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THE INTERNATIONAL IMPACT OF THE FAILED COUP IN TURKEY

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The consequences of the failed coup d'état in Turkey are already visible, especially in domestic policy. There is broad consensus that the president and his staunchest supporters are taking advantage of the abortive military uprising of 15 July to accumulate still more power and purge state institutions from elements which they believe represent an existential threat to them and to the state as a whole. The international repercussions are somewhat less apparent and may take time to materialise. Nonetheless, they are present.

Some of the factors which explain why the coup attempt is going to have an international impact are structural, including Turkey's geostrategic position, its NATO membership, its perennially complicated relations with the EU, and the army's continuing influence in defining and implementing foreign policy. Other determinants are more to do with timing, for example the fact that the attempted coup took place just weeks after Turkey announced a move to restore diplomatic relations with **Russia** and **Israel**, at a critical juncture for efforts to resolve the division of **Cyprus**, and when Turkey had become a key player in the conflicts of Syria and Iraq, as well as in the refugee crisis.

To all of this must be added the fact that, when the news broke of the attempted coup in Turkey, the international response was slow and ambiguous. **John Kerry**, for instance, merely expressed his desire for stability and continuity. In a first tweet **Federica Mogherini** also failed to express explicit condemnation of the coup attempt, limiting herself to calling for restraint and respect for democratic institutions. Only when it became clear that the attempt had failed did President **Barak Obama** make a more vigorous statement in support of the government. This triggered similar messages from other western leaders. Moreover, media sources and people in Erdoğan's inner circle have not refrained from venturing theories about a conspiracy of international dimensions and directly blaming the United States, which forced the US ambassador to issue a **communiqué** denying such accusations.

Hence, Washington is probably a good place to begin this survey of the international ramifications. Bilateral relations are not in good shape. Some months ago Ankara accused the United States of encouraging the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a group which is on the terrorist list of both countries, thanks to the mili-

tary support it is giving to its Syrian allies, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in the struggle against the Islamic State. Meanwhile, regrets have been expressed in Washington that Erdoğan did not take a stronger stand against the Jihadist threat until the summer of 2015, and his authoritarian stance has also given cause for concern. Far from improving the situation, the recent visits of **Joe Biden** to Turkey, and of Erdoğan to **Washington**, have contributed towards laying bare the mutual distrust. Tensions have been rising since the failed coup and the Secretary of State, **John Kerry**, went so far as to warn that NATO would be monitoring respect for democratic governance in Turkey, a statement that has been interpreted as a hint that its continuing membership in the alliance might be in jeopardy. Three factors which could aggravate the already-strained relations have emerged: the absence of a favourable response to Ankara's request for the **extradition** of the Pennsylvania-based cleric Fethullah Gulen; the fact that the purges are affecting people who have excellent connections in Washington; and Turkey's less cooperative position regarding use of the Incirlik air base.

Relations with the European Union and its member states have never been easy. Turkey has always felt looked down upon and has lamented that a double standard is applied to its case. In the past, the Erdoğan government has reacted angrily to criticism of its policies, for example its response to the **Gezi** protests. However, the refugee crisis has changed the dynamics of the relationship. Turkey has now become **indispensable** and, indeed, after the **March EU-Turkey Agreement** was signed, the number of refugees and migrants reaching Greece has significantly diminished.

Before the coup attempt, tensions were rising. Turkey wanted the EU to keep its promises of speeding up the process of the EU accession negotiations, to increase its financial contribution for dealing with the refugees and, in particular, to hasten its liberalisation of visas. However, the EU insists that certain conditions must be met, among them the contentious matter of Turkey's rewriting its **antiterrorism laws**. After the attempted coup, it is foreseeable that any changes will move in the opposite direction (especially if the **death penalty** is reintroduced), that purges in such spheres as justice will pose a threat to the separation of powers, and the harassment of opposition media will continue and even worsen. The EU will then be confronted with a thorny dilemma: take the risk that Turkey will not cooperate on border matters or resign itself to losing face.

The consequences for Cyprus also require attention. The Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot leaders have shown they are willing to try to reach agreement and, until now, Turkey seemed to approve. Additionally, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel was a further inducement to come to an agreement with Cyprus which would economically and logistically pave the way for development of gas deposits which have been found in the Eastern Mediterranean. The impact on Cyprus of the attempted coup could be two-edged. In one possible scenario, Turkey might begin to obstruct negotiations in retaliation for criticisms voiced by Europe. Then again, Ankara could decide to support a negotiated solution as a way of ensuring that the crisis with Brussels does not go completely off the rails. It should also be added that, in this conflict, the role of the Turkish army, with 43,000 soldiers deployed on the island, has been crucial. Whether any movement against army cadres, or an eventual decline in influence of the armed forces in the decision-making process will or will not modify Turkish policy in Cyprus and, if so, in which direction, is another situation which should be carefully watched.

A few weeks before the coup, Turkey announced normalisation of its relations with **Russia**. These had been damaged since November 2015 when Turkey shot down a Russian warplane. The first moves, beginning with a personal **telephone call** from Putin to Erdoğan after the coup attempt, and an announcement of the

desire of the two leaders to work towards a meeting in a matter of weeks, suggest that the failed coup has speeded up the reconciliation process. But this is about more than just having an excuse. At a time when Turkey is well aware of the deteriorating tone in its relations with Washington and Brussels, opening up this channel of dialogue with Russia is a move against being isolated, and also a way of sending a message to its trans-Atlantic allies that they should not play with fire. Russia's interest is clear and not only concerned with economic matters. The Kremlin is always on the lookout for any opportunity to fan the flames of discord in the trans-Atlantic alliance, especially after the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Right now, Turkey provides the perfect way to go about it.

Finally, one should wonder whether there will be changes in Turkish policy in Syria and Iraq, and also in regional dynamics in the Middle East. One consequence of the failed coup could be that Erdoğan will focus his efforts on consolidating presidential power while paying the price of reduced involvement in regional conflicts and even having to make more conciliatory gestures regarding Kurdish matters, both within and beyond Turkey's borders. If the government's mistrust of the military is growing, and purges in the armed forces undermine its operative capacity, even temporarily, this repositioning could be obligatory. Another matter which should also be monitored are the implications of the rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow, including the possibility that it might lead to some kind of initiative in Syria, eventually dragging in other regional powers which could exert some influence in the conflict. As for the normalisation of relations with Israel, **messages** exchanged after the coup attempt suggest that the thaw will continue. However, in the case of Egypt, the prospects for improved relations are presently non-existent. Analogies between the two coups are constantly being made, and the last straw was when Egypt blocked a United Nations Security Council statement condemning the attempted coup in Turkey, using the excuse that the Council was in no position to say who did or did not represent a "democratically elected government".

In the coming months, growing wariness between Ankara and its western allies can be expected, reconciliation with Moscow will be fast-tracked, and there will be adjustments in Turkey's Middle East Policy. All of this will be a result, not so much of the failure of the coup attempt as of how Erdoğan manages his victory. Some of the repercussions have a clear destabilising component, especially with regard to the Atlantic Alliance and Turkish-European relations. Yet the prospects, not only for Turkey but for the whole world, would have been considerably worse if the coup attempt had triumphed, especially if it had been preceded by a bloodbath. Washington and Brussels would have been obliged to break relations with the coup regime and an unstable Turkey would have introduced even more uncertainty into the heart of the Atlantic Alliance and a highly volatile Middle East.