

# Obama's Meeting with Erdogan: 'Minor Uptick' in U.S.-Turkey Relations

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**Their first post-coup meeting was one of the few positive bilateral developments in quite some time, so Washington should try to build on it.**

**T**he *Cipher Brief's* Mackenzie Weinger spoke with Soner Cagaptay, the Beyer Family Fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute, to get his take on President Obama's weekend meeting with President Erdogan, the current state of bilateral relations, and what is happening with Turkey's efforts on the ground in Syria.

**The Cipher Brief:** Obama met with Erdogan this weekend for the first time since the failed coup attempt. How would you assess their meeting? What kind of significance is there in Obama's seeming goal to try to smooth over relations with Turkey by not bringing up the crackdown, instead vowing to give his full support to Erdogan and help bring the plotters of the coup to justice?

**Cagaptay:** Look at Erdogan's body language compared to when he met Biden -- he was a little bit more reserved with Biden. I think the meeting worked. It is what Erdogan wanted -- basically, tender loving care from President Obama, which he had not gotten a lot of lately.

And they had disagreements going back before the failed coup plot, from Erdogan's democratic transgressions to Turkey's Syria policy. But Erdogan views the coup as an attack not only on himself, but on Turkey's constitutional order, as well as its parliament and its people. The coup plotters not only tried to assassinate Erdogan, unsuccessfully, but also bombed the country's parliament and the capital. So it was a rather traumatic event, and I think the fact that the first head of state after the coup plot to call in and to wish him well was [Russian President] Vladimir Putin did not go unnoticed. This building Turkish-Russian rapprochement, which had already started before the failed coup plot, basically accelerated the process.

I think Erdogan really wanted to have this meeting with Obama. During the meeting and later on, the president

spoke only about his support for Turkey and did not mention, to the dismay of some of Erdogan's critics, mass arrests in Turkey following the coup plot. I think it was received well by Erdogan. And of course, and again not surprising, the Jarabulus offensive, which is something on which the U.S. and Turkey had been working together to plan now for years, has finally come to fruition. Finally, ISIS does not border NATO ally Turkey.

All of that is good news. So it's a minor uptick in the relationship, but there has not been an uptick in the relationship for a very long time, so it's a very significant one...

**Read the full version of this interview on the Cipher Brief website.**

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