

Eurasia is swept by a Thirty Years' War

by Konstantin George

The zone of Eurasian territory engulfed by a British-orchestrated "Thirty Years' War" process has again expanded, with Turkey's de facto military occupation of northern Iraq, a military operation that began on March 20. Turkey's move was justified as an attempt to at least contain the use of northern Iraq by radical Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) guerrilla forces as a sanctuary to rest, refit, and regroup their units prior to launching new military operations against the Turkish state. However, the very existence of a PKK sanctuary in northern Iraq, which has necessitated the expansion of Turkey's war against the PKK, is a direct result of the post-Persian Gulf war Thatcher-Bush policy, which deprived Iraq of control over its northern region, creating a political power vacuum in the area.

There is now an unbroken line of military conflicts extending from the Russian North Caucasus, down through the Transcaucasus, through eastern and southeastern Turkey, and into northern Iraq. The British-directed policy of manipulating the Russian regime and other governments and movements to support conflicts, and thus have this particular region bleed and plunge into chaos, is hardly accidental. This zone of conflict lies astride the vital European and Russian overland transport and pipeline links with the populous southern tier of the Eurasian land mass. With this region embroiled in protracted warfare, the building of new infrastructure projects has been effectively sabotaged.

The expansion of this core zone of conflict has been accompanied this year by extremely significant escalations of conflicts typical of the "Thirty Years' War," both elsewhere in Eurasia and in Africa. Recent escalations to the east of this core zone include renewed heavy fighting among the various groups in Afghanistan's never-ending "Lebanon" pattern of civil wars. Added to this has been a resumption of violence in Tajikistan and along the Tajik-Afghanistan border. In the Balkans, heavy fighting resumed in Bosnia during March, and the potential is growing for a resumption of warfare between Serbia and Croatia.

Wars and massacres in Africa

To round out this picture, a brief look at Africa is in order.

During March, the civil war in Algeria underwent a

qualitative expansion. The scale of guerrilla conflict has, for the first time, reached the level last seen during the 1950s war of independence, with pitched battles lasting up to a week between government forces, massively using artillery and aircraft, and battalion-size Islamic guerrilla units.

In Egypt, the scale of daily irregular warfare between government police units and Islamic guerrillas is at the level at which Algeria was a year ago.

In black Africa, a new round of war and massacres has begun in Burundi, threatening to rival the horrendous slaughter that occurred last year in neighboring Rwanda (see last week's *EIR*, "Burundi: Countdown to Catastrophe").

EIR has documented the role of Britain and of British assets in France and elsewhere in instigating and perpetuating all these conflicts.

That being said, we can turn our attention to the contiguous zone of conflict, from the Russian Caucasus down to Iraq.

The core zone of conflict

The conflicts located in this zone from the Caucasus to northern Iraq, none of which has any prospects for an early end, are:

1) The war in Chechnya, with its spillover potential into the neighboring Russian North Caucasus regions of Ingushetia and Dagestan. The war in Chechnya, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives, has been raging for four months. Its first, and short, phase was concluded during the end of March and the first week of April with the destruction and capture of Argun, Gudermes, and Shali by Russian forces, thus placing all major towns under Russian control. The second, and longer, phase—protracted guerrilla war in the mountains—is about to begin.

2) The Armenia-Azerbaijan War, including the development of near civil war-like conditions within Azerbaijan itself, as witnessed by the mid-March bloody failed coup attempt against President Geidar Aliyev. That coup, staged by an elite unit of Azerbaijani Interior Ministry troops which marched on the capital, Baku, resulted in more than 100 people killed. Since the coup attempt, Aliyev has tried to preempt or postpone another coup attempt, through arrests of more than 400 opposition figures and government functionaries suspected of disloyalty. Should Azerbaijan plunge into civil war, there is no guarantee that the conflict would be confined to the territory of this former Soviet republic, with its 7 million inhabitants.

The Republic of Azerbaijan borders on Iran, and to be precise, on Iranian Azerbaijan, which contains more Azeris than Azerbaijan. A nightmarish outcome of a civil war would be a regime in Baku embracing a Pan-Turkic ideology, with a program centered on "reuniting the Azerbaijani nation." As the ongoing wave of preemptive arrests shows, this is not some conjectured "scenario." Aliyev has concentrated on rounding up Pan-Turkic opposition figures.

3) The conditions in Georgia, verging on civil war, combined with the potential for fighting to resume between Georgia and the two regions that have seceded from Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

4) The more than 10-year-old Kurdish insurrection in eastern and southeastern Turkey, which has cost more than 20,000 lives, covers all of Turkey's northeastern and eastern provinces bordering on Armenia and Iran, and the entire southeast quadrant of Turkey extending inland from Turkey's borders with Iraq and Syria. The war has ruined the physical economy of about one-quarter of Anatolia. The economic and social cost to Turkey has been far higher. The war has caused a flood of millions of homeless Kurds out of eastern Turkey and into the main cities of Turkey, including Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, where they live in squalor in shantytowns called *gecekondus*—"towns of the night."

The longer the conflict in eastern Turkey lasts, the greater the danger that the next theater of conflict will erupt, namely the hellish scenario—unfortunately all too real—of communal warfare in the cities of western Turkey. A foretaste of how volatile this situation is, was seen in Istanbul in March, with the bloody riots and clashes with police staged by Turkey's Alawite Islamic minority group.

The Kurdish conflict is not only strategically important because it wreaks havoc with Turkey's—and thus Europe's—overland links to Iraq and Iran and points farther

east. The headwaters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, which are the largest freshwater reserves for the Near East region, are located in eastern Anatolia. As London knows only too well, destroying eastern Anatolia deprives the entire Near East of the most important resource required for real economic development: water.

5) The addition of northern Iraq to the "Thirty Years' War" map. The Turkish operation was justified, but unfortunately, the incursion into northern Iraq also forms a trap for Turkey. The problem lies in the "rules of the game" at the higher level being controlled or manipulated by London. As long as the post-Persian Gulf war stranglehold placed on Iraq by Margaret Thatcher and George Bush still holds, northern Iraq cannot be pacified.

This example of the higher level of the problem illustrates that a workable solution to the entire array of conflicts in this zone and elsewhere is only possible through overturning the policies of the western governments of the Thatcher-Bush era that allowed these conflicts to be sparked in the first place. The starting point for this must come from the Clinton administration, and it must come soon. Otherwise, the level and scope of conflict and chaos in the area that geographically bridges Europe and Russia with the Near East and South Asia threatens to grow to a dimension that would make it all but irreversible, drawing other nations and regions into its vortex.

Holbrooke backs Turkish operations in Iraq

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke gave a press conference on March 31, following his meetings with Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's political adviser Emre Gonensay. In contrast to harsh condemnations made by the British, French, and German governments, Holbrooke fully supported Turkey's incursion into Iraq, and the importance of U.S. support for Turkey generally. Britain, France, and Germany have accused Turkey of human rights violations, have cut off arms sales to Turkey, and have threatened to veto Turkey's proposed admittance into the European Union customs union this year. French President François Mitterrand's wife, Danielle, traveled to Washington in March to denounce the Turkish incursion before the U.S. Congress as constituting genocide.

"Turkey, while it was already a front-line state during the Cold War in the sense that there was a common Turkish-Soviet border, has increasingly become the front-line state for the United States," Holbrooke told the press.

"Look at the issues of the region and consider how many of them impact directly on Turkey and on whom Turkey impacts directly. . . . Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, Iran, Iraq, Cyprus, problems in the Aegean, Bosnia all have a direct effect on Turkey. . . . In addition, there are other tensions in the area which do not directly involve Turkey but can affect them—Greece-Albanian relations, relations between Athens and Skopje, and the situation between Russia and Ukraine because of the Crimea.

"Turkey is critical to the security and stability of Europe. And when I say stability and security of Europe, I include our own stability and security, because we are a European power and it matters to us. . . .

"Currently the Turks have launched a military operation in northern Iraq inside the no-fly zone. We believe that their efforts to deal with the PKK [Kurdish Workers Party] are legitimate and their territorial integrity is critically important, not only of them but all of Europe, because I can tell you clearly that if the territorial integrity of the current boundaries of Europe, no matter what historical accidents created them, is changed, it will lead to chaos throughout the region. . . . At the same time, we have expressed our concern that these operations be limited in scope and duration."