Turkey Challenges U.S. Kurdish Policy in Syria
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The purpose of this article is to shed light on the predicament of the Kurds in the Kurdish region of northern Syria, which the Kurds call Rojava or western Kurdistan. These people, who had frequently been called the forgotten Kurds of the Middle East, have been punished by successive Syrian governments for holding on to their own ethnic identity, cultural practices and language as their brethren have done across the border in Turkey and Iraq. The Syrian government has used different crude and coercive tools, including the denial of rights to citizenship, property ownership, government employment and education with a view to absorbing them in the Arab melting pot. The Syrian Kurds came to prominence when they stood their ground with inferior weapons to fight back the Islamic State (IS), which tried to take over their villages and towns and use their women and girls as sex slaves, as they did to the Yazidi Kurds in the Sinjar (Shingal) district across the border in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Having witnessed the courage of the Kurdish women and men fighting back the Islamic State (IS), the U.S.-led international allies came to their aid and started training and equipping them with better weapons, a move that Turkey challenged. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the U.S. of collaboration with Kurdish terrorists and suggested that the U.S. should join forces with Turkey in the fight against all terrorist groups, including Syrian Kurdish fighters (People’s Protection Units-YPG/YPJ), whom they accused of being affiliated with Turkey’s Kurdistan Workers’
Party (PKK), which had been struggling for autonomy since 1984. This article explains why the U.S. military turned down the Turkish offer, despite Turkey’s continued opposition.

As the fight against IS was coming to an end and the US turned a blind eye to Turkish troop incursions into Kurdish territories, the YPG became increasingly concerned about the future status of the three autonomous enclaves they have established in northern Syria since 2012. While Russia, Turkey, Iran and the US were negotiating in Geneva, Astana, and Sochi how to divide their geopolitical loot in Syria, the Kurds were fearful that the U.S. might allow Turkey to implement its ethnic cleansing program by settling about 3.5 million Syrian Arabs on Kurdish land.