

“The New Middle East”: Russian Style. The Saudis are Running Scared

Part IIB

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This section examines how and why the two formerly most stable states in the Mideast (at least according to conventional Western understanding) have become the ones facing the greatest prospects of full-scale destabilization:

The Saudis Are Running Scared

Biting The Russian Hand:

The combined effect of the Coalition of the Righteous' (COR) successes sends chills down the Saudis' spine, since they're watching their regional proxies get wiped out to the benefit of geopolitical rival Iran. The author had earlier tried to [analyze](#) the nature of the closed-door Russian-Saudi diplomacy that had been ongoing for most of the year, eventually coming to a conclusion that Moscow was trying to provide Riyadh with a 'face-saving' retreat from the Syrian battlefield. The [tacit understanding](#) here was that the withdrawn proxy forces could then be redeployed elsewhere, perhaps to Yemen, which is inarguably seen by the Kingdom as its number one security issue at the moment.

The proposal sounded good on paper, but the Saudis attempted to double-deal the Russians by instead contracting [Gulf forces](#) to bear the brunt of most of the War on Yemen's brutal ground campaign, thus allowing them to leave their proxies in Syria as they continued to pursue their regime change ends there. As is now being seen in hindsight, the author's assessment has been vindicated, since it's now clear that Russia was indeed giving Saudi Arabia the opportunity to covertly withdraw its associated fighting forces prior to the coming onslaught, which they of course weren't notified about before in advance. The House of Saud thought it could finagle some type of extra benefit by declining to call its associated armies out of Syria, leading to a major miscalculation that that is seeing the Kingdom's proxies decimated in the course of a week and its strategic planners in full-blown panic mode.

Sinking In The Sand:

The entire Mideast was aware of the Russian-Saudi discussions, and now that Russia has assembled the COR and is directly fighting terrorism in the region, the Saudi's proxy forces such as the "[Army of Conquest](#)" must now be asking themselves why their patron

abandoned them as sitting ducks on the battlefield. It's not realistically thought that Russia informed the Saudis in any way whatsoever of their coming military campaign, but for the Islamists on the ground being killed by Russian airstrikes, it sure seems like a possibility, and they may be seething with anger against the Saudis for being set up. Already, [over 3,000 terrorists](#) have already fled Syria for Jordan, likely en route back to Saudi Arabia, and the Kingdom's security establishment must surely be aware of the threat this entails. Couple the returning jihadis with the homegrown ISIL terrorists that [already struck](#) in the country before, and a cocktail of domestic disaster is being mixed before the Saudis' own eyes, and their military establishment is too bogged down along the Yemeni border to adequately focus on it. This dire state of affairs could be made even more severe if the Ansarullah are successful enough in their attacks against the '[Arab NATO](#)' that some of its Gulf members (especially Qatar and the UAE) pull out, which would then force the Saudis to compensate with their own overstretched forces. Furthermore, their paranoid fantasies of "Iranian-Shia encirclement" are probably kicking into high gear right now, meaning that it can't be guaranteed that the country will react rationally to any threats that it perceives. In connection with this, a heavy-handed crackdown, whether against suspected terrorists or Shiites, can't be discounted, and this would obviously add to the country's domestic destabilization.

From Supreme Power To Second-Rate State:

Approaching the country from an international perspective, it's evident that Saudi Arabia's regional influence is waning as the COR's steps up its anti-terrorist campaign and drives its proxies out of Syria and Iraq. In the near future when ISIL and other terrorists are defeated in these states, the Saudis (if they're still a unified country) will be forced to accept a second-rate status in the Mideast, nothing at all like the position they had enjoyed since 2003. Additionally, they will find themselves increasingly relying on Russia in order for Moscow mediate between the Kingdom and the Islamic Republic and help maintain the "cold peace" that's expected to settle over the Gulf (as the author [previously forecast](#) in his "Pivot of Pragmatism" scenario). The US' diminished role in the Mideast will be a fait accompli by this point, signaling that the Saudis' days of fully relying on it for its security guarantees will be long gone. Also, the [energy war](#) between the two might by that time have placed the Kingdom in a weakened economic position, especially if it's not as successful as it hopes to be in diversifying its economy [through financial instruments](#). Overall, the geopolitical forecast for Saudi Arabia looks quite gloomy, and it's a sure bet that it's moving towards what might be the hardest times its ever experienced in its history, which will present an existential challenge that will strain its government to the maximum.

