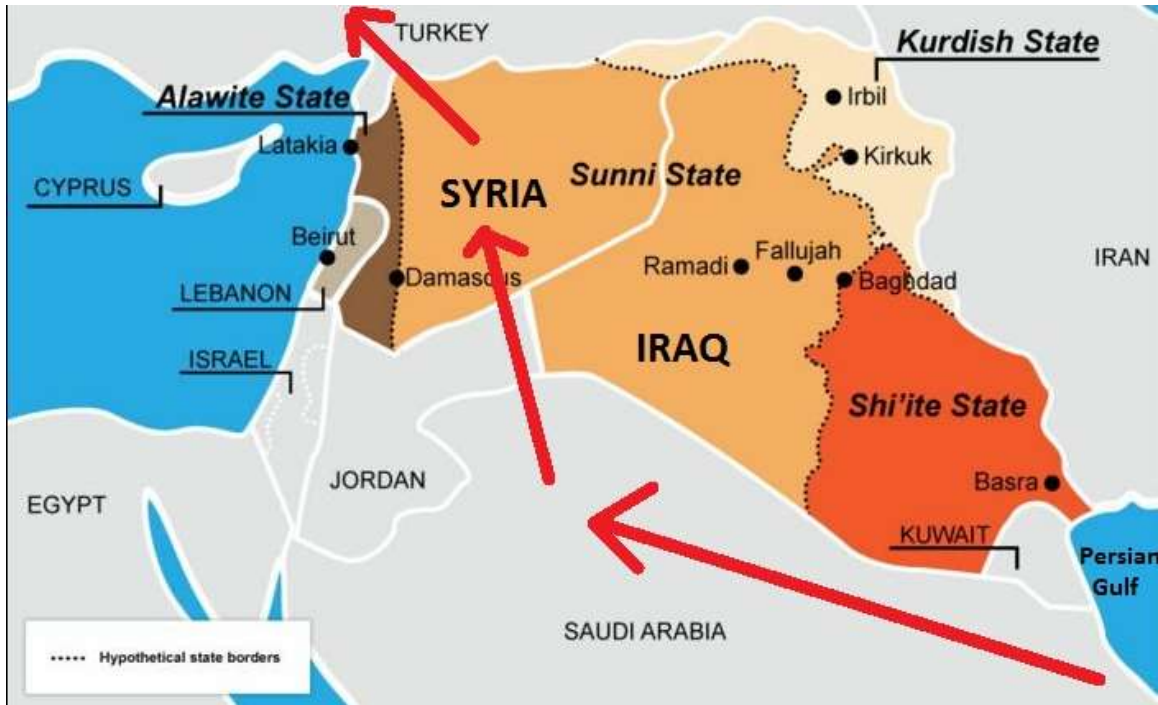


To stop the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline the Russians can either use their military presence at the Syrian coasts, or construct the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline themselves.

To stop the Iran-Turkey pipeline, the Russians can either help the Kurds of East Turkey (PKK) to revolt, or ask the Iranians to promise they will not sell Iranian gas to Turkey and Europe, and will instead sell to China, through the Iran-Pakistan-China corridor. Of course for the Iranians to reach China they will have to pass through the Muslim province of China i.e. Xin Jiang, and that might not be very easy given that the Turks and the Arabs are very strong there, since ISIS and Al-Qaeda have a strong presence.

To stop the Qatar-Turkey pipeline the Russians, together with the Iranians, must block the connection between Turkey and the Persian Gulf in Syria.

Map 2 Syria



http://cdn2.vox-cdn.com/assets/4396135/sunni-shia-kurd_state_crop.jpg

What the Russia Beyond the Headlines reports about Russia and Iran might simply be Russian and Iranian maneuvers in order to put pressure on the Turks and the Arabs, and reach a better deal during the talks about a cease fire that are taking place right now. But it might actually be true, if Iran is willing to promise Russia that it will not try to “steal” Russia’s share in the Turkish and European markets.

Besides it will take many years before Iran manages to bring its production to a level that will be sufficient in order to export large quantities to both the European and Asian markets. For the time being Iran cannot even satisfy its domestic demand for natural gas. Therefore theoretically it is possible for Iran to promise Russia that it will only export to Asia and China through Pakistan. That is of course if Iran manages to pass through Xin Jiang.

An upgrade in the Iranian-Russian alliance affects everybody, but I think most of all it affects Israel. For the time being the Russians are cooperating with the Israelis in Syria, and the Russians do not intervene when the Israelis attack the Iranians in Syria (Golan Heights) and Lebanon (Hezbollah).

Map 3 Israel



<https://lax2tlvbus404.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/map-of-israel.jpg>

A stronger Russian-Iranian alliance could mean that the Russians will use the very modern radars, aircrafts and anti-aircraft missile systems they have brought to Syria in order to attack the Israeli aircrafts in Syria in order to support Iran. That would mean a Russo-Israeli war, after the Russo-Turkish war broke out at the end of 2015.

If a Russo-Israeli war indeed brakes out, the Turks and the Israelis will face Russia and Iran as a common enemy. I do not know if that would be enough to force Turkey and Israel overcome their differences, but it would definitely help. But if the Turks insist that the Israelis lift Gaza's naval blockade, and the Israelis accept, the Israel-Egyptian cooperation would be endangered, because the Egyptians do not even want to hear about that. Remember that the Egyptian socialists (Sisi) and the Turkish Islamists (Erdogan) are bitter enemies. Lifting the naval blockade of Gaza would also undermine Israel's security.

The Turks are saying that they are close to an agreement with Israel. See Today Zaman "Turkey about to conclude deal with Israel on all issues", February 2016. The Israelis do not confirm something like that yet. We will have to wait and see what happens.

