

FROM ASHES OF SYRIAN WAR

New Axis of Stability and Development Emerging

by Dean Andromidas

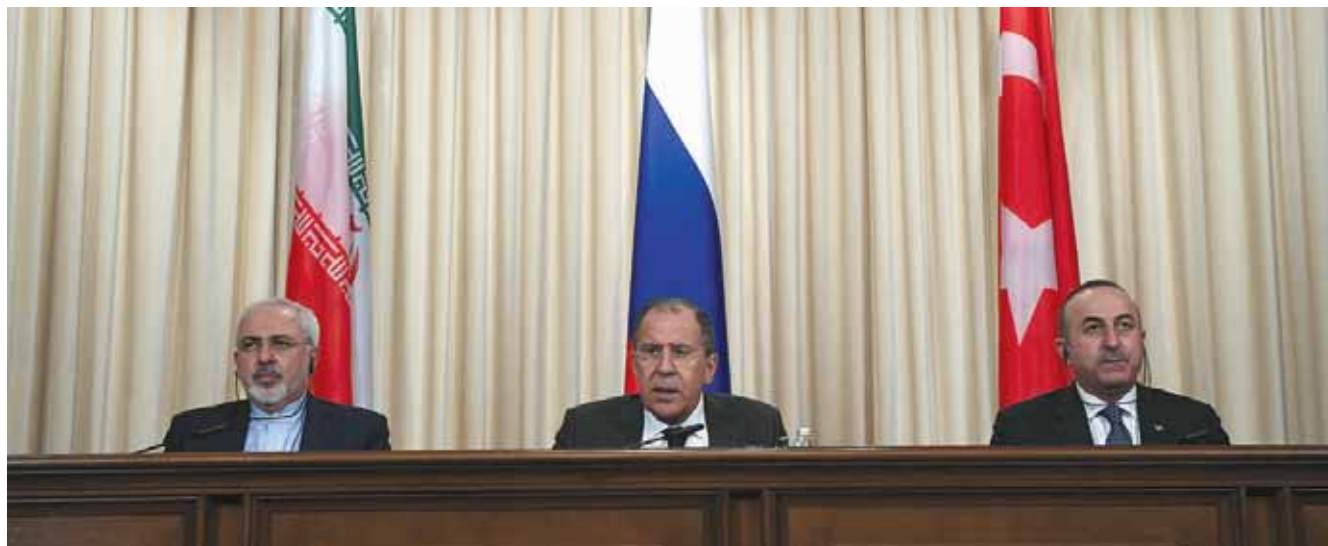
Jan. 9—A potential axis of stability and development is emerging out of the ashes of the Syrian War that will transform the region into a productive and integral part of the Eurasian development zone being created under the leadership of Russia and China through the “One Belt One Road” policy. As a result of the end of the Obama Administration, and the end of the nearly two decades of a policy of regime change and war that began under Bush and was carried forward and expanded under Obama, new hope is being felt throughout the Middle East region. The intention of the incoming Trump Administration to end the policy of regime change, adds to that hope.

A new paradigm is becoming a possibility with the ceasefire agreement initiated by President Vladimir Putin, with the full support of Turkey and backed by Iran. It gives hope for the final settlement of the Syrian war. If the fragile ceasefire holds, it should be followed

by talks for a negotiated political solution, to be held in Kazakhstan’s capital of Astana. Both the ceasefire and the talks exclude the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Nusra.

In announcing the ceasefire, Russian President Putin said it was “a development that we all have looked and worked for, for so long,” but was still “fragile.” He nonetheless said it could lead “to peace talks on the Syrian conflict settlement.” Putin added that Russia, Turkey, and Iran will act as guarantors.

The fact that Russia, Turkey, and Iran are now cooperating to bring stability to the region is no doubt creating nightmares for the adherents of a British geopolitical policy that has worked to keep these countries in perpetual conflict, not only for the last 30 years, but since the days when the British Empire always tried to pit Russia and the Ottoman Empire against each other in perpetual conflict.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

From left to right, Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, in Moscow, Dec. 20, 2016.

