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http://news.antiwar.com/2017/03/15/syrian-war-enters-7th-year-country-as-divided-as-ever/print/

Syrian War Enters 7th Year; Country as Divided as Ever

By Jason Ditz
March 15, 2017
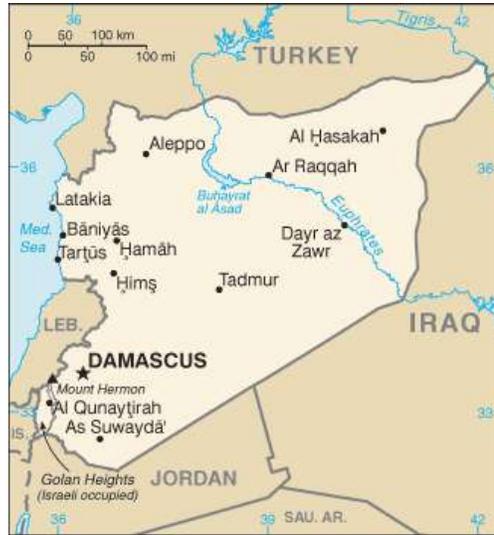
Syria has now completed six full years of war, and entering its seventh year, there are signs of changes on the ground, but not necessarily the sort of changes that are going to end the war itself, so much as continue the ongoing transition between different warring parties.

The Assad government has continued to secure territory, retaking the city of Aleppo, while the rebels in nearby Idlib, long dominated by al-Qaeda's Nusra Front, have increasingly been at odds with one another, with several coalitions forming to fight one another.

Perhaps the biggest change, however, is the addition of a new combat force into the country, with Turkey's invasion in August. Turkey has focused mostly on taking ISIS territory so far, but has also expressed interest in attacking Kurdish forces.

The Turkish invasion was part of a general trend that cost ISIS a fair bit of territory in the past year, though it hasn't necessarily made the now ISIS-free areas any less unstable, with Turkey and its rebel allies looking to expand against both government territory, and the Kurdish YPG's holdings.

On top of that, the efforts at restarting peace talks appear to have ended in failure this week, with Russia, Turkey, and Iran bringing the rebels and government to Astana for talks, which after promising earlier stages saw a full rebel boycott this week.

This all suggests that even seeming "game-changers," like the government recovering Aleppo or ISIS losing major amounts of land, aren't necessarily bringing the war any closer to ending, but simply are changing the equation and which targets the ever-growing number of combatants are focusing on.