

Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007*

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ABSTRACT

Turkey's foreign policy needs a new orientation in the light of the new regional and global developments. As a major country in the midst of the Afro-Eurasia landmass, Turkey is a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one, unified category. In terms of its sphere of influence, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea country all at the same time. Turkey should appropriate a new position in its region by providing security and stability not only for itself but also for its neighbors and the region. Turkey's engagements from Africa to Central Asia and from EU to OIC are parts of new foreign policy vision. Domestically, Turkey needs to deepen and enrich its democracy, accommodate the differences within its society, and strengthen the coordination and balance among its institutions in 2008 and the years that follow. These initiatives will make Turkey a global actor as we approach 2023, the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

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If a map of the complex web of global relations during the Cold War had been drawn, Turkey would have been considered a frontier country. As part of the Western block, it was a means of control in the South among the Western powers extending to the East and at the edge of the West. It was institutionally in the West, and was considered the most important country in NATO; it still preserves this position. After the end of Cold War in the early 1990s, a new notion of Turkey emerged as a bridge country. As many new problems emerged in the post-Cold War era, among them the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the crises in the Balkans, Turkey's main objective became the protection of its own stability. Turkey maintained its stability amid the chaos that engulfed many of its near neighbors, and the international community began to look to Turkey as an island of stability and a bridge country between east and west.

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Turkey's diverse regional composition lends it the capability of maneuvering in several regions simultaneously

Today, in the new era marked by the aftermath of September 11th, an accurate redefinition of Turkey's position is urgently needed. Turkey's new position has both an ideational and a geographical basis. In terms of geography, Turkey

occupies a unique space. As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia's vast landmass, it may be defined as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character. Like Russia, Germany, Iran, and Egypt, Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region. Turkey's diverse regional composition lends it the capability of maneuvering in several regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environs.

There are continental countries such as the United States and Australia. Countries in this category, which are continents themselves in some cases, are located away from Afro-Eurasian heartland. One may include even Europe, India and China in this category. In territorial terms, they are geographically big enough so that they are not defined by reference to an external geographical region. They are self-sufficient in many respects and have developed distinct cultures of their own. Another cluster of countries could be considered island countries such as Japan and the United Kingdom. Situated at the edges of a continent, they maintain special relations with the continental powers. Peripheral countries constitute a distinct category in that they belong to a region and could be defined by the characteristics of that region.

Among all these classifications, Turkey holds a special position. Turkey's geography gives it a specific central country status, which differs from other central countries. For example, Germany is a central country in Central Europe, which is far from Asia and Africa. Russia is another central country in the lands of Europe and Asia, which is far from Africa. Iran is a central country in Asia, which is far from Europe and Africa. Taking a broader, global view, Turkey holds an optimal place in the sense that it is both an Asian and European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean. A central country with such an optimal geographic location can not define itself in a defensive manner. It should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points, nor a frontier country, nor indeed as an ordinary country, which sits at the edge of the Muslim world or the West.

Just as geography, history, too, may come to constitute a country as a central country. Some countries play the central

country role in their region as a reflection of their cultural and historical heritage. For instance, Russia has a peculiar position of being a center of attraction because of its historical role. Germany has played such a role since the Roman-Germanic Empire. Turkey historically has been one of such centers of attraction. It was for this reason that when Turkey embarked on a successful nation-building process in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire, it gained population dynamism through immigration from neighboring regions. The effects of having diverse Caucasian, Balkan, Middle Eastern, Iraqi Turcoman and Anatolian elements, even in small groups, are seen in everyday life in today's Turkey, where diverse cultural elements meet under the umbrella of the Turkish state. Turkey's geography harmonizes these elements. Turkey occupies a center of attraction in its region; its cultural capital, Istanbul, spans two continents and is at once a Middle Eastern, Black Sea and a Mediterranean city. In terms of its area of influence, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea country. Given this picture, Turkey should make its role of a peripheral country part of its past, and appropriate a new position: one of providing security and stability not only for itself, but also for its neighboring regions. Turkey should guarantee its own security and stability by taking on a more active, constructive role to provide order, stability and security in its environs.

Turkey's geography gives it a specific central country status

Principles of Turkey's New Foreign Policy

Since the year 2002, Turkey has begun to structure its policies on the basis of this new vision, keeping in mind well-defined targets, and looking to benefit from its geographical position and historical assets. Five principles of Turkey's foreign policy making process need to be mentioned here. First, if there is not a balance between security and democracy in a country, it may not have a chance to establish an area of influence in its environs. The legitimacy of any political regime comes from its ability to provide security to its citizens; this security should not be at the expense of freedoms and human rights in the country. Administrations that substantially restrict liberties in order to provide security are or soon become authoritarian regimes. Since 2002, Turkey has maintained a position of promoting civil liberties without undermining security. This is an ambitious yet worthy aim, particularly in the post-September 11 environment, under the threat of terrorism, in which the general tendency has been to restrict liberties for the sake of

