Charred remains of Syrian ships after Israeli strikes.

**Jagatbir Singh** 

VSM (RETD)

Reshaped" can be

used for describing

West Asia since the

Syria. With Hamas

all but decimated

Hezbollah irrepara-

bly weakened, and

Bashar al-Assad

gone, the region has

witnessed dramatic change. The

main axis running from Iran

through Syria to the Hezbollah in

this 'reshaping' are Israel and

Turkey. Israel has taken advan-

tage of the flux in Syria by occu-

ing Mount Hermon and targeting

the Syrian Naval Fleet in Latakia

in Syria. Further, it has gained an

advantage to operate more freely

Turkey, meanwhile, has estab-

pying a small buffer zone, captur

The two main beneficiaries of

Lebanon has now been severed.

Turkey could not have executed its

takeover of Syria, hence, it is now

positioned to be the most influen-

Are Israel and Turkey on

Following the collapse of the

Assad regime in Syria, Israel,

which is backed by the US, and

Turkey, which is a NATO country,

suddenly find themselves face-to

face in what could lead to a 'colli-

sion course' as per Yaroslav Trofimov in the *Wall Street* 

going to be the next challenge.

Journal. Managing this rivalry is

diminished threat from Shia Iran,

there are new worries about a

Turkish-led group of Islamists.

Relative optimism is accompanied

by concern that radical Sunni

Islamists maybe just as dangerous

and just as committed to Israel's

strongly condemned Israel's move

into the buffer zone, with Erdogan

accusing Israel of 'displaying its

occupier mentality.' Israel coun-

tered with its own accusations

against Turkey, describing it as

about occupation in Syria.' Now,

with Israeli and Turkish forces

operating in different parts of

Syria, the possibility for unintend-

Stimson Centre in Washington,

"Israel is exploiting an opportuni-

ty to make sure that the next

Syrian government is essentially

demilitarised and will pose no

of Israel's actions in Gaza. It has

said that it would do everything in

its power to hold Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

accountable for his actions in

Gaza. Turkey has come out in sup-

Turkey has also been critical

As per Barbara Slavin, of the

ed conflict increase

'the last country that can speak

In recent days, Turkey has

destruction as Hezbollah's Shia.

While Israel can celebrate the

a Collision Course?

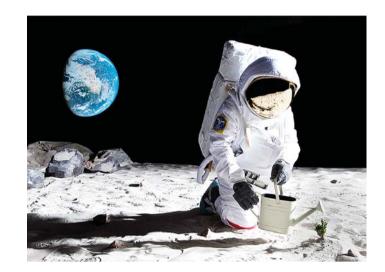
tial outside actor in the country.

राष्ट्रदुत

**#SPACE** 

# Food grows better on the Moon than on Mars

Scientists expect the moon to have better soil for growing food than the red planet.





Musk might suggest that human settlements could have a far easier time on the moon.

Scientists have come up with many ideas for growing food in outer space. One concerns growing plants directly in water (called hydroponics). for instance, and another is growing them using misted nutrients from the air (called aeroponics). But both of these options are expensive, so, some scientists are also exploring a more traditional method of feeding future astronauts, growing crops directly in lunar and Martian

Soil samples from the moon, taken during the Apollo missions, have been contaminated with moisture, and collecting new samples would be too costly, so, for the moon experiments, the scientists made do with artificial soil reconstructed by Exolith Lab. and based on samples taken during the Apollo 16 mission in 1972. Reconstructed Mars samples (humans are yet to return any true Mars samples from the Red Planet) were based on data collected by the Curiosity Rover, which is currently roaming the Martian landscape. (Soil, in this case, is used loosely because lunar soil,' or more accurately 'regolith,' as well as Martian regolith differs considerably from what we traditionally call 'soil' on Earth.)

