

# Post-Attempted Coup in Turkey: Quo Vadis?



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## Introduction

### **Professor Yonah Alexander**

*Director, Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies*

#### *Turkey's Challenges Within and Without: An Overview*

The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed on October 23, 1923, after winning its War of National Liberation led by General Mustafa Kemal (later called “Atatürk,” or father of the Turks), culminating in independence for the nation. And yet, as Turkey has just celebrated its 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Atatürk’s vision of “peace at home peace abroad” continues to be tested. Thus, a key question for this relatively young democratic Middle Eastern country is how to continue to maintain a balance between security concerns and civil liberties domestically, as well continuing to contribute to international efforts, including NATO’s mission, to advance stability regionally and globally.

Consider the latest internal and external challenges to Turkey’s vital interests. First, there was the July 15, 2016, attempted coup plotted by some members of the military seeking to seize control from the administration of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. His ruling Justice and Peace Party (AKP) had won the latest national elections in 2015.

After an appeal from President Erdoğan, thousands of civilians took to the streets to show support for the elected government and oppose the coup. In the aftermath of the failed revolt, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım declared that the coup was a “stain on democracy” and promised that those responsible would be “punished in every possible way.”

Subsequently, a state of emergency was imposed and security forces detained tens of thousands of military and civilians suspected of participating, or tied to plotters of the attempted coup. Despite the solidarity displayed by the Turkish people and the legitimate government in power, concerns within the country as well as abroad were expressed regarding infringement of individual and collective rights such as potential threats to the secular foundations of the state modeled on Atatürk’s legacy.

What also complicate Turkey’s domestic stability are the continuing security challenges from the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), a terrorist group that has been waging a deadly campaign for several decades, claiming the lives of tens of thousands of Turkish citizens. This sustained threat has traumatized the domestic political, social, cultural, and economic dynamics of Turkey. It is not surprising therefore that, following the failed July 2016 coup, Turkish F-16s were back in the air conducting strikes against PKK bases in Iraq.

Another major security concern is how the current internal political turmoil will affect Turkey’s participation as a member of the coalition battling Daesh (the self-declared Islamic State also known as ISIS or ISIL) in both Iraq and Syria. These topics as well as other related strategic concerns include the refugee crisis and Turkey’s relations with regional and global powers.

### *Academic Context and Acknowledgements*

This report on “Post-Attempted Coup in Turkey: Quo Vadis?” is the latest outgrowth of my academic work related to Turkey for over half a century. Following graduate studies at both the University of Chicago and Columbia University in the 1950s, I directed my first academic course in the Middle East (Turkey, Cyprus, and Israel), sponsored by Hunter College of the City University of New York, in the summer of 1961. Similar educational activities were subsequently conducted in the region, including in Iran, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.

It is noteworthy that academic programs in Turkey were undertaken at numerous universities (e.g. Ankara, Bahcesehir, Bilkent, Istanbul, and Kadir Has); think tanks (e.g., the Turkish Economic and Social Foundation and the Anatolian Science and Technology Strategic Research Institute); and NATO’s Centre of Excellence—Defence Against Terrorism (COE—DAT) and Partnership for Peace Training Center (PFP TC) in Ankara. Topics covered at these institutions included security challenges, international cooperation in combating terrorism, and strategic communication.

In addition, other events related to Turkey were held in other regions, ranging from Central Asia to Europe (e.g., an international conference on “Combating Terrorism: Turkey’s Added Value,” co-sponsored with the Royal United Services Institute, RUSI, in London).

Extensive academic work was also sponsored in the Washington, DC, area in cooperation with universities (e.g., Georgetown University, the George Washington University, American University, George Mason University) and think tanks (e.g., Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Brookings Institution, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy). Mention should also be made of the contributions to our seminars from diplomats at the Turkish Embassy, including Ambassadors Osman Faruk Logoglu, Nabi Sensoy, and Namik Tan, to name a few.

Likewise, my publications focusing on Turkey were published in reports (e.g., “Turkey and Terrorism,” 1996); articles (e.g., “The Situation in the Middle East,” 2008); and books (e.g., *Turkey: Terrorism, Civil Rights and the European Union*, Routledge, 2008). Other studies were also published in Turkish such as *Bir Terrorists Aginin Profile: Usame bin Laden*, 2001). Mention should also be made of my editing of *Partnership for Peace Review*, an international journal published in Ankara by Partnership for Peace Training Center under the auspices of NATO in 2010.

Finally, some acknowledgements are in order. The current report on “Post-Attempted Coup in Turkey: Quo Vadis?” represents a selection of slightly edited presentations made at a seminar held at the International Law Institute on August 3, 2016. Formally, it was organized by the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies (IUCTS), the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, the International Law Institute, and the Center for National Security Law at the University of Virginia School of Law.

Participating panelists at this event included Dr. Ahmet S Yayla (Deputy Director, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism and formerly Professor and the Chair of the Sociology Department at Harran University in Turkey); Dr. Sinan Ciddi (Visiting Assistant Professor and Director of the Institute for Turkish Studies, School of

Foreign Service, Georgetown University); Dr. Kemal Kirişci (TÜSİAD Senior Fellow and Director of the Turkey Project of the Brookings Institution's Center on the United States and Europe); and Dr. Jonathan Schanzer (Vice President of Research, Foundation for Defense of Democracies). We wish to express our deep appreciation for their participation at our events and contributions. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring institutions.