security. Turkey has protected civil liberties under all conditions, despite a serious challenge to it in 2007. The challenge was to carry out the struggle against terror without narrowing the sphere of liberties. Turkey successfully overcame this challenge. In the fall of 2007, the Turkish military pursued a military operation against terrorist formations in Iraq for several weeks, with no negative impact on liberties in İstanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakır, or Van. Normal life continues, even while Turkey wages a war against terror. This successful balance is a matter of political culture. Turkish authorities did not declare state of emergency, elections were not postponed, and the election results did not influence the process in a negative way. These results support the notion that Turkey's most important soft power is its democracy. The election resulted in a parliament that fostered the struggle against terror. Despite concerns in early 2007, this experience demonstrated that the balance between democracy and security is settled in Turkey.

Second, a "zero problem policy toward Turkey's neighbors" has been successfully implemented for the past four years. Turkey's relations with its neighbors now follow the right track in comparison to previous years. The most striking examples of Turkey's success in the region are its relations with Syria and Georgia. There is an intense economic interdependence with these countries. In contrast to that of 5-10 years ago, Turkey's level of relations with Syria today stands as a model of progress for the rest of the region. It is the same with Georgia. Developments such as the use of Batum airport as a domestic airport, and the growth of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, which were furthered without creating any fear of imperial expansion, are exemplary. The economies of Syria and Turkey are now integrated as a result of a free trade agreement. In addition, after Bulgaria's entry into the EU, Turkey's relations with this country further improved in a striking way. Turkish-Iranian relations did not face difficulties during this sensitive period, and the Solana-Larijani talk in Turkey created a meaningful channel for discussion of the nuclear issue. All of these achievements indicate that Turkey has developed a substantial trust in its relations with its neighbors.

The Iraqi challenge in 2007 sparked fears that the crisis would have a negative impact on Turkey's relations with the rest of its neighbors. Turkey has so far been successful in tackling Iraq-related risks. The PKK had aimed to create a wave of terror in order to bring Turkey face to face with Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq, and to instigate conflict between Turkey and the Iraqi central administration, the Arab world, and if possible with the whole Middle East and the United States. If Turkey had not responded with fine-tuned diplomacy and correct tim-

ing, a crisis with the Iraqi government would surely have ensued. Instead, Turkey's operations against the PKK continued for more than a month and the Iraqi government responded reasonably with an understanding that the PKK is a common enemy. This outcome demonstrates how two neighboring countries can cooperate against a common threat.

Turkey should guarantee its own security and stability by taking on a more active, constructive role to provide order, stability and security in its environs

The third principle is to develop relations with the neighboring regions and beyond. Turkey's regional impact extends to the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey became active in the Balkans, in particular, due to the Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina crises. Providing infrastructure for this active policy were Turkey's relations with NATO, the European Union, and the West in general. Turkey also enjoys close relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Caucasus. To date, however, there have been only limited possibilities for Turkey to extend its influence to the Middle East. The PKK factor, as well as the existence of mutual negative images on both sides, have been a stumbling block in the form of a mutual psychological barrier. Nevertheless, thanks to our efforts in the last five years, we have helped to overcome some of these barriers. Now, whatever may happen in the Middle East, Turkey has channels to follow these developments immediately. Despite its limitations, Turkey does have influence in Middle Eastern affairs, and not only at the state level but also at the societal level. For example, during the recent Lebanon crisis, Prime Minister Erdoğan talked on the phone with Nebih Berri and Saad Hariri, as well as with Siniora and Hezbollah. In 2004, then Foreign Minister Gül's visit to Lebanon was the first foreign ministerial visit to Lebanon for the past 25 years. Turkey has since become one of the most active countries in Lebanon recently, providing it with a firm diplomatic base. In this sense, Turkey's influence in the region has increased.

As a second example of such progress, in early 2007, a Sunni-Shia division occurred due to tensions between Shia and Sunni groups in Iraq. Turkey assumed an active role in seeking to bridge this divide and maintained a balanced policy toward both sides. Pakistan's President Musharraf organized a seven country meeting in Pakistan, which was perceived as an attempt against Iran. Turkey joined this group, but did not sever its relations with Shia groups in Iraq, the Iraqi government, or with Iran. Turkey thus involved itself, but did not take sides in this dangerous division. If one remembers the visits of Prime Minister Erdoğan to Iran,

Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia in December 2006, and his speech at the Arab League in 2007, it becomes clear that Turkish policy is to remain outside the Shia-Sunni division. At the same time, Turkey does not follow a passive line; rather, it pursues an active policy in regard to this tension in the region. This policy has helped Turkey to develop good relations with the Shia-backed Maliki government in Iraq. Moreover, Turkey has also developed good relations with the Sunni opposition in the region. Likewise, Turkey is close to both the Sunni establishment and the Shia opposition in Lebanon.

