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Erdogan's false flag operation

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Could it be that the Turkish leader staged the so-called coup in order to legitimize an assault on his domestic opposition?

The "coup attempt" in Turkey last Friday increasingly looks like a "false flag" operation. False flag is a term used to describe a covert operation designed to deceive in such a way that it appears to have been carried out by another party or government.

In other words, there is good and growing reason to suspect that President Erdogan staged the so-called coup in order to legitimize a broad-scale assault on his domestic political opponents; justifying this as a necessary "response" to the dangers posed by "anti-democratic forces."

In fact the real danger to democracy in Turkey lies in Erdogan's long-standing desire to establish a totalitarian Islamist regime. Turkish democracy is threatened by Erdogan's current offensive to rid the military, judiciary, academia and media of any and all political opponents.

Now I recognize that in Israel it may not be politically-correct at the moment to harp on Erdogan's flaws and point out his grand Machiavellian deception. After all, the Israeli government just signed an important and potentially mutually-beneficial accord with the Turkish government.

Prime Minister Netanyahu handled the six-year long negotiations with Turkey very deftly, and I supported the signing of the reconciliation accord. It is an accord whose strategic logic is unassailable, and which will hopefully withstand the test of time, despite the deepening dictatorship in Turkey.

But it impossible to ignore the mounting evidence that Erdogan has engaged in one of the boldest and most brutal, gargantuan political grabs in modern history; a sweeping attempt to crush the remnants of liberalism and democratic debate in Turkey.

Three facts point powerfully to the false flag suspicion.

First, there is the clumsiness of the coup attempt. The forces supposedly behind the coup

launched it on the wrong day of the week and at the wrong time of day; they "failed" to swiftly take control of key nodes of power and failed to shut down Erdogan's ability to communicate with his security forces and with the public; and they "missed" several clear opportunities to take-out Erdogan himself. None of this make sense.

In his chilling speech on Wednesday announcing three-month's of emergency rule, Erdogan claimed that 99 generals were involved in the coup attempt. You want me to believe that 99 generals couldn't have fashioned a more aggressive and effective plan to overthrow the government? You want me to believe that Turkish military leadership is so incredibly incompetent?

And therefore to me, this doesn't seem to have been a real coup attempt that was merely botched-up. It's more like an amateur school play, lackadaisically performed to set-up Erdogan's crackdown on his domestic opponents.

Second, it is impossible to believe that a planned "coup" of this size and scope did not leak in advance to any one of Erdogan's manifest and multiple security organs. Erdogan now claims that 9,000 police officers, 6,000 soldiers, 30 regional governors and 50 high-ranking civil servants – along with those 99 generals – were in on the coup attempt.

Really? And none of them breathed a word of the planning to a single intelligence officer or informant of Erdogan's vast internal security apparatus? You want me to believe that Erdogan was caught completely by surprise; so much so that he was "vacationing" at a resort out of the capitol?!

Third is the swiftness by which Erdogan's loyalists have acted since last Friday to round-up all perceived and potential opponents, clearly acting on lists that must have been compiled in advance.

Within 48 hours, at least 35,000 individuals were rounded-up or dismissed from their positions, including 1,500 finance ministry staffers, 15,000 education ministry personnel, 1,500 university deans, and something like 3,000 judges and prosecutors plus two justices of the country's Supreme Court.

You want me to believe that Erdogan was caught by surprise and hadn't been planning all along in systematic fashion to destroy the careers of these people? Inconceivable! It transparently seems more likely that the "coup" was an attempt to manufacture a situation that served as an excuse for wholesale routing of Erdogan's homegrown opposition.

Even before these latest developments, Erdogan had pretty much curtailed democratic liberties in Turkey. Not too much remained of real political checks and balances. Even before the apparently-staged coup and subsequent apparently-well-planned crackdown there were more journalists and generals in jail in Turkey than in any other country in the world, including China.

Now, Erdogan has fashioned an opportunity to finish the job, ensuring his absolute rule

towards full-blown Islamist autocracy.

“Democracy is like a streetcar,” said Erdogan back in the 1990s when he mayor of Istanbul. “When you come to your stop, you get off.” It seems like Erdogan indeed has stepped-off that streetcar.

The implications of this for Israel and the West are stark, yet difficult to manage. Non-democratic states are not eligible for NATO membership; yet Turkey plays an oversize role in NATO. Prof. Efraim Inbar of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies calls Turkey a “Trojan Horse” within NATO.

Moreover, the recent Turkish-Israeli accord was meant in large measure to facilitate Israel's greater integration in NATO affairs (to which Turkey would supposedly no longer object).

The Turkish-Israeli accord also was meant to get a grip on Hamas. Turkey was given the right to pour massive civilian aid and investment into Gaza on the understanding that Erdogan would rein-in Hamas' military build-up and adventurism. I find it hard to see the newly-emboldened Imperial Erdogan indeed playing this restraining role versus Hamas now.

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