

From the Desk of the Editor

In this issue of Turkish Policy Quarterly (TPQ), we examine topical developments in the Caucasus, Central Eurasia, and the Middle East to draw the contours of the emerging strategic configuration in Turkey's neighborhood. As key countries in the current geostrategic contestations of the region, we focus particularly on Georgia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria. We also assess Turkish foreign policy in the broader neighborhood, both to take stock of missed opportunities and identify potential opportunities. The fragile balance between secularism and democracy in Turkey, an important dimension of Turkey's regional role, is also touched on from various perspectives.

TPQ has published a security-oriented issue every year since its establishment in 2002. We have covered NATO's adaptation to emerging security challenges consistently, and tracked Turkey's evolving contribution to regional stability and Euro-Atlantic security.

In this issue of TPQ, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Frans Timmermans elaborates on the complexity of emerging security challenges and underlines the necessity of multilateral collaboration. The Minister presents the main pillars of his country's new security strategy. Underlining the vitality of NATO for the Netherlands, the Minister reminds readers of the current deployment of Dutch Patriot systems and battalions in Adana, geared at the defense of Turkey against potential missile attacks from Syria. He emphasizes that there is interdependence in the security of Turkey and the European Union, and that both would benefit from broadening the scope for cooperation between NATO and the Union.

In recent years, Turkey and its NATO allies have had various tensions. Turkey has hindered NATO-EU collaboration because the Republic of Cyprus blocks many vital cooperation avenues between Turkey and the EU – including but not limited to, Turkey's accession process. Ankara's blocking of Israeli participation in a number of partnership activities further strained relations in the Alliance. The most recent controversy is Ankara's announcement of its decision to purchase a Chinese air defense system. Because of its lack of interoperability with NATO missile defense systems, as well as intelligence and technology transfer concerns, Turkey's follow-through with this decision could cause significant problems. However, Turkey remains a critical NATO ally – underscored in 2012 by Ankara's agreement to the deployment of a NATO early-warning radar system that defends NATO members against missile threats from countries such as Iran.

Among positions that have disappointed some of Turkey's allies was Ankara's stance against the extension of NATO's Operation Active Endeavor from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea in 2005. A few years later, in 2008, there were expectations among Georgia's friends that Turkey take a stronger stance against Moscow during the August War. However, in his exclusive interview with TPQ, Georgia's Defense Minister Irakli Alasania explains his conviction that Ankara continued to have Georgia's interest in mind throughout this period. He underlines the strength of the bilateral relationship in the strategic and security fields. The Minister also outlines the strategy of the current Georgian government for overcoming challenges stemming from conflict with Russia. In addition to detailing the multifaceted collaboration between Turkey and Georgia, he notes the trilateral framework of relations developing between Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Minister Alasania also underlines the importance of Ankara's support for Georgia in NATO, and explains how Turkey can play a unique role in Georgian-Abkhaz rapprochement.

Taking a closer look at Abkhazia's need for de-isolation, Eric Eissler, who freelances with various organizations in Istanbul as a writer and translator, argues that the Abkhazian diaspora and business community of the Black Sea region in Turkey can play a positive role. Finding a solution that would enable Turkish businessmen to trade more with Abkhazia without violating Tbilisi's territorial integrity principles could bring about win-win-win benefits, he claims. He suggests that Tbilisi and Ankara should resume talks on reopening the Trabzon-Sukhumi ferry link.

Energy geopolitics affects the Caucasus strategic landscape considerably. In the framework of its regional analysis, TPQ has consistently covered related energy debates both with journal articles, and, since 2010, with roundtable discussions held with support from BP Turkey. Most recently, in October 2013 we held a roundtable discussion entitled "New Regional Opportunities: Can Turkey be an Energy Hub by 2023?" in Istanbul. The panel included Mehmet Ögütçü, Chairman of Global Resources Partnership; Hakan Türker, Vice President for External Affairs at BP Turkey; and –with the support of the Center for Strategic Studies of Azerbaijan (SAM)– Gulmira Rzayeva, Principal Research Fellow for SAM. The discussion was chaired by Zeynep Dereli, Managing Director for APCO Worldwide Turkey Office. The discussions focused primarily on the current developments regarding the geostrategically significant Southern Corridor for Azerbaijani natural gas, and the implications of the choice of Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) to carry this gas further on into Europe. The press release highlighting some of the points made is available at: <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/newsletter2013/energyrt.html>

