

## Global Hot Topics

# Syria: The war will continue

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**Aleppo has been seized almost entirely by pro-regime forces while Turkey moves deeper into northern Syria to seize ISIS-held al-Bab. The war against rebel forces will move to Idlib province west of Aleppo (rebel held green area in the map and southern parts of it). The new phase in the war would also a test of the alliance between Moscow and Tehran.**

## Military Situation in Northern Syria

Source: BBVA Research



● Turkish Air Raids

## Aleppo: Shadowed by massacre

The pro-regime forces, i.e. the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), Russia, Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah have reached a turning point in Aleppo. As of mid-December, the Assad regime declared 98% of Aleppo as in its control. In remaining 2% of the city, almost 100K people have been trapped. In order to evacuate the civilians the regime forces and the rebels declared ceasefire under the supervision of Turkey and Moscow on November 13. According to the deal, all the civilians would move to Idlib, the city jointly dominated by rebel groups of Fateh al-Sham (formerly named as al-Nusra) and Ahrar al-Sham. Turkey was ready to build refugee camps near the border to host almost 80K civilians. **Alas, due to Iran's strong objections, the deal could not be implemented at the beginning.** In fact, the SAA

violated the ceasefire by introducing new series of attacks over the remaining rebel held eastern Aleppo one day after Moscow and Ankara agreed on the terms of the ceasefire. The diplomatic traffic between Ankara and Moscow has yielded results and the ceasefire was resumed even though Shi'a militias attacked evacuation groups in Aleppo. **Thus, Aleppo could be a real test for the alliance between Moscow and Tehran, as Iranian hawkish groups perceive the evacuation as a maneuver of rebel groups.**

## Al-Bab: Cutting the Kurdish Corridor

Ultimately, Turkey and its proxies of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) reached the outskirts of al-Bab (the most critical phase in cutting the Kurdish corridor in northern Syria) and broke the first defensive lines of ISIS around the city. However, the pace of the operation through the city center has been slowed down due to baby traps. In the meantime, Turkish Air Forces conduct air raids against ISIS units to weaken the remaining defensive lines. **After al-Bab, Turkey/FSA could clear YPG of Manbij and Afrin as PKK proxies in Turkey escalated terrorist attacks in western Turkish cities.** In general, PKK proxies' terrorists are trained in YPG camps in northern Syria and Turkey may want to destroy terrorist trafficking between northern Syria and the PKK.

## Idlib: War for Idlib is waiting ahead

**Among 3000 rebel fighters will move from Aleppo to Idlib (rebel held green area in the map and southern parts of it) as part of the evacuation plan.** Some could be expected to join Turkey's Euphrates Shield and al-Bab offensive and some would stay in Idlib to join the preparation of defending the province from pro-regime forces. **It would be no surprise that after seizing the entire Aleppo city, the regime forces, Shi'a militia will attack Idlib province with Russian military support.**

## Summing up

**The fall of Aleppo to the hands of Assad regime is not the signal of the end of Syrian War.** In fact, Bashar al-Assad said, "the war is not over". Idlib, the rebel pockets near Damascus, and Palmyra, which is besieged by ISIS are the next targets of pro-regime forces. **As the war continues at full speed, it would be a real test between the forces that support Assad regime.**

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