

# Erdogan's Faux Coup

by Jerry Gordon (July 2016)



Erdogan supporters swarm army tanks in failed coup

When first televised pictures burst out on July 15, 2015 on international media about an alleged coup by the Turkish Army they were peculiar. The soldiers stationed at airports, in tanks on the Bosphorus Bridges looked timid and frankly lost. The flyovers and explosions by low flying Turkish Air Force jets and attack helicopters may have been threatening, but in reality they were for show. August 1<sup>st</sup> was the date for appointments to Turkey's Supreme Military Command. What better time to unleash a long planned staged coup that unfolded on flickering TV screens across the globe. Normally, in the four prior coups by Turkish military, the President and cabinet were immediately sequestered, official media communications were seized and the reigning government toppled before Turkish citizens knew what had occurred. Not this time. Erdogan was ensconced on vacation in his resort palace in Marmaris, while military units were seizing news offices, rolling out tanks on Bosphorus bridges and soldiers were blocking entrances to Istanbul International Airport. Then, as if on cue, hordes of men jammed the streets in Istanbul and Ankara. This was triggered by

an Facetime video message from Erdogan that he was returning to Istanbul in his Gulfstream 5 executive aircraft. He declared that he was seizing back control and summarily ordered the arrest of members of the country's judiciary, officers in the country's military and then Erdogan supporters began conducting summary executions. It is alleged that the country's military intelligence, the MIT, had fomented the "coup," which may have a partial ring of truth, as they had executed previous false flag operations at the behest of Erdogan.

Erdogan wants to clean out all remaining opposition so that he assumes dictatorial Presidential powers equivalent to a Sunni Islamist Caliph. The paranoia has swelled so badly that a senior Turkish official accused the US of being involved in the coup. That allegedly brought a rebuke from Secretary Kerry. Erdogan's bullying is nothing but persistent. This time even the waning Obama Administration that had previously considered him the "good Islamist" is sitting up and taking notice of how volatile and dangerous he is. Erdogan is using the playbook of the late Saddam Hussein in Iraq; reminiscent of Stalin's purge of the 1930's mired in paranoia. Moreover, there were precursors that this staged coup might be Erdogan's Sunni extremist equivalent of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Way past time that this country and others in the Atlantic alliance seriously consider requesting that Turkey be removed as a NATO member, but then he might even opt to join a mutual defense pact with Putin.

Chaos arising from this alleged failed coup in Turkey makes it an unreliable dangerous member of NATO and an even less than cooperative member of the US led coalition fighting ISIS in Syria. The Kurds end up as the only reliable and effective boots on the ground in both Syria and Iraq fighting the Islamic State. At the same time the coup was occurring and being crushed there was an air drop of the long awaited weaponry from the US led coalition resupplying the Kurdish led Syrian Democratic Forces. Now, they are free to finally close the Manbij gap along the Turkish frontier that provided unhindered access by the Islamic State.



Turkey's President at Funerals for Coup victims

Source: BBC.com

### The Toll of the Failed Turkish Coup

When initial news came of the coup, this writer was attending a candidate forum in Pensacola, Florida, sponsored by the Tiger Bay Club for the Congressional seat vacated by retiring incumbent, US Rep. Jeff Miller (R-1st CD). A question was posed on the effect of this possible coup by the Turkish military: Would our government support our ally Israel against Islamic terrorism in the Middle East region? With the exception of the lone Democratic contender, who was virulently anti-Israel, the majority of the six Republican contenders expressed the view that we would. Five of the six were veterans, one was an Explosives Ordnance technician and naval officer, James Zumwalt grandson of former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo Zumwalt. Another candidate, Cris Dosev, a former Marine aviator veteran explained to the audience that the Turkish Constitution provides the authority for the country's military to defend its secular democratic institutions. During the 93 years of the Turkish Republic founded by Mustapha Kemal Ataturk there were four virtually bloodless [military](#) coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and the last occurring in 1997. The current one, which failed to unseat President Erdogan would mark the fifth. It is turning out to be bloody.

The toll in the purge in Turkey after the alleged failed coup reported by the *BBC* included 290 killed, 100 coup plotters among them, nearly 1,500 injured

and 16,000 detained, including a military aide to Erdogan, and senior Army and Air Force commanders. The regime arrested 11 Turkish Air Force officers and the commander of the important Incirlik air base from which US coalition air strikes have been launched against ISIS. Chillingly, Incirlik has stored nuclear bombs in its revetments.



