

TURKEY'S FAILED MILITARY COUP: WHAT IS NEXT?

Nickolaos Mavromates

(Security Analyst-Historian)

Copyright: Research Institute for European and American Studies (www.rieas.gr) Publication date: 17 July 2016

Note: The article reflects the opinion of the author and not necessarily the views of the Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS).

“Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests.” Lord Palmerstone (1784-1865)

President Tayyip Erdoğan's success in putting down the Turkish military Putsch aimed at him and his administration with the help of Dr Hakan Fidan automatically elevates him in the foreseeable future as the new premier of Turkey. Without the support of Chief of the Turkish Intelligence Dr. Hakan Fidan any resistance by Erdoğan to the Coup mutineers actions would had been futile. Concurrently, now Moscow and Beijing will be viewed as Erdogan's closest allies rather than Washington because despite support from the west to his government the latter see him as a democratically elected authoritarian president who will do

anything to accomplish his geopolitical dream of seeing Turkey as the leader of the Sunni world.

As far as Israel, rapprochement with Turkey Michael J. Koplw states it better: "*{T}urkish-Israeli rapprochement, in short, is resting on a house of cards that will be easily blown over at the first sign of Israeli-Palestinian trouble*"¹

Meaning that it will be a kind of see and wait relationship. Knowing undoubtedly in Israel that when Erdoğan feels that he is all powerful again he will try to undermine this relationship once more. Now concerning the overall role of the Turkish armed forces against Erdoğan's AKP government, it is clear that their allegiance lies with the President of Turkey. The truth is that the Turkish armed forces and cadres like 1st Army Commander Gen. Dündar or Turkish Navy Chief Bülent Bostanoğlu currently are more faithful to the Padisha (Ottoman term for Sultan) than ever before. From the rank of Colonel to General, Erdoğan might have to look over his shoulder as he progresses in overall mission of the Islamification of Turkey. However, he has little to fear from lower ranking officers because they are strongly on board with his new vision of an Islamicized Turkey.

The new generation along with some older Turkish Officers share his Ottoman dreams in seeing a strong Turkey armed with the latest weaponry and, possible nuclear capability as well having major influence in the Mediterranean, the Levant and Central Asia. Turkey like Iran has imperial ambitions and Israel recognizes the possible future threats posed by the rise of an Islamic Turkey. The situation is still

¹ Michael J. Koplw, [Terrorism and Turkey's Deal with Israel Will Cooperation Work?](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2016-06-29/terrorism-and-turkeys-deal-israel), Foreign Affairs.com, 29, June, 2016, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2016-06-29/terrorism-and-turkeys-deal-israel>

fluid and unfolding in Turkey. But regardless how the Military Coup state of affairs evolves in Turkey, Anatolia is set for an impending Sunni, Alevi (a Shia sect of Islam) dichotomy. Which when combined with Kurdish nationalism is a recipe for disaster.

Even if the Kemalist Generals had seized power they would have had to fight the Sunni majority that aligned themselves with AKP's 13 year rule in Turkey, this was evident as thousands took to the street against the military plotters. President Erdoğan and Dr. Hakan's defeat of the Army putsch will now strengthen their desire to totally eliminate any Kemalists holdouts in the Turkish armed forces. Ironically, Erdoğan does not need any more reasons to go against any political dissidents, reporters, secularists, cultural or religious minorities, but now he has plenty of them to use. It is obvious then that criticism will be placed on secularism and its Kemalist guardian's legacy along with any Alevi affiliation with it.

Unfortunately, the Alevi minority of Turkey might once more be seen as the enemy of the state and violence against it might erupt. In the past this Shia sect has been portrayed not only as defender of Kemalism and as an atheist sect in the eyes of the Sunni majority but also as been close to Bashar Al Assad's Syrian Alawite regime, since Alawite and Alevis share similar religious and cultural traits. ²After all

² The Alevis of Turkey have a tendency to sympathize with the Baathist system of Syria and their co religious brethren that of the Alawites plight to keep Syria secular even under a single party authority. Something that Turkey witnessed in the past under Kemalism. Murat Yetkin goes even further by denoting if not clearly the possibility of Turkey having another headache similar like the Kurdish national aspirations if the Sunni majority completely ignores their religious rights and plights for equal representation in the Turkish Sunni society. See, Murat Yetkin, "Syria war at the gates of Turkey", 18, July, 2013, Hurriyetdailynews, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syria-war-at-the-gates-of-turkey.aspx?pageID=449&nID=50927&NewsCatID=409>. See, also, Mustafa Akyol, "Why the Turkish Opposition

Turkey's newest policy by granting Turkish citizenship to Syrian Sunni refugees as aimed in diluting the Kurdish and Alevi majority in the areas of the south east of Anatolia.³ It should be said that Alevi's community's demands still haven't been met by the Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (DİB). Just mentioning some are: Official recognition of cemevis; an end to required religion classes; converting the building of the Madımak Hotel in Sivas, in which 30 plus people in 1993 were killed by an arson attack, into a museum; and the return of assets and properties of Alevi-Bektaşî dervish lodges.