The fourth principle is adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy. Turkey's relations with other global actors aim to be complementary, not in competition. Such a policy views Turkey's strategic relations with the United States through the two countries' bilateral ties and through NATO, and considers its membership process to the EU, its good neighborhood policy with Russia, and its synchronization policy in Eurasia as integral parts of a consistent policy that serves to complete each other. Turkey's multi-dimensional foreign policy has been firmly established for the past 4-5 years, and has been largely successful. The most significant threat to this policy came when the relations with the United States were expected to collapse in 2007. A serious problem with the United States seemed imminent, due to the developments concerning the Armenian resolution and the Iraqi situation. Nevertheless, by the end of 2007, Turkish-American relations had evolved such that both sides emerged with a better understanding of each other; channels of communication continue to remain open on both sides. In regard to the EU, although the integration process slowed down, a serious deadlock was avoided and the process was not suspended. And although relations with France seemed to have problems after the French elections, the expected crisis was managed in a pragmatic manner. Overall, the relations with the EU did not progress to an extent that we would like to see, but the relationship has continued, let alone being suspended, as many feared. Also, an institutionalized pattern of relations with Russia emerged.

The fifth principle in this framework is rhythmic diplomacy. Turkey's serious and sustained development in the field of diplomacy becomes evident if we look at the international meetings and organizations it has hosted since 2003. The NATO Summit and the OIC Summit are just two examples: clearly Turkey has gained more influence in international organizations. Interesting developments in this regard took place in 2007. For instance, Turkey now has an observer status in the African Union, a natural result of Turkey's opening to Africa in 2005. Turkey has

been invited to the Arab League twice, both at the level of foreign minister and prime minister. Turkey signed a special agreement with the Arab countries during a meeting of Iraq's neighbors held in Istanbul on November 2 2007. This agreement includes the plans for institutionalizing the relations among Iraq's neighbors, and constituting a Turkish-Arab forum. As this line of important meetings continued, a meeting bringing together the least developed 50 countries convened in Istanbul in July. On a different note, Solana and Larijani met in Turkey to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue. Similarly, the only functional channel between Pakistan and Afghanistan was created by the initiatives of Mr. Gül; later, with the initiatives of Turkey's President and Prime Minister, Pakistani President Musharraf and Afghan President Karzai met in Turkey in May. This dialogue will continue after Pakistan has resolved its current instability. Similarly, the Palestinian and Israeli Presidents Mahmoud Abbas and Shimon Peres came together in Ankara before going to the Annapolis meeting in the US.

If there is not a balance between security and democracy in a country, it may not have a chance to establish an area of influence in its environs

Turkish foreign policy anticipates a continuation of this pace with reliance on the successful strategy of rhythmic diplomacy. It is important to recognize the change in Turkey's image brought about by its intense diplomatic activities from 2002 to 2007. Turkey now enjoys an image as a responsible state which provides order and security to the region, one that prioritizes democracy and liberties, while dealing competently with security problems at home. Turkey's aim is to intervene consistently in global issues using international platforms, which signifies a transformation for Turkey from a central country to a global power. It should also be underlined that this transformation is the result of the performance of all actors involved in foreign policy. Turkey's success is not only the result of state policies, but also the activities of civil society, business organizations, and numerous other organizations, all operating under the guidance of the new vision. The state's macro strategy is in conformity with the micro strategies of individual people, corporations, and civil society organizations. To list just a few examples, one of Turkey's business confederations, TUSKON (Confederation of Businessman and Industrialists of Turkiye), organizes the Africa Summit in conformity with the Africa policy and brings high numbers of African ministers to Turkey. TUSIAD (The Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) pursues lobby activities to facilitate Turkey's entry into the EU. MUSIAD (The Independent

Turkey's most important soft power is its democracy

together leading players in global economy and finance. And there are many other civil society organizations whose activities further Turkey's international aspirations, like those that reached out to the devastated areas after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan and the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Turkish civil society organizations form an integral part of the bigger picture defined as foreign policy. All of these elements have become part of Turkey's new international vision.

Industrialists and Businessman's Association) is actively involved in organizing business events in the Gulf, bringing

Iraq Policy

Turkey has been one of the most influential actors involved in solving the question of Iraq's future, during and after the invasion of Iraq. The meetings of the Extended Neighboring Countries of Iraq have made a serious contribution to the Iraqi question in the international arena. Turkey's efforts have not only helped to establish the legitimacy of the Iraqi government, but also paved way for Iraq to be not solely an American but an international issue to be dealt with within the framework of the United Nations. This 'neighboring countries' process was initiated by Turkey. Due to the presidential election in the Turkish agenda, the first meeting for bringing together the expanded neighboring countries of Iraq was convened in Sharm al-Sheikh at the beginning of May 2007. The second meeting was convened in Istanbul in early November of the same year. These two meetings defined a common international attitude toward Iraq. Replacing speculative scenarios about Iraq's fragmentation, these meetings have also provided the international community with a way to commit itself to the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq.

