

Erdogan's Turkey: When Knives Cut Both Ways

This is Part One of an on-scene investigative series direct from the streets of Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria.

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"A Leader should be like a father... he helps the country grow, teaches it, provides for its future. Erdogan? He is no father to Turkey." - Turkish citizen on the streets of Istanbul.

On the streets, cafes, and carpet shops of Istanbul a very different story than the one presented by western media is developing about the true allegiance of Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. While he continues to play a dangerous international game between Russia and the NATO/Israeli/US alliance his biggest future enemy walks the streets of his realm... the Turkish people. And he knows it.

While walking the ancient hilly streets here in Istanbul, where the ill-fated Occupy/Turkey movement and the purported, "coup" once reared its populist head in the huge Taksim Square, police presence here is massive, intentional and obvious.

Since the coup of July 15, 2016, most street corners now have patrol cars sitting idly, their flashing lights always on, two cops per car, sitting inside doing little but smoking fat non-filtered Turkish cigarettes and staring at the passers-by. Six different police uniforms can be observed along with those of three different branches of military garb. The uniform seen most is a simple, very new looking royal blue and black jacket with "Polis" emblazoned on the back in white six inch letters. While some carry automatic weapons and/or pistols, these jackets are also worn by women whose only weapon seems to be a purse, young Turks in jeans who stand in groups observing the crowd, and rough looking characters in jeans and track shoes who walk about, fingers on the triggers of Kalashnikovs. In the tourist centers, such as Galata Bridge, police indiscriminately accost Arab looking passers-by; demanding their passports. They leave the many Asian and very few Caucasian tourists alone.



One of the many MRAP style vehicles

Nowhere in Istanbul is this police presence not obvious. The grim faces of these *gendarmeries* have already had the desired effect on the people. Istanbul is unusually unfriendly. From the airport staff to bus drivers, and subway attendants they too showcase the same dark, narrowed eyes of suspicion exemplified by the police presence. These are the faces of the new Turkey. Erdogan's Turkey.

Considering that President Erdogan has publicly stated that his [preferred example of successful governance is Nazi Germany](#), it thus comes as no surprise that this long ago defeated example of authoritarian power is now his direction for his quest for unlimited, everlasting power.

This fact is not lost on the Turks who believe the coup of 2015 to be manufactured, similar to Hitler's Reichstag Fire, thereby providing him the reason to put tens-of-thousands of Turkish citizens- judges, doctors, journalists, and teachers- in prison while next arranging his Supreme court to his fancy which allowed for a new national constitution which gave him virtually unchecked power over every aspect of Turkish life. Considered at that time by the western power triumvirate to be well within their sphere of influence, western media has given all of this a pass by failing to report it or fabricating false truths of support that are as distorted as the 2016 coup itself.

Consider the false western narrative that

- 1) There was an externally influenced coup to unseat Erdogan and
- 2) it was authorized by Fethullah Gulen from his hiding place in America.

To the Turks, these mistruths fail to reveal that Gulen and Erdogan shared power and business interests for more than 15 years as the latter continued to grow in power and that they have always been and continue to be very close friends. Here on the streets, they add to this illumination that Erdogan came out unscathed in this coup while conveniently out of the country and avoiding arrest while the coup was actually a paltry effort at best being little more than the closing of the Galata Bridge by a few tanks that restricted the exit of the people from Istanbul's "modern city" and Taksim square where the Turks had gathered en masse. The result of this convenient theatre was that Erdogan immediately culled from them the intelligentsia of Turkey, without any evidence of their participation, off to prison. Per 1936 Germany, this was step one... and carried out to perfection.

This rouse continued as this past week as Erdogan again continued to demand the return of his supposed arch-enemy and past best friend Fethullah Gulen.

"If you're not giving [Gulen] to us, then excuse us, but from now on whenever you ask us for another terrorist, as long as I am in office, you will not get them," stated the Turkish president.

Rather than arrest him, should he be handed over, to the Turks it is more likely that the two would, in reality, sit down for a nice chat and a tulip glass of strong, delicious Turkish tea.

Although predominately missing in the Western press, none of this is any secret to the Turks who are also well aware of Erdogan's propagation of ISIS by being the financial pipeline of Syria's stolen oil to Turkish ports, his use of Kirkuk air base to bring new ISIS fighters to the

Syrian border and shipments of US weapons into Syrian opposition hands... long before the western media finally acknowledged this obvious truth.

Incorrect news reporting would have one believe that the Kurdish vs. Erdogan issue resides exclusively outside the Turkish borders in Northern Syria in proposed Kurdistan and that Gulen is its sponsor while tucked safely away in the US. Missing here is the fact that Gulen is not Kurdish and that of the 80 million Turkish citizens, more than 25 million are Kurdish and all lived in Turkey in harmony for centuries. Most of Turkey still do. But Erdogan demonized the Kurds by falsely blaming them as well as "*religious cleric*" Gulen in his growing effort to divide the country along religious lines. This is merely convenient propaganda since the Kurds like the rest of Turkey love their country and would prefer continued peace. Many believe that Erdogan's goal is a civil war; a war that he believes will make him all-powerful as one side of the country fights the other and then reaches out to him for salvation. This appears to be accurate.

President Erdogan's penchant for creating chaos was clearly shown this week when, as [reported to by the Libya Herald](#), Greek authorities confirmed they had boarded and seized a ship carrying potential explosive making materials from Turkey to Misrata, Libya intended for US-backed leader Haftar. The Hellenic Coast Guard Headquarters confirmed this. Further, this is one of the ports previously used to export Syrian oil stolen by ISIS. Further, at this point, nothing moves within Turkey without Erdogan's approval.