Articles

"Russia, Iran step up defense, economic engagement", February 2016

http://rbth.com/business/2016/02/16/russia-iran-step-up-defense-economic-engagement_568171

“Turkey about to conclude deal with Israel on 'all issues”, February 2016

http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_turkey-about-to-conclude-deal-with-israel-on-all-issues_412450.html

“The Middle East's Nightmare: Iran is Buying Russia's Lethal Su-30”, February 2015

<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-middle-east-s-nightmare-iran-buying-russias-lethal-su-30-15213>

“Iran to get Russian S-300 air defense systems by March 2016”, February 2016

<http://tass.ru/en/defense/835437>

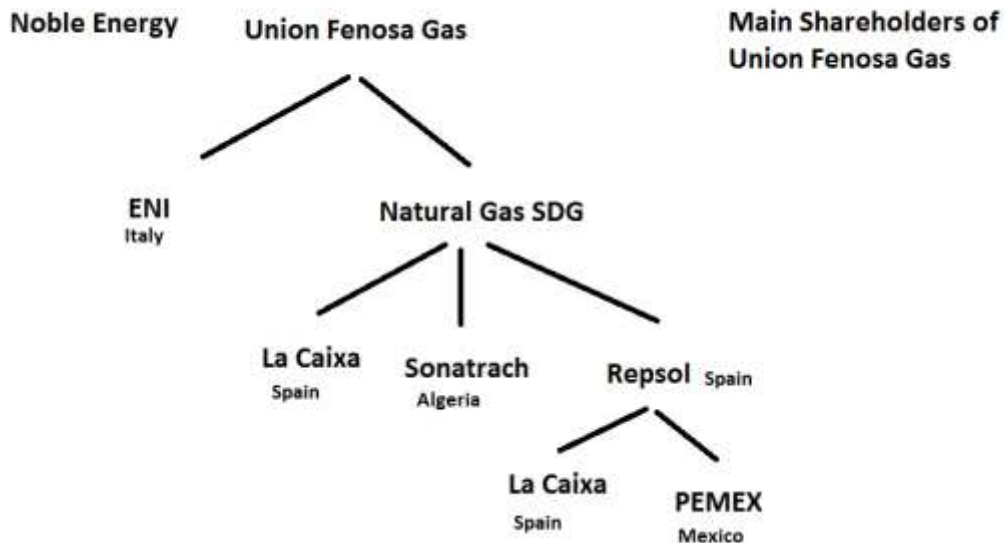
Israel's Agreement With ENI and Repsol

As you can read at the following Natural Gas Europe article, titled “Tamar representative in talks with Union Fenosa Gas”, September 2015, the Israeli government is ready to approve a deal between Noble Energy and Union Fenosa Gas.

“Tamar representative in talks with Union Fenosa Gas”, September 2015

http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/tamar-representative-in-talks-with-ufg-25519?utm_source=Natural+Gas+Europe+Newsletter&utm_campaign=de36a26196-

[RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c95c702d4c-de36a26196-307785513](http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/tamar-representative-in-talks-with-ufg-25519?utm_source=Natural+Gas+Europe+Newsletter&utm_campaign=de36a26196-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c95c702d4c-de36a26196-307785513)



Noble Energy is the American energy company which is the main player in the Israeli gas fields Leviathan (+500 billion cubic meters of natural gas) and Tamar (+300 billion cubic meters of natural gas). Noble Energy is also the main player in the Cypriot gas field Aphrodite (150- billion cubic meters of natural gas).

Map 1 Israeli and Cypriot Gas Fields



<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/cyprus/2013-03-20/trouble-eastern-mediterranean-sea>

Before I continue I must also give some information about the shareholders of Union Fenosa Gas, even though you can see the basics of its shareholder structure above.

Union Fenosa Gas, the company with which Noble Energy made a deal, is a partnership of the Italian ENI and the Spanish Natural Gas SDG, as you can read at the following address from the company's website.

<https://www.unionfenosagas.com/en/Conocenos/Accionistas>

The Italian public is ENI's largest shareholder. Repsol, Sonatrach and La Caixa are the largest shareholders of the Spanish Natural Gas SDG, as you can read at the following address from the company's website (on 22.9.2015).

“Frequently asked questions”

<http://www.gasnaturalfenosa.com/en/shareholders+and+investors/shareholders+corner/1297090745185/frequently+asked+questions.html>

Repsol is one of the largest energy companies of Spain, and La Caixa is one of the largest Spanish banks. Sonatrach is the state owned Algerian energy company. La Caixa is also the largest shareholder of Repsol, with the Mexican energy state owned company Pemex the second largest shareholder, as you can read at the following Financial Times article, titled “Repsol's big shareholders call the shots in YPF settlement”, November 2013.

6th Paragraph

Pemex, Mexico's state oil company and Repsol's second-largest shareholder, had made it known to the Spanish group that it favoured a quick settlement with Argentina, and earlier this month began to publicly attack Antonio Brufau, Repsol's executive chairman, for the size of his salary.

8th Paragraph

Meanwhile Caixabank, the Catalan lender that is Repsol's largest investor and, through its web of stakes in Spanish companies, one of the most influential concentrations of corporate power in the country, had begun to appear at loggerheads with Mr Brufau.

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/546ea5ae-5789-11e3-86d1-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3mRrD0c21>

La Caixa is the largest bank of Catalonia, and as you can read at the following Financial Times article, titled “La Caixa: Spain’s quiet powerhouse”, April 2015, La Caixa is one of the important players on the issue of Catalonia’s independence. At the same article you can read that there are no major shareholders and Caixa is a regional bank.

“La Caixa: Spain’s quiet powerhouse”, April 2015

6th Paragraph

In the political sphere, too, Caixa's reach is hard to ignore. The group has played a crucial role in the government's campaign to overhaul Spanish banking. It is also a key player in the struggle over Catalan independence, exerting pressure on both Madrid and the regional government to lower the tensions and come to an agreed settlement. Caixa is close to the royal house (it employs the king's sister, Princess Cristina), and has established strong financial and personal links with many of Spain's most important media outlets. It is rare to read a bad word about the Catalan group in either the Barcelona or Madrid press.

