



Erdogan once again Plays the Key Man in the Middle

Description

[Editor's Note: It was no surprise to see Mr. Erdogan's delight once again to be the deal maker or breaker in the NATO expansion of Sweden and Finland. His main purpose in being in NATO was always to milk it for all it was worth, and he has.

When an issue is on the table near and dear to them, we find that these high and mighty international organizations are open to extortion and bribery, both in offering and agreeing to it.

Erdogan made agreements during the Syrian War with Russia to decrease hostilities and help build conditions for new elections for Syrians when the war had cooled down, but he ended up sending his army to occupy northeast Syria in Idlib, and the NW Kurdish area.

This killed the election prospects, smothered in the crib so to speak, and Syria continues to be raped and robbed by anyone with the military power to do so. And what do the mighty international organization paper tigers do about it... Nothing!

Look at the UN now. How often do we see coverage of it in the MSM? The UN has become its own version of paycheck grifters, enduring to continue getting funding. Its conduct during the JCPOA deal was a disgrace when the US refused to abide by it, and the EU nations jerked Iran around with promises of trade fulfillment that were never concluded.



Erdogan is still caught up in his Sultan megalomania trip

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Internal divisions in NATO are not a new phenomenon, with tensions between Turkey, due to its ties with Moscow, and the US and the rest of NATO being its primary manifestation.

Turkey's recent objections to NATO's expansion by including two Nordic states of Sweden and Finland reveals, yet again, that the organisation is far from a house united internally.

Yet, Turkey's core purposes behind its objection are more political than geopolitical. In other words, unlike how some western media outlets have reported, Turkey's objections are not tied to its ties with Russia, although a crisis within NATO would certainly benefit Russia insofar as NATO's primary target has always been Moscow itself.

In fact, Russia's Vladimir Putin actually downplayed the significance of both countries joining NATO, although he stressed that this joining will invite Russian counter-measures, which is only a logical step to expect.

Therefore, far from being Russia's so-called "[secret weapon](#)" jeopardising NATO from within, Ankara has, in the recent past, supported NATO's expansion on multiple occasions. The question is: why is Ankara objecting now?

Turkey's objections are tied to some political interests that it wants to secure from the West in exchange for its support to expand NATO. In effect, Ankara, following its own national interests, is exploiting NATO's consensus-based model to its own advantage.

Most of all, Turkey wants the West to change its policy vis-à-vis Kurds. The core reason for Turkey's specific objection to Sweden and Finland is their support for certain Kurdish leaders that both countries

have been protecting for many years.

On May 16, both Sweden and Finland rejected Turkey's request to extradite 19 people with links to the PKK and Gülenist group. Turkey, therefore, sees Sweden's and Finland's bid to join NATO as a useful opportunity to target two groups it has been struggling to control – and eliminate – for many years.

A second – and more nuanced but less mentioned and discussed – part of Turkey's objection is Ankara's bid to extract concessions from the US, especially its inclusion in the F-35 jet programme.

Following Ankara's deal with Russia to purchase the S-400 missile defence system, the US threw Ankara out of the F-35 programme. Ever since then, Ankara has been doing everything it can, diplomatically, to convince the US to include Ankara in the project.

Now that the US is in a full-blown conflict with Russia in Ukraine (the US Congress recently approved US\$40 billion for Ukraine) and Washington has quite keenly utilised the ongoing crisis to strengthen and expand NATO, Turkey, too, is trying to make sure to use the crisis in ways that serve its core national interests.

Besides kicking Ankara out of the F-35 project, the US also imposed sanctions on the Turkish defence industry. These sanctions were imposed under the 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), a law that was specifically enacted to prevent the Russian arms industry from expanding and challenging the US/NATO.

Turkey's objections fly in the face of the US support for both Sweden and Finland. On May 19, Joe Biden hosted both Swedish and Finnish leaders in the White House and extended "full, total, complete backing of the United States."

As it stands, a major obstacle for the US to overcome to actually extend that support and make both Nordic states a part of NATO is to offer Turkey a deal that it cannot refuse. But will the US accept Turkish demand for its share of 100 F-35 jets? Given the ongoing conflict with Russia in Ukraine, this is unlikely to happen.

In particular, the role that Ankara has played ever since the beginning of the Russian military operation in Ukraine makes it extremely difficult for Washington to accept Ankara's demands.

Not only has Ankara refused to join US/EU sanctions on Russia, but it has also hosted, on multiple occasions, talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. This role, however, has been as an anti-US/anti-West geopolitics in the US/EU.

On other hand, the failure of these talks to produce a ceasefire and a durable outcome has led Turkey to actually accuse certain NATO members of sabotaging the whole process to keep the war going against Russia. "Some NATO countries do not want the Ukraine war to end", [said](#) the Turkish foreign minister last month without mincing any words.

In other words, Turkey's importance and role, following its ouster from the F-35 programme and US sanctions, has been very marginal with NATO. In this context, by using its prerogative to object – and block – NATO's expansion, Turkey is actually asserting itself within the organisation to force the rest of the alliance to recognise its importance as a key geopolitical player within the alliance and beyond.

This ascertain is also tied to Turkey's domestic political economy. The Turkish economy is teetering toward a crisis. Inflation rate is at an all-time high, reaching almost 100 per cent in April. Elections are due next year. Therefore, it is important for Erdogan to extract concessions from the West, especially if it can make the US lift sanctions, to win the next elections.

With ready-made support available from pro-Erdogan media in Turkey, the regime can project its success in extracting some concessions from the West in terms of Ankara's ability to bring the "West to its knees." In Turkey, Erdogan is already being portrayed as a "strongman" who can look the West directly in the eye.

If the West agrees to address some of Erdogan's interests, it will give him an important leeway against the opposition parties that are mobilising to build [a large anti-Erdogan alliance](#) ahead of the 2023 elections.

There are, therefore, multiple reasons for Ankara to play its card within NATO. Unlike western mainstream media's habitual – and oversimplified – portrayal of Erdogan as "Russia's man," the fact remains that the ongoing crisis of NATO's expansion caused by Ankara's objections is quite directly tied to Turkey's own marginalisation within the alliance.

by Salman Rafi Sheikh, research-analyst of International Relations and Pakistan's foreign and domestic affairs, exclusively for the online magazine "[New Eastern Outlook](#)".

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