As always, we are grateful to Michael S. Swetnam (CEO and Chairman, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), General (Ret.) Alfred Gray (Twenty-Ninth Commandant of the United States Marine Corps; Senior Fellow and Chairman of the Board of Regents, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), and Professor Don Wallace, Jr. (Chairman, International Law Institute) for their continuing support of our academic work.

Additionally, useful research and administrative support was ably managed by Sharon Layani (Research Associate and Coordinator, IUCTS). The team of undergraduate and graduate interns included Cameron Dively (Carnegie Mellon University), Jacob T. Fuller (University of Oklahoma), Daniel J Hennessy (University of California, Berkeley), Eunice Kim (State University of New York at Geneseo), Sheona Lalani (George Washington University), April Lee (George Washington University), Cameron Niven (University of California, San Diego), and Riley Plamp (University of Michigan).

**Dr. Ahmet S Yayla**

*Deputy Director, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism and formerly served as Professor and the Chair of the Sociology Department at Harran University in Turkey*

My name is Ahmet S Yayla. I am currently the deputy director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism and was the former chief of police in the counterterrorism and operations department in Turkey.

I would like to start very briefly and conclude my comments because we have only ten minutes. First of all, I would like to start with condemning any coup attempt or any intervention to any democracies. I think it is so critical that we understand and draw our stance and our point, however, I am for the democracy and the rule of law. It is also essential that we keep acting on the rule of law and we are respectful to the human rights and to the freedom of speech.

First, I would like to start with the coup attempt itself. The coup attempt started at 10:00pm, while everybody was up. So this was a big question as soon as it started for me, why as it happened in the past, it did not start at 3:00am in the morning when everybody was sleeping. As of today, it has been almost three weeks, over 15 days, over half of the generals in the military have been arrested, around 165; we have, I guess, about 350 generals in the Turkish Military. We still do not know who was behind the coup in terms of the names of the generals and the people who conducted the coup. So this is another big question for me.

Also, everybody knows, in this world today that if you are going to make an attempt to a coup, you need to cut the communications and the internet and this was not done during this coup attempt. They only confiscated Turkish radio and television which almost nobody watches in Turkey. All the channels were free to broadcast without any problems. Nobody from government was arrested, including the Prime Minister and several ministers. They were out in public talking about the coup attempt and very abruptly the parliament was bombed. Still, we do not know who was the pilot behind that bombing. There were rumors that other places were going to be bombed; some parts of the palace were also bombed.

So when I look at it from a distance, I really do not understand what kind of coup it was. Obviously the coup attempters know that if they were not successful, they were doomed - they were going to be arrested, there was going to be a lot of problems for them. But this coup was carried out in a way that they wanted to fail.

So what was it? Was it a God sent gift for a struggling government to establish a sole wanted new Turkish Republic through a revolution? I do not know.

I am going to look at it with the evidence I have because we, Turks, really like rumors or conspiracy theories and I do not want to talk about them but I would like to put on the table what I have. Once I had a great teacher, an intelligence teacher, when I was at the police academy. He use to tell us, "If you would like to see who is behind an attack, you should look at who benefits from it."



Now, I worked in the anti-terrorism, counterterrorism and operations division for 20 years in Turkey, in Ankara, at the capital; in Şanlıurfa, which is a border city to Syria where it has reached 2.5 million people now with the refugees. I know the capacity of the police, the counterterrorism divisions, especially in Ankara and Istanbul. Just three hours after Erdoğan's private jet landed at Ataturk Airport, 1563 military officers were arrested or they started to arrest those officers around Turkey. Some of them were directly involved in the coup attempt, some of them were not, some of them were on vacation and some of them were even openly against the coup. From a technical standpoint of view, in three hours, as a chief of police, I cannot make a list of 1500 people, find out their addresses, where they live and then get the paper work ready, distribute it all over Turkey and start to arrest them. So, this is the biggest question I have. And when I look at the aftermath, today the number is 90,000 – there are almost 20,000 people arrested, over 90,000 people are purged. It obviously tells me that lists were prepared way before the coup attempt, most probably at least six months to a year because it is impossible to figure out who is who or who is behind a coup that fast. If you look at the people who were purged, they were deans, professors, doctors, journalists. Most probably did not have any recognition or nothing to do with the coup.

We go from that to what happened afterwards. As soon as the coup attempt happened, the blames started to come out. The first blame was to a Muslim cleric living here in the United States and he was domestically claimed to be behind the coup and then the second was the Americans. We started to see in the media that, first, a general was behind the coup and then the CIA was behind the coup by providing \$2 billion for the coup. Then Obama's name came up. Then we had the demonstrations, mass demonstrations, and it has never stopped. To this day, we still have those demonstrations. Yesterday alone, or two days ago, there was still demonstrations around Incirlik base, and in fact, two days ago, Incirlik base gates and the roads and highways to Incirlik base was blocked by the municipality trucks claiming that there was going to be another coup coming from the Incirlik base.

When we look at the rhetoric and what is happening in the aftermath of the coup, with mass demonstrations, harsh criticizing of the west, finger pointing to the Americans, blaming the Americans, they had pumped into the society, we can clearly see that we are going towards an endpoint that we have seen in the past carried out by Stalin, Hitler and Khomeini. First, they created an enemy, domestic and international, then blamed everything on those enemies. Then steered masses for demonstrations, public demonstrations, against those enemies with the messages of hatredness, taking up that level to another level with the violent activities, which we have seen by burning of American flags in front of the Incirlik base and most probably we are going to see more. I truly believe that the last point is going to be a specifically desired Turkish Revolution and I think there is going to be a political Islamist and Salafist Turkish Revolution.