14th and 15th Paragraph

*The bank, meanwhile, has no shortage of competent executives, but none who comes close to rivalling Mr Fainé's power. When he clashes with top managers — as happened last year with Juan María Nin, the bank's experienced but restless former chief executive — they are swiftly let go. The foundation's stake is so dominant that no other investor can hope to exert meaningful pressure on management. "This is a great financial power but without any constraints. Shareholders don't have much power at the bank," says Andreu Missé, editor of *Alternativas Económicas*, a Barcelona-based magazine.*

*Caixa's remarkable structure and unusual breadth of ambition are both rooted in the same thing — the bank's former status as a *caja*, or regional savings bank. *Cajas* were set up to provide basic financial services to local savers and businesses, and to help economic development by recycling their profits in their region. More often than not, there was a close relationship between local *caja* bosses and politicians.*

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4b3340f6-d63d-11e4-b3e7-00144feab7de.html#slide0>

Israel's agreement with ENI, Repsol and La Caixa would be very helpful for Israel, if it goes ahead of course. Spain has built Europe's largest LNG facilities, in order to be able to receive liquefied natural gas and provide Europe with an alternative to the Russian natural gas. Spain is buying natural gas from non-Russian sources. Qatar is Spain's main LNG supplier and that makes Spain very aggressive towards Israel. Israel's agreement with La Caixa and Repsol will make Spain somewhat aggressive towards Israel.

I am not saying that Spain will change her orientation towards Qatar, because Qatar has 25 trillion cubic meters of natural gas while Israel has only 1. But in absolute terms the 1 trillion cubic meters is a huge amount. Europe consumes about 500 billion cubic meters of gas every year. The German-Russian pipeline Nord Stream 1, has a transfer capacity of 55 billion cubic meters of Russian natural gas to Germany every year. Theoretically Israel could supply this pipeline with gas for almost 20 years. I

hope I gave an idea of the volumes involved. Even though I cannot say how much the Spanish foreign policy will change if this agreement goes ahead, but it would soften towards Israel, even if only by a bit.

Italy on the other hand, was counting on the South Stream pipeline, because the Russians had given the Italians a large stake in the South Stream. Vladimir Putin and Silvio Berlusconi were the “fathers” of the South Stream. That made Italy less dependent on Qatar, and Berlusconi was a very pro-Israel politician. But now the South Stream pipeline has been cancelled and the Italian-Russian relations will be tested. See “The Clouds Over the Italian-Russian Relations”.

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2015/09/17/the-clouds-over-the-russian-italian-relations/>

However the strain in the Italian-Russian relations does not have to affect the Italian-Israeli ones if ENI imports natural gas from Israel. Especially now that ENI discovered a very large gas field in Egypt i.e. the Zohr (800+ billion cubic meters of natural gas).

Map 2 The Egyptian Natural Gas Field



<http://static2.businessinsider.com/image/55e341bb9dd7cc22008b6ae-480/zohr-gas-map.jpg>

Map 3



Map 4



Again I am not saying that this deal will make the Qatari influence in Italy disappear. Qatar is investing billions in Italy. Under the leadership of Mateo Renzi this influence should be even greater. Qatar is heavily funding the European left and center left parties, and you have seen what Mateo Renzi did with the immigrants when he was elected in 2014, and what Alexis Tsipras did in Greece when he was elected in 2015. They both flooded their countries with immigrants. The Arabs and the Turks are doing their best to see Islamism rising in Europe. But if ENI imports natural gas from Israel it is guaranteed that Italy will see Israel in a more positive way. Maybe less positive than Qatar but any gains should be welcome by the Israelis.

What I do not know is how the deal between ENI, Repsol and La Caixa will affect the relations between Israel and Russia. Israel gave a part of Tamar to Gazprom, the Russian state-owned giant, in order to have some Russian support, as you can read at the following Wall Street Journal article, titled “Gazprom Signs Deal to Market Israel's Tamar LNG Project”, February 2013. It is a sure thing that the Russians will not like Israel’s deal with ENI and Repsol, but it is very difficult to keep everybody happy, and that is true for everybody and not only Israel.

“Gazprom Signs Deal to Market Israel's Tamar LNG Project”, του Φεβρουαρίου 2013.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324338604578328231939157040>

Shell and Chevron to Leave Ukraine

In 2013 the English-Dutch Royal Dutch Shell, Europe's largest energy company, signed a contract with the Ukrainian government to exploit the Yuzivska shale gas field. Yuzivska holds more than 1 trillion cubic meters of shale gas. See map 1.

Map 1



<http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/image/Map.png>

As you can read at the following Euractiv article, titled “Russia's silent shale gas victory in Ukraine”, September 2015, Shell would invest 10 billion dollars, and by 2030 she would reach production levels of 20 billion cubic meters, which could satisfy most of the Ukrainian domestic demand. The article mentions that many believe that this gas field is one of the main reasons the Russia help the Ukrainian separatists.

As you can read at the following Financial Times article, titled “Shell to withdraw from shale gas exploration in eastern Ukraine”, June 2015, Shell informed the government of Ukraine that she will leave the country due to the situation in East Ukraine. As you can read at the following Oil Price article, titled “Chevron Pulls Out Of \$10 Billion Gas Deal With Ukraine”, December 2014, earlier the American energy firm Chevron had left Ukraine too. Chevron had agreed with the Ukrainian government to exploit the Olesska shale gas field in Western Ukraine (see map). According to the article Chevron would produce another 10 billion cubic meters of gas from this field.

Ukraine used to cover most of her energy needs with natural gas, but this has changed due to the problems between Russia and Ukraine. The Ukrainians claim that the Russians charge them higher prices in order to finance the Ukrainian oligarchs who promote the Russian energy policy, and the Russians claim that the Ukrainians steal natural gas which is supposed to go to Europe. I think that both claims are valid to a certain extent. However even today Ukraine consumes more than 40 billion cubic meters of natural gas every year, which is a huge quantity.

