



The Brief

MAIN LATEST

20-02-2017 22:38

Opinion // Trump must look at regional security in South Asia (Kadayam Subramanian)

20-02-2017 21:19

Go post-West, young man: This years Munich Security Conference delivered a predictable display of a West that refuses to recognize the emergence of a multipolar world order. (Pepe Escobar)

20-02-2017 19:35

Starbucks, Pacific Coffee among well-known chains accused by local media group FactWire of masquerading as restaurants without proper licenses. (Asia Times Staff)

20-02-2017 18:00

Hong Kong takeaways profit in license loophole, report reveals (South China Morning Post)

20-02-2017 17:19

South Korean government accused of blacklisting 9,000 artists — Here's what you need to know (Artsy)

20-02-2017 16:29

Hong Kong's former chief executive Donald Tsang is denied bail pending sentence for misconduct in the High Court on February 22. (Asia Times Staff)

20-02-2017 15:51

Alibaba billionaire Jack Ma has opened a new US\$160 million tech-oriented international

POLITICS SYRIA // ANALYSIS

What kind of Syria awaits the war-ravaged?

Whether unified or fractured, secular or clerical, the conversation regarding the political cast of Syria after the gun silent has begun in earnest

By SEEMA SENGUPTA | FEBRUARY 9, 2017 11:06 PM (UTC+8)



A member of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stands guard near the village of Bir Fawaz, 20km north of Raqqa on February 8, 2017. Photo: AFP / Delil Souleim

Restoring peace and normality in blood-soaked Syria is critical to stabilizing the Middle-East and securing the region's future after six years of intense fratricidal conflict that have extracted a heavy toll on the country's inherently secular fabric.

The vexing tug-of-war over who controls this strategically crucial nation – one that also represents the last vestige of Russia's Middle-East presence – has led to a vertical split in Syria's polity. As Gokhan Bacik, an eminent Turkey-Syria expert observes, trust between various ethnic groups is at its nadir in Syria today.

More on this topic



The Philippines: source of grass rc ISIS?

SAMI MOUBAYED



sponsored peace talks have consistently collapsed.



China is ready

SAMI MOUBAYED

20-02-2017 15:32

A 32-year-old domestic worker was indecently assaulted by an elderly Chinese man in Tsuen Wan in New Territories on Friday, local newspapers reported, citing the Hong Kong police. (Asia Times Staff)

20-02-2017 15:04

A manhunt is under way for nine men involved in a bar fight that spilled onto the street early on Saturday morning in Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon, local media reported (Asia Times Staff)

20-02-2017 14:43

Hong Kong was under British colonial rule for more than 150 years till 1997, yet surprisingly many of the wedding customs still resembles those practised in Beijing than in London. Asia Times explores wedding outfits people wore over the last century at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (Benny Kung and Liu Hsiu Wen)

20-02-2017 13:57

Asia Times explores royal wedding secrets of Qing emperors from the last imperial dynasty in China at a Hong Kong Heritage Museum exhibition. (Benny Kung and Liu Hsiu Wen)

20-02-2017 13:19

A veteran hiker is in stable condition after Civil Aid Service members walked 45 minutes up Buffalo Hill to rescue him when he fell ill during a hike with eight friends on Sunday, local media reported. (Asia Times Staff)

20-02-2017 11:59

Remembering Nüshu, the Chinese script only women could write (Atlas Obscura)