For that, I am going to explain why - just after the coup, according to the Sabah newspaper, the Saudis came out and said that they said they are pledging \$550 billion to invest in Turkey for the next five years. Turkey's yearly GPO \$200 billion. It was a little bit strange because Saudis are also struggling with their economy, the oil prices are getting really low but most strange was how ISIS members were cheering up at the telegram channels where we are watching at the International Center for the Study on Violent Extremism and ISIS men were so happy that the military coup attempt was

unsuccessful. Why? Because they knew that if the military came, they would not be free to operate in Turkey and they would have to stop operating in Turkey. They had to live in Turkey, they have bases, they have operations and the logistical support they are receiving from Turkey would stop. The Incirlik base was closed for two days. The ISIS members also mentioned and talked about the fact that they killed over 500 coalition forces, soldiers – FSO – because there was no coalition air flight support on the ground. They pledged and swore on the telegram accounts that “May Allah allow us one month without aid and support to our enemy, we will kill them all.” As far as I know, the ISIS fighters, I can guarantee you they are going to kill them all if there is no air support.

So where are we going with these purges, arrests, hatred pumped into the society, a big divided society, anti-west, anti-American sentiment? I guess, very soon, with the change of the Turkish constitution, we are going to have a new Turkish republic with a new constitution. I truly think that it is going to be a political Islamist and have close to Salafist ideology and we can also see that the coup members, by several members of the government, were announced as infidels which is Takfiri ideology. As the Prophet Mohammed said – if a Muslim labels someone as infidel and if that person is not an infidel, then he himself is an infidel. We see this labeling, this kind of Takfiri labeling with al-Qa’ida and ISIS mostly. The whole ideology is based on Takfirism and also strangely enough, Turkish authorities banned the religious service to those people. But the ISIS Istanbul bomber who carried out the suicide attack was serviced at his funeral by the Turkish Religious Affairs authorities. So, I am truly concerned about where our understanding of Islam is going and where my country is approaching.

I would like to tell a story in time to finish up - two days ago, someone I know from the police who was the Chief of the Organized Crime Division in a small city in Turkey. He was fired after the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 operations when corruption charges were brought against Erdoğan’s ministers. And he was running away because he did not want to get arrested. Two days ago, his wife was arrested because he did not show up as he did not want to get arrested. She has a baby, one-year-old, who was being breast fed by his mom. That baby was not allowed to be taken by his mom, and he was left with his high school and middle school brothers and sisters. Today, while I was coming here, I read about an 87 year old lady who was arrested because they could not find her lawyer son. Instead, they arrested his mom.

And as we approach to the end, I would like to tell you this: Kuleli Military school – Turkey’s oldest school, over 200 years old, was established 200 years ago – was closed two days ago by a new act passed with the power of that the government has right now, to rule new legislation. Today it was news in the media that Turkey’s most precious and most expensive real estate, which is Kuleli military school, was being or is being sold to the Saudis.

**Dr. Sinan Ciddi**

*Visiting Assistant Professor and Director of the Institute for Turkish Studies, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University*

I have been thinking about this for the last few days, all of my colleagues here on the panel as well as Turkey-focused scholars and policymakers in Washington, Europe, Turkey, and in trying to make sense of this, I think we are not going to get anywhere fast in the next 40 minutes or 50 minutes. I think this is a great wake-up call for political scientists who were always told when I was being raised as a graduate student that civil-military relations was an area that was dead, nobody studies it anymore. So maybe after Egypt, Turkey, Thailand, I think civil-military relations might be back on again. Who knows? The business of coup making, is it in the budding? I do not know.

To start off from the premise of what actually happened and why it actually happened, I think we are still in the stages of just getting some very preliminary information. From all the colleagues that I have spoken to, of all the news information that I have been able to assimilate, there are divergent views. I think there is a mainstream view in Turkey right now by reputable individuals who are actually saying that the West has got this wrong, the western media is not looking at this from the correct lens, especially Washington, especially the European capitals. I know the *Independent* newspaper has been slammed over the last few days over its coverage of these issues because they are saying we are concentrating far too much on how Erdoğan benefits out of this as opposed to who is actually responsible and the kind of trauma that Turkey has experienced. So let me just deal with that first before giving you my take on it.

This is a very traumatic experience for any society. I guess any society that has to reel through the experience of a coup d'état or a potential coup d'état where civil administration is likely to be overthrown by a military junta, it is quite terrifying. If you are on the streets of a major city like Istanbul where you have been, where I was born, to see tank shells being fired, gunships firing rounds and attacking the parliament building, headquarters of the intelligence organization, I do not know if it is quite replicable in terms of the trauma that it might cause individuals, and Turkish society I think is right now very confused and very traumatized. I think the level of public debate right now that we see on Turkish media outlets is very, very inadequate to deal with what is going on.

In terms of who carried out this coup, I think we have heard one take on this by Professor Ahmet Yayla here. I am not sure the extent to which I agree with it but I do not necessarily have any better information. I sort of propose a view that is sort of divergent to this but then again I do not have necessarily hard evidence to show you. This is more my view that has been informed by a collection of everything I have been trying to follow over the last two or three weeks.