Today, it is important for Turkey to further establish its position in the Middle East. This position must rest on four main principles. First of all, security for everyone, not only for this group or that group, this country or that country, but common security for the entire region. Second, priority must be given to dialogue as a means of solving crises. Here Turkey's role as a facilitator is already well-established. After all, why are Turkey's prime minister, president, and minister of foreign affairs paying continuous visits to the Middle East? Because they are the only leaders who can contact all Middle Eastern leaders. If, for instance, there were no diplomatic relationship between two powerful countries such as Iran and Egypt, and if their leaders did not meet, there would be little possibility for establishing order in the Middle East. Would it be possible to establish order in Europe

if France and Britain did not have any relations? In such a case, a country like Germany or another important third actor would have to intervene and set up channels for political dialogue, just as Turkey has done and continues to do in the Middle East. Turkey has undertaken many positive promoter roles among Middle Eastern states in recent years, some of which have been visible and some invisible to the public eye. Those countries have found every confidence in Turkey. Today, Turkey and its diplomatic means have proven to be the strongest and most reliable channels, not only between states, but also between communities and non-state actors. All parties acknowledge this. When a message or a concern has to be delivered from one place to another, Turkish channels are utilized.

Turkey's regional impact extends to the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia

The third principle is economic interdependence. Order in the Middle East cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of isolated economies. This holds true for Iraq, Syria, and others. The fourth principle is cultural coexistence and plurality. Historically, none of the Middle Eastern cities have been composed of a homogenous ethnic and sectarian fabric. Neither Basra, nor Damascus, İstanbul or Kirkuk is a homogenous city. Therefore, in order to establish order in the Middle East, it is essential to maintain this composition in one way or another.

The fourth principle of cultural coexistence and plurality is especially important for Iraq's future. As ethnic disputes continue in the region, the international community can take on an advisory role in establishing a multi-cultural and viable Iraqi government. Several of Iraq's neighbors have already weighed in on Iraq's future. As an important actor in Iraq, Iran prefers an undivided Iraq that is governed by Shiite dominance. As an equally important actor, Turkey also prefers Iraq to be undivided, to sustain its balancing role, and not to fall into chaos as a result of successive surges of instability that would destroy its borders. Jordan considers possible individual states that would emerge out of an Iraqi disintegration to be a major threat. Saudi Arabia sees a potential Shiite state that would emerge out of a fragmented Iraq as an arm stretching right towards the Gulf. Syria believes that Iraqi disintegration would constitute a heavy blow to Arab nationalism. In Iraq itself, there are no parties that would benefit from disintegration. When all these concerns are gathered together, even if the neighboring countries do not seem to be able to establish a common ground in a positive and constructive way, they share a common attitude towards the potentially dangerous consequences

Turkey's multi-dimensional foreign policy has been firmly established for the past 4-5 years

of the disintegration of Iraq. Through its Neighboring Countries initiative, Turkey has kept the ground for constructive dialogue between Iraq and its neighbors afloat since 2003.

Unfortunately there is, at present, no political mechanism that would guarantee a working political system in Iraq. Turkey's efforts to integrate the Sunni community into the system are well recognized. Beyond that, Turkey maintains close contacts even with the smallest groups in Iraqi society. According to what has been observed through these channels until now, these groups remain unable to compromise on a mutual agreement that would hold the political system in good working order. Nevertheless, each of these groups is fully aware that they would suffer from Iraq's disintegration. Today, looking from this perspective (as opposed to that of disintegration scenarios that had consistently risen to the agenda in 2005 and 2006) efforts to centralize Iraq these days focus not on the best possible structure, but on the most optimal structure. Turkey's influence on the fragmented groups within Iraqi society, its efforts to bring together Iraq's neighbors around a common platform, its persuasive diplomacy over the USA, and its principled relationship with the Iraqi government have all played an unprecedented role in these efforts.

In 2007, Turkey's primary concerns over Iraq concentrated on two issues: first, the rising PKK terror in the region and the likelihood of Northern Iraq becoming its breeding ground; and secondly, the Iraqi constitution's Article 140 which had set the deadline for the referendum in Kirkuk to be held by December of 2007. For Turkey, the risks in 2007 involved the referendum in Kirkuk and the possibility of a backlash of internal conflict, particularly the emergence of a security risk.

