

Is there relation between Turkey and ISIS?

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Since sustained opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad first took root in Syria four years ago, Turkey has been heavily involved in Syrian affairs. More recently, as the Syrian conflict has spread across borders, it has also taken an interest in Iraq. In both cases, the AKP government has pursued a sectarian policy of backing Sunni groups while seeking to counter the Alawite Assad regime in Syria as well as the Shi'a-dominated Maliki government in Iraq. This policy has aligned the Turkish government with the interests of a wide range of extremist Islamist groups that have metastasised within the security vacuum of conflict-ridden Syrian. Far from an uncomfortable or incidental association, evidence from the past several years suggests that Turkey has, actively in some cases and tacitly in others, supported a variety of jihadi forces in Syria. (Bipartisan Policy, 2015, p.11) Before Arab spring, the AKP government carried out a zero problem policy with neighbouring countries. Initially it was quite successful policy besides that policy was supported by the EU countries and the US. Owing to pursuing that non aggressive policy, Turkey promoted very good relations with Syria and Iraq. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has brought into direct connection with Syria for the first time in its history.

As it is widely known, the protests and demands of secularism by people in Tunisia ignited the Arab spring. Tunisia is the birthplace of the Arab Spring. For Tunisians, the goals of the Arab Spring were primarily freedom and economic prosperity. Even though they are disillusioned by the current political leaders and believe that the difference between the rich

and poor expanded since the overthrow of the authoritarian ruler, Zein al-Abedin Ben Ali, in early 2011, Tunisians consider themselves to be more empowered and freer than they were before the revolution. They support secular politics, and less than 20% favour an Islamic government. For them, secular parties have grown a bit more popular, while the appeal of religious-oriented parties, including an-Nahda, has waned considerably. However, political parties in general are the least trustworthy and the military the most trustworthy institutions in their perspective. For Tunisians, security is the principal concern, economic backwardness the most important cause of decadence, development of science and technology the key to economic prosperity, and excelling in science and technology their primary obligation. While a majority support the freedom of expression, this freedom is tolerable for only one-third of the respondents if it is used to criticise their religion. They also overwhelmingly concur regarding the significance of tourism for their national economy. (Moaddel, 2013, p.2)

At the beginning of the Arab spring, Turkey was being cited as an example by some political authorities for Arab governments. Does the Arab Spring have a Turkish model? Countries in the Middle East are looking to Turkey whose conservative social and cultural outlook, but liberal political and economic program, stand out as a model of Islamic liberalism. For the US Army, this presents a long-term opportunity. Turkish security forces, trained by the US Army, have begun to train other armies (such as Syria and Jordan in the Middle East and many in Central Asia and Eastern Europe). Thus US lessons on civil-military relations or the laws of war will, in turn, be taught to these countries. Given its current popularity, America could use Turkish help as it maps out the future of the Arab Spring. (Kaya, 2012, p.26)

Contrary to what is believed, Turkey have not been good an example for those countries because the AKP government implemented totally different foreign policy. A zero problem policy with neighbouring countries was abandoned by the AKP government. Probably the Gezi Park events had influence that the AKP government changed its foreign policy. The impact of the Gezi Park protests on Turkish foreign policy will likely become a hot topic in near future for the main reason that the way how the entire process has evolved will affect Turkey's image abroad. This essay will simply discuss how the Gezi Park protests, particularly the way the AKP government has responded to the protesters, will impact Turkey's soft power abroad. (Oğuzlu, 2013, p.11)

For most of its history Turkey has had a poor relationship with its southern neighbour. After independence Turkey showed little interest in the states carved out of the Ottoman Empire's

