

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

The Winter 2017 issue of Turkish Policy Quarterly (TPQ) marks a significant 15-year milestone in providing independent and balanced analyses on dynamics in Turkey and its neighborhood. Over the past 15 years, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to presenting all sides of the debate, encouraging critical opinions, and upholding the principles of freedom of speech. Amid an increasingly polarized political and intellectual environment, as well as global challenges to liberal democratic values, TPQ sustains an important role in fostering candid discussions about the complex challenges facing Turkey and its role in the regional and transatlantic context. In doing so, we have tried to highlight perspectives from the government and opposition parties, as well as engage international actors in the country's neighborhood and beyond. I want to express our appreciation to our contributors, readers, stakeholders, and advisory board members for your support over the last 15 years. I would also like to acknowledge our Publisher and our former Editor in Chief of 13 years, Nigar Göksel, for their vision, dedication, and invaluable contributions to the publication.

In this issue of TPQ, we examine political flashpoints and protracted conflicts in Turkey's neighborhood – in particular, Cyprus, Nagorno-Karabakh, Syria, and Ukraine. Several of our authors critically analyze the underlying sources of conflict and attempts towards a resolution, while others focus on the foreign policy implications of Turkey's domestic dynamics following the July 2016 failed coup attempt.

In a co-authored article, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, the Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe's (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, and Wolfgang Sporrer, a political analyst at the OSCE's SMM, discuss the progress of the Minsk process and the critical role of the organization's conflict prevention activities in Eastern Ukraine. Deployed in 2014 as an unarmed, civilian mission on the ground in Ukraine, the SMM's mandate is to “contribute to reducing tensions and to help foster peace, stability, and security,” and to monitor and support the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments. The authors point out that while the Minsk II ceasefire agreement – brokered by the leaders of France, Germany, Ukraine, and Russia in February 2015 – led to reduced levels of armed violence, most of the provisions of the settlement remain unfulfilled. Additionally, the political, operational, and security-related challenges the OSCE faces in Ukraine have become more complex as the security environment in which the SMM operates has deteriorated. Apakan and Sporrer highlight that the changing dynamics of the conflict have required constant adjustments in the Mission's deployment, with its civilian monitors increasingly operating under

hostile circumstances. The authors argue that one of the most important lessons that can be drawn from OSCE's engagement in Ukraine is that even in a high-risk environment and many setbacks, a civilian peace operation has the ability to succeed in containing a conflict.

Two of our authors focus on the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). Due to its international dimensions – the involvement of the OSCE's Minsk group member states, Turkey, and Russia – this conflict shares many parallels with the other conflicts discussed in this issue. A precarious status quo, punctuated by occasional eruptions in violence, has been in place since 1994, yet a peace agreement remains elusive. The most recent flare-up in the conflict occurred in April 2016, dubbed the “four-day” war. Although a ceasefire was brokered by Russia, the possibility that the conflict could escalate into a full-blown war remains a reality, with far-reaching implications for regional stability.

Zaur Shiriyev, an Academy Associate at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in London, provides an analysis of the four-day war from an Azerbaijani perspective. Shiriyev characterizes the April clashes as the most serious escalation of the conflict since the 1994 truce. As Shiriyev explains, Baku claimed that its military offensive was in response to Armenian provocation, which was foreshadowed by an announcement by Yerevan in February 2016 that it was shifting from a “static defense” strategy to an active deterrence mode. The four-day war ultimately proved successful for Baku, posits the author: it led to small territorial gains and dispelled the myth that Armenian's line of defense was unbreakable. However, the four-day war did not lead to a negotiation breakthrough much to Baku's disappointment. Shiriyev argues that the war and its aftermath solidified Russia's role as lead mediator in the NK conflict – a role the Western countries of the OSCE mediating body have seemingly relinquished. However, in Baku's estimation, the April events also demonstrated the limits of Russian diplomatic brinkmanship, Shiriyev points out.

In his article, Mikayel Zolyan, an analyst at the Regional Studies Center in Yerevan, Armenia, points to a combination of internal and external factors that created a ripe environment for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to flare-up in April 2016. Zolyan highlights the breakdown in Russia-Turkey relations following the jet-downing incident in November 2015 as one such external factor that contributed to increased tensions in the region. Characterizing the four-day war as a success for Azerbaijan militarily – albeit minimally – the author concludes that the April events led to important domestic gains for Baku: consolidated public support for the ruling government, and a deflection from the deteriorating socio-economic situation in the

country. Echoing Shiriyev's point about conflict resolution negotiations, Zolyan argues that despite the reinvigoration of peace efforts following the April clashes, peace has not been achieved. In fact, Zolyan asserts that the fallout of the four-day war is the hardening of both the Azerbaijani and Armenian positions. Riding the wave of their "victorious" narrative, Azerbaijan will be unwilling to make serious concessions, posits the author, while Armenia has doubled down on its intention not to give up any more territories. Using the term "dynamic status quo" to describe the pattern that the conflict has settled into, Zolyan explains that while full-scale war may not materialize, the situation in the conflict zone remains tense.