20-02-2017 11:56



Must-reads from across Asia - directly to your inbox

Your Email here

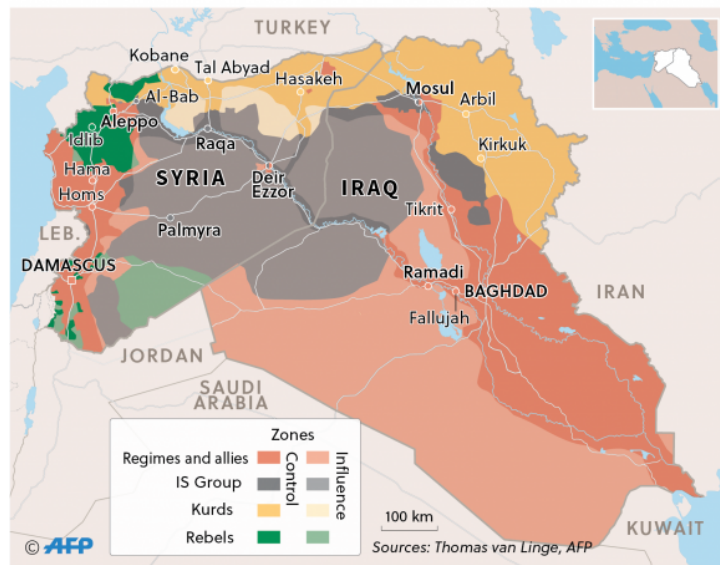
SUBMIT

Crucially, Russia, supported by Turkey and Iran, is now determined to work out an acceptable political settlement to Syria's protracted civil war in collaboration with other major world players led by America.

While the Astana talks did not produce any major breakthrough - the Syrian government and opposition delegations avoiding direct discussions - a realization has dawned, as reflected in the final statement, that there can be no military solution to the Syrian issue.

The crucial point is that, with up to 60 different armed factions being involved in the civil war, most of them operating as proxies for the geostrategic interests of others, even agreeing on a peace framework isn't child's play.

Control on the ground in Syria and Iraq



The United States has to date been apprehensive of Russia's intentions, notwithstanding President Donald Trump's broad hint about abandoning a regime change agenda in Syria to work closely with Moscow in the matter of confronting Islamic State and other terrorist actors.

A Russia expert at America's Foreign Policy Council, Stephen Blank likens the Moscow-backed peace initiative to a "nineteenth century imperial division of Syria into Iranian, Turkish and Russian spheres of influence."

EVEN MORE



Why Middle East nations support Trump's immigration halt

SPENGLER



(Taiwan News)

20-02-2017 11:49
Uber reaches new agreement with Taiwan
(The News Lens)

20-02-2017 09:45
Malaysia released pictures of suspects in the killing of North Korea leader Kim Jong Un's estranged half-brother last week and said four North Korean suspects had fled the country. (Reuters)

20-02-2017 08:38
Toshiba pulling plug on US nuclear reactor plan
(Nikkei Asian Review)

20-02-2017 08:34
China's Artificial Intelligence boom
(SupChina, The Atlantic)

20-02-2017 08:17
A US Navy strike group that includes the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson has begun "routine operations" in the South China Sea, despite a warning from China not to interfere with its sovereignty in the area. (US Navy)

20-02-2017 07:57
Salty soil unsuitable for growing rice forced farmers in Kijima town in western Japan to seek another crop. They decided on cotton, which generations later has proven a boon for urban cowboys looking for a cool pair of denim jeans, now Kojima's speciality. (Said Karlsson)

20-02-2017 07:24
SpaceX successfully lands its first-stage Falcon 9 rocket
(TechCrunch)

20-02-2017 07:20
Leadership planning in China: What's past is prologue (SupChina)

19-02-2017 16:47
Opinion // CIA-Iran

economic sectors.

Alexander Kuznetsov, a renowned Russian Middle-East expert and Deputy Director of the Moscow-based Institute of Forecasting and Resolving Political Conflicts disagrees, however. "Russia has never been an aggressive colonial power in the Middle-East."

"It is necessary to preserve Syria's unity. But Kurdish inhabited regions and Raqqa province may not be fully integrated into Syria for a long time"

For his part, Bacik asserts that "it is not realistic to expect a restoration of united Syria as it used to be before the war. The best likely scenario is a federal State where each group is given some kind of autonomy." He acknowledges, however, that breaking Syria up into statelets in order to separate competing factions would be a near impossibility.