With this, Erdogan is an example of US foreign policy. He does not mind internal chaos in fact many Turks believe this to be his actual goal for their country: Civil war. Many Turks report their distaste for their president's recent theatre appearance in supposedly supporting the Palestinians in lieu of the US president Trump's decision to rob them of a Jerusalem capital and note the unreported news that in the aftermath of the tragic, peaceful Mavi Marmara attempt to bring needed supplies to Gaza- during which nine people were slaughtered by Israeli IDF soldiers- that before Israel would agree to pay cash provided as reparations to families of the dead Turks, Erdogan did then agree already to allow Israel to take Jerusalem for their capital. Although unproven, it is fixed in the opposition voices and does share the ring of truth considering that in the wake of the series of US hurricanes this past year, FEMA required aid recipients to sign an oath to Israel... not America.

There is now a caution in the people's voices when one travels in Turkey; a hush that invades every political discussion or prognostications of what will befall this pluralistic society. The coup and its results are in the minds of all, as is the massive purge of innocent Turks. Here, Erdogan ignores history and human nature, preferring to believe in the current examples being shown by El-Sisi in Egypt, MBS in Saudi Arabia, Netanyahu in Israel, Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen and worldwide US hegemony: that his new military might makes him right no matter what and that force will override the fundamental desire of the Turks for peace and freedom. This, of course, ignores the historical results and demise of Hitler, Mussolini, and Pol Pot. When one speaks with Turks, there is anger in their eyes despite the hushed tones of hopeful resistance. One Turkish Kurd distilled this reality:

" The history of Turkey, back to the time of Ataturk [who gained Turkish independence from the World War One Allied powers] ... even before... is that of the knife. When war comes- if it does- Erdogan will meet the Turkish again. Then, he too will meet the blade of the knife!"

After a beautiful six mile walk through the streets and along the massive rock lined harbour that passed through this military gauntlet and now finally arriving at Taksim Square, a similar police presence comes into view surrounding the square. A huge white, military vehicle- seemingly an exact copy of the US made MRAP- with machine gun turret- sits parked, a fence ringing it while its black uniformed operators play cards, smoke and drink coffee just behind. They too are not friendly. These, like the many other multi- uniformed police here in Istanbul are Erdogan's troops. Like their master, they are not loyal to the Turks....they are loyal to power for power in a failing Turkish economy is job security: theirs.

The Turkish economy is in dire straights and many Turks believe this is yet another tool that Erdogan intends to use to divide their country via discontent. Istanbul is an amazing city full of examples of splendour, its ancient mosques reaching skyward across the hills that overlook the harbour of commerce that has been here for millennia. This city is worth any traveler's money, but tourism is a fraction of its former pre-coup days despite the Lira crashing in value. Although this is January and the slowest tourism month of the year, shop owners and cafe operators report that the tourist income is substantially down since the coup. On a normally busy Friday night restaurants are virtually empty, their many tables and chairs sitting vacant. The hawkers for each sing out their friendly solicitations, but there is a tone of desperation and futility as they try to attract travellers.

While a declining economy may be the beginning of Erdogan's fall from grace, many believe this is part of his ultimate plot. This opinion is not only bolstered by the many Turks, but by the foreign economic western press. [A Feb. 6, 2016, article by *The Economist*](#) stated clearly what many Turks already suspect:

“... sustained growth will require a change of attitude, beginning at the top. A sophisticated market economy cannot be run by offering favours for loyalty... Similarly, companies that own media outlets have been cut out of business in other fields if they fail to toe the line. Firms with the right contacts, say critics of the government, have done well, winning not just direct state contracts but privileged access to deals. “They [Erdogan's Gov't] used to be giving, sacrificing for the public good,” says an Istanbul news editor. “Now they are taking, using all the redistributive power of the state.”

These comments are much more important given the facts that Turkey was debt free in June of 2013 after having completely paid off all IMF loans but that now, since the coup Erdogan has already driven Turkey back into more than a US\$500 billion debt or over 50% of GDP...in less than five years!

On the long walk back from Taksim Square and now approaching the famous Blue Mosque and another huge square, the Hippodrome, which sits in front of the mosque with Istanbul University at one end. Even on this day something strange is happening police presence is suddenly even more dramatic and surrounds a series of all-black US style SUVs and all-black stretch limousines. Anyone attempting to get near is frisked and searched. The cops are very unfriendly. A helicopter circles over head. Once inside this fenced cordon, I ask if anyone speaks English and a nice man offers his help. “*It's the president,*” he whispers since there are six police with automatic weapons within earshot. “*Its Erdogan!*”

As we pull back from the metal barricade to chat more, I wonder how many professors here are still missing from their students and classrooms. This stranger tells me that he is Syrian from Palmyra having moved his family to Turkey after his hotel was destroyed due to an

American bombing. He would like to leave Turkey, but is jovial, good-natured, despite his loss, offering to show his hospitality at his home later that day. Preparing to depart, with a hearty handshake he concludes our conversation.

“All people should be able to be free,” he says smiling. “They should have chances...to have a future for their families... to have peace... to have...” and he stops searching for the right word.

“Happiness?” offered this reporter.

“Inshallah [if Allah [God] wills],” he agreed.

Here lies the problem. For in Turkey God has little influence on the values of the new king.

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