

COMMENTARY OPINION

LAST DAYS

Rebirth of the Turkish Caliphate -- and why it matters

Exclusive: Joel Richardson notes how earlier predictions about Erdoğan were spot-on



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In 2004, when I wrote my book "[Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast](#)," the nation of Turkey was still viewed by virtually all Western political analysts as the model government to be replicated throughout the Muslim world. The AKP party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was looked to as proof positive that moderate Islamist governments were possible. Even Reagan conservatives argued that moderate Islamist governments were the future of the region. If we simply offered people the option between freedom (albeit with an Islamist veneer) and traditional Middle Eastern authoritarianism, they would always choose freedom. Beyond this, it was argued that the hearts of the Turkish people were very much turning to the West, rejecting the values of the Muslim world to the east.

Despite the reality on the ground, however, this was not the future the Bible described for Asia Minor. Twenty-five-hundred years ago, the prophet Ezekiel foretold a last-days invasion of Israel that would specifically be led by Turkey. In my book "Mideast Beast," I carefully work through Ezekiel's prophecy to show how the Bible doesn't point to a last-days Russian-led invasion of Israel, but instead points to an invasion led by Turkey. For the false perceptions of the early 21st century to become the grim reality described in the Bible, however, much had to change. These changes, as we've now witnessed, took far less time than most could have ever imagined. As recently as 2012, President Obama named Turkey's current President Erdoğan as one of his top three closest friends among world leaders. A quick

five years later, Erdoğan has emerged as one of the most dangerous dictators of our day.

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Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Since Erdoğan has assumed complete control of Turkey, there are now more journalists in prison there than any other nation on the earth. The AKP-led government has assumed complete control over virtually every media outlet in the nation. The president has even sought to arrest his critics in nations as far abroad as Germany and the United States. Erdoğan openly stated that he has imprisoned foreign citizens to use as bargaining chips in his hope that foreign governments will extradite his critics to Turkey for punishment. Well over a hundred thousand of its own citizens have either been indefinitely imprisoned or fired from their jobs on suspicion of supporting opposition perspectives. Throughout the nation, men and woman continue to disappear randomly and suddenly, literally snatched off the streets simply for suspicion of holding critical views of the president. The elderly, those with incapacitating illnesses, pregnant women and even babies are now routinely incarcerated. The current national roundup of Erdoğan's enemies, or political opponents, is eerily reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Yet this is just the beginning.

We have reached the point where the president of a NATO nation is now openly threatening European nations, while he increases military

cooperation with Russia. Turkish forces brazenly attack U.S. allies in northern Syria and Iraq, and the president openly brags about it, taunting us to do anything about it. After sending Turkish troops into northern Iraq, Erdoğan responded to Iraqi President Abadi's protests by saying, "We do not need your permission!" There is abundant evidence that for the first few years of the ISIS Caliphate, Erdoğan's government was actually assisting them with everything from medical treatment in Turkey, to logistical support, to actually supplying them with weapons. Instead of working to destroy ISIS on its southern border, Turkey has worked to target the Kurds, the primary group responsible for successfully fighting ISIS these past three years. A prominent AKP-sponsored imam has even publicly called for a Turkish invasion of Jerusalem. Meanwhile, a few dozen nuclear warheads still remain under Turkish control at the Inçirlik Airbase in eastern Turkey. Something has gone deeply, deeply wrong.

How did this all come about? To better understand how we got here, we need to step back to the early part of last century, when the Ottoman Empire was crumbling. Often referred to then as "the sick man of Europe," Turkey's economy was a complete quagmire. Meanwhile the industrial revolution throughout the West was in full swing. As developing technologies and the economies of the Western world were skyrocketing, Turkey, as the leader of much of the Islamic world, was floundering.

Enter Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. (Atatürk is actually an honorific title meaning the father of the Turks). Atatürk looked out and contrasted the ascendancy of Europe with the slumping condition of the Ottoman Empire and decided that he had discovered the problem. More than nearly anything else, it was Islam that was holding Turkey back from modernization, advancement and ultimately competing with Europe. Atatürk reasoned that if a more secular republic could be established, then Turkey would be unfettered to rise just like the West. While maintaining its Muslim cultural identity, the government itself would be free from the antiquated restraints of Islam. And so Atatürk become responsible not only for dissolving the government and office of the caliph (the religious-political-military head of the Muslim world located in Istanbul), but also setting in place a rigid system of checks and balances whereby Turkey would forever remain a more secular nation. If any

particular government in Turkey become too Islamic, then the secular-controlled military would step in and remove it from power. Over the past 80 years in Turkey this actually has happened several times, with the secularist elites in control of the military each time wresting control of the Republic of Turkey back from any overly Islamist-oriented government.

