

There's More to Turkey's Failed Coup Than Meets the Eye

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Russian President Vladimir Putin did on Sunday what no major western leader from the NATO member countries cared to do when [he telephoned](#) his Turkish counterpart Recep Erdogan to convey his sympathy, goodwill and best wishes for the latter's success in restoring constitutional order and stability as soon as possible after the attempted coup Friday night.

The US Secretary of State John Kerry instead made an overnight air dash to Brussels to have a breakfast meeting on Monday with the EU foreign ministers to discuss a unified stance on the crisis in Turkey. The French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault was in an angry mood ahead of the breakfast, saying "questions" have arisen as to whether Turkey is any longer a "viable" ally. He voiced "suspicions" over Turkey's intentions and insisted that European backing for Erdogan against the coup was not a "blank cheque" for him to suppress his opponents.

The US has expressed displeasure regarding the Turkish allegations of an American hand in the failed coup. Indeed, Turkish allegation has no precedent in NATO's 67-year old history - of one member plotting regime change in another member country through violent means. Clearly, US and Turkey are on a collision course over the extradition of the Islamist preacher Fethullah Gulen living in exile in Pennsylvania whom the Turkish government has named as the key plotter behind the coup. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has warned that Ankara will regard the US as an "enemy" if it harbored Gulen. The dramatic developments expose the cracks appearing in the western alliance system. (See the commentary in the Russian news agency Sputnik entitled [NATO R.I.P \(1949-2016\): Will Turkey-US Rift Over Gulen Destroy Alliance?](#))

Interestingly, the senior Turkish army officials detained so far include the following:

- Commander of the Incirlik air base (and 10 of his subordinates) where NATO forces are located and 90 percent of the US' tactical nuclear weapons in Europe are stored;
- Army Commander in charge of the border with Syria and Iraq;
- Corps Commander who commands the NATO contingency force based in Istanbul; and,
- Former military attaches in Israel and Kuwait.

Most certainly, the needle of suspicion points toward the Americans having had some knowledge of the coup beforehand. Two F-16 aircraft and two 'tankers' to provide mid-air refuelling for them and used in the coup attempt actually took off from Incirlik.

✘Of course, Ankara has been wary of the US and France establishing military bases in northern Syria with the support of local Kurdish tribes, which it suspected would be a stepping stone leading to the creation of a 'Kurdistan'. (The advisor on foreign affairs to Iran's supreme leader, Ali Akbar Velayati, who is an influential figure in Tehran alleged on Sunday that the US is attempting to create a Kurdistan state carved out of neighboring countries with Kurdish population, which will be a "second Israel" in the Middle East to serve Washington's regional interests.)

Today, the famous Saudi whistleblower known as 'Mujtahid' has come out with a sensational disclosure that the UAE played a role in the coup and had kept Saudi Arabia in the loop. Also, the deposed ruler of Qatar Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani (who is a close friend of Erdogan) has alleged that the US, another Western country (presumably France) had staged the coup and that Saudi Arabia was involved in it. ([here](#) and [here](#)) Meanwhile, word has leaked to the media that in a closed-door briefing to the Iranian parliament on Sunday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif hinted at Saudi and Qatari involvement in the coup.

Putin's phone call to Erdogan suggests the possibility that Russian and Turkish intelligence are keeping in touch. The two leaders have agreed to meet shortly.

The timing of the coup attempt - following the failure of the US push to establish a NATO presence in the Black Sea and in the wake of the Russian-Turkish rapprochement - becomes significant. Equally, the signs of shift in Turkey's interventionist policies in Syria would have unnerved the US and its regional allies.

Israel, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have a great deal to lose if Turkey establishes ties with Syria, which is on the cards. Thus, stopping Erdogan on his tracks has become an urgent imperative for these countries. The spectre of the Syrian government regaining control over the country's territory haunts Israel, which has been hoping that a weakened and fragmented Syria would work to its advantage to permanently annex the occupied territories in the Golan Heights. Again, Turkey's abandonment of the 'regime change' agenda in Syria means a geopolitical victory for Iran. On the contrary, a triumphant and battle-hardened Hezbollah next door means that its vast superiority in conventional military strength will be rendered even more irrelevant in countering the resistance movement. Significantly, Israel is keeping stony silence.

Will the US and its regional allies simply throw in the towel or will bide their time to make a renewed bid to depose Erdogan? That is the big question. Erdogan's popularity is soaring sky-high today within Turkey. He can be trusted to complete the 'vetting' process to purge the Gulenists ensconced in the state apparatus and the armed forces. The meeting of the High Military Council due in August to decide on the retirement, promotions and transfers of the military top brass gives Erdogan the free hand to remove the Gulenists.

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