

“Sleeping with the Enemy” in Northern Syria? The Putin-Erdogan “Demilitarized Zone”

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They're strange bedfellows – Putin-led democratic Russia v. fantasy democracy Turkey under tinpot despot/wannabe sultan Erdogan.

The aims of both countries in Syria are world's apart, squaring the circle between them no simple task.

Last September, Putin let Erdogan deceive him into delaying the liberation of Idlib province Syria – the last US-supported terrorist stronghold in the country.

Delay left their residents remaining hostages to US imperial aims, controlled and terrorized by al-Nusra and other jihadists.

Putin and Erdogan agreed on establishing a 15 – 20 km-wide demilitarized zone in Idlib along the Turkish border – Russian and Turkish forces to control it.

Things haven't worked out as planned. For over three months heading into the new year, jihadists regrouped, more heavily armed, and increased their ranks – aided by the Trump regime and its imperial partners.

They're now a more formidable force than last summer – because of Erdogan's deception and Putin's willingness to go along with what he should have rejected.

All the while, entrenched terrorists use Idlib, including the failed demilitarized zone, as a platform for continuing attacks on Syrian forces and civilians.

The only solution is Idlib's liberation, ending delay, a campaign launched by Syrian forces, greatly aided by Russian airpower yet to begin in earnest.

On Saturday, senior Russian and Turkish officials met in Moscow on Syria. Sergey Lavrov, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, military chief General Valery Gerasimov, Kremlin envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentiev, and Putin aide Yury Ushakov met with Turkish Foreign Minister Melvut Cavusoglu, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, intelligence chief Hakan Fidan, and Erdogan aide Ibrahim Kalin.

Following discussions, Lavrov said

“(i)n the development of the agreements that were reached between our presidents, we considered further steps to implement the tasks that were set in the Astana format, primarily in the context of combating terrorism, resolving

humanitarian issues, and creating conditions for the return of refugees.”

“Both sides stressed that all this work would be carried out in strict compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (calling for ceasefire and diplomatic conflict resolution), including unconditional respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.”

Cavusoglu said Ankara “will continue close cooperation with Russia and Iran on Syria and regional issues...We confirmed our readiness and determination to continue this struggle in order to finally clear the territory of Syria from (the) evil” of jihadists - ones Turkey supported throughout most of the war, perhaps now as well while pretending otherwise.

Last September, Erdogan promised Putin he’d remove al-Nusra and other terrorists from the Idlib demilitarized zone both leaders agreed on.

They remain in place, more entrenched than months earlier, Erdogan failing to fulfill his promise, more evidence he can never be trusted.

He aims to annex oil-rich northern Syrian and Iraqi areas, wanting a greater Turkey, including the territories of both countries.

His war on Syrian YPG fighters continues on and off, perhaps to heat up again with heavily armed Turkish forces mobilized along Syria’s border, poised to invade on Erdogan’s order - if Kurdish fighters remain in the area.

His earlier aggression in northern Syria included Operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch, creating a buffer zone in territory populated by Kurds, likely part of his plan to annex areas he seeks to incorporate into a greater Turkey.

Following a December 19 phone call with Trump, after DLT’s announced troop pullout from Syria, Erdogan agreed to delay his planned offensive.

On Saturday, Russian and Turkish officials didn’t publicly comment on the situation in Manbij, Syria. Government forces reclaimed the city without occupying it so far.

Turkish and Russian troops are deployed there. Officials of both countries perhaps failed to agree in Moscow on withdrawing them to let Syrian forces control the city and surrounding areas.

Kremlin officials strongly support Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity, along with the right of its people to choose the country’s leadership and governance, free from foreign interference.

These objectives aren’t attainable as long as Washington wants endless war and regime change - its objective whether US forces stay in the country or leave.

Diplomatic conflict resolution efforts in Geneva, Astana, and Sochi failed to achieve significant diplomatic breakthroughs.

Prospects for Syrian peace in the new year are grim. The same goes for all US war theaters, including endless charnel house conditions in Libya and unsuccessful efforts for conflict resolution in Yemen.

All US post-9/11 wars continue. Washington didn't launch them to quit – part of its forever war strategy against all sovereign independent states.

Russia, China, and Iran are on its target list – the ominous threat of possible nuclear war ahead able to kill us all if launched by accident or design.

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