It does seem apparent that although the Turkish government would like to blame the Muslim recluse cleric who resides in Pennsylvania here, Mr. Fethullah Gülen, we have yet to see concrete evidence that draws a direct line between Gülen, as he sits in Pennsylvania, to the coup-makers in Turkey who actually carried out this coup. I think that has yet to be established and this is one of the things that the Turkish government

will have to prove if Mr. Gülen is extradited to Turkey as the Turks are adamant and very vociferously demanding of from U.S. authorities.

That being said, there seems to be an overwhelming amount of circumstantial evidence, personal testimonies, some of which we understand are coming out under duress. Amnesty International is reporting a great amount of torture, a great amount of physical abuse of detained soldiers and would-be coup-plotters who have been forced to sign testimonials and statements saying that they were involved and yes Mr. Gülen gave the order. But when you see a man whose head has been battered in every which way but blue, it is hard to verify the truthfulness of that statement. But that being said, there are more credible statements coming out from various other individuals. There are a couple of very trusted analysts that I follow who are suggesting that there have been significant elements of the Turkish military who are at least sympathetic to the Gülen movement, and who have lain dormant within the military, within state institutions for a considerable length of time, who have now seized upon the opportunity to actually implement and try to unseat the democratically elected government of Turkey on the one hand, and presumably Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey, on the other.

Why now? One of the mainstream theories that is put forward, again, is the suggestion that at the end of this month when the high military council – which is a supreme gathering of the promotion lists of the Turkish chief of staff, they do military promotions to basically fill in the biggest spots of the military’s hierarchy. It was rumored that over 1000 senior officers were going to be let go as part of Erdoğan’s ongoing de-Gülenification of Turkey, which had really gained pace since the Gezi protest of 2013.

So, in the ongoing struggle between Gülen and Erdoğan, it seems that matters came to a head between Erdoğan’s forces and the Gülenist sympathizers within the military as well as possibly other elements within the state and military who are not necessarily Gülenists.

Was there a direct correlation? Did orders come through from the Gülen complex in America down to Turkey? We do not know that. But that might be something that we have to concentrate on and see how that unfolds in the future.

Now what is clear is what kind of impacts this is going to have on a whole variety of factors. The first which is I guess what Washington and America, since we are here, is interested is how does this affect U.S.-Turkish ties. I think it is likely to affect it very, very negatively. Right now there is an immense amount of pressure that is brought to bear upon the Obama administration by the Turkish authorities. Erdoğan’s government, as well as the AKP government, is going hammer and tongs saying, “You have to hand over and extradite Gülen to Turkey now. Not tomorrow, not next month. We want him now.” To this end, we have a delegation in Washington now from the Turkish government, ministers saying, “Here we are, we want him, and we are going to present you with evidence, hopefully.” On the American side, the Americans are saying, “well great, we will consider it,” but the extradition treaty that exists between the United States and Turkey which was signed in 1979 and there are 34 articles pertaining to this – anything from arson to rape to a whole series of offenses which are considered extraditable – Turkey’s case has to merit and warrant the American standard of what

would be beyond a reasonable doubt. And what the Turkish problem with that is that right now, they do not have it.

Nothing so far since the Turkish authorities have presented against Gülen for the last three years, this extradition, this handover request is not new. It goes back all the way since Gezi protests in 2013, although no formal extradition request has been made. But the demand by Turkish diplomats in Washington has always been hand him over, hand him over. And the American response has always been what do you have that we can use in a court of law?

Once that extradition request is made, that is going to be considered in a district court in Pennsylvania, probably in Scranton, a low-level magistrate, if it gets approved by him or her, then the Gülen's people can appeal that, it can go to federal court, after which it can go all the way to the Supreme Court if pushed. This is a time-consuming process and the Turks are not right now in a position where they are willing to wait for this.

So, there is a whole series of things at risk. The future of the Incirlik air base, which is the most effective territory where the fight against the Islamic State is prosecuted out of, in terms of bombing sorties. The Turks are even hinting at the fact that this might even be in jeopardy, and that obviously sends shivers down the spine of Washington.

The second way that this really does impact U.S.-Turkish relations I guess is the changing nature of the dynamic of the relations between Erdoğan and Obama and the subsequent administration that comes into Washington, which is do we have a NATO power that is based on reciprocal trust, the big picture, or is the Turkish side right now transitioning into a quid pro quo approach? Unless you hand over Gülen, all bets are off. And that I think is where the whole notion of this relationship is becoming very soured and again, this is not something new. The relationship between Turkey and the United States has been the offing and very much on the slide as some of my colleagues can attest to for the last two or three years, if not longer. But right now it seems that the Erdoğan government or the AKP government in Turkey is willing to even take this a step further, take it a notch up, and really say, "If you do not necessarily do what we need you to do for us, we might not necessarily be the most cooperative ally in the future," and to that extent even Erdoğan has meetings scheduled with the Russian President next Monday.

So this does have very far ramifications outside the broad notion of where Turkey is headed as a democracy, as far as America is concerned. And this is I guess why the Turks find it so offensive. They are saying the western media is concentrating on the wrong things, we are looking at this from the perspective of what you guys are interested in, Washington is interested in, you are not looking at it from the perspective of the trauma that is experienced, how a democracy that you are supposed to be an ally of is not being stuck up by you. And the American response unfortunately has really very much soured Erdoğan's own predisposition to perceiving the United States as an ally. The chief of intelligence in this country, John Clapper, is on the record saying we have no evidence to suggest that Gülen was involved. Right now that does not play well with the Turkish government. The general in charge of central command has also said that, I cannot remember what he said, I have got it down here somewhere. I will revisit that one in a second. But again, the message that is coming out of officials here is not what

the government wants to hear. And the situation in Turkey has become so tense and so adamant and demanding that lack of action on the part of the U.S. in the way that Turkey would like it to act is really straining relations. And something needs to happen where that is toned down on both sides. And this is something that is possibly awaiting the next administration, certainly in terms of fence mending, but in the immediate future we do not necessarily should expect the handover or the extradition of Gülen. As I said that is going to be very time-consuming. He may already have plans to go to another country where extradition between Turkey and that country has not been signed. Canada is one of these alternatives, possibly Mexico, or there are some other parts of sub-Saharan Africa where the Gülen movement is very strong.

