

Public Support for Turkey's Erdogan More Suspect Than Real

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In the wake of Friday's aborted coup, thousands rallying for Erdogan looked suspect. Like all leaders, he can mobilize hard core faithful on short notice to show public support.

Saturday demonstrations looked more staged than authentic. Genuine support in the wake of an aborted coup would bring tens or hundreds of thousands out in force.

After the April 11, 2002 coup attempt against Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, popular support was overwhelming. Spontaneous mass protests erupted. Tens of thousands took to the streets, demanding he be reinstated.

On April 13 he was back, telling Venezuelans "(w)e demonstrated that a united people will never be defeated."

Chavez was a world-class democrat, a populist hero, beloved and widely supported.

Erdogan became prime minister in March 2003, then president since August 2014. He's a tinpot despot, an international outlaw, a rogue leader waging war on Kurds in three countries, supporting ISIS and other terrorist groups, an anti-civil libertarian, merciless against anyone challenging his ruthlessness.

Turkey under his rule is more police state than democracy. Criticizing him is considered terrorism or treason. Independent journalists, academics, students, trade unionists, human rights supporters, lawyers and other activists languish as political prisoners under harsh gulag conditions.

Civil and human rights abuses are commonplace. Wealth and power interests alone matter. Popular needs go begging. Neoliberal harshness takes precedence.

A few thousand rallying supportively in Ankara and Istanbul's Taksim Square hardly constitutes popular support. Memories of late May/early June 2013 remain, Taksim the site of massive anti-regime protests.

Plans to replace its Gezi Park with a shopping mall and reconstructed military barracks sparked things. Police brutality followed. Protesters chanted "Erdogan resign."

Nationwide strikes followed, public anger expressed against repression, neoliberal harshness, encroachment on secularism and war on Syria.

Taksim Square then and now are marked contrasts. Manufactured popular support masks

deep-seated discontent.

Will it erupt ahead more forcefully than before? Will Erdogan's ruthless rule be his undoing? Or will he continue ruling Turkey with an iron fist uncontested? The jury is out.

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His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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