While most students of history are familiar with Ataturk, few are familiar with another looming figure, a contemporary of Ataturk named Bediuzzaman Said Al-Nursî. (Bediuzzaman is also an honorific title meaning something along the line of, "the most wonderful, unique, elevated man of the time".) Nursî was an imam and theologian who understood well the thought process of Ataturk and sought to counter his efforts to secularize Turkey. Of all the various Islamist thinkers with goals of restoring the Caliphate, Nursî is the dark horse, little known, even among many students of Islamic history. Beside Sayyid Qutb (father of the Muslim Brotherhood), Ibn Taymiyyah (Wahabbism, Salafism) and Abul A'la Maududi (Jamaat-e-Islami), Al-Nursî is easily just as important.

**Turkish President Erdogan at the White
House with President Trump May 16, 2017
(White House photo)**

In my opinion, Nursî's methodology was far superior to any of the other fathers of Islamist movements. Unlike the others who emphasized violent jihad to accomplish their goals, Nursî emphasized things like science, good deeds and interfaith dialogue. In this regard, Nursî is the father of what we

could call "Turkish Islam." Instead of confronting the Western world with acts of jihad and violent resistance, Nursî sought to create a form of Islam the West would welcome with open arms. It worked like clockwork. The West took the bait and swallowed the hook. This was the kind of Islam the West wanted to champion – a moderated, decaffeinated, Christianized form of Islam.

Taking the baton from Nursî, a highly charismatic imam named Fethullah Gülen dramatically expanded upon all Bediuzzaman started. Though preaching a more nationalist message than Nursî, Gülen also preached an Islam intermingled with an emphasis on education, science, charitable acts of kindness and service and its greatest outreach tool – interfaith dialogue. As wonderful as this may all sound to the modern ear, Gülen is also infamous for having been secretly recorded instructing his followers to "infiltrate the very arteries of the system" of society and government to "lay in wait until the most opportune time" to retake Turkey from the secularists to ultimately re-establish the Turkish-led Caliphate. Ironically, Gülen today lives in rural Pennsylvania, under the protection of the United States government. There are also over 120 charter schools in the U.S. under Gülen's organization.

With regard to the rise of Erdoğan, What must be understood is that it was specifically this vast throng of Nursî and Gülen supporters who created the very backbone of Erdoğan's support. The Gülenists had followed their leader's dictates and infiltrated virtually every sphere of society. It was through this vast support base that Erdoğan rode to power over the past 15 years. It was not until the summer of 2013 that a dramatic spilt between the Gülenists and Erdoğan emerged. As the regional unrest of the Arab Spring finally reached Turkey, the Islamist government began violently cracking down on its own citizens. A handful died in the protests, and thousands were hospitalized. Having been in Taksim Square on May 15, 2013, the night of that year's most violent crackdown on the protesters, I can testify that the tactics of the government against its people were absolutely brutal.

Concerned at the heavy handed tactics of Erdogan's government, from his hideaway in Pennsylvania, Gülen began criticizing Erdoğan. Like any narcissistic dictator who demands absolute loyalty, Erdoğan would have absolutely none of it. What began as an escalating war of words soon grew into a full-blown clash of the titans. Gülen struck first with several high-level Erdoğan officials being arrested in multiple nighttime raids. Going for the jugular, the Gülenists targeted Erdoğan's own son Bilal. To further rub salt into the wound, Gülen's agents released a secret recording of President Erdoğan on the phone with his son, frantically warning him that the police were on their way and that he needed to immediately remove piles of boxes filled with cash from his house. Caught red-handed and utterly embarrassed, Erdoğan claimed the tapes were doctored – and although it was obviously his voice, he continues to vociferously deny it to this day. The gauntlet had been cast, and for the next few years the secret war between Erdoğan's AKP supporters and Gülen's deep-state followers continued to roll over at full boil.

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On the night of July 15, 2016, the conflict came to a full head, with the now infamous failed Turkish coup d'état. The attempt to overthrow the government was carried out by a faction within the military with ties to Fethullah Gülen. Despite a night of violent attacks and hundreds of deaths, by morning, Erdoğan had regained control of the nation and crushed the rebellion. Immediately, President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry took to the podium and publicly called on all Turkish political parties and citizens to support Erdoğan and the AKP party.

Turkey's soccer team listens as a stadium of 17,000 fans boo and chant "Allahu Akbar!" during a moment of silence for victims of 2015 Paris terror attacks

Since that night, analysts have sought to determine whether the coup was a genuine failed coup or if it was all staged by Erdoğan and his agents. The best analysis seems to indicate that it was likely a controlled coup attempt, one the AKP-run government had advance knowledge of and yet allowed to happen as an excuse to carry out the harsh purge of its political opponents.

This wouldn't be the first time the AKP had staged a red-flag event for the purpose of removing its political enemies. On two occasions the government claimed that the leaders of the Turkish military were engaged in a conspiracy theory to stage a series of terrorist attacks throughout the nation, as an excuse to remove the Islamist led AKP party. Instead, the AKP had hundreds of top military leaders arrested and removed from office. They were all replaced by officers faithful to Erdoğan. The AKP had effectively beheaded the only wing of the Turkish government capable of removing a runaway Islamist dictatorship.