"The interesting thing is that the lunar crops grew better than the Martian ones," said Laura Lee, a graduate Research Assistant at Northern Arizona University who presented the research poster at the 2024 American

Geophysical Union. "We had thought that it would be the other way around." The ground on Mars is full

of nitrogen, a vital component for planet life, raising hopes that it might be more hos pitable than it appears, but Martian soil is also dense and clay-like, the researchers realized, restricting the amount of oxvgen available to plant roots.

growing the crops with

Milorganite, a brand of fertil-

izer made of heat-treated

microbes that digest waste-

water, which was thought to

be a good candidate for pro-

ducing crops in space settle-

ments. Waste disposal would

be a problem for any off-world

settlement, and researchers

have long wondered if the

wastewater from astronauts

could be used to fertilize

crops and sustain farming

without importing fertilizer

from the Earth, solving two

potential problems at the

not yet been published, pre-

recycling waste from humans

on the moon and Mars might

not be a straightforward solu-

tion. Martian corn. grown

with wastewater-digesting

bacteria, had a survival rate of

33.3%, whereas corn, grown

in pure nitrogen fertilizer,

which is more regularly used

for crops on Earth, had a sur-

vival rate of 58.8%, suggest-

ing that fertilizer might need

to be imported to make up for

low vields, if we go the

human-wastewater-fertiliza-

testing broccoli, squash, beans and alfalfa with differ

ent mixes of regolith and fer-

tilizer in both soil types to see

if these plants respond better

than the corn did.

The researchers are now

But although the study has

lished Syria as its de-facto sphere of influence. The groups, which it supported during the Syrian civil war, have swept their way into Damascus and now control most of the country. There is no doubt that Turkey has successfully helped Syria's Sunni majority overthrow Syria's minority Alawites, which were backed by Shia Iran and is now, no doubt, wanting to restore its leadership over the region in continuation of its Ottoman legacy as an Islamic world leader.

> Turkev has been a long-term supporter of the Hav'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which had early links to the Islamic State, and then to Al Qaeda. Without the HTS,



Gas pipeline between Qatar and Turkey

THE WALL

**ISRAEL-TURKEY** COMPETITION

> Turkey and Israel have emerged as the main strategic beneficiaries of the collapse of the Syrian regime, which has led to the decline of Iranian influence in the West Asia. But now, these two countries,

whose relations have been strained to the breaking point since the war in Gaza began, are, maybe, on a collision course of their own, in Syria.

# **#GRAND VIEW**



Bashar al-Assad gone.

port of South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. It has suspended trade with Israel and blocked co-operation between Israel and NATO. The Turkish President has even thought about an armed intervention in Gaza. These highlight just how badly relations had deteriorated. Israel, in turn, blames Turkey

for allowing Hamas to use its ter ritory as a base for directing and financing military activities, and for money-laundering. Zaher Jabareen, a senior Hamas Commander-in-charge of operations in the West Bank, lives in Istanbul. Israel has said that Hamas's operations are partly financed by a network of companies based in Istanbul, some of which have been placed under sanctions by the US.

## **Golan Heights**

Israel Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has announced that he had approved a plan to double Israeli settlement in the occupied Golan Heights. "Strengthening the Golan Heights is strengthening the state of Israel." said Netanyahii in a statement on 15 December, "and it is especially important at this time. We will continue to hold on to it, make it

flourish and settle it." In response, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said, "This decision is a new stage in Israel's goal of expanding its borders through occupation. This step by Israel is a source of grave concern, taken

together with Israel's entry into the area of separation, in violation of the 1974 disengagement agreement, its advance into adjacent areas and airstrikes in Syria. The move would 'seriously undermine' efforts to bring stability to Syria after Bashar al-Assad's fall.'

Kurds The 'Kurdish issue' is now going to be in the spotlight. Forces from Syria's Kurdish ethnic minority became the US main local partner in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria, under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces

(SDF). After the extremist group was largely defeated, the Kurdish led forces consolidated control over towns in the Northeast, expanding an autonomous region amid the chaos, taking territory it saw as its own. But Kurdish fight ers still had to contend with their ongtime enemy, Turkey, which regards them linked to its Kurdish separatist insurgency.