So to reiterate, we do not know if there is a direct correlation between the Gülen here based in Pennsylvania and the broader movement. It seems that a broad number of his sympathizers for a varied certain number of existential reasons had a certain amount of circumstantial motive to instigate this. And that has been reciprocated in Turkey by a massive de-Gülenification on the one hand, where you see the purging, a wide net cast over tens of thousands of bureaucrats, military officials, as well as scholars in universities being detained, fired, put on administrative leave pending investigation. But you also see universities closed down which are close to the Gülen movements, not just Gülen-affiliated universities, but universities which are seen also to be very anti-Erdoğan. So one of the speculations that is also coming out about this is, is this Erdoğan's golden moment to the extent that he said that this is a gift from God, of not just casting out the would be coup-makers, but also concentrating on, is this his golden opportunity to weed out and really hammer down as much political opposition that has been rising up in Turkey certainly since the mid-2000s or specifically since the Gezi protests. I am going to stop there and hopefully entertain more questions later on. Thank you.

**Dr. Kemal Kirişci**

*TÜSİAD Senior Fellow and Director of the Center on the United States and Europe's Turkey Project at Brookings Institution*

Professor Yonah Alexander made references to 1996, and he made this point. I would like to make a reference to 70 years ago. 70 years ago, in 1946, the USS Missouri sailed into the Istanbul harbor, and since then Turkey has been an ally of the West. It has been part of the Western transatlantic community. It has been a very uncomfortable relationship, a controversial relationship, with ups and downs. The Turkish heart may have not always been in place with the transatlantic community, and clearly in the course of the last couple of years, there has been a drift away from the shared values of the transatlantic community, and also quite a bit of shoving and hassling over common interests as well, as has been the case with respect to Syria.

I would like to argue that even if, at this point in time, we may not have the concrete evidence of who was behind the coup, the coup was a traumatic experience.

Allow me to equate it to 9/11. This is, in some ways, the 9/11 of Turkey – and do remember the remark that the President of the time, Jr. George Bush made: “You are either with us, or not.” This is the psychology that the Turkish president is in, and the Turkish society is in as well.

There is a lot that can be criticized about the Turkish president, and people do it, and Turkey is rediscovering that freedom of expression. I try to follow the debates that are taking place in Turkey right now, some of them four hours long each evening. And the kinds of people that were not allowed anywhere near the media in Turkey have now an opportunity to speak their mind and reflect on their experiences. And it has opening my eyes as an academic and as an “expert” of Turkey and maybe broader political issues.

One point that has not come up so far is that the Turkish society and quite a few – Sinan has made references to the kind of people that he is following in the Turkish media – people who share the very values, to which the United States as a society and to which the European Union is committed, have huge concerns about the way in which the Turkish state was penetrated by the Gülenist movement.

Time will tell as to what the facts are. But when you listen to these debates and when you listen to prosecutors, military and civilian prosecutors, who had in due course opened cases on this issue of infiltration had actually faced indictments against themselves. And today, rightly or wrongly, they are attributing these indictments and the way in which they were not allowed to pursue their investigations to the fact that these were blocked by Gülenist prosecutors inside the judiciary, military officers inside the Turkish armed forces. Time will tell whether this is the case or not.

I am here to share this opinion that the Turkish public at large, including liberal people, including people who are attached to freedom of expression, to human rights, to the rule of law. And as I listen to these debates, and those of you who have some command of Turkish, I am very willing to send the links to these debates, it is also fascinating because the people, I can assure you that they really mean it, but they do flag out the importance of rule of law and the importance of making sure that those who

are innocent are not hurt together with the culprits, or the ones who have actually committed a crime there.

Also, what they are underlining is the significance of making sure that people are appointed to their positions because of their merits, not because somehow they have access to questions in the exams they need to sit to qualify to enter military high schools, to enter the judiciary, to enter universities, and elsewhere.

I have been a university professor since 1983 and retired in 2013. So I have a few ideas, a few notions about exams and about exams that have been compromised, and how that reflects itself in bureaucracies, including the police, the judiciary, as well as in the case of myself, firsthand experience, the ministry of foreign affairs.

What these debates are also underlining is this interesting expression that some of the Turkish columnists have invented: “going back to the factory settings of the Turkish republic.” And the factory settings of the Turkish republic is referred to as secularism and democracy. I would be one of the first to argue that it is a bit ambitious to argue that democracy was a factory setting back in 1923. But do please put it in the context of Europe of the 1920s and 1930s. I think democracy at the time simply meant against the background in Europe of *ancien régime*, the idea that the people somehow would have a say.

