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Egypt's Coup Provokes Split Reaction among Neighbors

By Jason Ditz

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Egypt is historically a big, influential power across the Muslim world, and it is no surprise that among its neighbors, yesterday's coup d'état has provoked a strong reaction. The responses are pretty split, however.

Syria cheered the move by the military as a "great achievement," seeing the ouster of a Sunni Islamist government as good for them. Turkey's government sees the exact opposite, as the Erdogan government's own Islamic proclivities and the nation's history of coups has them more than a little concerned.

Indeed, across the region what happened in Egypt is being viewed in the context of their own governments, and which side they fall on the Arab Spring very much colors their view on Egypt.

But Syria's jihadist movement isn't the only relation to what's happening in Egypt, as President Morsi's government endorsing the idea of Egyptian citizens adventuring abroad to impose Islamist government in Syria was seen as key in Morsi losing the military's support. The end of Morsi's rule likely means an end to Egypt allowing its citizens to go to Syria, which will surely be a relief to the Assad government.

Palestinians are split down the middle on the issue, with President Mahmoud Abbas cheering the coup, and Hamas losing a major ally in Morsi. Egypt's deployment of masses of tanks along the Gaza border makes it clear the new junta will be no ally of Hamas.

Perhaps the biggest “lesson” may be a rhetorical one, with Somalia’s al-Shabaab faction saying the coup proved that democracy simply doesn’t work, and that endorsing elections was a ticket to defeat, since even when an Islamist faction wins the vote, they just get sidelined by the military.