Given this context, it was crucial for Turkey to break down this plot in the making. In light of the political use of the PKK, Turkey had a clear course of action: building an international and Iraqi coalition and a common stance against the PKK, and attempting to find a solution that will be acceptable to different ethnic and sectarian groups in Kirkuk. Today, as was the case by late 2007, it can be easily said that Turkey has achieved its aims. Moreover, it has become clear that soft power and military power must be employed in coherence. If these forms of power are not managed together, even the most successful operation would bring about damaging results. As a matter of fact, the ascendance of violence during 2006-2007 and its prolongation until October 2007 had a pretty clear target:

Kirkuk's rise to the agenda. The apparent plan was to set Turkey initially against the communities in Northern Iraq, and then against the Iraqi government, and finally against the Arab World and America, thus ensuring Turkey's isolation. Turkey's ensuing diplomacy to counter this scheme has been the following. On the one hand, Turkey legitimized hard power through parliamentary resolution. On the other hand, Turkey hosted almost all of the regional leaders between September and December, following the presidential nomination. When the resolution was approved in parliament, the Syrian President visited Turkey and gave his full support to Turkey's possible operations against the PKK. Following the approval, Turkey engaged in intensive contacts with the Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian and Saudi Arabian heads of state, and their supports were secured.

Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Iraq also deepened. Iraqi president Maliki visited Turkey two times and had phone conversations with the Turkish Prime Minister many times. At the beginning of 2007, the two shared a normal level of trust; by the end of 2007, their relationship had developed into full-fledged confidence. Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan took trips all over the region; he became the first Turkish Foreign Minister to visit Baghdad. The Prime Minister's contacts should also be situated at the center of these efforts.

Against the tactics used by the PKK and other forces behind them, Turkey has gradually drawn the Iraqi government, regional actors, the United States, the European Union and Sunni-Shiite and Syriac communities in Iraq closer to itself. Turkey is in contact with all these groups. In sharp contrast to its initial plans of isolating Turkey, the PKK has become the party being isolated. This reversal demonstrates how diplomacy, soft power, and hard power can be reconciled in the best and most consistent manner possible. Owing to the correct timing of diplomacy and military strategy, there was no piece in the Arab or Western media that disfavored Turkey. Moreover, no state or international organization confronted Turkey in an open way. Compared to Turkey's bitter experience in the 1990s, when its military actions came under heavy international criticism, the recent developments indicate a remarkable success on Turkey's part. Turkey's success in this matter, however, was not achieved instantly. Turkey's total performance was based on a variety of different efforts, on different levels, all shaped by its new vision. If this had not been the case, and Turkey had adopted a less cohesive strategy, the Syrian president would not have chosen the day of the parliamentary resolution for his visit to Turkey, nor would he have declared his support for the approval of the resolution while he was in Turkey. The U.S. President would have adopted a

more critical attitude toward Turkey. In reality, due to the effectiveness of Turkey's efforts, everyone has come to understand that losing Turkey would be more costly than loosing the PKK.

Relations with the United States

Turkish-American relations has a solid geopolitical foundation, a strong historic background and an institutionalized framework. From geopolitical perspective, it carries almost all characteristics of a relationship between a continental superpower and a central country having the most optimal geopolitical position in Afro-Euroasia. Being a continental power located far from Afro-Eurasia landmass which contains 80-85% of the global population, with its major energy resources, cultural fortunes, and trade routes and being a superpower in the international system are the fundamental dialectic of American foreign policy. A superpower as such can only retain its status by means of alliances within the Afro-Eurasian continent. For this reason, since the period of Mahan in 1905, there have been two major components of the US strategy. First, maintaining an effective naval force. Second, implementing regional strategies based on system of alliances such as the Cold War era's containment policy, which makes central countries of Afro-Euroasia, such as Turkey, vital actors of American strategy. Turkey, as a middle-size central country, on the other hand, needs the strategic weight of a continental superpower within the parameters of the internal balances of power of Afro-Euroasia.

The strategic alliance between two countries throughout the Cold War has strengthened historic and institutional dimensions of this geopolitical foundation. There was a need for the re-adjustment of this foundation in post-Cold War era in the 90s due to the radical changes in the international system. When we analyze the flashpoints of world politics and the areas of military confrontation in the post-Cold War era, we can see an intensification in those regions where three basic factors intersect: the geopolitical areas of strategic vacuum, geo-economic transportation routes (including energy transfer), and geo-cultural zones of encounter. The end of bipolarity has created sensitive regions where there is a vacuum of power needed to control the strategic capabilities of the geopolitical core areas as well as the vast resource-production-trade capabilities of the international political economy and ethnic/secterian confrontations. US had to face this challenge as the superpower of the unipolar system while Turkey, as a country at the heart of all these sensitive regions, had to respond to the risks they pose.

The delay in re-adjusting Turkish-American relations in the new dynamic international/regional environment in post-Cold War era made Iraq a critical litmus test for this strategic relation because all of these three factors were directly relevant. The war in Iraq was necessary for American strategists to reframe regional and global order after 9/11. Such a war, on the other hand, was a source of great risks for Turkey from the perspective of all the three factors. The negotiations before the Turkish Parliament's rejection of the March 1st motion in 2003 and the developments that followed created mutual hesitations. These hesitations were not only in the minds of Americans but also in the minds of Turkish policy makers who had serious concerns regarding the post-War conditions in Iraq due to the ambiguity of the American plans. The rise of the consolidation and activities of the PKK terror in northern Iraq after the Iraqi invasion has also increased these concerns.