What is for sure though is that the departure of Chevron and Shell from Ukraine is a victory for the Russians.

“Russia's silent shale gas victory in Ukraine”, September 2015

<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/europes-east/russias-silent-shale-gas-victory-ukraine-317270>

“Shell to withdraw from shale gas exploration in eastern Ukraine”, June 2015

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/0c66011e-104a-11e5-bd70-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3l2jkOtq8>

“Chevron Pulls Out Of \$10 Billion Gas Deal With Ukraine”, December 2014

<http://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/Chevron-Pulls-Out-Of-10-Billion-Gas-Deal-With-Ukraine.html>

Vladimir Putin and Silvio Berlusconi

The government of Ukraine banned for 3 years the ex Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, from entering the country, because he visited Crimea with his dear friend Vladimir Putin. Berlusconi is one of the most outspoken supporters of Russia in Europe, and Vladimir Putin is always welcome at Berlusconi's parties. In Italy there was also a scandal because Gazprom made an agreement with an Italian energy company, Central Energy Italian Gas Holding, in which a friend of Berlusconi was holding 33% of the shares.

Berlusconi was Italy's Prime Minister for most of the first decade of the 21st century, and in the same way that the ex Prime Minister of Germany Gerhard Schroeder is considered to be the father of the Nord Stream pipeline, together with Putin of course, Silvio Berlusconi is considered to be the father of the South Stream pipeline. The Russians gave the Italian energy giant ENI 20% of the shares of the South Stream pipeline. The Italian public is ENI's largest shareholder with a 30% of "golden" shares, which give the Italian government several privileges over the remaining 70% of the shares which are privately held.

Maybe Berlusconi's geopolitical direction towards Russia was one of the reasons that Qatar wanted to buy from Berlusconi 30% of the shares of the Italian football club AC Milan, as you can read at the following Al Arabiya article, titled "Qatar linked to AC Milan purchase, Berlusconi ready to sell: report", October 2012. It is true of course that Qatar, like all other Arab

countries, invests billions in European countries and Italy, and it is also promoting the Muslim refugees and building mosques, where young Muslims are recruited. Leftist politicians like Alexis Tsipras in Greece and Matteo Renzi in Italy are very happy to allow illegal refugees in their countries. For Qatar's role in Europe there are many articles, you can see for example the following Telegraph article titled "Qatar donates £1.5m for mosque after intervention from Jack Straw", October 2009, and the following Gatestone article 'Italy's Mosque Wars', February 2012, or "Qatar Investments in Europe reach 65 billion USD", November 2013, by the Geopolitical Monitor of the Middle East.

Berlusconi's geopolitical direction towards Russia reduced Italy's dependence on the Qatari liquefied natural gas, and Berlusconi was very pro-Israel, and he was even talking about Israel becoming a member of the EU, something unthinkable in Southern Europe where socialists are extremely pro-Arab and anti-Israel. See "Berlusconi says Israel should be an EU member", February 2010. Berlusconi is not a socialist and he does not hate Israel in the same way socialists do. Socialists are always an easy prey for the Arab, Iranian and Russian petrodollars.

The French were feeling uneasy about the Russian-German-Italian natural gas axis, and in 2009 they decided to join NATO, 33 years after their withdrawal from the alliance in 1966. However with the cancellation of the South Stream and the agreement for the Nord Stream 2, the Russians gave shares to the British (Shell) and not the Italians (ENI). Therefore we should expect the Anglo-Russian relations to become warmer and the Russo-Italian

ones to become colder. See “The Clouds Over the Russian-Italian Relations”.

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2015/09/17/the-clouds-over-the-russian-italian-relations/>

That is of course if the South Stream is not revived at some point, and if the Nord Stream 2 come to life.

For the articles see:

“Ukraine Bans Silvio Berlusconi for Three Years After Crimea Visit: Reports”, September 2015

<http://europe.newsweek.com/ukraine-bans-silvio-berlusconi-three-years-after-crimea-visit-reports-333183>

“Berlusconi says Israel should be an EU member”, February 2010

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/7133042/Berlusconi-says-Israel-should-be-an-EU-member.html>

“Qatar linked to AC Milan purchase, Berlusconi ready to sell: report”, του Οκτωβρίου 2012

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/31/246846.html>

“Qatar donates £1.5m for mosque after intervention from Jack Straw”, October 2009

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/6298788/Qatar-donates-1.5m-for-mosque-after-intervention-from-Jack-Straw.html>

‘Italy's Mosque Wars’, February 2012

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2811/italy-mosque-wars>

“Qatar Investments in Europe reach 65 billion USD”, November 2013

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/europe/8233-qatar-investments-in-europe-reach-65-billion-usd>

