

Could a Bomb Blast in Ankara Change the Outcome of the War in Syria?

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan seems to think so. In fact, Erdogan is acting like Wednesday's explosion in the capital was a gift from God. You see, Erdogan and his fellow Islamists think that if they pin the blame for the bombing on luckless patsy, Salih Neccar, who has links to the Kurdish YPG, then they'll be able to convince Washington that the YPG is a terrorist organization. And if they can convince Washington that the YPG a terrorist organization, then Obama will have to break off relations with the YPG even though the Kurdish militia has been helping the US defeat ISIS in Syria. And if Obama breaks off relations with the YPG, then he'll have to depend more on good old Turkey for his footsoldiers which is just hunky-dory with Erdogan provided that Washington meet his numerous demands, that is.

So, could a bomb blast in Ankara change the outcome of the 5 year-long war in Syria?

It certainly could, if Obama is stupid enough to fall into Erdogan's trap. But so far that looks unlikely.

The problem with Erdogan's rationale is that the Obama administration is not convinced that the YPG is a terrorist organization. Nor are they certain that Neccar is guilty. More important, the US maintains a crucial alliance with the YPG in Syria which has helped them recapture strategic cities and territory from ISIS in the northern part of the country. The militia has provided the boots on the ground the US needs to prosecute its war in Syria. Naturally, they are not going to end a relationship like that without solid evidence that the charges are true.

And there are plenty of reasons to believe the charges aren't true. For example, the head of the Syrian PYD, Salih Muslim, has not only denied all responsibility for the Ankara bombing, but also stated that neither he nor any of his lieutenants have any idea who the perpetrator is. (The PYD is the political wing of the YPG)

We have never heard of this person Salih Nekar," said Muslim, after which he added, "These accusations are clearly related to Turkish attempts to intervene in Syria.

Of course, Muslim could be lying, but you have to ask yourself whether or not the bombing achieves its political objectives if the perpetrators deny responsibility? And the answer is "No, it doesn't." So why lie?

Here's more from the *New York Times*:

...some analysts questioned the plausibility of (Erdogan's) accusation, since mounting such an attack would jeopardize the group's American support.

"These allegations are unfounded — lies with no truth to them," Redur Xelil, a spokesman for the group said via WhatsApp from Qamishli, Syria.

"We are not enemies of Turkey, and our goal is to fight Daesh inside the Syrian borders," he added, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State. "We have no interest in being enemies with Turkey."...

"Sponsoring or being involved with car bombings in Turkish cities would break its alliance structure with the U.S. and Russia," said Michael Stephens, research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security. "Neither of which the P.Y.D.-Y.P.G. wants. In short, the Y.P.G. have nothing to gain and everything to lose by being involved in this." ("[Turkey Blames Kurdish Militia for Ankara Attack, Challenging U.S.](#)", New York Times)

So who is responsible for Wednesday's terrorist attack?

While no one knows for sure, many people think the Turkish government itself might have been involved which isn't too far fetched when you consider that this same administration was implicated in a similar incident in 2014 when the foreign minister (who is currently the Prime Minister) was caught on tape cooking up a false flag operation with the head of Turkish Intel to create a pretext for invading Syria. Sound familiar? (See [here](#) for more.)

The fact that the Erdogan administration has been involved in this type of skullduggery before suggests that they might have gone to the well one time too often.. In any event, given what we know of their past, the members of the Turkish government should, at the very least, feature very prominently on any list of probable suspects. Add to that the fact that there's now tons of evidence showing that the government has been arming, training and funding terrorists in Syria, and the only conclusion a reasonable person can draw is that Turkey is governed by a thoroughly untrustworthy lot of fanatical miscreants whose spurious accusations should be taken with a very large grain of salt.. Here's more from yesterday's *Hurriyet*:

"Although the PKK and the PYD are denying it, the information from the Interior Ministry and intelligence show that they are behind [the attack]," said Erdoğan, referring to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD).....

"This process will convince our friends in the international community to understand how tight the PYD and YPG's connection to the PKK is," Erdoğan said, repeating that Turkey had insisted on the link, submitting documents."

([Hurriyet](#))

See? This is all about convincing Washington that they've backed the wrong horse. Erdogan wants to muscle-out the Kurds, so he can take their place as place. That way, he can achieve his dream of annexing a 10-by-70 mile-wide strip of Syrian territory just south of the Turkish border that he wants to convert into a "safe zone" to provide a sanctuary for Sunni militants. The plan will prevent the Kurds from creating a contiguous state on the Syrian side of the border and, also, it will help keep open vital supply lines for jihadist allies conducting military operations in other parts of the Syria.

