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Iran will see its demise in Syria

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It is hard to forgo the taste of battle, when Adrenalin is pumping, when the sweet taste of power is ever present, when the vanquished are subservient out of necessity, especially if supremacy is asymmetrical and unchallenged. Surely, this is the description of a bully and it is. It is the description of Iran in Syria. Tehran is intent on seizure in investment, blood and treasure. Iranian presence in Syria is as a bully. Yet it is not the description of Iran's taunting of Israel. Bullies eventually meet their match and Iran has met its match with Israel. It will be on the Syrian battleground where Syria will eventually see its demise.

Unsubstantiated figures put Iranian military deaths in Syria at more than 2000. Others such as President Assad of Syria dispute this figure. He claims that there have never been Iranian troops inside Syria. But this has been contradicted by Iran who insists it is in Syria at the behest of Damascus and will only leave at its request. This contradiction and dichotomy questions the legitimacy of Iranian presence in Syria. There are no denying the facts. There are Iranian troops in Syria. Israel, American and Russian intelligence show that Iranian forces currently operate out of 11 bases around the country, as well as nine military bases for Iranian-backed Shiite militias and about 15 Hezbollah bases and observation points.

Indeed, Iran is not just a military bully in Syria. Iran has global intentions. Iran wants to plant the seeds of its financial and ideological institutions for a global revolution. For example, the Iran backed Jihad al-Binaa Islamic charitable foundation operating in Syria. Iranian presence in Syria is existential! The cost for Iran is not only in lives. There is an enormous financial drain on the Iranian economy to defend the regime of Bashar Assad from an armed uprising. There is mounting pressure including street protests in Iran to end this support. Iranians at home are demanding accountability and fiscal prudence. Even Iranian Foreign Ministry officials sometimes squirm to defend the Iranian position.

The pressure is not only domestic. Israel, American and even Russia have voiced that Iran needs to leave Syria. Each are taking their own measures and indeed there is even coordination of efforts. America has stressed that Iran's withdrawal from Syria is one of 12 preconditions for removing sanctions. Israel continues to strike Iranian targets that could threaten her security and in doing so restricts Iranian forces from implementing their leader's intent. Russia is pressuring Iran to troops and militias now in Syria's south to west of the Euphrates River.

Even with this I don't think Iran is willing to abandon its presence in Syria. It's very difficult for them to pick up their bags and go home. It is understandable that as a bully Iran cannot back down quickly or at all. It is not just about ego. Iran has invested too much blood and treasure, some say over \$30 billion to fold to domestic and international demands. However, by being recalcitrant and refusing to budge from Syria, Iran will eventually see its demise.

As a bully Iran also believes that it is invincible. Here lies its Achilles heel, its weak point. Regardless of Israeli airstrikes, American sanctions or even Moscow's pressure Iran incorrectly believes that it can and

will reap the potential long-term strategic rewards Syria has to offer. But there are no long-term strategic rewards. More than anything being in Syria lets Iran think it has the ability to taunt Israel. It thinks it has been able to move the venue of its grudge match to Israel's border. Time will show that this will be the ultimate passing of the regime in Tehran. The Iranian bully has taken on a strong and resilient country, nation, people, and religion.

In my view a full Iranian exit from Syria will follow the full military defeat of the Syrian government and this is inevitable. When this happens Iran, the bully will find that it has invested a lot of lives and money and reaped no rewards. The regime of the Ayatollah will be left with no prizes only debts; the biggest to its own population. Indeed, the Iranian presence in Syria is existential but not for the reasons that it thinks it is. It will not expand globally, it will topple when the Syrian regime topples because it has invested too much to support a losing side.

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