

ERDOGAN'S DANGEROUS FOLLY (Part II)

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At the time of the [Imia Crisis](#), in an assessment brief produced for diplomatic consumers, I offered the following conclusion:

It is now obvious that the Turkish leadership may switch back to Cyprus invasion mode with the aim of militarily contesting Greek sovereign island territory in the Aegean. This re-direction of the Turkish strategic plan will be most likely preceded by a period of persistent Ankara demands for a “global redefinition” of the international regime introduced by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. While Lausanne is not a bilateral but, rather, a multilateral international treaty, which is immune to tweaking according to Turkish whim, questioning its essence, constantly and persistently, could lead to the rise of Turkish demands for “justice” in the Aegean that would gather support from several Alliance members which insist Turkey is indispensable to Western security.

Seventeen years later the above is current and relevant except for Turkey having lost its “indispensability” for Western defense--although [some](#) continue to argue along the old Cold War lines in favor of Ankara.

Ever since last July, and the parody army “coup” against Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president has gone into a mind-boggling spin of retribution, persecution, and purging against anyone and everyone he sees as enemy.

Tens of thousands have been dismissed from their jobs and as many have been arrested and imprisoned. The armed forces have been brutally purged. Erdogan is in a frenzy accusing Europe of racism, “islamophobia,” and an attempt to undermine Turkey’s “rights” in all directions and, most notably, in burning Syria, Iraq, and the Aegean--and he is also [threatening](#) Europe with a renewed deluge of illegal Moslem immigrants breaching the European frontier.

A non-binding vote of the European Parliament to suspend Turkey's EU admission talks, because of Erdogan's post-coup attack upon Turkish society and basic freedoms, has triggered yet another torrent of abuse from Turkey's strapping autocrat.

This latest round includes a bitter denunciation of the Lausanne Treaty which, according to Erdogan, has robbed Turkey of its rightful empire. Such is the venom against the treaty which created modern Turkey that Erdogan has not hesitated to lash out at the Kemalist politicians who signed it in 1923. This attack has breached the most enduring taboo in Turkish politics: never touching the sacred Ataturk legacy.

Erdogan is pushing for a constitutional amendment that would give him a monopoly of power as an omnipotent president resembling those presidents-for-life in Third World countries. His alliance with Devlet Bahçeli's ultra Nationalist Movement Party aims at strengthening the parliamentary hand of Erdogan's AK party in its [quest](#) for absolute power.

Erdogan's Turkey morphing into a clear and present danger in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East should surprise only those deliberately blind and deaf.

Turkey reigned supreme for decades in Europe and the United States. The fear of "loosing" Turkey grew to proportions reminiscent of the American dread of "losing China" after World War Two (China was eventually 'lost' but we all learned to live with the fact).

The current collapse of the "indispensability" of Turkey results from the inevitable dissolution of the three enduring myths among Western "strategists" concerning Turkey's character, viz.:

1. Turkey is a "European" country by possessing a sliver of European territory (Eastern Thrace) assigned to it by an accident of history.
2. Turkey is a "symbol" of Western-style democracy capable of informing and educating other Moslem countries clinging to Islamic fundamentalism as the guide of politics and society.
3. Turkey is intrinsically integrated into Western defense because of its historical opposition to Russia and its self-evident commitment to NATO as the Alliance's forward bulwark.

Despite continuous and ample evidence defeating all these myths over the years, few in Western capitals were prepared to question Turkey's "clear" importance and, hence, its undeniable "right" of admission to the European (dis)Union.

Such strategic blunders always come at a steep price: with Syria a cauldron and Iraq a fractured entity wallowing in murderous tribal and religious conflict, Turkey's interference as the self-appointed imperial successor threatens both the (indecisive) Western efforts to contain the disaster and protect peace in the Aegean and the Balkans.

