

Is the Syrian War Really Over?

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Our ultimate desire is to bring an end to the Syrian Civil War. Far too many Syrians have suffered and lost everything during six years of war and their lives have been essentially destroyed. Millions have sought refuge in neighboring countries and millions more are internally displaced persons within the ruins of their former homeland.

The Astana peace process represents the most important initiative to date to bring an end to this horrific conflict. Russia, Turkey and Iran have all played significant roles in trying to bring peace to this war-torn land. All three nations have made compromises to bring peace to the region and come to common ground in order to end this conflict.

For example, President Putin has made a lot of efforts to bring security to the region, which turned into a hotbed of conflict and terrorism. Having seen Russia subjected to fragmentation in the early 1990's following the Cold War as well as having experienced significant economic dislocation, President Putin managed to find smart ways to connect with the leaders of the Middle East and even President Trump of the United States. As per many Middle East analysts and journalists, President Putin is considered to be the winner of the Syrian war.

In terms of Russia's foreign relations, President Putin could well be regarded as a leader who uses strategic factors in the best way possible. He uses the right sources at the right time with the right partners. Concerning Turkey, even though their relations hit rock-bottom due to the downing of a jet at the end of 2015, they are now becoming strategic partners as signatories to end the conflict in Syria. Not long ago, they signed giant energy deals such as Turkish

Stream, which has disturbed the Western powers. Turkey has also agreed to purchase the S-400 defense missile system from Russia. These two states, along with Iran, are working together to find bring an end to the war in Syria. President Putin's appearance with Assad on TV the night before the Sochi Summit is further proof of his being one of the major players to stop the conflict. He held phone conversations with President Trump, King Salman and Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu to inform them about recent developments in Syria and the outcome of the Sochi Summit.

Concurrently, President Putin has re-established relations with Egypt by reaching a preliminary agreement to authorize Russian military aircraft to use both its airspace and bases. This would provide Russia its deepest presence in Egypt since 1973 if both states complete this deal. With reference to Saudi Arabia, even though Russia was at odds with the Saudis during the Cold War era, they have signed 15 cooperation contracts in terms of oil, military and space exploration; the Saudis even stated they would purchase the Russian S-400 defense system during King Salman's visit to President Putin, which was the first official visit of Saudi monarch to Moscow. To indicate the significance of this new relationship, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, interpreted this visit by stating that Saudi-Russian relations "reached a new qualitative level".

In terms of the outcomes of the Sochi Summit, the three participant countries determined priorities for further cooperation on Syria. President Putin stated the following in the Sochi Summit regarding the future of Syria: "*The Syrian people will have to determine their own future and agree on the principles of their own statehood. It is obvious that the process of reform will not be easy and will require compromises and concessions from all participants, including of course the government of Syria.*" The nexus also made an agreement for a Syrian national dialogue congress to be held in December in Russia, intended to help establish a new constitution for Syria and for new presidential elections to take place in which Assad is also included.

However, there is one red line for Turkey in this agreement and that is the Syrian national dialogue congress must not include the PYD terrorist group at the negotiating table. Even the possibility of the PYD's participation in the

peace talks, the PYD being a dark mafia-like organization which has taken countless lives in the Middle East for 40 years, is extremely dangerous in terms of the integrity of Syria and the protection of the different ethnicities living in Syria. The PYD's efforts to legitimize itself as the so-called representative of the Kurds, simply in order to continue terrorizing the Syrian people, must not be allowed in any way, shape or form. A terrorist organization cannot be the representative of any people, nor can it be allowed to hide behind its so-called veil of legitimacy.

It should be noted that the PYD does not represent the Kurds. On the contrary, it is a bloody terrorist organization that brutally oppresses the Kurdish people and destroys any Kurd who doesn't agree with their views, even those that bring up an opposing point of view within the organization. They caused great suffering for the Kurds living in the region, killing thousands of religious Kurdish people; thousands more have taken shelter in neighboring countries to escape the persecution of the PYD. The PYD was only able to establish a canton in the northern part of Syria, which predominantly consists of Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen population, through armed oppression. Since the PYD desires to establish a communist state in Syria, it is exerting pressure on the local Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen populations. Just as how bloody terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Nusra are not invited to the negotiations, the terrorist organization PKK's Syrian extension, the PYD must also not be invited to the talks as well.

Via the Astana talks and the Sochi Summit, we once more realize how forming a strategic alliance is significant to end bloodshed in the region. It is extremely important to act in unity and take bold and wise steps in foreign policy for the security of this region. Even though the war in Syria is about to end, the war-torn country will not be able to go back to how it was overnight. A new transitional government elected by its own people should be established rapidly. It is vital for Russia, Turkey and Iran to participate in the reconstruction process. Turkey can act as a pioneer due to its success in the construction sector since it is vitally important to build residences, hospitals and schools for the refugees to be able to return their homeland. Above and beyond that, in order for the Syrians who have experienced war and lost their family members to be able to return to a normal life, there should be intense ideological or

moral training programs suitable for people from all strata of society. A great responsibility falls on the shoulders of this alliance to protect the region so that it does not experience a similar destruction again. Everyone should keep in mind that peace can be attained only by working together.

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Turkey

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