

Abstract

Geopolitical Competition and Compromise between Turkey and Russia: The Syrian Civil War and the Idlib Ceasefire Agreement (5 March 2020)

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How did Turkey and Russia, the two major belligerents of the Syrian Civil War (2011-present), find agreement on the recent Idlib ceasefire? While it is ostensibly a civil war, the strategic location of Syria, which stands at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, turned the war into a fierce international competition between disparate forces with varied religious, political, and economic motivations. In fact, the conflict in Syria has led to proxy wars between world powers such as the United States, Europe, Turkey, Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. In this context, the Idlib ceasefire can be considered a strategic compromise between Turkey and Russia in keeping with their foreign policy interests. They had a common interest in stopping Kurdish independence movements, continuing the Astana peace negotiations, and checking the influence of Western powers. Given this, the present study argues that the Idlib ceasefire agreement was the result of a compromise between Russia and Turkey, as both wanted to avoid further escalation, although it seems a stopgap measure. Despite the common interests and strategic environment that enabled such a compromise between the

two powers, the possibility of their re-entering the competition cannot be ruled out due to their conflicting interests and the nature of their bilateral relationship, which is considered a "marriage of convenience." Therefore, the future of the Idlib ceasefire agreement remains uncertain, and there is a need to keep an eye on further developments in Syria, where war and peace are determined by the strategic interests of the major powers.

Keywords: Russia, Turkey, Foreign Policy, Syrian civil war, Idlib ceasefire, Geopolitics