In his article for this issue of TPQ, Mehmet Ögütçü places the Southern Corridor in the context of the ongoing global shift of power and the energy revolution. Ögütçü

underlines that Moscow seeks a monopoly on the transportation of Central Asian/Caspian gas to Europe *via* Gazprom's pipeline network, while it also wants to tap into Iran's mammoth gas fields, further cementing Russia's control of natural gas trade. He points to the 2006 Russian-Ukrainian gas "war" and the 2008 Georgian War to argue that energy transit countries can be vulnerable if Moscow feels its vital national security interests are threatened. Ögütçü also covers the MENA region, stating that the forces unleashed by the Arab Uprisings will continue to create enormous political and geopolitical turbulence for years to come. Russia and Iran will remain actors to reckon with, he claims. Among the messages Ögütçü relates is that to fulfill the potential of the Southern Corridor, it would need to channel gas from new sources in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The latter, namely the prospect of Eastern Mediterranean natural gas, is elaborated on in depth by Matthew Bryza, Director of the Talinn-based International Centre for Defence and Security. Bryza who is also a member of the advisory board of TPQ, argues that recent large-scale discoveries of natural gas in Israel and Cyprus could help reshape the geopolitical trajectory of the Eastern Mediterranean. He points out that, with collaborative vision, these fields could provide Cyprus and Israel energy independence, catalyze new industries, generate significant export revenues, and foster diplomatic breakthroughs on the Cyprus Question and Turkey-Israel relations. He warns though that absent collaborative vision, this issue could reinforce political divisions and weaken regional stability.

The Middle East is central to the shifting fault-lines across Turkey's neighborhood, and is explored from different angles by a number of authors of this issue of TPQ. Divides along sectarian lines across the MENA region and global powerplays that have resonated at the level of the UN Security Council continue to challenge policymaking in this neighborhood. Before the Arab Spring, Turkey's effort to forge cooperative relations with its neighbors to the south yielded mixed results. Following the uprisings in the region, and particularly with the Syrian civil war, Ankara went far out on a limb in support of particularly Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in the region, which triggered a range of Turkey-skeptic coalitions. While Ankara appears to be mending its rifts with Baghdad, and the Iran-U.S. negotiation process offers cautious cause for optimism, it is apparent that Turkey needs the strategic reassurance provided by its Western allies for both defense from external threats, as well as domestic stability – particularly since relations with its southern neighbors are intertwined with the Ankara's "Kurdish peace process."

In this issue of TPQ, various authors cover the ongoing dynamics involving Iran and Syria. Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation Philip Gamaghelyan, for example, notes that the Western media,

think tanks, and policy community routinely portray the Syrian conflict as a dichotomy: the dictatorial Assad regime versus the fragmented opposition. He argues that in reality, the clear majority of Syrians are neither of these two. He warns that by reducing the Syrian conflict to an “Assad versus opposition” duality, the population’s peaceful majority is marginalized and the two violent extremist actors are empowered. Gamaghelyan claims that ignoring Syria’s overarching civic identity and trying to consolidate the opposition into an easily identifiable second party has negative consequences in Syria.

Focusing on the highly topical case of Iran, Senior Fellow at the *Istituto Affari Internazionali* (IAI) of Rome and European Foreign and Security Policy Studies Fellow Riccardo Alcaro analyzes the winners and losers of a potential U.S. deal with Tehran over its nuclear program. If a deal is concluded, the U.S. would achieve a major non-proliferation success, and sanctions against Iran would be lifted. There could be far-reaching positive effects across the region, from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan. Ultimately, Turkey would benefit from more regional stability. However, Alcaro argues, Israel and Saudi Arabia perceive their interests not to be in line with such an outcome, and might accordingly try to derail the talks.