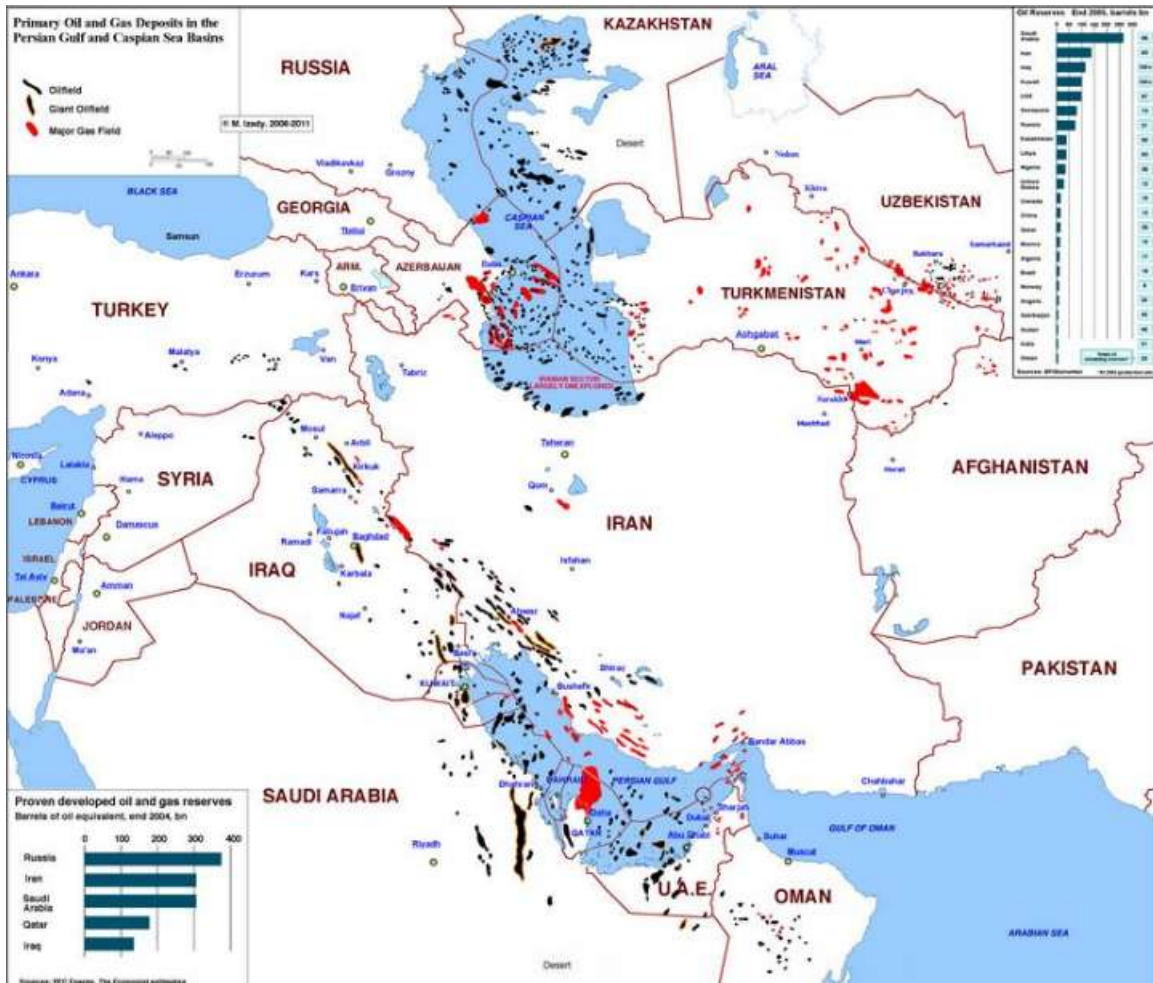


The Cost of an Iranian-Saudi War

On New Year's Eve the Address Hotel at the United Arab Emirates was set on fire. The United Arab Emirates is a close ally of Saudi Arabia. On January 2nd 2016 the Saudis beheaded 47 people, among them a Shiite cleric and many members of Al Qaeda. Then the Iranians set on fire the Saudi embassy in Tehran, in order to revenge the death of the Shiite cleric.

Some people are talking about "the drums of war". But the question is how are these two countries going to fight a direct war, when almost all of their oil and gas reserves are in the middle of these two countries, very close to the Persian Gulf, as you can see on the map? (the oil fields are colored black and the natural gas field red).

Map 1



It is much simpler for them to fight proxy wars in Syria, Egypt and Yemen, where they do not have to worry about the safety of their oil and gas reserves, than to actually fight a direct war.

Moreover what would be the effect on oil prices if a war between Saudi Arabia and Iran was to break out? Tankers would not be able to even reach Iraq, in order to get oil at least from Iraq. Therefore you have Saudi Arabia and Iran worrying too much about the safety of their reserves, and you have the United States, Europe and China worrying too much about oil prices, since their economies are addicted to oil, and would be harmed a great deal

if oil prices were to increase dramatically. Only Russia would gain from the dramatic increase in oil prices, because she would see her oil revenues exploding.

But if Iran and Saudi Arabia, and almost all great powers, have so much to lose from a Saudi-Iranian war, it means that it will be harder for such a war to break out. I am not saying that it is impossible, but the higher the cost of war the more the parties involved will think about it before they pull the trigger.

Articles

“Blaze hits Dubai skyscraper, New Year's fireworks proceed nearby”,
December 31 2015

<http://news.yahoo.com/fire-engulfs-dubai-hotel-near-worlds-tallest-building-175831640.html>

“Saudi Arabia executes 47 people in one day – including prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr”, January 2 2016

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-executes-sheikh-nimr-al-nimr-and-46-other-prisoners-in-one-day-a6793626.html>

“Protesters Angry Over Nimr Execution Set Fire To Saudi Embassy In Tehran”, January 2 2016