The period between March 1st of 2003 and November 5th of 2007 was not a sudden leap but a process. Both sides have reached certain conclusions in the process. First of all, the Iraqi territorial integrity and political unity is essential for the national, regional and global interests of both sides, and common efforts are needed in this direction. The rising threat of PKK to the stability of Turkey and Iraq, increasing Turkish role in the reconciliation process in Iraq especially through the political integration of the Sunni Arab elements, the significance of the regional engagement in Iraq through the process of neighboring countries meetings, the interdependency between the situation in Iraq and the regional balance of power proved the necessity of a joint approach. Secondly, there is a wide scope of common strategic issues which should not be overshadowed by the disagreements on individual concerns regarding Iraqi policy, such as stability in the Middle East, Balkans, Caucasia and Central Asia, energy security, enlargement of NATO, and fighting against terrorism. The transformation in the Balkans and the role of NATO presence in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the completion of Baku-Tiblisi-Ceyhan energy project in 2006 and other joint energy projects, the increasing role of Turkey in the Middle East issues especially in Lebanon and Palestine have demonstrated the need for a much more institutionalized channel of consultation and cooperation. The fact that President Bush and Prime Minister Erdoğan have consulted on the situation in Darfur in their meeting in October

Turkey now enjoys an image as a responsible state which provides order and security to the region, one that prioritizes democracy and liberties, while dealing competently with security problems at home

2006 indicates the diversification of common agenda. Thirdly, there is a need of new methodology and mechanisms for the readjustment of bilateral strategic relation. The document entitled “Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue to Advance the Turkish-American Strategic Partnership” declared by the then Foreign Minister Gül and Secretary of State Rice in July 2006 reflected these conclusions and priorities of both sides as an attempt of re-adjustment of bilateral relations.

Despite this common ground, 2007 was seen by some circles as a year of risk in the Turkish-American relations at the beginning of the year due to the challenges of PKK terror and Armenian resolution. Rational approaches on both sides regarding these issues, however, did not only prevent a turbulence in bilateral relations, but also prepared the ground for a new era of cooperation based on frank and constructive consultation. In this sense, the Erdoğan-Bush summit in November 2007 became a historic turning point. I regard the amelioration of attitudes and creation of a common ground in Turkish-American relations as a great achievement in 2007, and a step in the right direction for both parties. The psychological ground on which Turkish-American relations is now moving has been reconstituted. In this framework, Turkey is no longer a sole alliance nation whose support is taken for granted, but a significant country with regional and global influence whose strong vision and the proven capacity to make meaningful contributions need to be taken into account by a healthier communication and a cooperative dialogue.

This new understanding is a natural consequence of Turkey’s foreign policy performance. For instance, Turkey’s efforts to integrate the Sunnis into the political process in Iraq have been the most important success story among the many other reconciliatory attempts made in the last five years. In consequence, the United States noticed that Turkey’s unseen soft power cannot be disregarded. No one was expecting this outcome at that time. Over time, it has also been observed in relation to Iraq that Turkey’s Iraqi policy does not depend merely on a bare security reflex, with all the obstacles that would encumber such a stance. On the contrary, Turkey has a constructive attitude towards Iraq. Turkey developed meaningful and rational projects on diverse issues in Iraq including Kirkuk, and shared those with the Iraqi government, Iraqi groups, Americans and neighboring countries. As for the Palestinian question, it is imperative to see and appreciate the picture that Mahmoud Abbas and Shimon Peres exhibited during the Ankara Forum meetings. All these new structures of relationship are products of Turkey’s foreign policy performance. The United States has recently been making a good

assessment of this potential. Against this background, a Turkish-American alliance that relies on a solid geopolitical basis and bears no historical prejudices can be successfully sustained at diplomatic and political levels.

Turkey is now a country that has original thoughts extending from Ankara to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia to Latin America

Energy Security

Turkey is neither a country that has an excess of energy nor a country that produces energy. Thanks to the geographical position Turkey enjoys, part of its national strategy involves facilitating the transit of energy across its territory, which is central to the East-West energy corridor. The most significant oil pipeline project in this regard, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, initially travels to the West and later descends to the south. It connects the trans-Caspian to Turkey and enables Turkish access to Central Asia. Among Turkey's mid-term targets is to link Kazakh oil to this route. Secondly, "Şah Deniz", a natural gas project that will connect the energy routes of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey with Greece, will create a new East-West belt. With the Nabucco gas pipeline project, the Turkish energy corridor stretching from East to West will be expanded.