Continuing the focus on Iran, Tehran-based freelance journalist Şafak Baş provides a historical overview of Turkey-Iran relations, pointing out the interplay between rivalry and pragmatism. The policies of the AKP that diverged from those of Washington, improved Turkey’s image in Iran until 2011. However, the Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria again brought rivalry to the fore in Ankara-Tehran relations, Baş explains. Looking ahead, the author argues that bilateral relations may be positively affected by the more cooperative stance of the new President of Iran and a potential rapprochement between Tehran and Washington.

Turning to the ways in which Turkey is perceived in this region, Jean-Loup Samaan, Researcher at the Middle East Department of the NATO Defense College in Italy, traces the reception of the “Turkish model” in the Arab world in the past decade. He points out that 2009-10 were peak years for Arab admiration of Turkey. However recently, he argues, this positive image is waning as a result of apprehension over some of Turkey’s strategic choices in the region.

The upcoming retreat of NATO forces from Afghanistan and the question of how to ensure stability in Central Eurasia are also taken up in this issue of TPQ. An abbreviated version of a Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) policy paper relates recommendations for the post-2014 era, drafted by representatives of Afghanistan’s neighboring countries. The project that gave birth to these recommendations was comprised of

inter-regional Track II (or Track 1,5) dialogues meant to build trust among relevant actors from Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, India, and Pakistan. The Policy Groups set up also engaged in dialogue with experts from China, Iran, Russia, and Turkey, thereby creating “communication channels” in the region.

Micha’el Tanchum, Fellow at the Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies at Shalem College in Jerusalem and at the Asia and Middle East Units of the Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University, offers lessons for Turkey from a broader regional perspective. Comparatively analyzing Turkey’s policies with India’s similar policy in the region, Tanchum argues that New Delhi has sought to maintain its strategic autonomy from both Moscow and Washington. This policy, Tanchum asserts, has led Russia, in addition to China, to marginalize India in the region. Ankara flirts with a similar triangular diplomacy in Central Asia. The author’s examination of how New Delhi’s insistence on strategic autonomy has damaged India’s position in Central Asia, sheds light on possible policy outcomes for Turkey in the region if Ankara persists in its present orientation.

Turning from hard security to societal issues and values that also influence country’s alignments, Caroline Fourest explains the logic of allowing Islamic attire in universities but not in lower grades of schooling. According to the French writer, who is author of numerous books on secularism and religious fundamentalism, secularism is the strongest guarantee for the rights of minorities because a non-secular country will always favor its majority religion and downgrade its citizens holding other beliefs to secondary status.

Finally, in this issue of TPQ we include Okan University Assistant Professor Zeynep Alemdar’s analysis of the TPQ seminar on women and LGBT rights in Turkey, which was held on 6 November 2013. The debate among conservative and liberal activists, decision makers, and journalists covered topical issues related to Turkey’s polarization regarding liberal lifestyle choices as well as the legislative framework and practices pertaining to the rights of women and LGBT citizens. The event, held with support from the MATRA Fund of the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Istanbul, was covered extensively in Turkish mainstream newspapers, and is available for viewing at: <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/article/933/women-and-lgbt-rights-in-turkey-progressing-or-regressing/>

As TPQ, we highly appreciate the standing contribution of Kadir Has University. Being situated in the university since August 2010 has enabled TPQ to develop in many ways that would not have otherwise been possible. We are delighted and honored to welcome the rector, Mustafa Aydın, to our advisory board with this issue.

Since our launch in 2002, we have been committed to fostering critical and constructive debates about NATO's evolving role in Turkey's neighborhood, multidisciplinary approaches to security, and Turkey's anchorage to the Euro-Atlantic bloc. In our quest to this end, we appreciate the consistent support of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD). This Fall 2013 issue is the sixth security issue we have published with support from the NATO PDD.

The corporate sponsor of this issue of TPQ is Tüpraş – to which we extend a special thanks. We also appreciate the continuing support of our other sponsors: Garanti Bank, TAV, İş Bank, Akbank, Turcas Petrol, Odeabank, BP Turkey, and Finansbank. We are also thankful for the outreach-based partnership we enjoy with *Hürriyet Daily News* and *The Globalist*.

As always we hope you, our readers, find analysis we provide to be useful in illuminating the complex political dynamics of Turkey and its neighborhood, and look forward to your feedback.

Diba Nigâr Göksel