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## Ankara: the New Capital of Jihad

By Mike Whitney  
August 20, 2015

“The US and it’s allies want to keep this monster (ISIS) in check, but they don’t want to destroy it. All their military, political and media campaigns are smokescreens. What the West has done so far has strengthened terrorism not ended it. The proof of this is the fact that terrorism has spread everywhere, its material resources have increased, and its ranks have swollen.”

— Syrian President Bashar al Assad

Has US policy in Syria fallen prey to the political ambitions of one man, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan?

Certainly not. Washington has its own malignant agenda in Syria, which is to topple Syrian President Bashar al Assad, split the country into pieces, lock-down critical pipeline corridors, and establish a “Salafist principality” that will justify continued US intervention across the Middle East for the foreseeable future. These are the objectives of US policy and they haven’t changed because of anything Erdogan has done.

That’s not to say that Erdogan hasn’t complicated matters by requiring the US to play by Turkey’s rules. He has. Just look at the Incirlik deal. In theory, it looks like a win-win for US war-planners who will now be able to cross into Syrian airspace in 15 minutes instead of the two hours it took from Bahrain. But the devil is in the details which suggest constraints on the US

military's ability to conduct its own campaign or even choose its own targets. Take a look at this excerpt from an article in *Al Monitor*:

“Turkey wants to open Incirlik not only to US warplanes but also to the aircraft of anti-IS NATO members France, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Canada. What Turkey wants to accomplish here is to affix NATO legitimacy to the operation by reinforcing the perception that operations against IS targets in Syria are part of a NATO mission.

Turkey insists that operations, flight routes and targets should be decided collectively by the coordination cell, but subject to Turkey's final approval. This means decisions made at Incirlik must be conveyed to Ankara immediately. The coordination center in Ankara must be kept informed of all operations and flights in real time with Incirlik.

Ankara is trying to insert a clause that gives it the authority to send back the coalition planes in case of contravention of the agreement.

.... The emerging concept is coordinated planning of Turkish air operations against the PKK in Iraq and US attacks against IS. The United States and Turkey would know all the details of each other's operations in Iraq, but not interfere with each other.” (“What's US really doing at Turkey's Incirlik Air Base?”, *Al Monitor*)

If it sounds like Erdogan is in the drivers seat, it's because he is. The US will have to do whatever Ankara tells it to do or get the boot. It's that simple. How do you think the Obama crew is going to like taking orders from a megalomaniac like Erdogan?

They're not going to like it at all, but they're going to have to suck it up and play along if they want to get rid of Assad. And, whether they admit it or not, removing Assad is their top priority, so they'll probably do what they're told.

And did you notice how Erdogan wants to get NATO involved? That's because his generals were resisting any action against Syria without international approval. Now that Erdogan has gotten the thumbs up from NATO and Uncle Sam, the military can bomb the Kurds “til their hearts content” and never worry about punitive sanctions or future war crimes tribunals.

Also, Erdogan is going to have the final say-so on who is targeted and who isn't, which means that his attacks on the People's Protection Units (YPG) or the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and can continue unabated, but Washington will have to get the go-ahead for their attacks on ISIS. Looking at it from this angle, the agreement doesn't look nearly as rosy as the media has been saying. Even so, the Pentagon still believes Incirlik will be a “gamechanger”, which it could be since the real goal is not to eliminate ISIS, but to create a no-fly zone across Syria that reinforces US-proxy fighters in their war against the Syrian gov forces. Of course, US officials are not about to call the no-fly zone a no-fly zone because that would be an act of war and a violation of international law. Instead, they're going to stick to their script, pretend nothing is happening, dodge the question whenever possible, and get their buddies in the media to keep the matter off the front page, which is exactly what they've been doing up to now.



*Incirlik Air Base, Turkey.*

But there will be consequences for intensifying the war effort, after all, Syria does have a few powerful friends that can make US flyovers a bit more difficult. Putin, for example, is not just going to roll over and play dead. Check this out from BGN News:

“Six MiG-31 fighter jets from Russia have landed in Damascus, in partial fulfillment of a protocol signed between Moscow and the Syrian regime in 2007. Developed by the Soviet Air Force, the Mikoyan MiG-31 is a supersonic jet, and one of the fastest fighter planes in the world. The jets have a target range of approximately 200 kilometers.”

(“Russia sends six fighter jets to Syrian administration“, *BGN News*)

And this is just the first shot fired over Washington’s bow. They’ll be more to come as the conflict intensifies. But the message is clear, Russia and Iran are not going to allow a repeat of Libya in Syria. They’re committed to preventing the violent overthrow of Assad and the descent of Syria into anarchy. Case in point: Check out this blurb from the *Miami Herald*:

“According to Hamid-Rezi Taraghi, the international affairs spokesman for the Islamic Coalition party and a former member of parliament, Iran is prepared to send Iranian forces into Syria. “If necessary, we will... send up to 100,000 Basij or revolutionary guard fighters. “They’re always ready,” said Taraghi.”

