

LIX. Turkey's Attitude in the Present Geopolitical Juncture

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1. General geopolitical framework

The Turkish political leadership of Davutoğlu-Erdoğan (in this hierarchical order) is fully aware of the gradual erosion of Turkey's strategic value for the West in general and for NATO specifically. This erosion is attributed to geophysical factors, i.e. the melting of ice along the Northeastern Passage (Bering Strait). This geophysical development shall allow in a few years Russia's approach to the strategic points of the Pacific Ocean in a timeframe that shall be three times faster in comparison to the US.

This fact is expected to undermine in due time the strategic importance of Turkey as a containment factor (along with Greece) of Russian expansion into the warm waters of the Mediterranean. It also reduces significantly the overall strategic role of NATO's Southeastern Wing, a role which is promoted under the moral-ideological cover of 'Greek-Turkish friendship'. This 'Greek-Turkish friendship' is continually challenged by Ankara in the Aegean Sea and in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Cyprus. We should also note that 38% of the territory of Cyprus Republic, a member-state of the European Union, is still under Turkish occupation.

2. Adopted Turkish geostrategic view: concerning the international community

Therefore, the Islamist government of Ankara attempts to regain its lost strategic role for the West and for the international system in general, through two ways:

1) hoping to become a European-Middleeastern hub for the transportation of hydrocarbons, thereby influencing energy transit routes. Through this influence Turkey attempts to draw constant benefits concerning energy supplies and also to extract Western support of every kind in crucial matters of internal security (Kurdish issue, anti-Islamist and anti-governmental protests).

2) hoping to enhance its power projection on the whole area that once formed the Ottoman Empire (Neo-ottomanist doctrine).

This dominant cultural area, which is deemed necessary for the fulfillment of the two aforementioned strategic goals of Ankara, is inter-related to the following strategic planning, which in turn is naïve, ideologically ambiguous and dangerous for international security:

i) the creation of an axis linking Turkey and the Balkans (reaching the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea)

ii) the creation of an axis linking Turkey and Central Asia (Azerbaijan serving as its territorial springboard)

iii) the creation of an axis linking Turkey and the Middle East (the central axis being the river system of Tiger and Euphrates and also the Gaza Strip-Cyprus complex, after the complete ‘Turkification’ of the island)

The third axis requires the founding of a Palestinian state, which shall be strategically aligned with Ankara and subsequently it also requires the obliteration of Israeli influence in the sea region (EEZ) that lies off the Gaza Strip. Through such a plan Ankara attempts to obliterate Israel’s sea strategic depth towards the Mediterranean, thereby reducing Israel into a state surrounded by Islamic forces/actors. The Islamist government of Ankara therefore views the foundation of a Turkish-Palestinian-Cypriot strategic triangle as offering i) the moral foundation to exert influence in the Arab-Muslim world and ii) the sub-

stitution by Ankara of the dominant role once occupied by the USSR in this region. In this way Ankara thinks that it will be able to exert pressure on Israel and through this pressure to blackmail each American administration towards ceding significant benefits.

2.1 The disruption of Israeli-Turkish relations as a result of Turkey's Neo-Ottoman doctrine

Turkey's strategic goals have been already understood and accordingly evaluated by Jerusalem through a series of events: the attack made by Erdoğan against President Perez in Davos (29 January 2009), the exclusion of Israel from the joint military exercise Anatolian Eagle (11 October 2009), the incident of Mavi Marmara, which was organized by the Turkish government (31 May 2010) etc. These events have undermined Turkey's credibility vis-à-vis Jerusalem and also in the general framework of Euro-Atlantic power equilibrium. The erosion of Turkish credibility was manifested in the fact that the talks between Israel and Hamas to cease hostilities and Operation Pillar of Cloud (14 November-21 November 2012) were made possible through the intervention of Morsi's Egyptian government and not through Turkish intervention, despite Turkey's arduous wish to do so.

The Islamist government of Ankara upheld the tension between the two countries resorting to anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic actions. These actions were indicative of Turkey's attempt to isolate and exclude Israel i) from the issue of the foundation of a Kurdish state in the northern region of Iraq and ii) from the economic investment in the oilfields of Mosul and Kirkuk, which Turkey wishes to control solely.

This same method of operation is used by Ankara in the EEZ of Cyprus Republic. Turkey promotes its alleged contribution to combating the Islamists of ISIS and by actually blackmailing the US and the EU, Turkey invades against all international law in the sea region of the Cypriot EEZ in an attempt to usurp the Cypriot hydrocarbon deposits. The Cypriot deposits are related with European, Korean, Israeli and American companies. This blackmail is unacceptable by Jerusalem and Washington and is in complete disagreement with European and inter-

national law. Should Turkish demands be accepted and satisfied, there would be no concrete gain for the involved states. Moreover that would cause great problems in international law, creating the precedent for negative interactions in an international level.

Turkish strategic planning, as described above in point (i) is contrary to the rights of peoples to self-government and also to Israel's geostrategic needs for a land strategic depth and its self-sufficiency regarding security and the prospect of its long-term survival.

Israel's geostrategic needs include a) the foundation of an 'allied Kurdistan', b) which shall not be controlled by Islamist anti-Semitic powers and c) which could function as a strategic buffer zone for Israel. Turkish-Islamic planning concerning point (ii) is in stark contrast with all international economic and strategic interests.

3. Adopted Turkish geostrategic view: concerning internal administration

In order to fulfill the aforementioned strategic goals the Islamist government of Ankara resorted to totalitarian methods in its internal affairs. After the riots of June 2013 and a research concerning corruption of Erdoğan himself, Erdoğan's son and many government officials, the Islamist government undermined any progress that had been made concerning the rule of law in Turkey. President Erdoğan actually demolished the democratic principle of the separation of powers thereby undermining the very foundation of a civic, pluralist European-type democracy.

Erdoğan rightly understood that Turkey's involvement in the attempt of the US, England, France and Italy to overthrow the totalitarian regime of President Assad would not meet with reaction. By now the strategic landscape has changed, as Assad is not a primary target of the West and Iran is cooperating through talks with the West concerning its own contribution to dealing with the dangerous prospective of a destabilization spreading throughout the whole of Middle East.

Still, Turkey continues to advance its Neo-Ottoman ideas by using secretly the 'Islamist dimension' of the supposed 'Caliphate'. It is com-

mon knowledge that Turkey has adopted an extremely dangerous and rather ambiguous stance concerning its obligations towards the US and its Western allies. In the case of the French Republic, Turkey does not hesitate to export to this country acknowledged jihadists of ISIS.

Ankara's actions concerning the fight against ISIS are of a completely negative nature. There are many Western analysts who characterize Turkey's attitude in this matter as one worthy of condemnation. There is also a growing consensus among many analysts that Turkey's membership in NATO should be re-examined along with its candidacy as a future member-state of the European Union.