Michael Rubin, American Enterprise Institute, Resident Scholar

Michael Rubin's Prescient Prediction

[Michael Rubin](#), Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute made this prescient prediction about a possible Turkish coup in March 2016. It was republished as a "Notable and Quotable" in the Weekend Edition of the July 16-17, 2016 *Wall Street Journal*:

From policy analyst Michael Rubin's "Could there be a coup in Turkey?" for the American Enterprise Institute's [AEIdeas](#), March 21, 2016:

The situation in Turkey is bad and getting worse. It's not just the deterioration in security amidst a wave of terrorism. Public debt might be stable, but private debt is out-of-control, the tourism sector is in free-fall, and the decline in the currency has impacted every citizen's buying power. There is a broad sense, election results notwithstanding, that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is out-of-control. He is imprisoning opponents, seizing newspapers left and right, and building palaces at the rate of a mad sultan or aspiring caliph. In recent weeks, he has once again threatened to dissolve the constitutional court. Corruption is rife. . . .

Erdogan long ago sought to kneecap the Turkish military. For the first decade of his rule, both the US government and European Union cheered him on. But that was before even Erdogan's most ardent foreign apologists recognized the depth of his descent into madness and autocracy. So if the Turkish military moves to oust Erdogan and place his inner circle behind bars, could they get away with it?"

Any secularists inside the military lost out in what may turn out to be, Erdogan's faux coup.



Erdogan at Ataturk Airport Memorial

Source: Reuters

### Erdogan's Dangerous Striving for a Neo-Islamic Turkish Caliphate

Erdogan, backed by his AKP cohorts in the Ankara Parliament were shocked in June 2015, when they didn't obtain a super majority enabling him to pass a referendum converting the ceremonial post of President into an executive one, modeled, as he frequently has said, on that of Hitler as elected Chancellor of Nazi Germany. He was prevented by a surge in votes of secular minority parties and the Kurdish – led Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). He declared an internal war against the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), designated terrorists, to create a tumult to return to a working majority in a September 2015 Presidential race.

He initially appointed his former Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davatoglu. But Erdogan nudged his former ally aside in May 2016, in an apparent power struggle for control of the AKP and the Ankara parliament. That power play was set against the backdrop of a series of suspicious bombings in Ankara and Istanbul, allegedly credited to the PKK and the Islamic State. Turkey has been a NATO member since 1952, but has played a quixotic and questionable role in the

turmoil next door in Syria wracked by six years of civil war and the emergence of the Islamic State, the self declared Caliphate. He alternatively made threatening noises about dislodging his former regional ally across the border, Bashar Assad while also threatening to fight the Syrian Kurdish PYD/YPG affiliate of the PKK. The Syrian Kurds are the only fighting force partnered with the US and abetted by Russia trying to dislodge the Islamic State. An Islamic State to which he facilitated the transit of foreign fighters, weapons, contraband oil, and purloined antiquities the sale of which line the family's pockets.

He shot down a Russian jet last fall across the border in Syria; a provocation unacceptable to Russian President Putin, who replied by cutting off agricultural trade and employment of Turkish construction workers for projects in Russia. He fostered the influx of more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees and migrants from across the Muslim Ummah in what can only be considered a Dar al Hijrah immigration strategy threatening Europe with Islamization. Among those throngs were Islamic State operatives headed to strike terror in the fall of 2015 with a spectacular massacre in Paris and in dual suicide bombings at Brussels airport and subway in March 2016. Some of these young male migrants spawned a host of instances of sexual rapine in welcoming countries like Germany and Sweden. Erdogan drove a hard bargain with the cowering EU receiving promises of billions in Euros to fund the misery of Syrian refugee camps in Turkey. He also had the chutzpah to up the ante demanding Visa free transit for 79 million Turkish citizens.

In late June 2016 an ISIS suicide team hit the Ataturk International Airport in Istanbul with dozens killed and well over a hundred injured. About the same time, Erdogan feeling isolation pinching his economy apologized to Russian President Putin for the shoot down of the Russian jet in Syria. He finalized a deal to renew relations with Israel after suspending it for five years over the Mavi Marmara Gaza blockade incident in May 2010. Then, on the eve of the July 15, 2016 staged coup, he turned turtle and now backed Assad endeavoring to punish rebel opposition, especially the Al Nusra Front he had previously backed. To top that off, it was reported that he had reached a deal with the US-led coalition to enable the Kurdish -led Syrian Democratic Force to close the Manbij gap cutting off ISIS access to the Turkish Frontier.