Kuznetsov concurs, and holds out hope for a secular, democratic and united Syria. "It is necessary to

preserve Syria's unity. But Kurdish inhabited regions and Raqqa province may not be fully integrated into Syria for a long time," he says.

He advocates a Lebanon-type agreement that allows for a multi-party system, one where the highest constitutional post is reserved for the majority faction but power-sharing guarantees for minorities are locked in.

Ambassador Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a Middle-East security specialist and Iran's nuclear negotiator, offers a five-point solution: "Preservation of Syrian unity; sovereignty and rights of minorities; preventing the collapse of the military and security establishment; a power-sharing coalition to run Syria; respecting the will of majority and their right to choose their constitutional leadership through a UN-supervised free election."



#POLITICS #SYRIA #MIDDLE EAST #RUSSIA #ASTANA

Comments



Add a comment...



Branka Alhamdy

And if mixed messages (along with reinforcements in arms, food, salaries, and religious fervor) are not sent, the peace would have happened a long time ago. For as long as external factors are supporting the newly enshrined human right of anyone to pick up arms, and be called "the opposition"-- peace will be hard to achieve. And while it may be dawning on everyone that there is no military solution, I would argue it differently. There is only a peacefull solution available, when one side realizes that it CANNOT WIN. Then, the side with the upper hand must be generous, and pretend a bit of ... See More

Like · Reply · Feb 9, 2017 11:50am



Yashad Rizvi

This is pretty well thought out. However, after 4 years of civil war with people taking sides, and all of those sides responsible for atrocities that they can all just sit down and forget the murder of the father/mother/sister/brother/cousin. No, even if the Assad regime and whoever in Iraq keep control there will be a reckoning. In Yugoslavia that had 40yrs of iron rule by Tito, after he died the hatreds of WW2 didnt take too long to reappear. Blame outside interference all you like, if people want to be divided they will. All I hope is that the Kurds get their own state.

Like · Reply · Feb 10, 2017 8:21am · Edited



Richard Pearce · Calgary, Alberta

A 'military' solution is possible, but neither the Syrian government (which was offering amnesty in exchange for the release of hostages before Russia or Iran intervened) the Iranians, or the Russians want that. And, while the idea of someone (the letters U, S, and A spring to mind, maybe politely disguised by the addition of D and I) 'bribing' the Russians with Syria's oil and guarantees of a perpetual militay base isn't that radical of a notion, doubt if Russia would bite. The solution is almost certainly to end up being a reversion of the status quo before the extremists were bolstered by a... See More

Like · Reply · Feb 9, 2017 7:05pm



Michael Chan

Libya and Syria were two well-governed country. Their populations were not very rich but they were living well and in peace. Peace left the two countries when USA, the most terrible terrorist country of the twenty first century invaded and bombed them. Not only did the bombs kill hundreds of thousands Libyans and Syrians, but they also created a number of displace people, destroyed the lives of the rest of the population and destroyed also tens of billions of dollars of infrastructures. Now, the ravaged countries have to piece back together. It will need several decades before they will reach the same level as before the invasion and bombings by the Americans.

Like · Reply · Feb 9, 2017 11:16pm



Yashad Rizvi

What are you on, 2 well governed countries? Read up (hopefully the Chinese firewall lets you) on the Iraq-Iraq war, or the gasing of the Kurds. And as for Syria, the massacre in Homs. Assad Snr and Saddam were nasty brutal dictators, but I suppose if your standards for morality are China and the CCP, then they were 'well governed countries'.

Like · Reply · Feb 10, 2017 8:12am

Facebook Comments Plugin

EXPLORE

MAIN

TRENDING TOPICS

#Southeast Asia

ABOUT

About Asia Times

THE DAILY



ASIA TIMES

- INSIGHTS
- POLITICS
- BUSINESS
- CULTURE
- SLIDESHOWS

- #India
- #Koreas
- #South China Sea
- #Sport

- Write for Us
- Terms of Use
- Privacy

Must-reads from across Asia - directly to your inbox

Your Email here

SUBMIT

