

Terror Incidents and the Syrian Dilemma in International Affairs

A proposal for a random-based federalized solution to the problem

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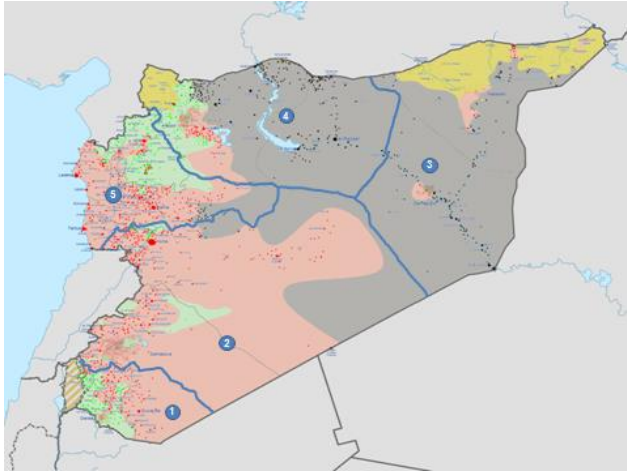
29.06.2016. Today, another deadly, tragic and sad terror attack has shocked the world in Istanbul, Turkey. This contribution written at this very day emphatically pays respect to all dead, injured and their families in their unbelievable grief. It is our joint responsibility that this suffering was not in vain, that these attacks as before in Ankara, Brussels, Istanbul, Paris and other places are stopped with all effort international politics can muster. And the root for any solution lies within Syria.

Besides its internal civil war, the problem of Syria since 2011 is mainly that the number of involved parties and interests has been increasing steadily. Coupled with the rise of the outlaw terrorist regime of IS, this has led to a situation where seemingly no internal or external power holds an option for providing a real healing solution for the country. This is evident by Russia's withdrawal of its main military forces from Syria. At the same time, regional and world-wide instability and risk is accumulating as a result of turmoil in the region, increased levels of refugee streams, and heightened terrorist activity in European countries.

A possible solution is in the core interest of all countries but has to solve the problem „on the ground“ within Syria. As seen over the last five years, other endeavors including mitigating refugee streams (EU-Turkey agreement) or minimizing terror (European, US coalition and Russian anti-terror campaigns) are doomed to fail without solving the Syrian issue. A new approach is needed – and the situation in post-war Germany may provide a solution: This concept outlines a federalized structure for Syria (and maybe also applicable to Iraq) including a new characteristic regarding the distribution of federal responsibilities to outside powers to ensure security and peace.

The following actions may be taken in order to bring peace and stability back to Syria and the region, including the return of most of the refugees now stranded in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and European countries:

- (A) Divide Syria into five strong economic regions able to care for themselves in terms of infrastructure, education, transportation, energy, and local (police) security. A rough draft of a possible federal structure in five regions is depicted below, aiming for relating to the existing regional structures as well as economic and transport viability and similar size of the regions. The final solution may be different but has to comply with the stated objectives (economic, stability, size, infrastructure).



- (B) Five outside powers to take over responsibility of those regions. This would happen under the supervision of the UN in order to ensure non-violence, security and the state of law within these regions. The five outside powers could be: EU, Russia, China, Japan, and India. Again, different setups for these external guarantee powers are imaginable, but the core requirements shall be to not to be involved or regionally too close to Syria (i.e., Turkey), have a sufficient political and military size capable of managing the task in Syria, and hold a major role and responsibility within the UN system. The US may not be included as there are other tasks the US should commit their soft and military power to: All of Syria would be declared a no-fly zone for military aircraft, supervised by US forces under the law of a UN resolution. Therefore, air campaigns against terrorist organisations would be stopped as they mainly bring harm to civilians without a major impact against terrorism. The US may commit its efforts to a similar solution (also with UN supervision and in cooperation with several other states) for Iraq.
- (C) A new element provided by this plan would be allocating the five external powers to the Syrian five defined regions through a random, lottery-style selection in order to avoid agenda-setting and power games among the external powers as well as between the regions. The UN (general secretary) would impartially preside over the allotment process.
- (D) The overall state entity of Syria would exist as a very loose federation of these five regions. The current state president may continue in office but without any military and security responsibilities and assets. The existing Syrian army would be dissolved and all weapons – also with any civil war and terror organizations – would be confiscated by the new external guarantee powers responsible for the maintenance of peace and non-violence. It is declared by the UN and guarantee powers that the state entity of Syria is not to be changed today or in the future.
- (E) Responsibilities of the guarantee powers for the five proposed Syrian regions is to stabilize them by ensuring collection of all weapons, providing military and police forces sufficient to guard the international and regional borders as well as the cities and living spaces of the population. Also, the rule of law has to be enforced and local police forces (new persons, no members of former Syrian military or police forces) have to be equipped and trained. Future democratic structures and elections would be secured within a ten year roadmap plan. The UN would set up and enact recovery funds, distributed evenly among the five regions in order to repair transportation, education, health, and cultural infrastructure. As the keys to stability are jobs and prosperity, foreign companies would be encouraged to invest in plant locations within the regions.
- (F) After a period of time (12 months) of recovery, all five regions would begin to take back the international Syrian refugee numbers, with roughly 1 million set for reintegration per region.

The allotment would be implemented pro rata (i.e., 50.000 refugees per month for about 20 months) and try to accomodate earlier living places of refugees as well as meeting placement wishes of refugees and their families (i.e., relatives, refugees who wish specifically not to return to former home areas). The effort would led by the UN and its UNHCR, which is already operating a number of refugee camps (i.e., Lebanon and Turkey), in cooperation with other NGOs like IFRC.

This six point plan may be a starting point for comprehensive international cooperation and the chance for a new start within Syria as well as an option to implement a real security effort against terror organizations on the ground in Syria and Iraq. It requires a large amount of international resources, politically and militarily; but delaying addressing the problem further will increase costs dramatically, not only in resources but also in lives from terror victims in countries of the region, Europe, and world-wide. We can do better, yes we can.

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