The US also maintains a force of about 900 troops in the Kurdishcontrolled oil drilling areas in the northeast and a garrison in the

With a pro-Turkish government in the saddle in Syria, they will be looking at the freedom to operate against the People's Protection Units (YPG) outfit in Northeastern Syria. The YPG spearheads the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and is considered by Turkey to be part of the PKK, which has fought against the Turkish state for decades.

Turkish Defence Minister, Yasar Guler, recently told a press conference, "In the new period, the PKK/YPG terrorist organisation in Syria will be eliminated sooner

Europe also needs gas to replace Russian gas imports. A natural gas pipeline from Qatar to Turkey, running through Syria, had been blocked by Assad in 2009, and could be back on the table under the new regime. This would give European markets an access to Qatari gas. For this, they need the support

of Turkey, hence, for Europe, it is military will leave it vulnerable to imperative that the instability in resurgent fundamentalists, with a Syria and tensions between question mark over who will keep Turkey and Israel are managethe extremist groups in check. The question remains whether

damentally changed the dynamics of the Israeli-Turkish relation ship. To begin with, the shared threat perception of Iran has significantly diminished. While Israel may still pursue an aggres sive stance against Iran, especially due to the possible assurance from the incoming Trump admin istration, but Iranian proxies threat to Israel stands diminished Similarly, while Turkish-Iranian competition will continue in Iraq and the Caucasus, the absence of Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, makes these other fronts more manageable for

rhetorical in the past, will now regional influence, remain neutral or even side with the US and carry more weight, given Turkey's expanded influence. As it is now Israel, in case of renewed tension. resent on the borders of Jordan. ebanon, and Israel, both coun-

Syrian naval fleet in Latakia.

Next, Erdogan's threats

against Israel, which were seen as

over a unified Syria, ensuring that

its own strategic interests are

safeguarded. If HTS attempts to

challenge Israeli-held territories.

or if Israel acts to weaken HTS.

tensions could escalate. Unlike

Israel's war with Hamas and

Hezbollah, Turkey is likely to be

more involved in a conflict

depends on Turkey as it once did

The normalization of Israeli rela-

tions with Arab states, including

Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, and

potentially Saudi Arabia, has

But the weakening of Syria's

broadened its regional alliances.

Lastly, Israel, no longer,

between Israel and HTS.

Turkey and Israel have emerged ries are now de-facto neighbours. Furkish intelligence, military, and as the main strategic beneficiaries civil operations will be active in of the collapse of the Syrian reas controlled by Hay'at Tahrir regime, which has led to the al-Sham (HTS), and Turkey's preslecline of Iranian influence in the ence near Israel's borders may West Asia. But now, these two merge as new flashpoints. countries, whose relations have Turkey and Israel now hold been strained to the breaking onflicting visions for Syria's point since the war in Gaza began, cuture. While Israel appears to are, maybe, on a collision course

favour a fragmented Syria with of their own, in Syria. Both Israel and Turkey are jusouffer zones, to provide security against HTS and other actors, in tifying their actions in Syria on contrast, Turkey opposes any fragthe grounds of national security. mentation of Syria, fearing it are operating largely unchecked, could lead to the establishment of following the collapse of Assad's a Kurdish state under PKK influforces and his allies, the Iranianence. Even if such fragmentation led militias and Russian troops. does not lead to a Kurdish state, it will reduce the effect of Turkey's victorv in Svria. Hence. Turkev seeks to consolidate HTS's control

Western influence in the region will now need to be filtered through these two powers. While the US will want to maintain its nfluence in Syria by supporting the SDF as well as contain a weakened Iran, it also needs Turkish cooperation to keep a check on resurgent fundamentalism in the

reignite the Arab spring move

ment and Turkey's growing

upheaval in Syria, countries in the region need to take into account the territorial integrity of Syria and it will be catastrophic if it becomes a battleground between Turkey and Israel. Unfortunately the risks posed by deterioration of relations and regional escalation have global implications.

The fact is that shaping the aftermath of the Assad regime. without consensus among external players by fragile agreements among Syrian factions, may well be undermined and effective governance frustrated.