The Obama administration was sympathetic to this plan at one time, but Russia's entry into the war in late September changed everything. Now the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), Iranian Quds Forces and Hezbollah are closing in on the Turkish border which has dashed any chance Turkey might have had to seize and hold Syrian territory without a direct confrontation with Russia, which Washington definitely does not want. Bottom line: Washington has adjusted its strategy to the new reality on the ground while Turkey and the Saudis are still grasping at straws thinking the war can be won.

Sealing the border is a top priority for Moscow which pins its hopes for ending the war largely on its ability to stop the flow of Sunni fighters crossing over from Turkey. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov: "The key point for the ceasefire to work is a task of blocking illegal trafficking across the Turkish-Syrian border, which supports the militants. Without closing the border it is difficult to expect the ceasefire to take place." (The ceasefire is scheduled to begin on Friday)

So Russia is going to persist in its plan to close the border regardless of what Turkey does. At the same time, it has tried to signal to Turkey that if it goes ahead with its plan to invade Syria, there will be hell to pay. Check this out from *Today's Zaman*:

A senior Russian official threatened Turkey, saying that it will face Russia and Iran if carries out a ground intervention in Syria..... Russia proved in Syria how powerful its weapons are and showed everybody that it will not hesitate to use them if necessary." (["Official: Turkey to face Russia, Iran if intervenes in Syria"](#))

Interestingly, the Russian foreign ministry delivered another chilly warning early Friday after receiving reports that "Turkish military vehicles had crossed into an area in Syria controlled by the Kurds and were starting to dig trenches near Meidan Ekbis, a town in Aleppo province.... Dozens of Turkish military vehicles advanced 200 meters into the Syrian Kurdish region in Aleppo province on Thursday." (ANHA news agency)

According to AMN News: "

Asked about the implications of any ground incursion into Syria, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters: "We view Syria's territory as the territory of a sovereign state. Any incursion into the territory of a sovereign state is illegal." ([AMN News](#))

The question is whether Putin will engage the Turkish military in a full-blown war just to recapture a few hundred meters of Syrian sovereign territory. I expect Putin will let the incident slide and chalk it up to "frustration" on Turkey's part. If that's the only victory that Erdogan requires, then it's a price that's worth paying. Putin has to stay focused on the big picture, and not get diverted by trivialities.

Of course, if Erdogan plans to push further into Syria, then there's going to be trouble. After all, Moscow's hands are tied. The only way it can hope to extricate itself from the conflict in Syria is by defeating the jihadists as quickly as possible, clearing out the hotbeds of resistance, and reestablishing security. If Turkey enters the war, that throws a wrench in everything. The tit-for-tat fighting will drag on for years, and there will probably never be a clear winner. This is exactly what Putin hopes to avoid. So, if Turkey launches an invasion

and sends in ground troops, Putin will be forced to strike with everything-he's-got to see if one, big shock and awe display of raw military power is enough to reverse the trend and send Erdogan's legions packing. If it doesn't work, and Turkey digs in, Syria could devolve into the mother of all quagmires, which is why we're a little surprised that Obama is not pursuing a plan that would draw Turkey deeper into the fray, after all, Washington gains nothing strategically from its support for the YPG. In a way, the alliance makes no sense. Does Washington care about Kurdish aspirations for a homeland?

No. Does Obama want to help Putin clear the area North of Aleppo of jihadists, militants and opposition forces?

Of course not. Then what does Washington get?

Nothing.

An alliance with Erdogan, on the other hand, provides Washington with the footsoldiers it needs to fight its proxy war with Russia. It also creates a situation where Russia could get bogged down for years in a conflict that could drain its resources, undermine morale, and precipitate social unrest at home. Isn't that exactly what Washington wants?

Indeed, it is, but there's one glitch to the strategy that obviously has US ruling elites so worried that they have abandoned their support for any Turkish-led invasion into Syria.

What is that glitch?

It's the fact that Turkish ground troops would require US air-cover and that, in turn, would pave the way for a military confrontation between Washington and Moscow. And that's why Obama and Co. have scrapped the idea and moved on to Plan B.

So as reckless as one might think US foreign policy is, Washington still does not want to mix-it-up with Russia. We can all be thankful for that.

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