It took decades for Turkey to join the club of democracies and it happened at the time when the Missouri sailed into the Istanbul harbor. Since then Turkey has experienced a series of coups. I have lived through every single one of them. 1960, I remember as a little boy, six years old. The recollection I have of it is *gendemarie* in the streets of Izmir. That is all I have, my notion of politics would have not gone beyond that. But I do see him there standing, a *gendermarie*. And then came 1971. I was just on the verge of starting university and I saw what happened, the consequences of 1971 was nasty. Young men of my age were executed, and then subsequently the Turkish society and state regretted it, just as Turkish society and state regretted that three ministers were hung in 1960. Then came 1980. Luckily, I was in London as a graduate student and I heard it through the BBC World Service. Then came 1997 post-coup, they called it. Sorry, post-modern coup. I will not go into the details of it. And then in 2007 came the so-called e-coup.

So we are citizens of a country that has had these coups, but never was the parliament attacked. And I am still trembling that the Turkish parliament was attacked. It is a parliament that has been sitting there since April 1920. Whoever might be behind the coup; I think the West, the United States and the European Union, I empathize greatly. I understand that they are angry towards the Turkish government and maybe towards the president for the kind of rhetoric and language he may be using. It is not helping the exercise of building bridges, finding the means for a dialogue. But the United States, I think the U.S. is moving in that direction, and the European Union has to recognize that this is a trauma. A trauma not that different than 9/11. The Turkish people and Turkish students, some of them are here, are proud that the Turkish public went out into the streets and stopped this coup in its trails. They stood up in front of tanks. How did the West respond to what happened in 1989 in Beijing? Remember the guy standing up in front of the tank there? We all remember him, and the empathy and



the sympathy that was expressed for this person. There are similar guys, they had to throw themselves under the tank not to be crushed by it. Where is that empathy?

Turkish opposition parties came together. The Republican People's party, the Nationalist party, the Kurdish party, they all got together instantly, while, I am so disappointed, I was here, that the U.S. Government did hesitate. The first line that came from the Secretary of State, for which I have genuinely very high regard and respect, was a hesitant one; calling all parties to restraint. How can you call all parties to restraint when one is leading a coup against a legitimate government? Problematic government, in terms of democratic norms, etcetera – you cannot do it. And it was only after a bit later that from the White House, an unequivocal statement making clear that Turkey was not going to be treated like Egypt came. *Chapeau!* on that. How do the Turkish people feel about it? How do the Turkish people feel about this tweet that I am going to read to you? (Sorry, I have aged; I need reading glasses.) I hope this is not true but this is a tweet from the *New York Times* World. It is a tweet with a link to a *New York Times* article with a different title. But the title here is, “The Erdoğan supporters are sheep and they will follow whatever he says.” This is not a statement you expect from a cradle of democracy. You may not like it. But this is a president who has received 52 percent of the public vote. Yes, there are questions marks about how fair the election was, but it was free. Then, the government is presiding, there are question marks, constitutional issues whether he can preside or not. Fair enough, these can be challenged. But the government right now is in power with 49 percent of the vote. This is not what they deserve, the people who voted for that particular political party. Neither did the others who voted for the other opposition parties.

I do not want to go on and I realize I promised myself I was going to speak only for 10 minutes to be on the safe side. I realize this is a very controversial, difficult issue. But I would like to see the European Union and the United States to give Turkey the benefit of the doubt. Like in 1946, the United States gesture at the time sending the USS Missouri to the Istanbul harbor and the subsequent events made out of Turkey a democracy – a problematic democracy. And then eventually, that country evolved into a major economic powerhouse. Let us all remember, in spite of all the problems in the country, this is an economy that is still growing at four, four and a half percent. Many in Europe are secretly wishing that they could do the same.

How did Turkey come to it? This is where I risk falling into serious trouble with general public opinion in Turkey. It is because Turkey was part of the western alliance. Yes, right now there is huge and preposterous allegations against the United States. And to a lesser extent to the European Union. But you have to understand the context. One of the commanders that has been stopped and arrested and that sought asylum with U.S. authorities at Incirlik Base. Turkish public are asking the question: How on Earth a superpower like the United States would not know about what is going on? It is possible it would not know. There are a lot of things that the U.S. has missed out on, including what happened in 9/11. But that is the psychology they are actually in right now.

Today – my final point – I listened to a parliamentary group who have come clearly with the intention of trying to build little bridges. Recognizing that they need dialogue and recognizing – I think, I may be wrong -- that they cannot afford to burn bridges with this western alliance towards which there is this anger in the European Union. Yes,

Erdoğan will be meeting with Putin. But is really Russia an alternative for Turkey? Is Iran an alternative, the way a four star general in 2002 had suggested? Turkey needs an economy and I think those who are running Turkey right now recognize it even more in this particular context.

To wrap up, it is a difficult situation. Time will make it much clearer, but give an ear to the Turkish public. Be them pro-AKP supporters of Erdoğan, be them the others. The only disappointing part of the delegation was that there was not a Kurdish MP included in it and I wish it was there as well. However, I do not know what the background of that formation of that delegation was.

I remain, frankly, hopeful – I cannot afford to say anything to the contrary – that Turkey will come out from the rut into which it has fallen. But I do really hope that it will receive a helping hand from the European Union and from the United States. Imagine how the region would have looked like if that USS Missouri had not sailed into the Istanbul harbor and Turkey had not become a part of that transatlantic community. The European Union would not have needed to worry about the European Union-Turkey migration deal, because I think the picture would have been a very, very different one and the same thing applies for the fight against ISIS as well.

**Dr. Jonathan Schanzer***Vice President of Research, Foundation for Defense of Democracies*

What I want to talk about today is the troubling trends that we have seen in Turkey over the last three to four years. And what I would argue today is that the events we have seen after the failed coup has accelerated those trends, in my view, and I believe that that is very worrying for the U.S.-Turkey relationship and I will explain.