People rally after missile strike in Israel, on October 1, 2024

## **#FAREWELL!**

# ROWDY, CHOTU BHAI, BYE!

Rowdy was as good as his name, playful and mischievous, but strong-willed and a trifle aggressive to those he disliked or felt threatened by. Our Rowdy has bitten everyone from his canine and human menagerie. Compulsory vaccination for Rowdy as well as preventive injections, personally for me, was de riqueur. For the rest of my clan, complete trust in Rowdy's goodness meant only the annual poke for the blighter.



a biscuit wrapper unpeeling?

🗕 Mohan Sundar Rajan

oth came in from the cold. Rowdy, the ebony indie with contrasting white lines on his forehead and paws, christened white 'socks' by some. Fondly fetched from a litter in Mumbai's Western Suburb of Goregaon, he entered our lives on the second day of the inauguration of the Worli-Bandra Sea Link. Can

never forget the rainy day, Wednesday, July 1, 2009! Then, Chotu, indie number 2, auburn as the Autumn leaves, given a lifelong pass to our period-styled bungalow in Jayalaxmipuram, Mysore, the city of lip-smacking delectable fare, manna for our gourmet man's best friend.

You may ask who came first in our scheme of things. My loyalties are torn. Chotu, by far the younger. Rowdy, the sagacious, with age on his side. Each was special, gave generously, took frugally. Rowdy lived up to a blessed 15 years and Chotu, who passed away in the prime of his youth, at 4, due to complications past a last fatal seizure, God knows why! This is their story as both coin-

Vilas Road, Mysore.

cidentally lie in Umesh's Bow Bow

In happy times, Umesh, the author, Manyeeth and Tirupati, school-going lads

at the author's Platinum Jubilee at Kailash Parbat Fine Dine Restaurant, Vani



The author, Mohan Sundar Rajan, in



And last but not least, the bench at the Bow Bow Pet Resort, where close by dear Rowdy and Chotu lie together in eternal rest.



Happy pets being lovingly cared for at Bow Bow Pet Resort by Umesh of Road, Mysore, after being laid to Mysore, hence, hardly missing their rest in idyllic surrounds, within a parents who are away on brief visits.

span of under 30 days of each other Rowdy was as good as his name, playful and mischievous, but strong-willed and a trifle aggressive to those he disliked or felt threat ned by. Our Rowdy has bitten everyone from his canine and human menagerie. Compulsory vaccination for Rowdy as well as preventive injections, personally for me, was de rigueur. For the rest of my clan, complete trust in Rowdy's goodness meant only the annual poke for the blighter.

For Chotu, whose ears would perk up every time when a biscuit wrapper was even mildly ruffled, it was 'food, glorious food, hot sausage and mustard!' Willing and able any time of the day, and, if available, at night too. I think he would even dream of food going by his swashbuckling legs during gastronomic slumbers. Slim and trim, neverthe less, pineapple and tangy treats were

the only ones he would give a miss. When Chotu came, Rowdy threw a cordon of protection around him Chotu was not so forgiving and gnarled and gnashed his teeth threateningly at Rowdy. Trying to separate them at that point would be But now, for me, like in the lyrics

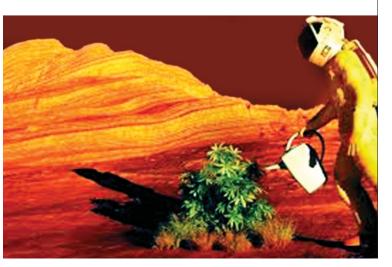
of Engelbert Humperdinck's 'The Last Waltz "It's all over now, nothing left to say Just my tears and the orchestra play

I  $ar{h}ad$  the last waltz with you Two lonely people together fell in love with you The last waltz should last forever."

## Mohan with family friend Sarita Tamang, with Jaya, Choti (Vixy) and Jenny.

### By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott **BABY BLUES**

ISN'T THERE ANY PART FOR



EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE STUPID, BUT YOU'RE ABUSING THE PRIVILEGE

FROSTY THE SNOWMAN' HAMMIE IN THE HOLIDAY SHOW, ZOE? ON POLLER SKATES? THERE IS COURSE! ONE.

CAN YOU BELCH-SING



ZITS







By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman