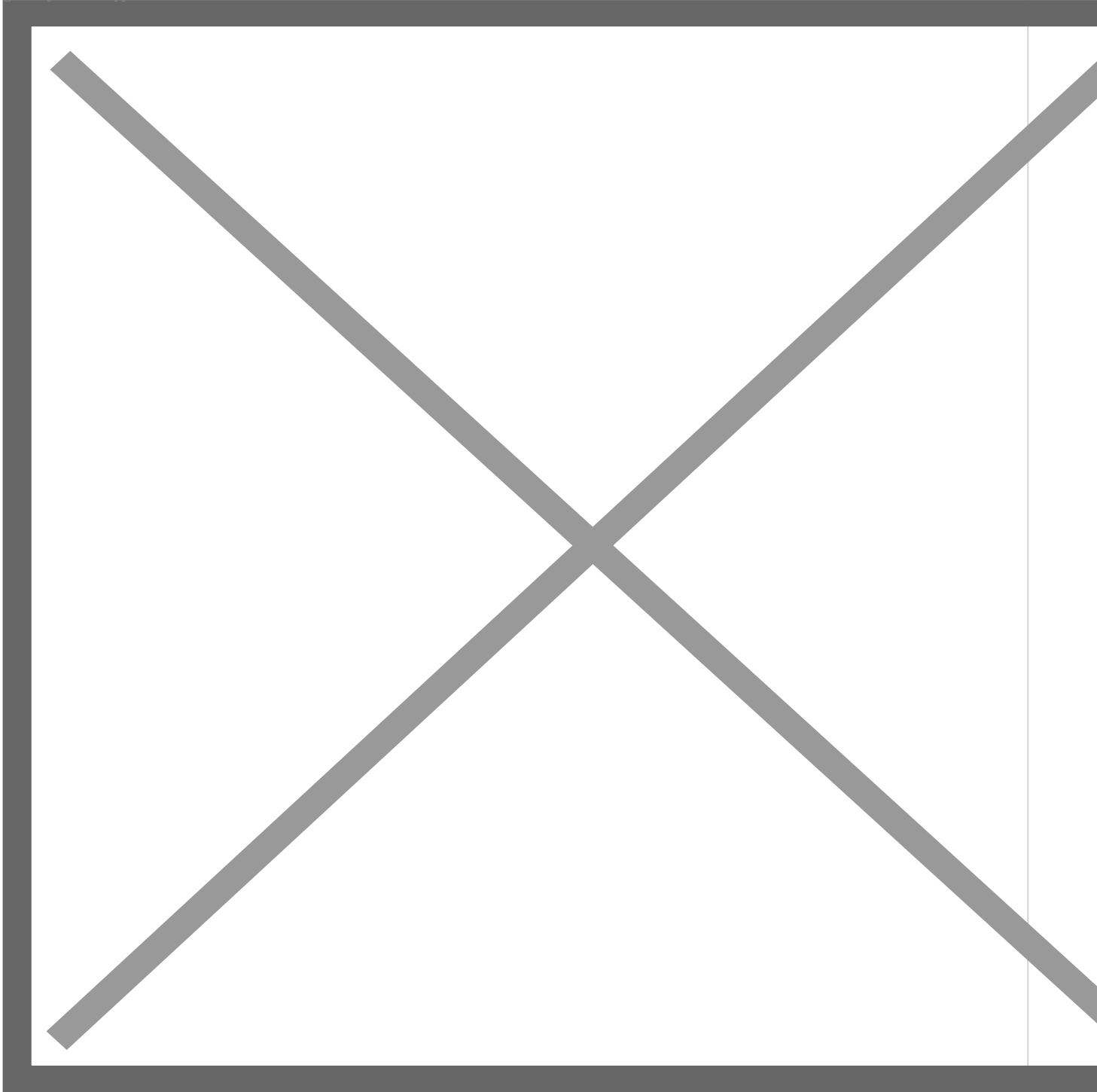


China reaches out to Syria

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By Roberto Morejon

In the midst of serious difficulties after 12 years of war, compounded by the impact of an earthquake, Syria is making enormous efforts for survival and the government is slowly and gradually rebuilding foreign relations.

Important agreements signed by the presidents of China, Xi Jinping, and Syria, Bashar al-Assad, are a hopeful path for Syria, although the material shortcomings are remarkable.

The Syrian Head of State completed his first official visit to China since 2004 and as a result the two governments established what they called a strategic partnership.

China reiterated support for Syria in its rejection of foreign intervention and Western sanctions, in its efforts to safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity.

For Syria, cooperation with Beijing on the Silk Road and Strip initiative, in addition to signing economic and technological collaboration agreements, represents an important step.

The permanence of Bashar al-Assad in the Asian giant is part of a gradual process of expansion of Damascus' foreign relations, after the encirclement promoted by the United States.

The latter country, with military bases in Syria against the will of its government, is seizing part of the native oil, after supporting opponents and terrorists who have sown destruction.

In the opposite direction to the still ongoing harassment of the Northern power, in the Middle East a timid approach towards Damascus can be seen.

The Syrian leader has recently visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Oman and Russia, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs has visited Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Jordan, while the country has returned to the Arab League.

Aid to Syria, with an economy weakened by war and armed actions by gangs still controlling parts of the country, encouraged by external forces, is expected to increase.

Syria is suffering from inflation, it is imperative to revive agriculture, not all schools have been able to recover in the government-controlled territories, and the February earthquake left a trail of destruction.

In these embarrassing circumstances, the understanding and help promised by China, a country willing to address the plight of nations in the global South, is encouraging.

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