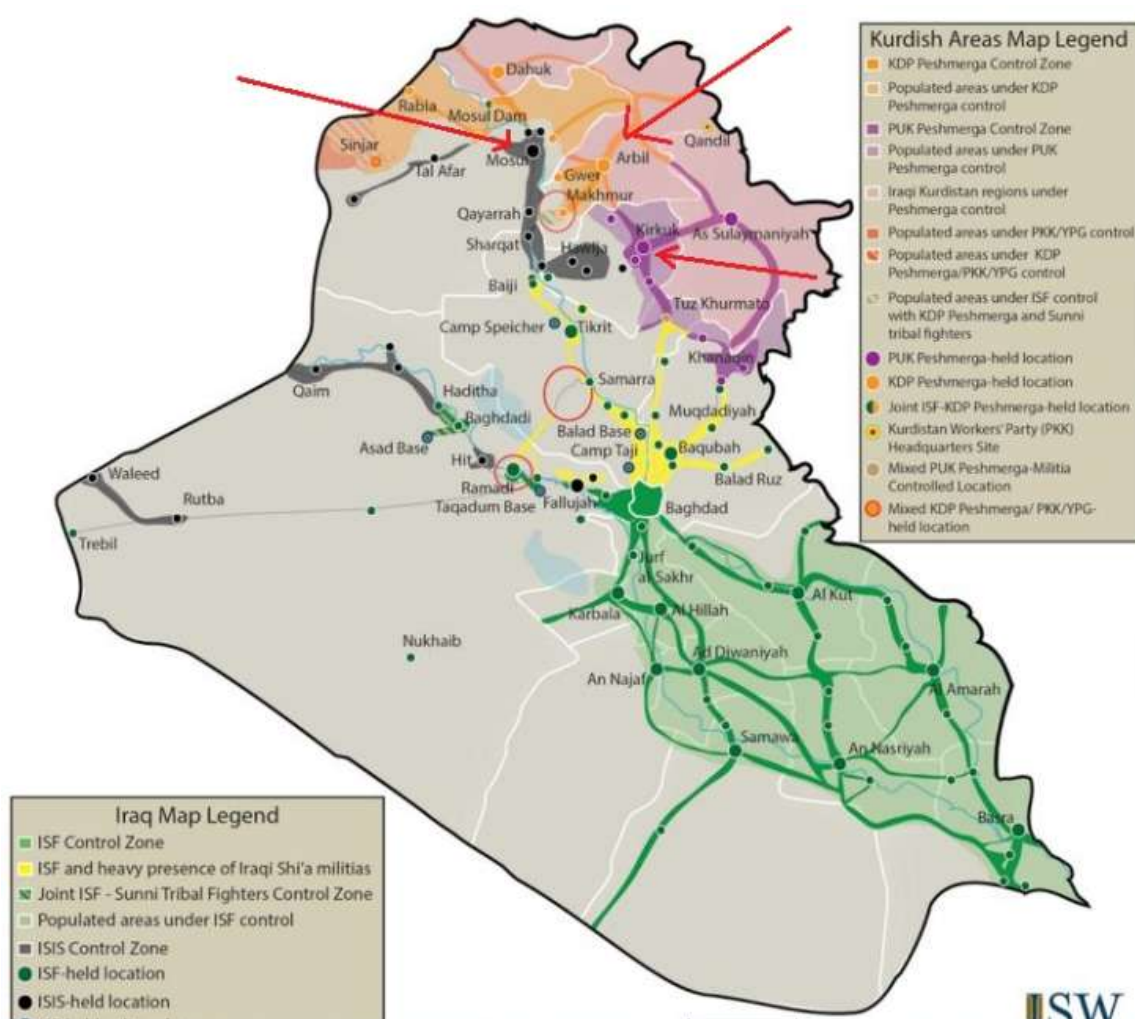
<http://www.ibtimes.com/protesters-angry-over-nimr-execution-set-fire-saudi-embassy-tehran-2246962>

The Presence of ISIS in Iraq (February 2016)

The following map from the Institute for the Study of War, an American think tank, shows with black lines ISIS presence in Iraq (8th February 2016). By ISIS I mean the Sunni Islamists of Iraq i.e. the Sunni ex-socialists of Saddam Hussein. There are exceptions of course to this rule. See “Saddam Hussein: The Father of ISIS in Iraq”.

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2016/01/08/saddam-hussein-the-father-of-is-is-in-iraq/>

Map 1 Iraq (8th February 2016)



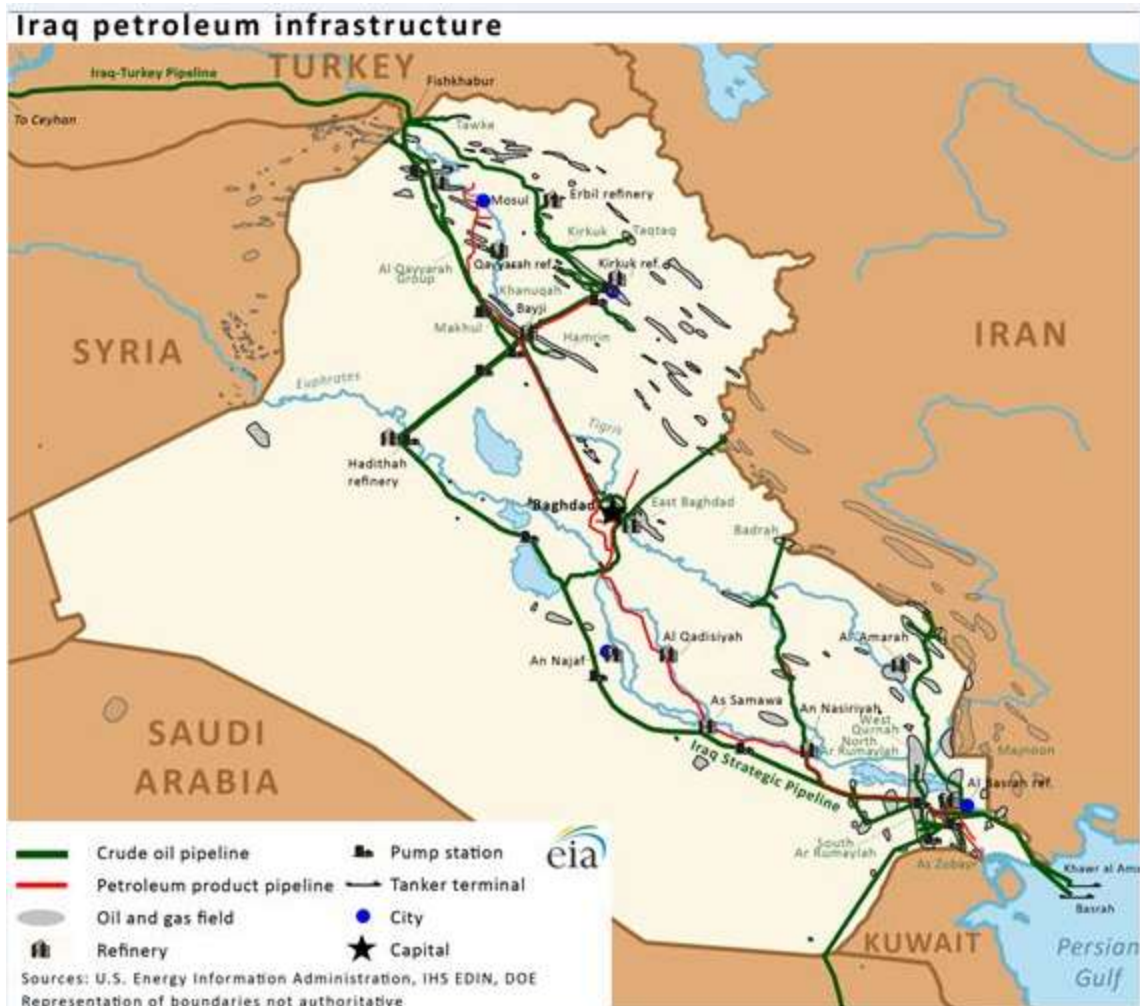
http://iswresearch.blogspot.gr/2016/02/iraq-control-of-terrain-map-february-9.html?utm_source=Iraq+Control+of+Terrain+Map:+February+9,+2016&utm_campaign=Russian+Airstrikes+in+Syria:+January+29+-+February+7,+2016&utm_medium=email