Lastly, one of the most important actors of this Turkish drama as it unfolds who managed to remain out of sight from Turkish and western media scrutiny is no other than Dr. Hakan Fidan. For Hakan having to know that live rounds were fired at his MIT HQ in Ankara by military Helicopters must have already set the stage for his personal revenge. This action proves to him that after President Erdoğan he was the next immediate target that had to go if the Putsch would succeed in Anatolia. Unfortunately for the army mutineers the days when this young NCO took orders from the Kemalist brass while in service in SHAPE Headquarters Belgium or in Turkey are over. Now the opposite is happening. Dr. Hakan Fidan and President Erdogan will make sure that on July 15, 2016 Kemalism died for

Likes Assad" 13, March, 2013, ALMONITOR, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/turkey-opposition-chp-assad-meeting-syria.html>

³ MHP leader criticizes Erdoğan's offer of citizenship to Syrians, hurriyetdailynews.com, 12, July, 2016, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/mhp-leader-criticizes-erdogans-offer-of-citizenship-to-syrians.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101500&NewsCatID=338>, See also, Barcin.Yinanc, Turkey can't accuse Europeans of Syrian cherry-picking, hurriyetdailynews.com, 14, July, 2016, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-cant-accuse-europeans-of-syrian-cherrypicking.aspx?pageID=449&nID=101563&NewsCatID=412>

ever in Turkey. Already more than 3,000 Turkish officers and Judges have been arrested by Dr Hakan Fidan's security apparatus. ⁴

The next target for Erdoğan will be the amending of the Turkish constitution and the Turkish Presidential institution as we know it. Ironically, President Erdoğan used the same media sources he criticized in the past to save his government. It is obvious that Dr. Hakan's executive intelligence policy to stop the mutineers from disrupting Turkish media and internet services connection with the Turkish populace and the failure of the plotters to study the failure of the Soviet Coup of 1991 against then President Michael Gorbachev sealed their fate. Now as far as claims by Erdoğan that the Islamic cleric Fetullah Gülen was behind the coup, there is little evidence to substantiate that accusation. How the US will react to these accusation placed on Gülen, who resides in Pennsylvania, is all together another question. ⁵

⁴ Turkey urges US that harboring Gülen is a hostile act after coup attempt, hurriyetdailynews.com, 16 Jul, 2016, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-urges-us-that-harboring-gulen-is-a-hostile-act-after-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101688&NewsCatID=510>

⁵ 2,839 detained over coup attempt, hurriyetdailynews.com, 16 July 2016, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/2839-detained-over-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101682&NewsCatID=341>, see also , 188 arrest warrants issued for members of Turkey's supreme courts, Russia Today.com/news, 16 Jul, 2016, available at: <https://www.rt.com/news/351602-turkey-supreme-court-arrested/>

Concluding Remarks

NATO and the EU need stability at its southern border to fight ISIS and the Padisha knows it. ⁶ For sure he will give what the West wants in return for the latter being more lenient to his domestic policies. Namely his authoritarian approach to his real and imagined enemies inside and outside his realm. But what is more important is that by having eliminated the last Kemalist opposition in the military it will free him and his ally and savior Dr. Hakan Fidan to gradually pursue Turkey's new geopolitical role in the region.

By Making Moscow and Beijing a safety net from possible US/NATO actions against Turkey's future geopolitical ambitions in the region. Turkey in return can offer her cooperation where ever it serves their strategic designs. Namely, allowing China having an outlet for its products, arm sales, technology transfers, and by permitting (Turkish stream) Russian gas pipelines that undermine US policies against Moscow's design in supplying Europe with gas. For sure Crimean Tartars and Ukrainian comradeship with Ankara will be left to the wayside. Most importantly it will allow Moscow and China to disrupt Washington's monopoly in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East as well as its ability to influence Central Asia and the Pacific.

⁶ Already the US and its coalition allies complaint on Ankara's brief decision to stop flying sorties all over Turkey including US air sorties from Incirlik Base against ISIS targets as a means to discourage further airfare mutineers from attacking Erdogans security apparatus. See See, Eric Schmitt and Dan Bilefsky Turkey Interrupts U.S. Air Missions Against ISIS at Major Base, New York Times.com 16, July, 2016, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/17/world/europe/turkey-us-incirlik-isis.html?_r=0

RIEAS @ July 2016, Athens, Greece

All these developments set the stage for Erdoğan's ultimate goal - a powerful Turkey, becoming the leader of the Sunni Axis and a strong independent player in the Middle East and beyond. As far as the secular Turkish Republic and as the world once new it is now dead. A new Imperial era will arise with President Erdoğan getting what he always wanted: "Absolute control of Anatolia."