The agreement follows a meeting of Russian, Turkish, and Iranian Foreign Ministers in Moscow on Dec. 20. The progress made at that meeting prompted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to assert that unlike the United Nations and U.S.-backed formats, which have only prolonged the conflict, the Russia, Turkey, and Iran format works.

The ceasefire was later backed by a United Nations Security Council Resolution, and other countries have been invited to join in the process.

“It is important to increase the number of guarantor countries, and we therefore want at this stage to invite our Egyptian colleagues to join these agreements,” Lavrov said. “Later, at subsequent stages, we could probably get other key countries with influence on events in Syria involved too—countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, and Jordan.”

Commenting on these developments, Lyndon H. LaRouche agreed, saying that Putin has assured that the Russia, Turkey, and Iran format is one that could work.

Slamming Obama While Waiting for Trump

The Turkish government totally rejects Obama’s support of the Syrian Kurdish YPG and PYD in the name of fighting ISIS. Both are closely linked to the Turkish Kurdish PKK, which is waging an armed insurgency in Turkey, and Turkey considers all three organizations to be terrorists. It is no coincidence that during the period Obama has been heavily supporting the YPG and PYD, they have moved in the direction of establishing a Kurdish entity in northern Syria, which is totally unacceptable to Turkey and Syria alike.

Now, with the assassination of Russian Ambassador Andrei Karlov, followed by a terrorist attack on New Years Eve killing over 40 people, and another attack in Izmir two days later, Turkish leaders rightfully feel they are under attack for collaborating with Russia and Iran in organizing a ceasefire in Syria.

Hinting at the possible role of western intelligence services in the Istanbul attack, Deputy Turkish Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus suggested that “foreign intelligence services” could be behind the attack, considering how “professionally” it was carried out. “I am of the opinion that it’s not possible for the perpetrator to have carried out such an attack without any support. It seems like a secret service thing. All these things are



TRT World/youtube

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus

being assessed,” Kurtulmus told *Hurriyet Daily News* on Jan. 4.

The Istanbul New Year’s Eve attacker has been identified as Uzbek national Abdulkadir Masharipov. Although it is believed that he was part of an Uzbek cell of ISIL, this has not yet been fully determined. He is still at large.

Former deputy director of Turkey’s National Intelligence Agency (MIT) Cevdet Oner did not dismiss Kurtulmus’ assertion of a foreign intelligence service connection. He told *Hurriyet Daily News* that despite ISIL’s taking responsibility for the attack, “There are strong doubts that the attacker was an ISIL militant,” and that “when you examine ISIL’s emergence in the Middle East, it is an open question whether there are possible foreign service connections.”

In the same interview, Kurtulmus expressed the hope that relations with the United States would be better under a Trump Administration. “We have a strained relationship with the United States at the moment, but I don’t think it will last long. I think this tension will soon be eased,” Kurtulmus said.

Kurtulmus also referred to Washington’s support for the PYD and its armed wing, the YPG. “Will the United States show its existence in the Middle East through cooperation with terror organizations or through its long-standing ally? I believe the United States will undergo a clear change in its position and will cooperate with a state like Turkey,” under Trump, Kurtulmus said.

Taking a defiant stand in the face of these terror attacks, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, “Turkey is under a joint attack from various terror groups. Those who do not know us should read about

Gallipoli and our War of Independence.” (Gallipoli was a World War I battle in 1915-16, in which the British were sorely defeated by the Turkish army, one of whose commanders was Kemal Ataturk, founder of the Turkish Republic and leader in its War of Independence.)

On June 5 Erdogan continued, “We were accused of not doing enough to combat Daesh. The games of those who support other terrorist organizations against Daesh have gone to waste. Their aim is not to clear the area of Daesh and other terrorist groups; it is to turn the region into a sea of blood and bullets.”

Creating the Crossroads between Africa and Eurasia

If other countries in the region join the Syrian peace initiative proposed by Russia, Turkey, and Iran, it would create a community of nations which could transform the region into its historic destiny of being the crossroads between Eurasia and Africa. China’s “One Belt One Road” policy is the perfect political-economic framework to bring this into a reality. It is also at the center of the Schiller Institute’s proposal for the reconstruction of Syria. Iran and Turkey both have populations of close to 90 million people, making them among the largest countries and economies in the region.

