



“In fact, the issue is always between two points”

Weekly Political and Geopolitical Developments

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TRUMP'S MIDDLE EAST TOUR: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE**Prof. Dr. Murat KOÇ**

The apparent primary aim of Donald Trump's Middle East tour—which included Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—was to strengthen the economic and geopolitical interests of the United States. This trip marked Trump's first major international visit in his second presidential term and aimed to deepen strategic partnerships in the region. But what about the hidden agenda?

THE VISIBLE OBJECTIVES**1. Effort to Establish a New Regional Bloc**

Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE sought to construct a Sunni Arab axis that excludes Israel, opposes Iran, and keeps a distance from China. This axis intends to deepen economic ties with the U.S. while offering an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative within the Arab world.

2. A Display of Global Leadership

Trump, at the outset of his second term, staged this tour as a form of "economic diplomacy theater" to rebuild his global leadership image. The trillion-dollar deals were meant not only to signify economic gains but also to project power and prestige. He aimed to reverse the perception that the Middle East was drifting away from American influence.

3. A Geo-Economic Counter-Offensive Against China and Russia

The tour was designed to curb Chinese energy investments and technological influence and to undercut Russia's strategic footholds in Syria and Iran by promoting a "new American economic order."

THE HIDDEN DIMENSIONS**◆ A New Wave of Tension with Iran**

Trump's closeness with Gulf states will be perceived by Iran as a direct threat. The Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf are likely to become increasingly tense.

◆ Israel's Reaction and Political Signals

The complete exclusion of Israel from the tour caused security concerns and diplomatic discomfort in Tel Aviv. It is not unlikely that Israel will begin pressuring Trump via the U.S. Congress and Jewish lobbying groups.

◆ New Tech Blocs and AI Collaboration

The AI and defense tech agreements signed during the visit are part of a broader plan to fuse Arab capital with Silicon Valley. This is an attempt to counter China's "digital yuan" strategy by creating a "technological dollar zone" in the Arab world.

◆ Regional Impact of the Syria Initiative

The lifting of sanctions on Syria will open the country to new investments. However, this move will unsettle both anti-Assad opposition and the Russia-Iran axis. Gulf capital, backed by the U.S., will be positioned as a reconstruction power in Syria to counterbalance China.

Trump's 2025 Middle East visit should not be seen merely as a matter of economic or defense deals but as a bold attempt to permanently restructure regional balances.

The core objectives:

- To establish a new geo-economic balance against China and Russia through Gulf partnerships,
- To create a new leadership axis in the Arab world by offsetting Israel's influence,
- To reclaim soft power in the Middle East under the American orbit.

In this context, Trump's visit should be considered a turning point for the region's future and a catalyst for new power recalibrations among all actors in the Middle East.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUMP'S TOUR FROM RUSSIA'S PERSPECTIVE

Donald Trump's 2025 Middle East tour has been perceived by Russia as a highly critical and unsettling development. Moscow viewed this visit not just as a move to expand U.S. economic influence but as a direct challenge to Russia's geopolitical achievements in the Middle East.

1. Risk of Losing Geopolitical Balance to the U.S.

Since 2015, Russia had established strategic superiority in the region via its intervention in Syria. Alliances with Iran, closer ties with Turkey, and controlled dialogue with Israel were its cornerstones. Trump's tour and the full alignment of Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar with the U.S. undermine Russia's role as a balancing actor in the region. Qatar's proximity to Washington, despite being a rival in natural gas and previously in dialogue with Moscow, rings alarm bells in energy diplomacy.

2. A Challenge to Russia's Role in Syria

Trump's meeting with Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa and his promise to lift sanctions represent a direct threat to Russia. The move aims to sideline Russia in Syria's reconstruction and prioritize Gulf capital and U.S. companies. This undermines the return on Russia's decade-long military and political investment in Syria.

3. Shrinking of Russia's Arms Market Share

Massive arms deals signed with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (e.g., Patriot systems, F-35 transfers) represent significant losses for Russia's defense exports. These countries previously used Russian systems like the S-400 as leverage in negotiations. Now, Russia's bargaining chips have weakened considerably.

RUSSIA'S POSSIBLE REACTIONS AND STRATEGIC RESPONSES

◆ 1. Deepening Strategic Partnership with Iran

Russia may push Iran more decisively into the anti-Western bloc. Aggressive arms and energy agreements could lead to the formation of an "immunity alliance" against U.S. pressure.

◆ 2. Coordinated Moves in the Middle East with China

Russia and China may develop coordinated regional counter-initiatives in response to Trump's Middle East expansion. The Gulf component of China's Belt and Road Initiative could be accelerated to offer alternatives to the American-led model.

CONCLUSION

Trump's 2025 Middle East tour can be interpreted as a redistribution initiative directly targeting areas where Russia had long established influence. From the Kremlin's perspective, the visit signifies:

- The reassertion of American presence in the region,
- The limitation of Russia's role to military influence only,
- Potential economic campaigns to weaken Russia's hand in the Ukraine crisis,
- And a further consolidation of the China-Russia-Iran axis.
- These are developments expected to shape the strategic landscape moving forward.