

High Noon in Kurdistan

"It is the wise man who knows where courage ends and stupidity begins." – Jerome Cady

by G. Murphy Donovan



Kurdish fighters weeping

Gun slinger is one of those good news/bad news metaphors. President Donald Trump might be the poster child for that kind of ambivalence.

First, there's good news. Getting off the first shot, especially with a new policy, has the virtue of surprise and takes the initiative away from opponents. The bad news, for policy hip shots, is just as obvious. Gun slingers are ever in danger of shooting themselves in their Guccis.

And so it was the other day when Donald Trump gave Recep Tayyip Erdogan a signal to invade Syria under the pretext of

suppressing Kurdish “terrorists.” The Trump bluff or retreat, real or imagined, is a win for everybody except Europe, America, and the Kurds. Numbers of deployed GIs don’t matter either; the optics of getting played or bested by Erdogan or Islamists are awful.

Turkey, a rogue NATO member now savages the very people who made the recent “victory” against ISIS in the Levant possible.

Perfidious Turks, who artfully avoided the recent fight against ISIS, are now exploiting the vacuum in north Syria to settle generational scores with long suffering Kurdish minorities. The ISIS genocide against Yazidis and Kurds is now replicated by brutal Turkish ethnic cleansing.

During the ISIS war, Turks sat back and watched Syrian and Kurd bleed whilst the Erdogan family ran a black market oil smuggling racket from conflict zones in the south to Turkish sanctuaries in the north.

Throughout, Turkey has provided cross border sanctuary to terrorists and Islamists alike. The Erdogan regime, unlike the Atatürk model, is run by a recidivist Islamic party. Like Iran, Turkey has been looking backwards for two decades or more.

Adding fuel to flames, Turk troops are liberating ISIS prisoners across the region. Humanitarian Kurds and Yazidis will rue the day that they put ISIS fighters and families in humane camps instead of up against the wall or on the gallows. Ankara and Washington have, in effect, breathed new life into ISIS.

Of course, ISIS, like al Qaeda, was never really beaten anyway. Theater is not war. Now, Islam’s cut throats have license for mayhem in a region where we thought they had already done their worst.

Absent a big power ally, Kurds are now driven to the tender

mercies of Damascus and Moscow for survival, raising the specter of a shooting war between Syria and Turkey. By treaty, NATO is “obliged” to support the Ankara aggressors.

In fact, the Kurdistan war, the ISIS war, and the so-called “war on terror” are just symptoms of impotence in Brussels. The EU and NATO are paper tigers. Yugoslavia was dismembered in the Clinton years. Two new European Islamist states, Kosovo and Bosnia, were hatched as a consequence in the heart of Europe. Now Erdogan threatens the EU with another 3 million plus Syrian Muslim refugee *tsunami* while Brussels whimpers about sanctions.

If Trump is determined to end the endless procession of Muslim small wars, why begin the end by throwing the Kurds under Turkish tanks? Kurdistan was the best of a very bad lot in the *Ummah*. Ironically, as the Kurds were set adrift, boat loads of new arms were arriving at the House of Saud, those unindicted 9/11 co-conspirators.

Alas, Kabul is the perennial and bleeding ulcer of small wars pathology. Why not start the disengagement there after 30 feckless and costly years? Even the Russians had the good sense to leave Afghanistan after ten years.

Insult now compounds irony. The Syrian skedaddle now makes withdrawal from Afghanistan dicey – or turns a retreat into a global rout. Think of all the potholes across America that might have been filled were it not for the billions squandered in Kabul. Mullahs, imams, and ayatollahs worldwide should be dancing in the streets.

Uncle Sam appears to be folding like a cheap tent.

Not so fast! The abrupt Turkish strike into Syria, and the equally abrupt US brokered cease fire, does not pass the smell test. If you assume the land grab was staged by Messrs. Trump and Erdogan, the game is “plus sum” and the outcome is win/win. The US gets troops out of Syria and Erdogan gets his

zone sanitaire, in effect a buffer between Turk and Syrian Kurds. The American vice-president gets bonus points as peace maker.

Sadly, the hidden costs here are Syrian national sovereignty and Kurdish national integrity. And how is Russian meddling in Georgia and Ukraine to be condemned whilst a NATO/Turkey land grab in Syria is blessed by Washington?

America's kinetic adventures with Islam inexorably go from bad to worse. The Syrian fiasco is underwritten by a single truth that Brussels and Washington will not accept. America and Europe cannot save Islam from itself.

The clash of civilizations is a thing.

Heretofore, there were only two allies worthy of American blood and treasure in the Mideast. Now that the Kurds are lost, the Israelis are sure to think twice about American assurances.

And why on God's green earth would you light another fuse in the Levant midst domestic travails like an impeachment drama and a toxic national election?

Ending all those "endless" Muslim small wars is a noble goal. If we are honest, we should recognize that many Pentagon campaigns have taken a page out of our welfare books. Programs, once begun, ignore their origins and purpose, and assume a life of their own. After a while, results do not matter.

Victory, for most Americans, is not a thing anymore. Thus the beginnings of national folly are easy; endings are difficult if not politically impossible.

President Trump's instincts about Muslim small wars might be prudent, courageous or both. Unfortunately, starting with Kurdistan, he may have shot valiant Kurds in the head and

American assurances in the foot.