China’s Special Envoy for the Middle East, Xie



Xinhua/Ammar Safarjalani

Xie Xiaoyan, Chinese government Special Envoy to Syria.

Xiaoyan, has been visiting the countries of the region in support of the ceasefire agreement and the proposed Astana peace talks. China is also deeply involved in economic cooperation in the region, especially with Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, and is committed to aiding in the reconstruction of Syria.

Despite being under constant attack, including suffering an attempted military coup last July and the ongoing campaign of terror being waged against it, Turkey continues to build the infrastructure it needs, to become an efficient participant in the New Silk Road. In the past six months, it has inaugurated two key crossings of the

Bosporus linking Europe and Asia. These include the world’s fourth-longest suspension bridge and an automobile tunnel. They follow the opening of a railway tunnel two years ago. Then, last month, Turkey announced the initiation of two more Bosporus tunnels, including a combined railway and automobile tunnel, and a pedestrian and light-vehicle tunnel.

On Jan. 3, Turkish Transportation Minister Arslan announced that Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia will have completed the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway by mid-2017. “We will finish the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project in mid-2017 and the railway will go into service,” said Arslan, adding that the project will link London with Beijing by opening a southern route of the New Silk Road, which would potentially be faster than the current northern route.



Segment of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway under construction.



Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway

Turkey's rapprochement with Russia has opened the doors to extensive economic cooperation. Work has already begun on the Turkish Stream pipeline between Russia and the European side of Turkey, which will contribute to making Turkey an energy hub of oil and gas between Asia and Europe.

On Jan. 6-7, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim made an official visit to Iraq, where he and his Iraqi counterpart Haider al-Abadi co-chaired the third meeting of the Turkey-Iraq High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council in Baghdad, which declared that both countries would work for their mutual interests as well as for peace and stability in the region. In addition to security issues, it was agreed that both countries will jointly work on water projects and management of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

The key security issues discussed included the fight against ISIL, which Iraq is currently fighting in Mosul, and ending the use of Iraqi territory by the PKK for attacks against Turkey. These issues were also discussed between Yildirim and Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani. The linking of cooperation in security with economic cooperation and integration, is precisely what Iraq needs after nearly three decades of war and economic isolation.

Iran has welcomed this rapprochement between Turkey and Iraq as represented by this visit. "We welcome the easing of tension and the restoration of friendship relations between Turkey and Iraq," said Ali Akbar

Velayati, a senior advisor to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on Jan. 8, as quoted by Dogan News Agency.

The reconstruction of Iraq, another potential powerhouse, is essential for the reconstruction of the entire region. China is already deeply involved in Iraq. China's China International United Petroleum & Chemicals Co., Ltd. (UNIPEC) is already the largest purchaser of Iraq's oil, while the China Machinery Engineering Corp. is building a 1 billion dollar 650MW gas-turbine power-station in Basra. The China Development Bank and its Export-Import Bank are financing the building of a

150,000-barrel-a-day oil refinery. China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) is building a 250 million dollar cement plant which is slated to have a daily output of 6,000 tonnes. These are only the most recent projects.

China is also deeply involved in the reconstruction of Iraq's railway network, with Chinese-built passenger trains now in service there. A high speed rail line between Bagdad and Basra is under discussion.

In December, the state-run Iraqi Republic Railways (IRR) company announced that it intends to build a rail line linking Basra with the Iranian city of Al-Shalamcheh. The planned 32-kilometer extension will not only allow passengers to more easily travel between the two countries, especially during Shia pilgrimage seasons, but will finally link Iraq to Iran's rail network, which in turn is already linked to several New Silk Road railway routes.

The link between Turkey and Iraq had been reopened in 2010, but the Syrian war (the line runs through Syrian territory) and the rise of ISIL in Iraq and Syria, has closed the line one again. Once peace comes, it can quickly be opened

The question on the minds of regional leaders is what will the new Trump Administration do. If it carries through its intentions to give up the regime-change policies of the last twenty years, and cooperates with Russia and the countries of the region, as Trump has said, it will find more than willing partners.