

Failures in Syria and Libya Fuel Coup Speculations Against Erdogan

By [Paul Antonopoulos](#)

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Turkish media has been full of speculation of a potential coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, including from state-run [Anadolu Agency](#), and other major outlets like [Sabah](#) and [Haberturk](#). Erdoğan already survived a 2016 coup attempt against him that he blames on his ex-ally, Fethullah Gülen, who leads the FETÖ Islamic movement. It is likely that Erdoğan will conduct another purge of the Turkish military.

Although the 2016 coup was orchestrated mostly by the Air Force, it appears that one of the first victims could have been Rear Admiral Cihat Yaycı. On May 15, Yaycı was demoted from the Chief of Staff's to the General Staff, prompting him to resign from the military completely on Monday. Although some speculated it could have been because of the coup rumors circulating, Yaycı proved to be one of the most loyal Chief of Staff's to Erdoğan and played a significant role in purging so-called FETÖ elements from the Turkish military.

It is likely that Yaycı was actually demoted because of Turkey's complete failure to project its power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Yaycı is known as the architect of Turkey's "Blue Homeland" theory that aims to annex Greece's Eastern Aegean islands and maritime space. To achieve the "Blue Homeland," Ankara in November 2019, with recommendation from Yaycı, sealed the "Marine Jurisdictions" maritime boundary delimitation deal with Libya's Muslim Brotherhood Government of National Accords (GNA) to split Greek maritime space between Turkey and Libya.

However, since the signing of the deal with the Tripoli-based GNA, Ankara's power projections in the Eastern Mediterranean has only weakened Turkish influence. Turkey had not expected for Greece to expel the GNA ambassador from Athens, one of the first NATO and EU countries to do so. In reaction, Greece recognised the GNA's rival, the Tobruk-based Libyan House of Representatives who appointed Field Marshal Khalifa Belqasim Haftar to command the Libyan National Army against Turkish-backed jihadists who fight for the GNA.

Greece's shift in recognition shows another flashpoint in rivalry with so-called NATO ally Turkey and rapidly changed dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean. Haftar currently controls about 90% of territory and 60% of the population, prompting Turkey to send 5,000 Syrian jihadists to support the GNA, who have regained some lost territory in recent weeks.

But this is going to change as it appears massive simultaneous operations against the GNA and Turkish-backed jihadists in Syria's Idlib province are set to begin in the coming weeks. Turkey as the sole backers of jihadist forces in Libya and Idlib will find this extremely difficult to deal with as it faces an economic crisis.

A detailed report by [New Economy](#) found that "Turkey's probability of bankruptcy is

extremely high,” along with its three big banks of Garanti, Akbank and the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk-founded İşbank. “The country’s commercial banks, its last stronghold, have dried up from foreign exchange currency,” meaning that Turkey has nearly no money for its import and export companies.

[Another report](#) found that failed wars against Libya and Syria have been a major problem for its economy, making Turkey’s bankruptcy probability over 30% in the forthcoming period, putting them behind only Venezuela and Argentina, but “without having the US embargo that Venezuela has, nor the vast debt that Argentina brings.”

Most startling however for Turkey is that it has to find \$80 billion by August, according to [New Economy](#), or else it faces bankruptcy.

“There is also the additional 0.5-1 billion dollar cost per month for the wars in Syria and Libya, which seems to exacerbate the existing situation, leading to a huge state budget hole and escalating the probabilities of bankruptcy,” the report said.

With major economic problems in Turkey, Ankara paid Syrian jihadists in Libya [only one month’s worth of wages](#) and then ended all payments. This has prompted the jihadists to make videos urging other Syrians not to go to Libya and fight. Meanwhile, Turkey’s aggression has prompted [Greece to renew diplomatic relations with Syria](#), become actively involved in Libya, and strengthen relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates who oppose Turkish influence in the Arab world.

Yaycı’s ambitious “Blue Homeland” project forced Greece to become involved in Libya and Syria that it previously had no interest in, and it is now actively a part of an alliance that is opposing Turkish influence in the region. With Greece actively opposing Turkish influence in Libya, France has also taken a stronger interest and openly opposes the GNA now. What began as a plan to carve up Greece’s maritime space has now turned into a debacle that sees French involvement against the GNA and EU recognition of the Muslim Brotherhood government waning.

Egypt is now threatening to directly use its military to defeat the GNA rather than just supply Haftar’s forces. The UAE has promised to continue airstrikes against the GNA and funding mercenaries for Haftar. Saudi Arabia is also funding mercenaries. Greece and France are involved in the EU’s Operation Irini to stop maritime deliveries of arms to Libya. In March, Haftar’s political representatives signed with Syria a Memorandum of Understanding to start diplomatic relations. Syria and the Libyan National Army are also preparing likely simultaneous operations against jihadists in their respective countries.

This is all happening while Turkey faces a very serious threat of bankruptcy and rumors of a coup attempt. Therefore, it is likely that Yaycı was demoted by Erdoğan for masterminding and pushing for the “Blue Homeland” that has ended in catastrophic failure for Turkey.

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Paul Antonopoulos is an independent geopolitical analyst.

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