



# Abandoned on the battlefield

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## **Abandoned on the battlefield-The U.S. has a moral obligation to keep the Syrian Kurds safe, instead of giving Turkey a free run**

- U.S. President Donald Trump's recent decision to pull American troops out of Syria is a body blow to the Syrian Kurds, the unsung heroes of the war against the Islamic State (IS).
- The decline of the IS actually began in Kobane, a largely Kurdish-populated Syrian town on the Turkish border, in January 2015.
- It was after the battle for Kobane that then U.S. President Barack Obama realised the real strategic potential of the Kurdish rebels.
- The Kobane experience was repeated in nearby towns.
- Since Mr. Obama sent some 50 commandos to advise the Kurds in 2015, the number of American troops has grown to at least 2,000.
- In the territories east of the Euphrates that are part of the Rojava, the U.S. has built massive military infrastructure — it has at least a dozen military bases, including four airfields.

### **Success story**

- This American-Kurdish partnership has been a success story.
- Within three years of its formation, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has defeated the IS in most of the territories the group held.
- The IS, which once claimed territories as big as the United Kingdom, has now been confined to some narrow pockets on the Iraqi-Syrian border.
- But the U.S.'s support for the Kurds and their military victories has irked another country in the region — Turkey, a NATO member and an American ally.
- The YPG (the main component of the SDF) has close ties with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Kurdish militant group on the Turkish side which is seen as a terrorist organisation by both Ankara and Washington.

### **Support and betrayal**

- The U.S. has a history of supporting and betraying the Kurds.
- In theory, the U.S. pulling out of an illegal war is fine — the American intervention has neither congressional approval nor the UN Security Council's nod.
- But in practice, since the U.S. intervention has already started shaping the reality on the ground, the pull-out should have been an orderly one.
- The U.S. has the moral obligation to ensure the safety of the Syrian Kurds.

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