Captured Turkish soldiers beaten by Erdogan supporters, July 16, 2016

Source: Getty Images

Is Turkey poised for an Islamist Revolution?

[Soner Cagaptay](#) of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote a *Wall Street Journal* opinion article, "[Turkey Faces its 1979 Moment](#)," a reference to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Cagaptay zeroed in on what may be the real objective of Erdogan's staged coup: conversion of Turkey to a Sunni Islamist state akin to the 1979 Iranian Revolution. As baseball great Yogi Berra might say: "looks like deja vu all over again." Cagaptay noted the intensity of Islamist fervor triggered by the July 15th staged coup as Erdogan's message calling for Sharia supplanting the secularist traditions of Turkish Constitution emblematic of founder of the Republic Mustapha Kemal Ataturk.

As the coup plot was unfolding on Friday night, Mr. Erdogan appealed to religious sentiments in the country, rallying his supporters to launch a counter-coup. On his orders, calls for prayer were issued from Turkey's over 80,000 mosques at 1:15 a.m.—not a time when people are supposed to be praying. The strategy worked, the call to prayer acted as a call to political action, and religious Turks took to the streets in defiance of the secularist military. Together with pro-government police forces, they overpowered the military's botched effort.

[...]

Erdogan [promoted] efforts to impose religion: In December 2014, Turkey's Higher Education Council, a government-regulated body, issued a policy recommendation that mandatory courses on Sunni Islam be taught in publicly funded schools to all students, even ones as young as age 6.

Enter a second, quicker path to power: Islamist revolution. Erdogan supporters—who took to the streets to defy the coup, and who have continued to rally throughout the country since then—are not the garden-variety conservative AKP supporters, but rather Islamists, and even jihadists. Over the weekend, pro-Erdogan mobs captured and beat soldiers who had supported the coup. Images were reportedly posted online, in the Islamic State style, of a soldier who had been beheaded.

Jihadist sentiments in Turkey have become increasingly noticeable lately, in no small part due to Mr. Erdogan's education policy, as well as his Syria policy, which has allowed Islamist radicals to use Turkey as a staging ground. According to a recent poll by the Pew Research Center, 27% of Turks don't view Islamic State unfavorably. Mr. Erdogan can now harness these forces to usher in an Islamist revolution.

Cagaptay concludes: "most Turks of other political outlooks are scared to leave their homes."



Erdogan versus Gulen

#### Erdogan Seeks Extradition of Former Ally Fethullah Gulen

The objective of Erdogan was to pin the blame of the coup on a reclusive Sufi Sheikh multi-millionaire living in a fortified compound in the Pocono Mountains of Eastern Pennsylvania, Fethullah Gulen.

Gulen is the founder of the Hizmat or service movement with global followers and a network of more than 1000 schools in 100 countries. These so-called academies of math and science are in reality centers for promoting Islamic and Turkish culture. US Charter Schools, founded by Gulen Movement adherents and funded by US tax dollars, are staffed by Turkish administrators and teachers admitted under the H1B Visa program. There are more than 135 Gulen sponsored Charter schools across the US. Perhaps the most significant are the 46 Harmony Schools in Texas funded at over \$135 million annually.

Gulen and Erdogan were once allies. The Sheikh supported the election of Erdogan in the beginning only to fall away as he began to close Gulen Movement news media, root out prosecutors and ultimately close down the Gulen private school network in Turkey. We considered Gulen the long term radical Islamist, while Erdogan with his Muslim Brotherhood affinities had aspirations to bring back a conservative Islam. In the process he hoped to become the neo-Sultan of a family run corrupt empire. We have written about the falling out of the two former

allies and the collapse of Turkish democracy under Erdogan for the past nearly four years.

