

The Geopolitics of Turkey's About-Face

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President Vladimir Putin has announced that he has concluded a cease-fire agreement for Syria, with Turkey, which until now has been the main operational support for the jihadists. How may we explain this astonishing turn of events? Will President Erdoğan be able to turn his country away from the influence of the United States and towards that of Russia? What are the causes and the consequences of this dramatic reversal?

Turkey is a member of NATO, an ally of Saudi Arabia, a patron of international jihadism since the hospitalisation of prince Bandar ben Sultan in 2012, and godfather of the Muslim Brotherhood since the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi and the quarrel between Doha and Riyadh in 2013-14. Besides this, it attacked Russia in November 2015, destroying a Sukhoi-24 and causing the interruption of diplomatic relations with Moscow.

And yet this is the same Turkey which has just sponsored the cease-fire in Syria, imagined by Russia [1]. Why?

Since 2013, Washington no longer considers Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a trusted partner. The CIA has therefore launched various operations, not against Turkey, but against Mr. Erdoğan personally. In May-June 2013, it organised and supported the Taksim Gezi Park protest movement. During the general elections in June 2015, it financed and supervised the party of the minorities, the HDP, so as to limit the power of the President. It played the same tactic during the elections of November 2015, which the Power had rigged. The CIA then moved on from political influence to secret action. It organised four assassination attempts, the last of which, in July 2016, turned ugly, forcing the Kemalist officers to attempt a coup d'état for which they were unprepared.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan therefore finds himself in a position similar to that of the Italian Prime Minister of the 1970's, Aldo Moro - both men heading a NATO member-state, and both having to face the hostility of the United States. NATO managed to eliminate the Italian by manipulating an extreme left-wing group [2], but has failed to kill the Turk.

Moreover, in order to win the elections in November 2015, Erdoğan flattered the Turko-Mongol supremacists by unilaterally expanding the conflict with the Kurdish minority. By doing so, he added the alleged «nationalists» of the MHP to his Islamist electoral base (AKP). In a few months, he caused the deaths of more than 3,000 ethnically-Kurd Turkish citizens, and destroyed several villages, even certain neighbourhoods of major cities.

Finally, by transmitting arms to al-Qaïda and Daesh which were sent by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and NATO, he wove close relations with the jihadist organisations. He did not hesitate to use the war against Syria to make money for himself. First of all by dismantling and pillaging the factories of Aleppo, then by trafficking the oil and antiques stolen by the jihadists.

Progressively, his entire clan became linked with the jihadists. For example, his Prime Minister, mafia gangster Binali Yıldırım, organised factories for the confection of counterfeit goods in the territories administrated by Daesh.

However, the intervention of Hezbollah in the second war against Syria, from July 2012, then that of the Russian Federation, in September 2015, turned the fortunes of war. From this moment on, the gigantic coalition of the «Friends of Syria» lost a lot of the terrain they had occupied, and encountered increasing difficulty in recruiting new mercenaries. Thousands of jihadists deserted the battle-field and fled to Turkey.

But in fact, most of these jihadists are incompatible with Turkish civilisation. Indeed, the jihadists had not been recruited to form a coherent army, but simply to swell the numbers. There were at least 250,000 of them, perhaps even many more. At first, these men were Arab delinquents supervised by the Muslim Brotherhood. Progressively, were added Naqshbandi Sufis from the Caucasus and Iraq, and even young Westerners in a quest for Revolution. This implausible mixture can not hold together if it is displaced to Turkey. First of all because now, what the jihadists want is a state of their own, and it seems impossible to proclaim another Caliphate in Turkey. And then for all sorts of cultural reasons. For example - the Arab jihadists have adopted the Wahhabism of their Saudi benefactors. According to this desert ideology, History does not exist. They have therefore destroyed many antique vestiges, allegedly because the Qu'ran forbids idolatry. While this has not caused problems in Ankara, there is no question of allowing them to touch the Turko-Mongol patrimony.