Turkey's energy agreements with Iran go back to 1996. During the present government's tenure, there has been no retreat from these energy agreements; on the contrary, there have been continual efforts toward improvement. Here all our allies should take into consideration Turkey's unique position. As a growing economy and surrounded by energy resources, Turkey needs Iranian energy as a natural extension of its national interests. Therefore, Turkey's energy agreements with Iran cannot be dependent upon its relationships with other countries.

It is often claimed that energy projects engaging Iran and other neighbors bypass and upset Russia. To the contrary, the route that extends from the Blue Stream in the North and to the Eastern Mediterranean, through Aqaba, and all those routes that descend from the North to the South actually safeguard Russia's interests. With that in mind, it is important to manage the East-West routes in a way that takes the interest of international community into consideration. Looking to the future, another route that is less anticipated but that could become important in the future is a potential South-North route that would carry Arab natural gas through Egypt-Syria-Jordan. Secondly, the most optimum transit corridor for oil and natural gas for Iraqi energy resources would be a route over Ana-

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tolia to the East Mediterranean, Europe or Black Sea. Parallel to this, another potential project to consider seriously in the future is the transit of oil and natural gas from the Gulf to Europe in a South-North direction. Carrying liquefied natural gas (LNG) from a risky region

like the Gulf to the European markets has tremendous risks, especially due to the unstable balance of power in the Gulf.

Turkey's national interest lies in the proper utilization of its geography. Here, what disappoints and surprises us is the EU's inability to grasp this vision. Some Europeans seem to have this thought in mind: the Turkish state and its people are not European but Turkey's geography is freely open to European use. Such logic does not provide a solid ground for managing Turkish-European relations. The fact that the countries most opposed to Turkey's integration into the EU are also those that hold high expectations for these energy projects is a great contradiction.

The EU will comprehend this fact at some point. Turkey is patiently waiting for the EU to appreciate its indispensable position with regard to energy security, cultural politics and transit routes. When they acknowledge Turkey's value in these terms, they will realize that Europe's global power can only be attained through Turkey's full integration into Europe. Turkey shares common interests with Russia, Iran, and the United States for the successful operation of natural gas and oil pipelines that run in various directions through the Turkish territory. Hence, Turkish analysts try to combine all these interests in one single picture. This is a rational calculation, not an ideological account. Turkey's relations with Iran will continue, and efforts will be made to preserve its understanding with Russia, based on mutual interest. As far as cooperation with the United States in the field of energy concerns, the joint projects on the Trans-Caspian as well as strategic approach for energy security in global economy will be maintained in the most effective way.

The European Union and Cyprus

Four processes are crucial for putting Turkey's relations with the EU on the right track. First is Turkey's integration process into the EU. Because this has been a process of modernization and reform for domestic transformation, it is impor-

tant for Turkey to pursue it independently, even if the EU freezes all its relations with Turkey. The Turkish government has shown its will to do this. It declared at the beginning of 2007 that it would do so until 2013. This determination on Turkey's part could not be implemented much in 2007. Why? When this declaration

came to the fore in February, it meant that Turkey will continue to pursue progress in the reform process without becoming discouraged by the suspension of eight chapters because of Cyprus question. After making this declaration of its strong will to move forward along the road of accession, however, Turkey became entangled in domestic political issues. The year was marked by presidential elections, parliamentary elections, and a surge of PKK terror. In spite of these events, the reform process did not stop and some progress was made. International attention turned to Turkey, as many expected a crisis in April and May. The 'sick man' image again rose to the fore. In Europe, Turkey's critics considered the situation as strengthening their hands. They were not expecting Turkey to overcome the crisis so easily. Yet Turkey's successful handling of the crisis ultimately served only to increase trust in Turkey; even the French elections could not have a negative impact on this confidence. It is now time for Turkey to acknowledge its success in this matter and to step forward in its revision of the constitution. This and other reforms should be realized independently of the voices in Europe.

Turkey is patiently waiting for the EU to appreciate its indispensable position with regard to energy security, cultural politics and transit routes

The second process involves a technical dimension, namely relations with the EU Commission. Turkey has not had a serious problem with the Commission since November 2005. On a technical level, the opening of negotiation chapters and the following of this process was successful. Six chapters are opened, one is closed and two are waiting. Education and culture is one of them. The technical process is going smoothly since the Commission's behavior is based on objective criteria. Turkey's real problem is the political negotiations at the level of the European Council, which constitute the third necessary process. Whatever steps Turkey takes toward improving its record, some actors would continue to set obstacles before Turkey, which will slow down the process. They consider the political process as an opportunity to exploit for their own benefit.