It worked perfectly the first time, and it worked even better the second time. Just one year after the failed coup, Erdoğan's government has arrested over 123,000 citizens, has fired over 145,000, removed nearly 9,000 academics, closed over 2,000 schools, arrested nearly 300 journalists, shut down close to 200 media outlets, and has dismissed close to 5,000 judges. This doesn't include the increasing number of men and woman who continue to simply disappear, having been literally snatched off the streets never to be seen again. This is unparalleled in modern history. Turkey has experienced its own "Nacht der langen Messer," or "Night of Long-Knives." Hitler's 1934

extrajudicial assault on his own supporters know as "the Brownshirts," bears a striking resemblance to Erdoğan's purge of the Gülenists. Although he could not have become president if not for their support, he turned on them and crushed them.

Now that Erdoğan has attained absolute power over Turkey, the moderate character that he played to win the support of the Western world is no longer needed. His mask has been removed and his true colors revealed. Now he is free to openly threaten European leaders. As I have been warning for well over a decade, the moderate Islamist who supports democracy was all a facade. His plan, declared nearly 20 years ago, went perfectly according to his plan. As he said then, "Democracy is like a streetcar. You ride it until you get where you need to get, and then you get off." This is exactly where we find ourselves today.

So what does the future hold?

In 2013, during the height of the Turkish riots, I not only attended one of the protests, but also attended a massive political rally for Erdoğan. This was far and away the largest gathering I have ever been to in my life. As far as the eye could see, there was a throng of supporters waving Turkish flags and chanting their hero's name: "Recep. Tayyip. Erdoğan. Recep-Tayyip-Erdoğan!" I commented then, and will reiterate now, I have never felt as though I were watching history repeat as clearly as I did that day. The combination of nationalism, Islamism and over-the-top political hero worship on display that day should be terrifying to anyone with foresight. One would have to have been completely blind not to have seen the dark ghost of Nazi Germany hanging over the crowd that day.

For years, analysts tried to shout down warnings that Erdoğan has a desire to return to the Ottoman era. Today those same critics are taking a fresh look at the man they once made excuses for and even championed. On the day Erdoğan won the referendum (allowing him to rewrite the Turkish constitution and which effectively brought an end to the secular democratic Republic of Turkey as envisioned by Atatürk), to celebrate his victory, he

made a very symbolic statement. Not only did he specifically avoid visiting the tomb of Ataturk, but instead, he visited the tomb of Sultan Selim I. He was making a very clear statement. Known as Selim the Grim, the Sultan ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1512 to 1520. He is most remembered for his expansionist conquest over Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Erdoğan was sending a very clear message. The era of Ataturk is over. There is a new Sultan Selim the Grim in power.

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There is a Turkish proverb that says, "Show the people death, and they will happily embrace malaria." In other words, compared to the horror of the ISIS Caliphate, a Turkish Caliphate looks quite appealing. Even in the Western press, various think tanks and op-ed pieces are now suggesting that the key to Middle Eastern stability is a return to Ottoman regional control – a new Turkish Ottoman order of sorts.

As the ISIS Caliphate collapses, and much of the civilized world is breathing a sigh of relief, many others throughout the Muslim world, while acknowledging the horrific excesses of ISIS, also recognize that there is indeed a significant cry through the Muslim world for the restoration of the Caliphate. Having a Caliphate in place is an essential part of Muslim life and doctrine. It is as foundational to Muslims as having a pope in office is to Catholics. Within Islamic theology and practice, the Caliphate is the very means by which Shariah ("God's law" as Muslims might say), is established, safeguarded and ultimately spread throughout the world. Since that fateful year of 1923 when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk oversaw the dismantling of the Ottoman Caliphate, Islamist thinkers, dreamers and the organizations they birthed have been strategizing and fighting to see its restoration.

As the ISIS Caliphate collapses, there is a much larger shadow rising not only over the Middle East, but also well into Europe. The history of American foreign policy has somewhat been a circus of creating our enemies of tomorrow, today. We did it with the Taliban. We did it with Saddam Hussein. We arguably did it with Osama bin Laden. Each time, it was a short decade or more before we were at war with the very entities we had supported, backed and even trained. After 16 years in Afghanistan and Iraq, with American military resources drained, and well over 4,000 American soldiers dead, one could argue the region is in a worse condition than when we first began. But here's the kicker; the Taliban and Saddam Hussein are small potatoes compared to Turkey, a nation that has the largest army in the Middle East. If my understanding of biblical prophecy is correct, this time, the very monster that the United States helped to create, is going to be a lot more than the world can handle.

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Summary

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Joel Richardson is author of "The Islamic Antichrist," "Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist" and "Why we Left Islam" and is the co-author of "God's War on Terror." Richardson is also producer of the new documentary film, "End Times Eyewitness." His blog is www.Joelstrumpet.com.