Arab provinces, propelled by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's desire to face westwards and a lingering sense of betrayal directed towards the Arabs for having sided with Britain in the First World War. Syria was particularly problematic. Turkey and Syria were on opposite sides in the Cold War, with Ankara a founding member of NATO and Damascus becoming the USSR's closest regional ally. Bashar al-Assad's father and predecessor, Hafez al-Assad, promoted a centralised socialist economy. This meant trade relations between the two countries got nowhere – unlike Turkey's growing ties with Iraq and Iran during the 1980s. Instead, Hafez al-Assad continued to clash with Turkey: championing Syrian claims to the Turkish province of Hatay, demanding a greater share of water from the Euphrates River, which runs from Turkey into Syria, and giving military support to the Turkish-Kurdish separatist group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The end of the Cold War and a military alliance with Israel in 1996 enabled Ankara to take a much more confrontational stance in the 1990s, culminating in the 1998 threat to invade if Syria did not hand over PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, whom it was sheltering. Yet when Hafez al-Assad swiftly relented to defuse the crisis, the Adana Accords signed soon afterwards opened the door to a decade of Turkish Syrian cooperation. (Phillips, 2012, p.3)

For almost a month, Turkey has been witnessing serious challenges to its social and political stability, with protestors defying the authority of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Sparked by a harsh response to a quiet environmental demonstration over Taksim's Gezi Park, the protests caught the world by surprise, as did the government's reaction to them. The defiant attitude of Erdoğan, along with the heavy-handed approach of the police, cast a dark shadow over Turkey's ruling elites and attracted criticism from the international community, including the EU. (Paul and Seyrek, 2013, p.1)

During a time of Gezi Park events, the AKP government felt abandoned and betrayed by its European allies and US. The AKP government placed mostly importance to foreign policy with Syria that is why it always maintained intimate relations with Al-Assad regime. When Gaddafi regime was toppled in a short span of time, the AKP government changed its foreign policy completely. Turkey expected that Al-Assad regime would have been toppled by protesters at short notice. In other words, AKP government hoped that Western countries and the US would have supported opponents in Syria. But Turkey did not take accounts of Assad's military and intelligence power. Beside that Al-Assad has very powerful two political allies, their interests correspond with Al-Assad regime. Majority of Turkish Population is

Sunni-Islam. On the other hand majority of Syrian population is Sunni-Islam as well. AKP government attempted to use Sunni Islam against Al-Assad regime, because Al-Assad family is Shiite. The Assad regime receives significant support from Shia forces in the region, eager to preserve the “crescent” of Shia-led states that stretches from Iran, through Iraq, to Syria. Tehran has long maintained close economic and security ties with the Alawi regime in Damascus. Now, in order to keep its ally in power and preserve its own influence, Iran has redoubled its support by sending more money and arms, providing military advisors and even deploying Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commanders and soldiers to support the regime. Hezbollah’s close ties with Assad and the IRGC have led it to intervene as well, sending fighters from Lebanon to reinforce the Syrian government. Iraq’s Shia-led government deeply worries about the possible effects of a rebel victory in Syria on its own Sunni population, and thus allows Iranian planes with arms supplies bound for Syria to use its airspace. (Abramowitz and Edelman, 2013, p.12)

The AKP government suddenly started implementing leadership policy. Especially Erdogan was trying to gather under a single roof only Sunni Muslims by exemplifying Secularism. While in Cairo, Erdoğan gave an interview on Egyptian television in which he doled out advice on what he considered the lessons to be learned from his own country. His message to the Egyptian people: “do not fear secularism, because it does not mean being an enemy of religion.” (Halperin, n.d., p.9) Erdogan paid many official visits to Arab countries. He mentioned the Arab leaders and Arabic people always about secularism in every country. Middle Eastern countries were influenced by Turkish secularism for a while. When the Gezi demonstrations were suppressed heavily by Government, Turkey has lost its popularity in front of Middle Eastern countries. The AKP government declared Al-Assad as a dictator beside that gave the opponents financial and military support in Syria. Despite all supports, Opponents could not succeed to overthrow Al-Assad regime because it was more powerful the estimated for Turkish Government. The AKP government could not find political support from western countries and US. It tried to create new and much more powerful alternative military forces against the Al-Assad regime in Syria.

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