Erdogan and protesters outside the Saylorville, Pennsylvania compound of 75 year old Sheik Fethullah Gulen of the global Hizmet movement want him extradited. He successfully survived a 2008 hearing over an earlier 1998 coup indictment by a previous secular government. Outside of his Saylorville Compound in the Poconos in Eastern Pennsylvania were supporters of Turkish President Erdogan protesting Sheik Fethullah Gulen as the instigator of the failed coup. Inside his small prayer room, Gulen was expressing to a gathering of reporters the view this was a coup staged by Erdogan. In this case there are indications that this may be so. The two former Islamist allies have been bitter enemies since 2013.

[Watch](#) this *Guardian* video interview with Sheik Fethullah Gulen at his compound in Saylorville, Pennsylvania.

In the midst of the failed coup Erdogan sent off a demand for the extradition of his former ally Gulen to President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry. The Administration was caught unawares by these developments and simply said in return; show us the evidence, so that we might deliberate on what to do. Gulen may have protection under US law. In May 2016, we wrote in a *NatSecDailyBrief* [article](#) about Erdogan's filing a complaint in Texas against the Gulen Movement sponsored Harmony Charter School network.

*The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) on May 25, 2016 that the Turkish government under President Erdogan retained the Washington, DC law firm of Amsterdam and Partners to file a complaint before the Texas Education Agency. The complaint was against a network of 46 Harmony Charter Schools founded by adherents of his one-time Islamist ally, Sheik Fethullah Gulen. The complaint alleges discrimination in hiring practices; a reference to hiring Turkish staff and instructors under H1B visas with little to no experience, rather than qualified US instructors.

Gulen had important US friends vouching for him, including the Clintons, who provided testimony in a 2008 extradition hearing that went in his favor. The Erdogan government had also been endeavoring to seek Sheik Gulen's extradition for prosecution of suspected involvement in a coup against the AKP government. This fracas arose over alleged Gulenist prosecutors and affiliated news media in

Turkey accusing the autocratic President of corruption and muzzling a free press. The AKP government purged prosecutors and made major Gulen affiliated news media subject to government editorial control.



Former Turkish Army Chief Ilker Basbug, Istanbul Court 2014

Source: Reuters

## The Ergenekon Trial Verdicts Overturned

In 2007, Turkish prosecutors launched a series of trials against senior military alleged to be part of a secret terrorist organization, Ergenekon, that purportedly had planned a 2003 coup. The trials ended with 275 convictions reached in 2013, many top generals among them. In April, 2016, those convictions were overturned because of procedural rules and evidence there was no such group. *The Wall Street Journal* [noted](#) who sought the original convictions:

Judges in Ankara said the trial of retired Gen. Ilker Basbug—the former chief of Turkey’s armed forces—and others [convicted in August 2013](#) was flawed by procedural errors that prevented a fair hearing, according to Turkey’s state-run Anadolu news agency. The verdict paves the way for a retrial that could lead to acquittals.

Prosecutors had described a mass conspiracy by an ultranationalist terrorist organization called Ergenekon, named for a Turkish legend, but the court ruled there were no grounds to prove its existence.

The Court’s decision effectively marks the unraveling of a case that divided the country, pitting backers of the secular-leaning military against Islamist conservatives who backed then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The trial helped bolster Mr. Erdogan’s power and blunted the influence of the once almighty military—the second largest force after the U.S. in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The case was sparked by a 2007 investigation that found more than two dozen grenades in an Istanbul shantytown and eventually led to the prosecution of military officers, journalists, academics and politicians.

Defendants in the case have denied the allegations. They argue that false

evidence was planted by supporters in the judiciary and the police of Fethullah Gulen, [a U.S.-based Turkish imam](#) who was at one time one of Mr. Erdogan's strongest backers.

They say the prominent cleric sought to push secularists from the military and bureaucracy in an effort to transfer power to Islamists.

## Conclusion

My how the worm has turned. Now Erdogan is seeking to extradite the very man who helped him crush the secularists in Turkey's military, Fethullah Gulen.

This would make great copy for a contemporary Turkish Game of Thrones series. The tragedy is that once secular Turkey has been destroyed by the two radical Islamists, former allies, now at each other's throats. One of them, President Erdogan is challenging the US once more to extradite Sheik Gulen, accusing him of staging a faux coup that Erdogan executed without his former ally's knowledge. It all appears as the devolution into a Sunni Sharia Caliphate with autocrat Erdogan as the neo-Sultan overthrowing the secular Constitution of the Turkish Republic, founded by Mustapha Kemal Ataturk.

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