

Turkey vs House of Saud -- Winning the Islamic World

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Erdogan, MBS, Islamic leadership and the price of silence

The House of Saud's connection to the Khashoggi murder is being milked by the Turkish President for maximum political benefit amid debate on leadership of the Islamic world and how the real crisis may affect US and Saudi strategy in the Middle East.



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TurkStream is projected as two lines, each capable of delivering 15.75 billion cubic meters of gas a year. The first will supply the Turkish market. The second will run 180 km to Turkey's western borderlands and supply south and southeast Europe, with first deliveries expected by the end of next year. Potential customers include Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary.

Call it the Gazprom double down. Nord Stream 1 and 2 supply northern Europe while TurkStream supplies southern Europe. Pipelines are steel umbilical cords. They represent liquid connectivity at its best while conclusively decreasing risks of geopolitical friction.

Turkey is already being supplied by Russian gas via Blue Stream and the Trans-Balkan pipeline. Significantly, Turkey is Gazprom's second largest export market after China.

Erdogan's speech, strenuously emphasizing the benefits of Turkey's energy security, was played and replayed all across a rainy, ultra-congested Istanbul. To witness this geopolitical and geoeconomic breakthrough was particularly enlightening, as I was deep into discussing Turkish geopolitics with members of the progressive Turkish Left.

Even the opposition to what in Europe is routinely defined as Erdogan's brand of "Asian illiberalism" concedes Turkey-Russia trade connectivity – in energy, in the military domain via the sale of the S-400 missile system, in the building of nuclear power plants – has been conducted with consummate skill by Erdogan, who is always careful to send direct and indirect messages to Washington that Turkish national interests will not be compromised.

The big prize: leading Islam

Now juxtapose this developing entente cordiale between the Bear and the (aspiring) Sultan with the gripping drama in Istanbul. Ibrahim Karagul – never afraid to apply a Rabelais touch – is always useful as a mirror reflecting the state of play of AKP circles around Erdogan.

For this political elite, a breakthrough in the Erdogan-conducted "Death By a Thousand Leaks" is imminent, allegedly proving that Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) directly gave the order for the killing and slaying of Jamal Khashoggi.

The consensus among the AKP leadership – confirmed by independent Left academics – is that the US-Israel-House of Saud-UAE axis is deep in negotiations to extricate MBS from any almost indisputable culpability.

That includes key items in the hefty Erdogan "package" dangled to the axis to essentially buy Ankara's silence – an end of the Saudi blockade on Qatar and the extradition of Fetullah Gulen, described across the Turkish political spectrum as the leader of FETO (the Fetullah Terrorist Organization).

The Kremlin and the Russian Foreign Ministry are very much aware that the high-stakes game goes way beyond 'Pulp Fiction' in Istanbul and the Astana peace process on Syria – carefully micro-managed by both Putin and Erdogan alongside Iran's Rouhani. The big prize is no less than the leadership of the Islamic world.

There is nowhere better than a few stops in select landmarks of Ottoman imperial power, or a lively conversation at Istanbul's Old Book Bazaar, to be reminded that this was the seat of the Islamic Umma for centuries – a role usurped by those Arabian desert upstarts.

Alastair Cooke has captured with perfection the House of Saud's close involvement in the slaying of Khashoggi and how this raises questions about Saudi Arabia's status as "no more than an inept Custodian of Mecca and Medina". This is indeed splashed all over the – Erdogan-aligned – Turkish media. And Cooke notes how this status "would strip the Gulf of much of its significance and value to Washington".

My ongoing conversations with progressive, Kemalist Turkish academics – yes, they are a minority – have unveiled a fascinating process. The Erdogan machine has sensed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to simultaneously bury the House of Saud's shaky Islamic credibility while solidifying Turkish neo-Ottomanism, but with an Ikhwan framework.

And that's the rationale behind Erdogan and Turkish media relentlessly denouncing what is

interpreted as a plot concocted by MBZ (MBS's puppet master), Tel Aviv and the Trump administration.

No one can possibly advance the endgame. But that carries the strong possibility of a dominant, Erdogan-led Turkey all across the lands of Islam, allied with Qatar and also with Iran. Plus all of the above enjoying very close geopolitical and economic relations with Russia. Expect major fireworks ahead.

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[Indeed, the corporate (weapons manufacturers and Wall Street banks) ruled USA has made a monumental misjudgement imagining their media would be able to distract and save guilty Saudi prince Salman from the consequences of his heinous, amateurish, murderous actions. America may have snookered itself and risks going down with the House of Saud if it persists in its stupendously stupid coverup of Salman's guilt; even the deep state serving CIA was forced to come to the obvious conclusion of Salman's guilt after Turkey supplied numerous compromising recordings of events as they occurred in the Embassy during Khashoggi's gruesome murder.

And so, now committed, America flounders in the pit it has dug for itself. The aware world of international politics is watching intently as America, without external assistance, plunges deeper into a morass of its own making, for WHAT? The filthy lucre, profits made from arms sales to the Saudis, the use of which have already compromised Washington's international standing.

Let's see if those paltry profits are able to save America's economy and plummeting international reputation in the WORLD -- not a snowflake's chance! It seems that Russia and China need only sit back and watch the neocons and the military corporate complex destroy what is left of American influence and power.]

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