



Turkish Observers See Connection between Failed Coup and S-400 Purchase

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey recently commemorated the third anniversary of the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, with numerous news shows featuring panel discussions on how this incident impacted Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkey took first deliveries of components of the Russian-made S-400 missiles. As the accompanying passages demonstrate, many observers see a link between these two events.

The first passage is from such a panel discussion. One of the panelists, a former Turkish diplomat, points out that the S-400s entered Turkey's agenda "right after the 15 July coup attempt three years ago." He continues on to explain that, shortly after the coup attempt, President Erdoğan "ended a 9-month period of frozen relations with Russia, jumped on a plane and went to St. Petersburg, met Putin on 9 August, and put Turkey-Russia relations back on track." He attributes this to the fact that Putin "showed the right reaction that night by calling and asking if he could do anything, in contrast to our US interlocutors who were nowhere to be found..."

This expert also points out that the failed coup raised questions in people's minds about the Air Force (which was a key force in the attempted coup); specifically, whether a pilot, "like a lone wolf" in the Air Force could "attempt something like this again..." He claims that there is an effort to replace the Air Force as the main backbone of Turkey's air defense; distributing the responsibility within Turkey's defense architecture, and shifting it more to UAVs and S-400s.

In the second passage, a well-known journalist argues that "the most important side effect of 15 July was Turkey beginning to trust Russia more than the US and its other Western allies." Therefore, he claims, Erdoğan "views the S-400 purchase from Russia as a precaution against the possibility of another such attempt."

The final passage features parts of comments that Erdoğan made to a group of journalists, which may provide a clue about this issue of [mis] trust. Claiming that the S-400 purchase is "the most important agreement in our history," Erdoğan discusses in historic context, the various threats that the Ottoman Empire, and later Turkey faced from all directions. He continues on to say, "Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them... Even though we were the frontline against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it was not sufficient to protect us from these threats." Many analysts, including the first one excerpted here, saw this as a significant political message. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2019.

Source: Адміністрація Президента України via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Recep_Tayyip_Erdo%C4%9Fan_2019_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Recep_Tayyip_Erdo%C4%9Fan_2019_(cropped).jpg), CC BY 4.0

“Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them.” -Turkish President Erdoğan



Continued: Turkish Observers See Connection between Failed Coup and S-400 Purchase

Source: Aydın Selcen, Kadri Gürsel, Kemal Can and Yüksel Taşkın, “Türkiye’nin Durumu (The State of Turkey),” *Medyascope*.tv, 18 July 2019. <https://medyascope.tv/2019/07/18/acik-oturum-200-turkiyenin-durumu-aydin-selcen-kadri-gursel-kemal-can-ve-yuksel-taskin/>

[Aydın Selcen] “When did we start talking about the S-400? Right after the 15 July coup attempt three years ago, President Erdoğan ended a 9-month period of frozen relations with Russia, jumped on a plane and went to St. Petersburg, met Putin on 9 August, and put Turkey-Russia relations back on track... This has to do with the fact that Putin showed the right reaction that night by calling and asking if he could do anything, in contrast to our US interlocutors who were nowhere to be found... And President Erdoğan mentioned buying the S-400 for the first time on his flight back from St. Petersburg.” ...

What happened after 15 July? First of all, a question emerged against the Air Force about whether it could happen again.... The question of whether a pilot, like a lone wolf, can come out of the Air Force [and do something like this again]... So there seems to be an effort to take the Air Force out from being the main backbone of our air defense, and place more responsibility on UAVs and S-400s within our defense architecture.. But there’s also a political meaning... As Erdoğan said in a recent speech, “Even though we have been part of the Western alliance, we’ve also seen the greatest threats from them...”

Source: Murat Yetkin, “15 Temmuz, 15 Soru (15 July, 15 Questions),” *Yetkinreport*.com, 15 July 2019. <https://yetkinreport.com/2019/07/15/15-temmuz-15-soru/>

President Erdoğan... views the S-400 purchase from Russia as a precaution against the possibility of another such attempt.... The most important side effect of 15 July was Turkey beginning to trust Russia more than the US and its other Western allies.

Source: “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan S-400 Açıklaması: Tarihimizin En Önemli Anlaşması (Statement about the S-400 from President Erdoğan: The Most Important Agreement in our History),” *Haberturk*.com.tr, 14 July 2019. <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-erdogan-dan-s-400-aciklamasi-tarihimizin-en-onemli-anlasmasi-2504288>

“The Ottoman [Empire] always had to deal with threats, sometimes from the east, sometimes from the west, sometimes from the north or south. And its ultimate collapse came as a result of the bold struggle it put up against these threats from four different directions. The Republic of Turkey was founded, not based on its victory against a small country like Greece, but rather against the greater powers that were behind [Greece]... at the time. Even during the period of the Republic, we were constantly tested. Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them. This is political, this is economic, this is cultural, in every way.... Even though we were the frontline against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it was not sufficient to protect us from these threats. Greece, and later on the Greek Cypriot [Administration] of Southern Cyprus, was always waved over our head like the Sword of Damocles.”

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