With the black lines you can see the areas controlled by ISIS, and as you can see ISIS controls the rich in oil Mosul in Northern Iraq. With orange and purple you can see the areas controlled by the Kurds of Iraq i.e. the rich in oil Kirkuk and Erbil (see red arrows on the map).

With green and yellow you can see the areas controlled by the majority of the Iraqi population i.e. the Shiite Arabs that came to power when the United States overturn the socialist Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein. The Shiite Arabs of Iraq control the rich in oil regions near Baghdad (Central Iraq) and also the rich in oil regions at the South, near the Persian Gulf.

At the following map from the Energy Information Administration you can see with gray blots the Iraqi oil and gas reserves. The rich in oil areas are at the south, near the Iranian-Iraqi borders, at Central Iraq, near Baghdad, and at Northern Iraq i.e. Mosul, Kirkuk, Erbil etc. With green and red you can see the oil networks of Iraq, which mainly end to Turkey at the north and the Persian Gulf at the south.

Map 2 Oil and Gas Fields of Iraq (EIA)



https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Iraq/images/iraq_map.png

At the following map from Washington Post you can see that the Western Part of Iraq is a desert, and at the north there are the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, where the Turkish Kurds of PKK are hiding when the Turkish army is after them. Note that PKK has carried out many terrorist attacks in Turkey, asking for greater autonomy for the Kurdistan in Turkey. Sometimes in the past the Turks had the blessings of Saddam Hussein when they entered Iraqi Kurdistan to chase the Kurds, because the Kurds were a common enemy.

Map 3 The Iraqi Desert, the Iraqi Mountains and Mesopotamia



http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inat/images/iraqart/map_people.gif

As you can see at the following map of Syria, from the New York Review of Books, the Syrian desert at South Syria is adjacent to the Iraqi desert at Western Iraq. Geography and natural barriers are important both for the construction of pipeline networks, but also for the supplies of the fighters.

Map 4 Map of Syria



<http://www.nybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/syria-map-101013.png>

I must also say that in Iraq, the United States, together with Iran, they support the Shiite Arabs at the South, and the United States also support the Kurds at the North. The Turks and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf support the Sunni Islamists of Iraq, but they are also trying to approach the Shiite Arabs in order to reduce the Iranian influence. The Turks have also common interests with the Kurds of Iraqi Kurdistan, because the Iraqi Kurds need to export their oil and the Turks need that oil. However the Turks are fighting the Kurds of Syria and Turkey. The Shiite Arabs of Iraq have problematic relations with the Kurds of Iraq, because the Iraqi Kurds do not pay

commissions to the Shiite government of Baghdad from their oil exports. However the Shiite Arabs of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds face ISIS as a common enemy.

Articles

“Iraq Control of Terrain Map: February 9, 2016”, February 2016

http://iswresearch.blogspot.gr/2016/02/iraq-control-of-terrain-map-february-9.html?utm_source=Iraq+Control+of+Terrain+Map:+February+9,+2016&utm_campaign=Russian+Airstrikes+in+Syria:+January+29+-+February+7,+2016&utm_medium=email

“Iraq”

https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Iraq/images/iraq_map.png

Syria : The Economic Interests

Yesterday I uploaded a Financial Times article which revealed that Putin asked the Syrian dictator Bashar al Assad to consider stepping down. See “Vladimir Putin asked Bashar al-Assad to step down”, January 2016

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/735b4746-c01f-11e5-9fdb-87b8d15baec2.html#axzz3xz5q4y00>

Someone might have just read the title, and think that this happened yesterday, and expect Assad to go in a couple of days. But that’s not at all how the story goes. According to the Financial Times, Igor Sergun, a Russian General, was sent by Putin on the 3rd of January 2016 in order to ask Assad to consider stepping down, in order for a solution to be reached in Syria. Remember that almost at the same time the Russians said they could offer Assad asylum. See Guardian “Putin hints that Russia could grant asylum to Assad”, January 2016.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/12/putin-russia-assad-asylum-snowden>

The article is not important because it says that Assad will go, because that’s not at all what it says. Actually the Financial Times writes that the Russians deny that they suggested to Assad that maybe it is time for him to go. The article is important because it confirms what we already know about Syria. And what do we know so far? We know that it would be good for Russia if Assad stepped down, because Bashar al Assad is the main Iranian ally in the

Middle East, and his removal would calm the Turks and the Arabs of the Gulf.

Therefore the war between Russia on one hand and the Turks and the Arabs on the other could cool down with Assad gone. The reason is that the Turks and the Arabs could accept Russia as a second best solution in Syria, in order for Russia to guarantee that the Iranians and the Iraqis will not export oil and gas to the Mediterranean Sea through Syria. If the Iranians and the Iraqis were to do that they would create competition for the Arabs and the Russians in Europe, and they would also bypass Turkey as an energy corridor.