But the West (i.e. the US) still appears imprecise (read: confused) regarding the exact objectives of Turkey's aggression in Syria dubbed Operation Euphrates Shield. Seeing Western hesitation as a profitable opportunity, Erdogan has sped to tell us exactly what *he wants*: Turkish troops, he has announced, are in Syria [to topple](#) "tyrant" Assad. That being said, the Ankara Padishah added with righteous indignation, Turkey has "no territorial ambitions" in Syria and it is fighting a just war because it cannot "endure" the killing of innocents any longer.¹

This laughably transparent language comes from a man who has been waging a genocidal war against Turkey's Kurds and who is terrified at the mere prospect of Syrian and Iraqi Kurds winning the right to establish an independent national entity through battlefield action. The Padishah, however, had nothing to offer us about his estimation of what Russia might do given that Mr. Putin is an avowed Damascus supporter--or how Turkey proposes to deal with the ire of [Iran](#) and its Hizb'allah proxy if the Turkish intervention becomes a credible threat to the Assad regime.²

The plot thickens further because of sudden ISIS escalation in the Golan Heights, which drew immediate [Israeli response](#) in Israel's usual determined manner. Given Turkey's sympathies toward fundamentalist Islamic terrorists, the Golan Heights action has led to speculation that "undetermined forces" are doing Turkey's bidding -- and are trying to draw Israel into the Syrian conflict, something that Israel has carefully avoided from the outset. Israel's next step is unclear, but there are already allegations of the Israeli Air Force [making its presence](#) felt in Syrian skies. Still, how Israel's entry in Syria would benefit Turkish strategic ambitions remains unclear.

Closer to home, Erdogan's folly is a rapidly expanding menace for Greece.

The mounting Turkish threat is compounded by the continuing ludicrous saga of the E(d)U-IMF "bailouts" which have devastated the Greek economy and locked the country in steep decline which appears irreversible. Putting Greece in a debtor's prison has robbed the country of its (limited) ability to defend itself and has send the message to predators, like Turkey, that a "small splendid war" could be tolerable with Greece as the target.

Erdogan possesses the **absolute strategic initiative** against Greece spearheaded by the illegal immigration weapon of mass destruction. Europe's decision to close its borders, after the calamitous deluge of summer 2015 triggered by Mrs. Merkel's "humanitarian" decisions, has increased the effectiveness and **lethality** of this Turkish weapon to unacceptable levels.

¹For the exact Turkish objectives in invading Syria, see [this](#).

²The apocalyptic corollary to all this would be Turkey coming under attack from *Russian forces* if Erdogan pushes his luck and overestimates US willingness to support him in a shooting war with Russia, which could automatically involve NATO in a global conflict (if that is the Allies decide to honor Erdogan's inevitable call for activating Article 5 when he finds himself in boiling water).

Greece is already burdened with an estimated 65,000 uninvited “guests,” who are growing more [violent](#) and desperate by the day. Europe’s “resettlement” scheme is for laughs as no European country wishes to accommodate any more “migrants” and “refugees.” In a moment of honesty, Gerald Knaus, the Austrian founding chairman of the [European Stability Initiative](#), correctly “accused Europe of “ ‘hiding behind Greece’ and ‘playing Russian roulette’ with Greece as the potential victim.”³ Words though, while welcome, offer little succor.

Greek commentators continue to counsel against “inflammatory” rhetoric and for “coolheaded monitoring” of Turkish behavior. Such advice though is desperately irrelevant as prospects deteriorate by the day. *The incumbent Greek administration has long abandoned all practical thought of doing anything drastic on illegal immigration.* Touting its “humanitarian internationalism,” and its “obligation” to act as the E(d)U’s holding facility for illegals, it approaches the defense of the Aegean territories in an academic and lukewarm manner which, without doubt, invites smiles in Erdogan’s chancery and pours fuel on Turkish burning ambitions.

Judging from experience, Greece would be ill-advised to expect any meaningful help from its “friends” and “allies” in case of a repeat Turkish aggressive fling ala Imia (which could grow far worse if there is no immediate hard-nosed response). “Coolheaded monitoring” is fine for confused editorialists. What is needed though is **preparedness** which is still missing.⁴

As always, Greece will “play it by ear” until the last moment before disaster strikes.

In the meantime, there are more pressing matters to attend to--like the umpteenth cycle of austerity measures demanded by the creditors in the role of the friendly anacondas preparing the country for “returning to the markets.”

³“ESI Chairman Gerald Knaus on Refugee Crisis: ‘Europe Is Hiding Behind Greece’”. GreekReporter.com, May 26, 2016 <http://bit.ly/2gFi6Ej>

⁴The priorities of the incumbent Greek government at this critical time never cease to amaze us. The Greek PM was the [only](#) EU head of government who attended the funeral of Cuban communist dictator Fidel Castro.