(“Iran’s perspective on Syria: U.S. allies to blame for rise of Islamic State“, *Miami Herald*)

The point is, Iran sees the war on Assad as a war on Tehran, so it’s not going to back down. They’ll send troops and supplies to Syria thinking that “it’s better to fight the US and its allies there, rather than here.” So, while US officials are crowing about the “gamechanger” Incirlik deal, what they’ve really done is they’ve thrown more gas on a fire that was already raging increasing the chances of a regional war that could eventually pit Moscow against Washington. Now check out this quote from an op-ed in Turkish daily *Hurriyet*:

“For Syria, there is no hope of maintaining its unitary status. As the diplomatic bargaining over dividing what is left of Syria among the parties continues at full speed, Turkey is understandably seeking to carve out a buffer zone to protect its interests.” (“Conquering Aleppo“, Selin Nasi, *Hurriyet Daily News*, Turkey)

Bingo. This is exactly what Erdogan has in mind, and ostensibly, the US has agreed to help him achieve his territorial aims in exchange for the use of Incirlik. Some will disagree with this analysis, but it’s absurd to think that Washington doesn’t know what Erdogan is up to. He’s carving off a nice big chunk of north Syria to add to Turkey’s landmass while Obama and Co. look the other way. That’s what’s really going on. Here’s more clarification from the same article:

“Claims that Turkish military forces on Aug. 10 entered the planned zone in Syria via the Öncüpınar/Bab al-Salameh border crossing along with the Sultan Murat Brigade, which is composed of Turkmens, presents a worrying picture, especially when taken in conjunction with pro-government media headlines that cheerfully proclaimed Aleppo as the 82nd province of Turkey. The Turkmen card, which Turkey saves for rainy days as a foreign policy option, is on the table once again – something that is not surprising when nationalist sentiments are also on the rise. The perils of this political gamble loom large: Any attack against our Turkmen brothers in the safe zone could easily spark a military clash and drag Turkey into war.....

In the end, do we really want to fight for an 82nd province?”

So Turkey’s right wing pundits are saying that Aleppo, (which is in N Syria) is “Turkey’s 82nd province”?

Yep, they sure are, which means the path has been cleared for a major invasion followed by a land-grab in northern Syria (including Aleppo) using the justification of establishing a “safety zone”. The assumption is that the US will provide air cover for this blatant act of aggression, and that the UN will sweep the whole matter under the rug since Erdogan already got the green light from both Washington and NATO. Meanwhile, Washington plans to pound the holy crap out of any Syrian government forces that come with a 50 mile radius of their glorious army of Takferi “moderates”, you know, the same moderates that cut off heads and rape teenage girls. These are America’s allies in its war against Assad, er, ISIS.

Of course, if the US was serious about fighting terrorism, they’d assist Assad in his battle against jihadi groups operating in Syria, and then move on to the vipers lairs in Ankara and Riyadh, the cesspits from whence all terror emerges. Check out this clip from *Hurriyet* on the problems Germany has had dealing with double-dealing Erdogan:

“The second and perhaps more troubling concern emerged within the German security establishment when Turkey’s neck-deep involvement in supporting radical groups fighting to topple Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria reached out to expatriates in Germany. Erdoğan’s secret support for radical groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Jabhat al-Nusra and the Ahrar al-Sham was closely monitored by German intelligence. Several test cases where Turkey failed to turn over high-profile ISIL suspects detained by Turkish police and

wanted in Germany but instead let them join ISIL's ranks in Syria convinced Chancellor Angela Merkel's government that Erdoğan is simply playing a duplicitous game regarding the security of its allies.....

The threat of the possible radicalization of Turkish Muslims in Germany as a result of controversial policies pursued by Islamists in the AKP government (Erdoğan's party), which was accused of facilitating the flow of foreign fighters arriving in Syria from all over the world, is something about which the German government is very concerned." ("Islamists risk rupture in Turkey's ties with Germany", Hurriyet)

How do you like them apples? So Obama wants to topple Assad who has NO history of supporting terrorist organizations, and join forces with Erdoğan who, according to German intelligence, is not only "neck-deep.. in supporting radical groups", but has also taken a lot of these bad apples that Germany wants to prosecute, and sent them off to fight in Syria.

And this is the guy that Obama just hopped into bed with?

Erdoğan is a duplicitous-troublemaking narcissist and everyone in Washington knows it. They know he's planning to steal Syrian land, just like they know that he's butchering the Kurds for no reason. They also know he's gaming the system so he can declare himself Supreme Leader of Turkey following snap elections in October. They know it all, but they don't care, because Washington is so obsessed with its single-minded hatred of Assad, that they'd make a pact with Beelzebub Satan if they thought it would move them closer to their ultimate objective. That's why they don't mind throwing their lot with the likes of Erdoğan.