Another conflict characterized by its complexity of interests, is the decades-old dispute between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island of Cyprus, which has lurched towards resolution and back for the past half a century. While the UN-sponsored Annan Plan to unite the island was rejected by the Greek Cypriots in the 2004 referendum, there has been a wave of optimism that the current round of negotiations facilitated by the UN in 2015, will lead to a reunified island. The hopeful atmosphere engendered by the willingness of Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akıncı, to seek convergences has been tempered by disagreements over thorny issues such as security, territory, and property. Our authors reflect on the history of the conflict, comment on the status of the recent negotiations, and parse the remaining obstacles to achieving a solution.

In his article, Dr. Ahmet Sözen, Director of Eastern Mediterranean University's Cyprus Policy Center (CPC) in Northern Cyprus, argues that despite the significant convergences on many topics during the recent round of negotiations in Geneva, the important sticking issue of security and guarantees remains. The way to overcome this impasse, explains Sözen, is to develop a "common vision." The core of this vision needs to include a central institutional framework that enables the island to independently manage its security. The current round of talks, the author posits, is different to previous negotiations for a number of reasons. First, the primary advantage the two leaders hold this time is that they are not starting from scratch. Additionally, Sözen explains, the two sides negotiated the issue of territory for the first time. Lastly, it was historic that all five parties involved – the three Guarantors and the two Cypriot sides – met for discussions. Nevertheless, the author clarifies that the focus of future talks should be on the security and guarantees issue, and in particular, the establishment of internal security mechanisms for a future united Cyprus.

Dr. Andreas Theophanous, Professor of Political Economy and President of the Center for European and International Affairs of the University of Nicosia, provides

a historical overview of the Cyprus problem and sheds light on an alternative solution for the divided island. According to Theophanous, the proposed solution in Geneva – a bi-regional federation – may be challenging to implement within a short time frame. The author argues that an evolutionary approach should be undertaken, based on several conditions, including: the northern part of Cyprus should be designated an EU region; relations between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey should normalize; and a roadmap for a federal constitution should be established. Furthermore, the author touts the establishment of an interim agreement involving the implementation of the EU *acquis* in the northern part of Cyprus and the return of Famagusta and a buffer zone under the Greek Cypriot administration.

Ayhan Dolunay and Dilan Çiftçi, both lecturers at Near East University in North Cyprus, zoom in on the week-long UN-backed Cyprus peace talks in Geneva in January. Acknowledging that the negotiations started out on a positive note, the authors point out that the two Cypriot sides remain at loggerheads over the issue of security and guarantees, which ultimately led the negotiations to stall. Turkey is adamant about remaining a guarantor to Cyprus with Turkish troops on the island, while Greece does not accept this condition. The inability of the two sides to come together on this fundamental issue, as well as waning momentum, does not augur well for reaching a comprehensive final agreement, state the authors.

The nature of Turkey-Russia relations is at the nexus of several of the conflicts that our authors focus on; the Syrian crisis, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the Ukrainian crisis. The confrontation between the two countries after Turkey shot down a Russian jet in November 2015 for violating its airspace resulted in a seven-month diplomatic freeze in bilateral relations. It brought to the fore the many foreign policy differences Ankara and Moscow had sought to marginalize in favor of strategic economic cooperation. The breakdown also revealed several factors and trends that will continue to shape and influence the relations between the two countries: Russia's growing assertiveness in the region where both countries' strategic neighborhoods overlap; Turkey's increasing energy dependence on Russia; and Moscow's foreign policy leverage over Ankara.

Hasan Selim Özertem, a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Bilkent University in Ankara, comments on the fragile Russia-Turkey relationship in his article. Özertem argues that conjuncture played a large role in the restoration of ties between Turkey and Russia following the jet-downing incident, and that while the parties are moving from cooperation to the higher level of coordination, the bedrock of bilateral relations remains underdeveloped. The seven-month diplomatic discord highlighted that economic cooperation