To understand where we are today, I think it is important to just backtrack and take a quick look at our recent past. I will start in December of 2012, when reports began to emerge of a scheme that was uncovered, where Turkey was working very closely with Iran. It was called the “Gas-for-Gold” Scheme, and this was a way for Iran to avoid sanctions on a massive scale.

Now if you recall, it was during this time that the pressure was on Iran because of its nuclear program, sanctions were at their peak, and it was a race against the clock. There was an attempt to squeeze Iran as much as possible from a financial perspective, to bring it to the negotiating table, and to prevent it from getting a nuclear weapon. As it turns out, Turkey was instrumental in helping Iran evade sanctions. It was to the tune of 10 to 15 billion dollars; that was roughly half of Iran’s cash reserves at the time. This, I think, gave Iran more time, gave it more leverage, as it negotiated with the West, or as it was about to negotiate with the West. I will get to it a little bit later, but we learned quite a bit about that scheme, the Gas-for -Gold scheme. There was an individual who is now about to stand trial here in the United States, and I will explain how he fits in just a little bit later.

Following Gas-for-Gold, and this was of course, to be very explicit here, there was the real concern that Turkey was working against the Western Coalition at that time, working against Western interests. Here you have a NATO country that is undermining the global effort to curtail Iran’s nuclear program.

Then fast forward to 2013, the following year, we began to see very troubling reports of Turkish meddling in Syria. Now let me be very clear about Turkey’s Syria policy. I agree with it very much in terms of its efforts to bring down the regime of Bashar al-Assad and I think many here in this country would and many around the world would as well. Of course we are looking at something akin to genocide right now in Syria. So it is very understandable that the Erdoğan government would be opposed to Bashar al-Assad.

But what we saw during that time and what we have seen since, is a concerted effort on the part of the Turkish government to empower a broad range of actors that are involved in the Syria conflict, some of whom are very troubling. I can tell you that from a report that I wrote with a colleague who is here today, Merve Tahiroglu. We talked to former government officials who were talking to the Turks about their border policy how they had allowed for jihadi fighters to cross from Turkey southeastern frontier into ISIS, or Nusra-controlled territory. And what we have heard from these officials was that this was essentially a Turkish strategy to try to bring down the Assad regime without having to get involved personally. So it was a proxy war, and they were not really distinguishing between the so-called moderate rebels and the more extremists – the jihadi variety.

So what we saw was a very troubling trend of traffic. We saw weapons going in, bolt cash going into these territories, obviously a stream of fighters who were coming in, most of them flying to Istanbul and making their way east over the borders for a phenomenal fee of 25 dollars or more.

We saw an oil pipeline that was coming out of Syria into Turkish territory and this has been documented by many journalists at this point. I think probably the best report is the one done by Mike Giglio of Buzzfeed if anyone has seen that. But it was very clear that jihadi groups were able to sell their oil onto the black market through Turkish middle men. And of course the Turks were again, turning a blind eye to this activity. We also saw the sale of antiquities and this has I think received a lot of attention in recent years.

So what we saw was that southeastern Turkey had become a zone of illicit finance. A zone of support for a range of jihadi actors. And there was a lot of concern that was voiced quietly by U.S. government officials. These discussions were rarely voiced beyond a whisper, although we did catch glimpses of it from Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, from Vice President Joe Biden, and a few others. And we saw many, many visits by Treasury officials who were concerned about these illicit finance issues.

I think, perhaps a side note, this was a failed strategy on the part of Turkey. I think we have seen blowback inside Turkish territory. We had been noting for the last couple of years that there was the potential for ISIS cells to be growing inside Turkey. In other words, this was not just a southeastern Turkey phenomenon, but rather we were beginning to see that there were recruitment cells, and supporters of ISIS, and Nusra and other jihadi groups, that were based in places like Ankara and Istanbul. So we became increasingly alarmed about that activity.

Then in September 2013, there was another news story that further indicated strained ties between Turkey and the United States. And this was a Turkish contract that was signed with a Chinese company, called the Chinese Precision Machinery Export Import Corporation. This one contract was for the Chinese to sell sophisticated weaponry to the Turks outside of the NATO umbrella. And NATO allies were beginning to voice serious concern about this sale because of the potential for integration of this Chinese system into a NATO system, and what this might mean for cyberattacks, or gaining information about NATO weaponry.

Then in December of 2013, we saw the leak of the Istanbul prosecutor's report. For FDD, where we focus a great deal on illicit finance, this was a real eye opener. The report of course has been attributed to the Gülen movement, and I have no reason to doubt that it was the Gülen movement that leaked it. But it was mind boggling the amount of illicit financial activity that was detailed in there. We saw banks facilitating illegal transactions, we saw classic money laundering techniques like over-invoicing, where brown sugar was sold for 430 dollars a pound. Amazing ways of bringing money through Turkey and onto places like Iran. The total amount of illicit financial activity was estimated to be roughly 100 billion dollars. Really an astounding report. It never quite confirmed as official, but it did elicit a massive crackdown. And what we began to see inside Turkey was the crackdown on the Gülenist movement, really in response to many of these leaks. What was troubling to me also, was that we were not seeing the Turkish parliament or the judiciary being able to take action, or at least even be able to

investigate further because this is really when the purges began, perhaps at a slower pace.

