

# Turkey's Troubling Turn: Terrorism and Security After the Attempted Coup

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Jul 19, 2016

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**Erdogan may appear victorious today, but he cannot hold onto power in the long run if the country's internal security falls prey to rampant domestic extremism.**

**B**efore the failed military coup on July 15, Turkey was struggling to recover from a bombing and shoot-out that killed 45 people at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport on June 28. Although the attempted takeover complicates the country's crackdown on terrorism, its security problems began long before this summer's turmoil. The three jihadists who planned the attack had been in Turkey for quite some time, having traveled over 750 miles from Syria, rented an apartment in Istanbul, and then assembled bombs for a month. They did so without raising alarm for a simple reason: Turkey itself is radicalizing and the jihadists blended in.

Much of Turkey's religious turn has to do with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the most powerful democratically elected leader in Turkey's history. In Erdogan's Turkey, the politics of religion has seeped into all walks of life, and education has been one of the most tragic examples of this trend. Secular education, one of Ataturk's key policies, is all but gone. In December 2014, Turkey's Higher Education Council, a government-regulated body, issued a policy recommendation suggesting that mandatory courses on Sunni Islam be taught in publicly-funded schools to all students, even ones as young as six. This policy was eventually implemented and as a result, Turkey's public education system can no longer be considered secular. Kindergarten-age students from other faiths, no-faith, or non-practicing families are forced to take courses on Sunni Islam in publicly-funded schools.

Erdogan's policies are all the harder to swallow given the public support he receives from extremist elements and emboldened vigilantes. During the month of Ramadan, these groups violently attacked citizens who chose not to fast and targeted establishments that served alcohol. These are both unusual and disturbing developments in

Turkey, which hitherto has been known for its liberal interpretation of Islam...

Read the full article on the Foreign Affairs website. (<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2016-07-19/turkeys-troubling-turn>) ❖

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