was not enough to obfuscate the fundamentally opposing positions the two countries had taken in the war in Syria, concludes Özerterem. Describing in detail the factors leading up to the shooting down of the Russian jet, the author claims that the incident was a result rather than a cause of the deterioration of relations. The diplomatic freeze that followed dealt a heavy blow to the Turkish economy. In particular, the tourism, agriculture, and construction sectors suffered – the Kremlin lifted the visa-free regime, banned charter flights, and imposed embargoes on Turkish exporters and contractors. After relations began to normalize in the summer of 2016, the author explains that Ankara and Moscow began to coordinate their policies in Syria, which manifested in the launching of the Euphrates Shield Operation in August 2016. Following the rapprochement, political convergences, coupled with a reinvigoration of energy cooperation signaled the beginning of a new phase in bilateral relations, which Özerterem characterizes as being actor-driven, rather than institutionally-based. Relying primarily on the Turkish and Russian leaders to steer the relationship at the expense of institutional mechanisms raises questions about the sustainability of the relationship moving forward. Ultimately, Özerterem asserts, the same fragilities that existed before the Turkey-Russia confrontation, still linger.

In his article, Dr. Şener Aktürk, Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at Koç University, traces the evolution of Turkey's identity from since the end of the Cold War to the present. Aktürk explains that Turkey's democratization efforts in the 2000s set Turkey on a pro-European trajectory, but that several external factors contributed to a suspension of this path. It was Turkey's role in the Arab Spring, however, that particularly highlighted identity-related contradictions between Turkey and Western powers, argues Aktürk. While Ankara expressed its vocal support for the ousted President of Egypt, Mohammad Morsi, many Western countries maintained ambivalent positions towards the authoritarian counter-revolution. Turkey's stance on Egypt and its efforts to jumpstart reform in Syria can be viewed through the lens of Ankara's "democratic idealism," contends Aktürk, which ultimately was revised due to the geopolitical realities of the post Arab Spring context. Against the background of Ankara's disappointment over Western countries' delayed condemnation of the failed coup on July 15 and rapprochement with Russia in the summer of July 2016, Aktürk questions whether Turkey is headed towards a "pro-Russian Eurasianist" geopolitical identity. Despite several claims to this end, Aktürk argues that the Turkish-Russian relationship is primarily tactical in nature, and that Turkey's geopolitical identity remains in flux.

The Syrian crisis, now into its seventh year, continues to pose numerous spillover risks for Turkey. Meeting the demands of more than 2.7 million Syrian refugees in the country, as well as stemming the flow of refugees to Europe has been one

of the greatest challenges. The smuggling industry has become a significant vehicle in facilitating large scale migration, undercutting policy responses to irregular migration. In her article, Ayşem Biriz Karaçay, Assistant Professor at Istanbul Commerce University, provides an overview of shifting human smuggling routes amidst the growing refugee crisis. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the Eastern Mediterranean route – which entailed crossings on both the land and sea routes on the Turkish-Greek border and the Turkish-Bulgarian border – replaced the Central Mediterranean route. The Aegean Sea emerged as the most preferred clandestine route over the last couple of years, which led to the drafting of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan in March 2016. While Karaçay notes that since the agreement's implementation, the number of arrivals on the Greek islands has decreased and alternative routes have not sprung up, smuggling networks have become increasingly adaptable. Karaçay also points to a cyclical pattern, which raises the possibility of continued irregular migration: stricter EU border control force refugees to use ever more dangerous routes through smuggling networks.

On the domestic scene, Turkey continues to grapple with various fallouts from the 15 July 2016 coup attempt. In addition to wide scale purges in the wake of the failed putsch, there has been a paradigm shift in civil-military relations. In a co-authored piece, Dr. Metin Gürcan, a research fellow at Sabancı University's Istanbul Policy Center (IPC), and Megan Gisclon, Managing Editor of IPC, parse the implications of recent reforms for the institutional identities of Turkey's security actors – the Turkish Armed Forces, the National Intelligence Agency, the Gendarmerie Command, the National Police, private security, and village guards. Dubbing the new era to reform “revolutionary civilianization,” the authors argue that the swiftness of the changes is outpacing the security sector's ability to both respond to security threats and to adapt to the new realities of the post-failed coup context. Gürcan and Gisclon espouse a holistic and pragmatic approach to security sector reform, which should prioritize democratization of these entities. Furthermore, they advocate for the de-politicization of the security sector, which will not only reinforce the stability of key ground military operations, but will also foster democratization and good governance.

On an institutional note, Erhan Arslan joins TPQ as our new Associate Editor. A graduate of Bilgi University, Boğaziçi University, and Queen Mary University of London, Erhan Arslan is currently PhD candidate and a teaching assistant at Koç University. He is also a founding member of Co-Opinion Network and the current Director of Academic Affairs. We are delighted to welcome Erhan to the TPQ team.

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We would like to acknowledge the over 700 authors who have contributed their expertise and opinions to TPQ since 2002. As always, we welcome feedback from our readers.

Süreya Martha Köprülü