Thus, today Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has to face three simultaneous enemies - not counting Syria ;

- ✘ The United States and their Turkish allies, the FETÖ (Fethullah Terrorist Movement) of the Islamist bourgeois Fethullah Gülen;
- ✘ The independentist Kurds, and more particularly, the PKK;
- ✘ The Sunni state ambitions of the jihadists, particularly Daesh.

While the main interest of Turkey would be, as a priority, to dial down the interior conflicts with the PKK and the FETÖ, Erdoğan's personal interest would be to find a new ally. He was the ally of the United States when their influence was at its height, and presently hopes to become the ally of Russia, now the leading conventional military power in the world.

This about-face would seem all the more difficult to navigate since his country is a member of the Atlantic Alliance, an organisation that no-one has ever been able to leave. Perhaps at first he could leave the integrated military command, as France did in 1966. At that time, President Charles De Gaulle had to weather an attempted coup d'état and numerous assassination attempts by the OAS, an organisation which was financed by the CIA [3].

Even supposing that Turkey might manage to handle this evolution, it would still have to deal with two other major problems.

First of all, although we do not know precisely the number of jihadists in Syria and Iraq, we may estimate that they are now no more than between 50,000 and 200,000. Given that these mercenaries are massively irrecoverable, what is to be done with them? The cease-fire agreement, the text of which is deliberately imprecise, leaves open the possibility of an

attack against them in Idleb. This governorate is occupied by a bevy of armed groups who have no links with one another, but are coordinated by NATO from LandCom in Izmir, via certain «humanitarian» NGO's. Contrary to Daesh, these jihadists have never learned how to organise themselves correctly, and remain dependent on aid from the Atlantic Alliance. This aid comes to them across the Turkish border, which may soon be closed. However, while it is easy to check trucks which travel on well-defined routes, it is not possible to control the passage of men crossing the fields. Thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands of jihadists could soon flood into Turkey and destabilise it.

Turkey has already begun changing its rhetoric. President Erdoğan accused the United States of continuing to support the jihadists in general and Daesh in particular, suggesting that if he had done the same in the past, it was under the evil influence of Washington. Ankara hopes to make money by handing over the reconstruction of Homs and Aleppo to his construction and public works company. However, it is difficult to imagine how Turkey can escape from its responsibilities, after having paid hundreds of thousands of Syrians to leave their country, after having pillaged the North of Syria, and after having supported the jihadists who have destroyed this country and killed hundreds of thousands of Syrians.

Turkey's about-face, if it is to be confirmed in the months to come, will provoke a chain-reaction of consequences. Beginning with the fact that President Erdoğan now presents himself not only as the ally of Russia, but also as the partner of Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran, in other words, the hero of the Chiite world. The end, therefore, of the mirage of Turkey as leader of the Sunni world, fighting the «heretics» with Saudi money. But the artificial inter-Muslim conflict launched by Washington will not end until Saudi Arabia also lets it go.

The extraordinary shift by Turkey is probably difficult to understand for Westerners, according to whom politics are always public affairs. Leaving to one side the arrest of Turkish officers in a NATO bunker in East Aleppo, two weeks ago, it is easier to understand for those who remember the personal rôle of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during the first Chechen war, when he was director of Millî Görüş; a rôle which Moscow has never mentioned, but concerning which the Russian Intelligence services have conserved a quantity of archives. Vladimir Putin has preferred to transform an enemy into an ally, rather than taking him down and having to keep fighting his country. President Bachar el-Assad, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have gladly followed his lead.

Keep in mind:

✘ After having hoped to conquer Syria, President Erdoğan now finds himself - due only to his own policies - opposed on three fronts - by the United States and Fethullah Gülen's FETÖ; by the independentist Kurds of the PKK; and by Daesh.

✘ These three adveraries might once again be joined by Russia, which has in its possession a wealth of information concerning Erdoğan's personal record. So President Erdoğan has chosen on the contrary to ally himself with Moscow, and may leave the integrated command of NATO.

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