Turkish Turmoil

The Current State Of Affairs:

The author forecast this scenario in his [most recent](#) article for The Saker, but it's definitely worth citing again and exploring more in-depth because it looks ever more likely that it'll transform into a reality. The gist of the idea is that Turkey is undergoing such strenuous domestic difficulties at the moment (civil war, [left-wing terrorism](#), [Islamist terrorist bombings](#) [which may have been a [false flag](#)]) that there's a real possibility that it could become 'the next Syria' of absolute destabilization if the government and/or military (through a coup) doesn't regain full control soon. The situation was already precarious even before the COR's anti-terrorist crusade, but now Turkey faces the very real prospect of its own Islamist proxies retreating northwards to their nest just as the Saudis' are doing in the

southern direction.

With the Turkish military focusing most of its attention on the Kurdish-dominated southeast, it's dubious whether or not it even has the capability to fully secure its border now that it literally has the pressing security urge to finally do so. An influx of experienced terrorists into the Turkish heartland is literally the last thing that the security establishment needs during this already turbulent time, and depending on the level of political uncertainty after the snap November elections, it could very well be that the military decides to once more take matters into its own hands and restore order in the country. If that happens, then it might be the decisive moment needed to push the country towards a full-on Eurasian Pivot, which in that case would completely dismantle the US regional security architecture and send shockwaves through the rest of NATO.

The Unintentional Flank and Turkish/Balkan Stream:

✖ Continuing with the topic of a Turkish military coup, the author feels the need to explain his forecast in detail so that it is properly understood by the reader, but in order to get there, some contextual information is necessary. To begin with, Russia's military involvement in Syria has completed the unintentional fait accompli of flanking Turkey. In fact, if one uses this perceptive lense to reexamine the past three conflicts that Russia partook in, then it: (1) secured the Abkhaz coast and neutralized any future Georgian naval expansion, thus projecting Russian power across the entire eastern Black Sea; (2) secured Crimea and guaranteed Russian control of the northern part of the Black Sea; and (3) positioned Russian air assets south of the Turkish border. It is not at all to suggest that the pursuit of these results played any motivating influence whatsoever in guiding Russia's role in these three conflicts, but the final facts are indisputable – Russian naval forces project power along Turkey's northern coast, while its aerospace ones (and to an extent, certain naval ones as well) do the same along the southern border.

In this context, Turkish/Balkan Stream was an olive branch of friendship meant to reassure a strategic energy ally that Russia means no harm, and actually intends to peacefully strengthen bilateral relations, not weaken them, despite each side's polar opposite approach to Syria. Despite this, talks on the project had [stalled](#) as of late, as Erdogan foolishly attempted to follow the Saudis' lead by turning what could have been mutually beneficial and pragmatic diplomacy with Russia into some type of grand geopolitical game, and just like with King Salman, 'Sultan Erdogan' also failed in his gambit. Now that the country is unable to form a government at least until the November elections, the project has been frozen until [December or January](#) at the earliest, frustrating Russia's plans to accelerate its [Balkan Pivot](#), playing to the US' relative advantage, and undermining Turkey's business reputation similarly to how France's was self-slurred by the Mistral affair (although not yet past that dramatic point of no return).