In 2014, we noted at FDD that the Financial Action Task force, which is essentially the UN of terrorism finance, had finally delisted Turkey as a grey listed country – a country that was not up to standards in terms of its terror finance regime. And what was amazing about that was that Turkey was on the grey list for seven years, that it was simply not implementing the recommended standards to combat terrorism finance.

And then of course later on that year there was the Hamas war with Israel, and we noted with alarm that the person who sparked that war was a man named Saleh al-Arouri. Mr. Arouri was the West Bank chief of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, this is the armed wing of Hamas. It was Mr. Arouri who planned and facilitated and financed the kidnapping and killing of three teens in the West Bank and that attack sparked the 2014 war. I can tell you that, even with the recent rapprochement between Israel and Turkey, that there are still roughly a dozen Hamas activists and figures still based in Turkey today.

And all the while, we had Turkey fighting against the United States in terms of its involvement in the counter-ISIL campaign. It was actually only until this time roughly last year that Turkey joined actively the fight against ISIS, despite the fact that this was a NATO country bordering on Syria. We now see Turkey still involved, but not certainly to the extent that I think the West would like to see it.

So this is giving one a sense that Turkey's foreign policy has not been aligned with the United States for quite some time, and certainly not aligned with that of NATO. And all the while, we did see crackdowns on the press; Turkey has become a leading jailer of journalists. The judiciary, as I mentioned, has not thrived. And as we have already heard, President Tayyip Erdoğan has tried to change the political system from a parliamentary system to a presidential one. And so he is consolidating power and this has also been a concern, we know from State Department and other officials, this has been an ongoing topic of conversation.

So this brings us to the July 15<sup>th</sup> coup. The crackdown continues today, the consolidation continues. We are seeing signals of a potential withdrawal from a counter-ISIL coalition. And there is concern, as we have heard today, of a withdrawal of a U.S. partnership, or at least the downgrading of it.

Let me be very clear, I think the U.S.-Turkish relationship is crucial, from a geographic perspective, from a political perspective, as a bridge between the United States and the West to the Middle East.

There has been a lot of talk about whether Turkey might be removed from NATO or might remove itself from NATO. I can only tell you this: that it will be complicated. And I think that is an understatement. As we have studied NATO, it is not easy to join NATO, but it is also extremely difficult to be removed from it. I would actually go as far as to say it reminds me of the Hotel California. You can try to check out, but there is no way you are leaving it, at least the way that things are currently constructed and I cannot imagine that Turkey would want to do that. But I can see a potential downgrading of

ties, and a steady downgrading of ties, and as we have heard a possible warming of ties with countries like Russia and Iran.

The concern now is I think primarily for the Incirlik air base. This is home to 1500 American servicemen. It is home to a squadron of A-10s. It is home to a number of armed drones that have been active inside Syria. And we have other military assets elsewhere, including radar, search and rescue teams which are crucial given how close they are to the Syrian border to be able to extract special operators both from the U.S. and from other countries that may be operating inside Syria. And of course, it has been widely reported, the United States or Western countries have nuclear weapons in Turkey. And to think that all of this right now is going on, this great strain while these assets are there, is deeply troubling.

I think right now, it is going to be important for the United States to consider contingency plans for all of these military assets and for the 3,000 or so total servicemen that are based in Turkey. There is great concern that as the CIA, Barack Obama, Gülen, whoever, that the United States is somehow behind this coup. It certainly seems as if the servicemen who are there are subject to perhaps some danger. We have seen the protests, we have seen the calls, the anti-Americanism that has been spiking.

The key right now, from our perspective, from my perspective, is to try to bring Turkey back into the fold. How to do this when they blame us for the coup is extremely difficult for me to see. I think the rhetoric obviously needs to be tamped down. And the Gülen issue is going to be a thorny one. The extradition of this man, certainly we will see that his followers were likely involved in this coup on some level. But to be able to prove that an old man who has been living as a recluse in the Poconos, that we can directly tie him to this plot, I think strikes me as extremely difficult.

I mentioned the Turkish gold trader early on. This trial of Reza Zarrab, which is coming up in the early fall, I think has also the potential to greatly strain U.S.-Turkish relations. The trial itself is going to be about sanctions busting. It is going to be about how one individual with strong ties to both the Turkish government and the Iranian government was able to bring gold and so much money in and out of Turkey. But as we now understand, the story of Reza Zarrab very much involves the upper echelons of the Turkish government; in fact, the Erdoğan family. And if that information begins to come out in court, it will be extremely volatile, especially in this environment. And so this is going to be something that I would say could make or break Turkish-U.S. relations or at least tip the scales in one way or another.

I will conclude with this: the core here is not about whether the United States was harboring Gülen. Of course we have been, and I think without much argument from Erdogan or the AKP for many, many years up until 2013. I think really the core here is that we are looking at a leader of Turkey who has been on a slide towards autocracy, towards Islamism; this has been a steady trend. So there is no doubt in my mind that the coup that was attempted on July 15th was anti-democratic. It was an assault on liberalism, it was an assault on NATO, it was an assault on Western values. But I can also say very clearly that what we have seen from this AKP government over the last three or four years has also been an assault on Western values. It has also been an assault on NATO. So it is now up to all of us to try to bring these elements all together under one roof, U.S. and Turkish, and try to work out a way forward. And for right now, it seems like a very difficult one at that.

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Established in 1994, the activities of IUCTS are guided by an International Research Council that offers recommendations for study on different aspects of terrorism, both conventional and unconventional. IUCTS is cooperating academically with universities and think tanks in over 40 countries, as well as with governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental bodies.

## International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS)

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