Map 1 The War for the Pipelines



But as I have already said if the Russians were to consent to Assad's fall, the Iranians could decide to send oil and gas to Europe through Turkey to

retaliate. On the contrary, as long as the Russians help Assad to stay in power, the Iranians will prioritize sending their oil and gas to China through Pakistan, and to India through Oman, in order to avoid India's main enemy i.e. Pakistan. That way the Iranians would not hurt the Russian interests, since Russia does not sell natural gas to China and India. Russia has signed some agreements with China but it is very doubtful that they will come to life. They were mainly meant to scare the European Union.

Therefore the Financial Times article is important as a confirmation of what we already know, and not as a prediction of what will follow. Assad would go any time Russia decided so. Russia would not even have to overturn Assad herself. Russia could simply withdraw her forces from Syria, and Assad would fall, because the Iranians could not stop the Turks and the Arabs without the Russians. Obviously the Russians are not willing to let Syria fall in the hands of the Turks and the Arabs, because they would construct the Arab-Turkish pipelines, for example the Qatar-Turkey pipeline that the Arabs and the Turks agreed on in 2009, and which was blocked by Assad in Syria. Assad blocked the Qatar-Turkey pipeline in order to protect the Russian and Iranian interests, and agreed to the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline, which would be constructed and managed by Gazprom.

I would like to make a summary of the major economic interests in Syria, because the main interests are really straightforward, and they tell the whole story in Syria. The problem is that they are moving in ways that make it very difficult to reconcile.

Russia : Russia's first priority is to prevent the Arab-Turkish (Sunni) Pipelines, and also to prevent the Iran-Iraq-Syria (Shia) Pipelines. The second Russian priority is to construct and manage the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline if one of the two must definitely go ahead.

Iran: The Iranian dream has always been to reach the Mediterranean Sea and export their oil and gas to Europe. It has been centuries since the Iranians do not have access to the Mediterranean Sea.

Iraq: The Shia Arabs of Iraq, who are the majority of Iraq and came to power after the Americans overthrew the minority of Sunni Arabs (Saddam Hussein) who were running Iraq, are competing with the Iranians in the Persian Gulf, because they are both oil and gas exporters. However in Syria the Shia Arabs of Iraq, whom we called the "Government of Baghdad", are supporting the Iranians.

The Iraqis agreed to allow the Iranians to send their oil and gas to Syria and the Mediterranean Sea through Iraq, in order for the Iranians to allow the Iraqis to send their oil and gas to the Mediterranean Sea through Syria, which is a very strong Iranian ally. However the Iraqis and the Iranians are not natural allies. Probably the opposite is true, and if at some point the Iraqis believe that they have more chances to export their oil and gas to Europe or Turkey through the Sunni alliance, they could change sides. But for now the Shia Iraqis are supporting the Iranians in Syria.

Turkey: Turkey wants the Arab-Turkish pipelines to go ahead and also Turkey wants to block the Iranians and the Iraqis from reaching the

Mediterranean Sea, because they would bypass Turkey as an energy hub. Turkey wants free elections in Syria, in order for the Sunni minority to rise to power, something that would open Syria's door to Turkey. Turkey wants Syria to become a Turkish satellite, since Turkey is the strongest military power of the Muslim world.

The Arabs of the Persian Gulf : In Syria the Arabs of the Persian Gulf have almost the same interests with the Turks. The Arabs want the construction of the Arab-Turkish pipelines, and also to block Iran's exit to the Mediterranean Sea. However the Arabs would prefer Syria under Arab rather than Turkish influence, but they would definitely prefer Turkish than Iranian influence over Syria, because Turkey does not have oil and gas to export through Syria.

The United States: Syria is not very important for the United States, because she is poor in oil and gas. The rich in oil and gas Iraq is a lot more important for the Americans, and that's why the Americans care a lot more for their Shia Arabs allies in South Iraq, and their Kurdish allies in Northern Iraq. Both of these American allies are very rich in oil and gas. In Syria the Americans support the Kurds, the Turks and the Arabs support the Syrian Sunni Islamists, and the Russians and the Iranians support the Syrian Alawites of Bashar al Assad.

In Syria the Americans are attacking the Sunni Syrians who are supported by Turkey when they attack the Syrian Kurds, and to make things up to Turkey they support Turkey against Russia in Syria. That's why the Americans are asking for Assad to go. But the Americans are calling for Assad to go with

less and less enthusiasm. Erdogan's Turkey is not the ally she used to be for the United States, and I think that for the United States it would be much better if the Iranians controlled Syria rather than the Turks. The Americans are already too heavily dependent on Turkey, and I do not think they would be very happy to see their dependency on Turkey rising. But it does not seem realistic to expect the Iranians to control Syria. Probably the Alawite part of Syria will be controlled by Russia, and the Sunni part of Syria will be controlled by the Turks and the Arabs of the Gulf.

For the United States the best scenario would be for all the pipelines to go ahead i.e. the Arab-Turkish Pipelines (Qatar-Turkey), the Iran-Syria Pipeline (Shia Pipelines), and the Caspian Sea-Turkey-Europe Pipeline (Southern Energy Corridor), in order for no one to have too much influence over the American allies in Europe. But this scenario is a midsummer night's dream.

China: For China, Syria is not very important either. Iraq is important for China. For China and the United States oil and gas rich countries like Iraq are always more important than oil and gas poor countries like Syria. On the contrary, for the oil and gas rich Russia the importance is not on the oil and gas but on the corridors of oil and gas. Iraq is a source of oil and gas and interests more the US and China, and Syria is a corridor for oil and gas and interests more Russia.

What is important is that the economic interests in Syria are very straightforward, and you can know what is happening in Syria simply by looking at the map I provide above. The problem is that these straightforward interests are moving in very opposite directions, and are very difficult to reconcile.

But articles like the one from the Financial Times cannot tell us something that we do not already know about Syria, because things in Syria are already pretty simple.