By the way, the author of the previous op-ed clearly states that the ISIL suspects that were rounded up after the terrorist bombing in Suruc (which was used as the pretext for bombing the Kurds) have all been released. I'm not kidding. Think of how ridiculous that is. The Turkish government justifies a war on the basis of lies about an ISIS bombing "in the homeland", and then releases all the suspects, refuses to conduct an independent investigation, detains all the eyewitnesses who were present at the time, and fails to produce a shred of evidence proving that their implausible explanation of the attack actually happened.

If you think that Turkey is fast slipping into the Twilight Zone, you're probably right.

Here's what you're not going to read about Erdoğan in the western media. Erdoğan just lost his Parliamentary majority in June dashing his hopes of becoming Turkey's Grand Sultan for eternity. Also, he has rejected the idea of a coalition government because he doesn't like the idea of sharing power with members of other political parties. That means that there's going to be snap elections sometime in late October. Erdoğan expects to win a clear majority since voters typically support the sitting government during times of crisis. The problem is that, the polls are not running in Erdoğan's favor, mainly because more and more people see him as a power-hungry opportunist who uses terrorism to achieve his own ends. In a recent survey by the Gezici Research Company, the Justice and Development Party (Erdoğan's party) is

losing ground. “According to the results, 39.2 percent of respondents said they would vote for the AK Party, a fall of 1.6 percentage points from the official results of the parliamentary election on June 7.” Even more shocking: “Fifty-six percent of those who participated in the survey believe that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is responsible for the war-like situation in the country that began shortly after the failure of the AK Party to win a majority in the general election.” (Today’s Zaman)

In other words, a growing number of Turkish voters have seen through Erdogan’s self-serving terrorist ruse. For once, the terror card has not succeeded in building support for some lame political demagogue looking to shoehorn his way into power. Of course, none of this has put a damper on Erdogan who is as determined as ever to establish one-man-rule by hook or crook. According to *Hurriyet*:

“Erdogan... has made it clear that he is not interested in a U.S. or French type of system where the president is answerable to the legislature, and is hemmed in by constitutional checks and balances which guard the system against the abuse of power by the president.....

He said on Aug. 14 that because he was elected by the people last year, there was already a de facto change in the administrative system in Turkey and all he needs now is a new constitution. This statement came despite the fact he has no parliamentary power to do that and despite the fact that no polls are hinting that he will be able to achieve it in a new parliamentary formation.” (“Seizing an election“, Murat Yetkin, *Hurriyet*)

In other words, Erdogan is claiming that he is Turkey’s king whether he reclaims a majority in parliament or not, and whether changes are made to the constitution or not. He’s the king because, well, because he says so, that’s why.

This is the madman who is now Washington’s number one ally in its bloody war against Assad. Not only was he allegedly involved in ISIS seizure of Mosul, (according to former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki: “What happened in Mosul was a conspiracy planned in Ankara” ) he’s he’s also “neck-deep” ...”in supporting radical groups .... such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Jabhat al-Nusra and the Ahrar al-Sham was closely monitored by German intelligence.” (*Hurriyet*)

So why does Washington want to team up with someone who’s so obviously connected to very groups it claims to be fighting?

To remove Assad, of course. What other reason could there be?

Obama is convinced he can use Erdogan long enough to topple Assad and then dump him as soon as the job is done. But would Erdogan really be foolish enough to order his troops to attack Damascus?



Probably not, because if he did, there'd be a mutiny in the military and Erdogan's career would be kaput.

But if Turkish troops aren't going to take the Capital, then how is Obama going to pull this thing off?

Special Forces leading US-backed jihadi militias into battle? Is that the plan?

It could work, but neither Iran nor Russia would allow it. After all, if Assad falls, then Tehran knows that it's next in line, so they're going to defend Damascus to the very end. The same goes for Putin, although for different reasons. As a staunch defender of national sovereignty, self determination and international law, the Russian president will eventually realize that he can't back down, that if he doesn't stand up to US aggression in Syria, his credibility as leader of the new multipolar global system will be in tatters. He can't afford to let that happen. Russia will have to get involved.

So this is where the rubber meets the road, where Moscow and Tehran finally face off with Uncle Sam. Of course, there doesn't have to be a confrontation. There are other options. Iran is promoting a four-point plan that calls for an immediate cease-fire, the creation of a national unity government, a rewriting of Syria's constitution to include the majority of Syrian ethnic groups and new national elections under international supervision. It's a good plan and it's the best way to stop the violence and end the crisis. But the US isn't going to sign-on to Iran's peace deal. No way. Washington wants regime change and it's not going to stop until Assad is gone. That means there's going to be a war, a war that will pit the United States against Syria, Iran and Russia.

Has anyone in Washington even thought about what that might mean?