The fourth process is in the strategic dimension. The integration process and its component reforms are prerequisites. However, a strategic vision is necessary

Turkey shares common interests with Russia, Iran, and the United States for the successful operation of natural gas and oil pipelines that run in various directions through the Turkish territory

to guarantee Turkey's future in Europe. If there is a deficit in this vision, it will not be possible to overcome the resistance of certain countries. During the last EU summit, a play of words led to ambiguity over Turkey's participation, and we were not part of this setting. If Turkey were to respond harshly to the negative developments, as was expected by some circles

in Europe, relations would have been suspended by now. The process continues in a critical way, largely due to developments in Europe, beyond our own control. We have had a paradoxical situation as far as the domestic setting in France and Germany is concerned. During periods when the Turkish-EU relations were on a smooth path, actors critical of Turkey were in power in France and Germany. When Turkey's integration with the EU was going through difficult times, actors close to Turkey dominated the political scene in these countries.

Nevertheless, the trauma expected to affect Turkish-EU relations after French elections did not materialize. This is due to the fact that a dialogue channel was established between the leaders of the two countries. This diplomatic channel of dialogue remains open and provides continuous contact between Turkey and France. Turkey made clear to the French administration that their approach of seeking good bilateral relations and cooperation in regional affairs while setting obstacles to Turkey on the European level is not acceptable. Turkey's policy has three components in regard to relations not only with France but also with all other European countries. These are bilateral relations, EU-level relations, and regional/global relations. None of them can be compromised at the expense of the other. It is not possible to cooperate with an actor in the Middle East, which is simultaneously pursuing a critical stance toward Turkey at the EU level. Turkey will not allow such a problematic form of relationship to develop in its dealings with France and other countries.

A major reason why the French acted prudently was their appreciation of the weight of democratic process in Turkey. Moreover, they also came to understand that if Turkish-French relations evolved in a positive direction, there would be great potential for cooperation in many areas especially in the Middle East. Turkey is in this geography and will stay here. Countries that wish to have an active role in this geography should take Turkey seriously into consideration with all its weight.

Turkey cannot demand EU membership from a position of waiting outside the door. We need to undertake diplomatic initiatives to prepare the ground and foster the psychological atmosphere to achieve this goal. It is important to take stock of the new situation; the EU has changed the process to a technical and routine one due to the suspension of eight chapters. Nevertheless, the process is continuing between technical teams. The last EU progress report was both appreciative and critical of the current developments in Turkey. Such assessments of the reform process are necessary and it is pointless to oppose them. They indicate what to do and their purpose is to expedite Turkey's smooth progress toward integration.

Strategic vision is necessary to guarantee Turkey's future in Europe

The section of the Progress Report, however, contained a misguided interpretation about Cyprus. No new and comprehensive peace for Cyprus is on the horizon under the current conditions. Greek Cypriots are aware of this situation and they try to strengthen their position within the EU accordingly. Turkey has sought every possible way to explain its just position. One possible way to persuade the EU would be to capitalize on Turkey's increasing strategic weight. A second policy could be to intensify the exchanges of Northern Cyprus with other actors so that it is increasingly integrated to outside world. Indeed, 2007 was a good year for Northern Cyprus, and four openings now present themselves. The first is in the Council of Europe. The second is the opening of trade offices in Gulf countries. The third is the start of mutual sea cruises to Syria's Lazkiye port. And the fourth is the official state visits. President Talat has been received as head of state in Pakistan. The OIC General Secretary and OIC teams visited Northern Cyprus with official status. Promisingly, the economic gap between the North Cyprus and the South has decreased. A point may come when it may be necessary to persuade the Northern Cypriots to unify with the South, for their recognition by the international community and growing standards of life in the North will remove the rationale for doing so. Their conditions are indeed improving.

Conclusion

First of all, Turkey needs to deepen and enrich its democracy, accommodate the differences within its society, and strengthen the coordination and balance within its institutions in 2008 and the years that follow. In this way, Turkey's internal situation will be considered an asset by external actors. Furthermore, Turkey should avoid crises like the ones that occurred in April and May of 2007,

Turkey needs to deepen and enrich its democracy, accommodate the differences within its society, and strengthen the coordination and balance within its institutions

which undermined the country's image and reputation outside. Secondly, Turkey needs to deepen its participation in regional matters. Specifically, Turkey should contribute to peace, security, and prosperity in its region. Obviously, Turkey would benefit from such a positive environment; working toward it would raise Turkey to an internationally proactive

position. This elevation could occur via Turkey's implementation of energy, transportation, and cultural policies. Turkey could pursue a more influential policy line in international politics after asserting itself in its regional setting. When these principles take roots, the relations with the United States will be pursued in a more mutually beneficial and meaningful way and the relations with the EU will have a stronger base. After all, Turkey is the rising actor in the region and will be sensitive to the concerns of other regional players. In that respect, it will develop a balanced relationship with Russia. The activities of civil society and Turkish intellectuals will contribute to the attainment of those common goals. Turkey's engagements from Chile to Indonesia, from Africa to Central Asia, and from EU to OIC will be part of a holistic approach to foreign policy. These initiatives will make Turkey a global actor as we approach 2023, the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish republic.