

NATO against NATO? Turkey Lambasts US Role in Supporting ISIS-Daesh in Syria

Introductory Note by Michel Chossudovsky

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Global Research, January 05, 2017

[New Eastern Outlook](#) 5 January 2017

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence, Terrorism, US NATO](#)

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Both the US and Turkey support ISIS-Daesh. And now they are accusing one another.

From the very outset the recruitment, training and financing of the terrorists was a joint US-NATO-Turkey operation. According to Israeli intelligence (Debka, August14, 2011):

NATO headquarters in Brussels and the Turkish high command are meanwhile drawing up plans for their first military step in Syria, which is to arm the rebels with weapons for combating the tanks and helicopters spearheading the Assad regime's crackdown on dissent. ... NATO strategists are thinking more in terms of pouring large quantities of anti-tank and anti-air rockets, mortars and heavy machine guns into the protest centers for beating back the government armored forces. ([DEBKAFfile](#), NATO to give rebels anti-tank weapons, August 14, 2011)

*This initiative, which was also supported by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, involved a process of **organized recruitment** of thousands of jihadist "freedom fighters", reminiscent of the enlistment of Mujahideen to wage the CIA's jihad (holy war) in the heyday of the Soviet-Afghan war:*

Also discussed in Brussels and Ankara, our sources report, is **a campaign to enlist thousands of Muslim volunteers in Middle East countries and the Muslim world to fight alongside the Syrian rebels**. The Turkish army would house these volunteers, train them and secure their passage into Syria. (Ibid, emphasis added)

These mercenaries were subsequently integrated into US and allied sponsored terrorist organizations including Al Nusrah and ISIS.

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While it may seem too much to say at this point of time that NATO, given the gravity of the situation triggered by the out-going US president's nebulous foreign policy, is disintegrating, what is happening is that the Western military alliance is facing an unprecedented crisis. This crisis is certainly as unusual and dramatic as any Shakespearean tragedy. More than a

strong military alliance, NATO is at its worst and looks like a house divided against itself. It looked like this when Turkey, second biggest military power in the western alliance, point-blank accused the Obama administration of covertly supporting ISIS and other terror outfits, which are bent upon destroying Iraq and Syria and are now likely to target Turkey too.

Turkish President Recep Erdogan alleged, giving the Obama administration a 'new-year-surprise', on last Wednesday, December 28 that Turkey is in possession of "confirmed evidence, with pictures, photos and videos" of the US' support to ISIS.

While Erdogan had previously lambasted the US for [supporting Gulen](#), Erdogan's enemy number one and a potential terrorist according to Turkish officials, this time he took it to the next level and blamed the US, for the first time ever, for continuously supporting Daesh and Kurds.

We already know that the US has been officially supporting certain 'moderate groups' in Syria and that this support has directly contributed to the intensification of the conflict in Syria. What we know now is the support US has been providing to the most devastating terror groups the world has ever seen.

Gen. Michael Flynn, former head of the US Defence Intelligence Agency (and National Security Advisor-designate in the Trump administration), had himself claimed last year in a TV interview that the rise of the IS was a "wilful decision" by the Obama administration in furtherance of its agenda to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The support, as such, does exist. As a matter of fact, the recently announced lifting of restrictions on the supply of heavy weapons to these so-called moderates is yet another irrefutable evidence of the support the US continues to provide to these groups who are directly threatening the lives of those fighting Daesh and other terror networks.

Just a day before Erdogan lambasted the US role, Maria Zakharova, a Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, [said](#) that the policy change - set out in the annual defence policy bill and signed into law by the US President Barack Obama on December 23 - would lead to weapons ending up "in the hands of jihadists with whom the sham 'moderate' opposition have long acted jointly."

"Such a decision is a direct threat to the Russian air force, to other Russian military personnel, and to our embassy in Syria, which has come under fire more than once. We therefore view the step as a hostile one," Zakharova said in the statement.

In this context, Turkey's lash out against the US is a reflection of the growing frustration with the dual policies (read: rounds of negotiations with Russia were combined with supply of weapons to terrorists) the US has been following in the region. For Turkey, continuous US support for Kurds marks the red line that the 'super power' has violated many times and that it is unwilling to cut-off.

Whereas the allegation that a NATO member (the US) is trying to destabilize another NATO member (Turkey) is a reflection of a crisis brewing in the alliance, it also marks the strong urge in the region to oust the US (read: a number of other countries including Iran have tacitly claimed to have evidence of the support US has been providing to Daesh) and embrace Russia as an ally, truly capable of and willing enough to counter existential threats such as ISIS.

With Turkey taking a series of steps to re-write its relations with the West, including the EU (read: Turkey is planning to upgrade its Customs deal with the EU in the first half of 2017), and with Turkey distancing itself from playing a second fiddle to the US in Syria and Iraq, a potential exit of the US from the region is looking imminent.

It is this potential and probable 'exit' from the region that seems to have prompted Erdogan to set the trajectory of his new foreign policy in motion without waiting for the new US president to assume responsibilities. The new trajectory has excluded, interestingly enough, the US only as Turkey has invited both Saudi Arabia and Qatar to formally join the trilateral forum to discuss the Syrian endgame.

These two GCC states, which have been deeply involved in the Syrian conflict, would know that the US has rendered itself fairly irrelevant to the endgame in Syria. Therefore, the strong likelihood is that they will cooperate – tacitly at least – with the Russian-Turkish move to get the opposition to sit across the table with the Syrian government.

Significantly enough, at a meeting between Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Thani and the visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Doha on last Monday, the Saudi-backed Chief Negotiator for the Syrian Opposition, Riyadh Hijab was also present.

Again, Çavuşoğlu had arrived in Doha late Sunday from the Saudi city of Jeddah, where he had participated in an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) executive committee. The emergency meeting in Jeddah was held to discuss recent developments in the war-torn Syria, especially in the northern city of Aleppo.

That Saudi Arabia and its allies are also supporting these developments is evident from the recent statement issued by Riyadh Hijab. The Syrian opposition's main political body on last Tuesday, December 27, urged rebel groups to cooperate with "sincere regional efforts" to reach a ceasefire, but said it had not been invited to any conference, referring to the Kazakhstan meeting.

"We support the shifts in positions of some international powers and the positive, sincere efforts that could represent a starting point for realising the Syrian people's aspirations by reaching an agreement that brings security and stability," Riyadh Hijab said in a written statement distributed to the press.

While the 'known-unknown' here is the behind-the-scene bargain going on between Russia/Iran and Saudi Arabia via Turkey, the development itself indicates the growing sense in the region of the need to re-define the US' traditional role in the Middle East. This redefinition, as the series of developments indicates, is about limiting the US involvement and increasing the role that these regional countries can themselves play.

Erdogan's charge sheet against the US has accelerated the US exit and put other regional countries in the position to tap into this scenario—a scenario that countries like Saudi Arabia can use to get out of the financial, political and military crisis they are currently immersed in.

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