Erdogan's Imaginary War Against Russia:

The geopolitical situation is a lot different today than it was a few months ago, however, with Turkey now mired in civil war and Russia having completed its unintentional flanking of the country through the basing of air units along its southern border. There's no sane scenario where Russia would ever decide to launch a first strike against its NATO neighbor, but still, the present distribution of forces indicates that Russia certainly has acquired a strategic upper hand in any event. Turkey's [overreaction](#) to the [unintentional](#) violation of its airspace by a Russian jet this week was due in large part to its political establishment's

increasing paranoia about this, played up of course by the [US](#) and [NATO](#) for their own strategic ends. Nevertheless, with the Turkish military being stretched between Kurdistan, the Syrian border, and every soft terrorist target in between, the last thing its top brass needs is to become entangled in Erdogan's imaginary war with Russia. The more that the political leadership tries to press the point of Russian "aggression", the more likely it is that the military will rebel against it and take steps towards an actual coup, since it, more than any other actor in Turkey, understands the falseness behind this claim and the absolute futility in pursuing it, especially in light of the existentially threatening circumstances that Erdogan has presently and completely unnecessarily gotten the Republic of Turkey into.

The Military's Mindset:

The Turkish military is being gorged on the horns of a multisided dilemma. First off, it's stuck fighting a bloody civil war in the southeast which was sparked by Erdogan's [failed pre-election ploy](#). Secondly, this conflict has already gone international, with limited Turkish ground and air strikes in Iraq, demonstrating the growing operational complexity of this mission. Thirdly, the Turkish military needs to counter the very real threat that thousands of retreating Syrian-based jihadis will return to their Turkish training base. On top of that, the political leadership is pressing it to simultaneously remain on standby in the event that an ill-fated decision is made to conventionally intervene in Syria. Already, these four simultaneous pressures (civil war, Iraqi intervention, "anti-terrorist" responsibilities, and Syrian standby) are pulling the Turkish military to the breaking point, and that's not even considering the very real danger that Erdogan's imaginary war with Russia could have on the country's stability.

To explain the last point, Russia's unintentional flanking of Turkey has put it in a position where it could inflict significant damage to the country if attacked, which, of course, is in nobody's interests (not even Erdogan's, as personally fickle and prone to temper tantrums as he is). So, in the event of any hypothetical Turkish antagonism against Russia (for example, over its anti-terrorist operations in Syria), then the feasible scenario arises where the Russian-Kurdish-Iranian members of the COR extend some form of tangible support to the Turkish-based Kurdish separatists, which might be enough to fatally tip the balance of power against the Turkish military and lead to its removal from the entire southeast portion of the (former) country. Rhetorically speaking, if Turkey can [involve itself](#) in Russia's domestic affairs in [Crimea](#) (potentially even through [militant means](#)), there's nothing at all stopping Russia from doing the same in Kurdistan, even if it doesn't announce it as arrogantly as Erdogan did. Remember, this is a rhetorical/hypothetical situation – no proof exists that Russia has any intent to do this – but military strategists, in this case those from Turkey, as per their job responsibilities, must consider and plan for all scenarios, so it's likely that this one has entered the minds of at least a couple of people in Ankara.

A Geopolitical Blessing:

Already stretched to the limit as it is, there's no way that the Turkish military would also be able to manage an emboldened Kurdish insurgency that was strengthened by Russian, Iraqi Kurdish, and Iranian support, which would thus lead to the independence of the region and the dismantling of Turkey's territorial integrity and Eurasian energy nexus plans. In the military's mindset, it's logically much better for Turkey to avoid provoking Russia and prompting it to play out this scenario, because as is obviously understood, it would quickly lead to the unravelling of Turkish statehood. This is why the Turkish military could realistically be pushed towards acting on any preexisting coup ideas it may have if Erdogan

continues to press ahead with his provocations against Russia. In fact, a post-coup Turkey might actually be very beneficial for Russian-Turkish relations, since the country would finally have a capable enough leadership in power that understands the essence of the bilateral partnership and could seek to intensify it for maximum mutual advantage, notably by rapidly moving forward with Turkish/Balkan Stream and de-facto disengaging from NATO.

The reader must never fail to remember that Turkey is already very close to a military coup as it is, but that the anti-Russian agenda being pushed by the Erdogan government might very well be the point that breaks the military's patience and pushes it to carry out its plans. The regime change would be entirely self-inflicted and with no external party to blame whatsoever (let alone Russia), but it could fortuitously become a geopolitical blessing if the military administration decides to follow the above recommendations and unyieldingly turn towards the multipolar community of Eurasia.

[To be continued...](#)

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