



Russia Is Better Ally For US Than Turkey: American Analyst

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With Russia saying it considered declaring war against Turkey, analysts are wondering whether NATO, and the United States in particular, need such an “irresponsible” ally as Ankara.

Even though we have not yet entered World War 3 over the incident of Turkey shooting down a Russian warplane over Turkish airspace, Ankara’s actions have demonstrated what an “irresponsible” ally to the U.S. it really is, according to Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties.

In his article published on the Huffington Post, Bandow argues that the war in Syria is gradually turning into a yet another conflict that serves the interests of other nations far more than U.S. interests.

The analyst writes that Washington policy in Syrian has been “impossibly incoherent,” since the Obama administration is trying to achieve all of its goals at once: get rid of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, destroy ISIS (aka Islamic States, ISIL, IS, Daesh), support “ineffectual” moderate forces, persuade the Gulf States to fight against the extremists they have been supporting and convince Turkey to serve America’s interests rather than Islamic interests.

Turkey wants to help ISIS survive?

With no one – except Turkey itself – believing that Russia had any hostile intention against Ankara when a Russian fighter jet entered Turkish airspace last month, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan “played the fool,” according to Bandow.

The analyst believes that Ankara’s intentions were to interfere with Russia’s military operations against ISIS and possibly even discourage future Russian airstrikes against Turkey-backed

Islamists. And it really did interfere with Moscow's airstrikes against ISIS, as Russia had to all of a sudden shift its focus onto Ankara to determine whether it is an enemy greater than ISIS.

The downing of the fighter jet was a provocative and a not necessary for Turkey's defense move, which "obviously" was contrary to U.S. interests, the author argues, noting that if Russia unleashed war against Turkey, Washington would be treaty-bound to defend its NATO ally.

Should U.S. withdraw from NATO?

Earlier this month, ValueWalk reported that the U.S. has been encouraged to withdraw from NATO; and Bandow appears to be supporting the idea since "Turkey is a growing threat to Western interests and values."

Moreover, the author argues that Turkey has never been a true friend to the West. And with Erdogan sacrificing most of Turkey's human rights advances, Ankara is even more alienated from the West that it has ever been.

Erdogan "gained control of the police and judiciary; conducted multiple mass conspiracy trials; and attacked independent journalists, opposition politicians, and business critics. He has pushed, unsuccessfully so far, to establish an authoritarian presidency along the lines, ironically, of that created by Russia's Vladimir Putin."

The author also argues that Erdogan is moving Turkey in a more Islamist direction. This notion alone raises the question whether NATO, and particularly the U.S., needs such an ally.

Turkey's tricks in the Middle East game

Evidence of the Turkish government allowing relatively free transit of personnel and materiel for ISIS have repeatedly emerged in Western media, while there have also been evidence of more direct assistance such as sending military equipment, passports, training, medical care, "and perhaps more" to ISIS militants, according to Bandow.

Moreover, agreeing to assist the U.S. against ISIS, Erdogan appears to have played Washington into directing most of Turkey's fire against U.S.'s Kurdish allies. But the Turkish military shooting down the Russian warplane proves that Ankara is even more irresponsible, according to the author.

Since Turkey was obviously aware that the Russian fighter jet was not planning to attack Turkish forces, it downed the warplane to either punish Russia for opposing Ankara's objectives or to deter the Kremlin from taking further action, the author argues.

Russia is better ally for U.S. than Turkey

The incident, which has already been called the most dangerous military encounter between NATO and Russia's armed forces in over 50 years, heightened tensions not only with Turkey, but also NATO, and in particular – the U.S.

“Striking nuclear-armed Russia for an alleged overflight lasting just a few seconds appears to be seeking war,” the analyst noted. “The U.S. should shun Ankara for playing chicken with Moscow.”

Bandowa goes as far as saying that Russia is “a better and more reliable partner” than Turkey for the U.S. in the Middle East, even though Russian President “Vladimir Putin is a nasty character.”

Under the presidency of Putin, Russia is acting like a typical great power, which feels the need to protect security and win respect. “He has created an ugly autocracy at home, suppressing the civil liberties and political freedoms Americans and Europeans value,” according to the author.

Russia is friendlier and less dangerous than Turkey

However, Bandowa argues that Erdogan is no different from Putin, since he profits from abusing presidential power, jailing journalists, seizing media companies and causing conflicts for political gain.

But Russia and U.S. interests in the Middle East “broadly coincide,” according to Bandow. Even though it is unclear why the U.S. feels such a desperate need to remove Assad from power – whom even Secretary of State Hillary Clinton once described as a “reformer” – cooperating with Moscow against ISIS and other radical terrorists in the Middle East does not even require U.S. President Barack Obama to be best friends with Putin or to create a formal alliance for that matter.

“Rather, such a policy would be simply transactional, with the two governments working together where and when doing so serves both nations’ interests,” the author writes. “That’s more than occurs with Turkey today. It is difficult for the U.S. to articulate a single genuine shared interest with Ankara.”

With Putin calling the Turkey’s move to shoot down the Russian fighter jet “a stab in the back by the terrorists’ accomplices,” the U.S. should abandon “outdated alliances” and stop covering for “the terrorists’ accomplices,” most importantly Turkey, the author notes, adding that Russia may not be an ally, but at least it is much friendlier and less dangerous than Turkey today.