

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

This issue of TPQ takes stock of important geopolitical shifts in the Eastern Mediterranean region, from the exploitation of newly discovered energy resources and emerging regional alliances to conflict resolution efforts and migration flows. While parsing the short and longer-term implications of the deteriorating security environment in the region, our authors indicate that there are also opportunities for cooperation.

A new strategic equation is coming about in the Eastern Mediterranean, which has spawned questions about how domestic and regional dynamics will continue to play out. There are several prominent features in this environment: the more assertive role of Russia, the emergence of an Israeli-Greece-Cypriot alignment, an uncertain US role, the enhanced jihadist threat, the influx of refugees, Iran's potentially enhanced ability to project influence in the region, and competition over energy resources.

The Turkish perspective on the Eastern Mediterranean region is colored by its vital need to reassert its regional role, rebuild its relations with key neighbors, and confront manifold challenges both at home and abroad. With its Syria policy in disarray and the diplomatic fallout from damaged relations with Russia continuing to send shock waves through the country's tourism, energy, and economy sectors, Ankara is actively attempting to recalibrate its foreign policy. Fixing the troubled Turkish-Israeli relationship has been a key component of Ankara's efforts to hedge against increasing isolation, with the two countries now at the cusp of normalizing their relations. Furthermore, the installment of new Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım is serving as a foundation for the broader revision of Turkish foreign policy; reevaluating the country's Syria policy and trying to normalize relations with Russia are among the priorities of the new government.

Another area of potential uncertainty is the EU-Turkey deal that was struck in March 2016 to stem the flow of refugees from Turkey to the Schengen countries. Ankara's refusal to reform its anti-terrorism law in order to secure visa-free travel puts the controversial deal at jeopardy. This is compounded by alarming gaps in EU solidarity over how to handle the refugee crisis, which has exposed deepening fault lines within the Union. Britain's historic decision to leave the EU underscores this fact dramatically and will undoubtedly have far-reaching repercussions for the Union's future, as well as for regional stability.

In his article, Ambassador Sorin Ducaru, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, assesses the increasingly complex Euro-Atlantic

security environment faced by NATO and its allies. With a particular focus upon the unique challenges emanating from NATO's southern periphery – from hybrid warfare to the ongoing conflict in Syria – Ducaru emphasizes that a “one-size-fits-all” deterrence response will be insufficient. Instead, the Alliance needs to adopt a “multi-layered” strategy which reflects the complexity of the region's threat landscape. To that end, Ducaru highlights four areas in which NATO needs to become more proactive: bolstering its collective defense and deterrence capabilities, advising and assisting local forces in the region; deepening its cooperation with international organizations and regional partners, and enhancing its strategic awareness on energy and cyber security.

In his overview of Eastern Mediterranean dynamics, Dr. Ian O. Lesser, Executive Director of the Brussels office of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, argues that the region is moving from the periphery to the very core of strategic concerns. Dr. Lesser points to several key trends: the challenge of violent extremists, increased migration flows, the rise of the new actors Russia and China, and the vulnerability of Turkey to both internal and external security problems. These will all have long-term implications for the balance of power in the region. Lesser contends that Turkey is the most exposed transatlantic partner in this Eastern Mediterranean “vortex” due to the collapse of the security order in Turkey's neighborhood, the spillover of the Syrian conflict, Russia's emergence as a regional rival, and Iran's growing involvement in the Levant.

Erhan Arslan, Semuhi Sinanoglu, and Irmak Taner, Director of Academic Affairs, Chairperson, and Academic Team Coordinator respectively at Co-Opinion Network, take stock of the policy reforms necessary for the socioeconomic integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey. While the authors highlight Turkey's generous open-door policy – the country now hosts over 2.7 million Syrian refugees – they also argue that there are several steps Turkey needs to take in order to promote the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society. These include undertaking labor market reforms, increasing access to language education, and redefining the status of Syrian refugees from temporary protection to granting full citizenship. The authors conclude by emphasizing that the Turkish government needs to revise its asylum and immigration policies in response to the changing realities of the Syrian refugee crisis and the likelihood that Syrians will permanently resettle in Turkey.

Turning to a topic with far-reaching implications for not just the Eastern Mediterranean, but also for the wider region, Dr. Peter Harling, former Middle East advisor with the International Crisis Group (ICG), analyzes the current jihadist landscape in relation to how the movement has evolved and reinvented itself over

time. Dr. Harling argues that the conflict in Syria and the eroding “superstructure” of the Middle East have provided fertile ground for the revival of the jihadist movement, which temporarily weakened after it reached its apex under Al Qaeda. The emergence and ascendancy of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) will be a durable feature of the terrorist environment in the years ahead, asserts Harling.

In his article, Dr. Aykan Erdemir, former member of the Turkish Parliament, argues that Turkey can make progress with its constitution if the country pursues an incremental strategy rather than fixating on the wholesale drafting of a new constitution. Erdemir, who is currently a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) in Washington, states that in the past Turkey has made several amendments to its constitution (i.e. seven times in November 2002), resulting in the revision of a total 57 articles. Erdemir argues that as a deeply divided society, Turkey needs to first overcome social polarization and political impasse. Instead of drafting a new constitution from scratch, Erdemir suggests that Turkish citizens should gradually build a new understanding that will lay out fundamental principles to coexist peacefully through meaningful dialogue despite differences. According to Erdemir, this is only possible through deliberation, compromise, and building trust.

Also taking up the thorny issue of redrafting Turkey’s constitution and transitioning to a different system of government, Prof. Dr. Birol Akgün, Chairman of the Institute of Strategic Thinking (SDE) in Ankara, argues that the only viable democratic model for the country is a presidential democracy with checks and balances. However, Turkey’s political class and society are politically divided over the proposed system change, a schism that Akgün argues must be bridged through an all-inclusive, constructive, and informed public debate. According to Akgün, the AKP faces two important obstacles to realizing its aim: it does not have the seats in parliament required to make a unilateral change, which means it will need to find support from other political parties; and it also faces challenges in garnering sufficient public support to win a referendum.

A common theme running through several of the articles is whether the region’s energy resources can serve as an engine for regional cooperation and conflict resolution. In her article, Suzanne Carlson, senior editor at *The Oil and Gas Year*, argues that the changing dynamics of supply and demand in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, due in large part to the discovery of the offshore Egyptian gas field Zohr, makes this an appropriate juncture to examine potential synergies in the energy sphere. According to Carlson, the Zohr discovery has drastically decreased Egypt’s import needs. This development is likely to affect the dynamics among key energy players in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Israel, Cyprus, and Turkey. Due to

the saturation of the Egyptian market, Carlson contends that Israel and Cyprus will have to find new export routes for gas from their Leviathan and Aphrodite fields respectively. While Turkey is the most economically viable option, the unstable investment climate, decreased financing for hydrocarbon projects, and the complex geopolitics between Turkey and Israel and Cyprus, present obstacles to regional cooperation.

Dr. Harry Tzimitras and Dr. Ayla Gürel provide an assessment of the current status of Cyprus negotiations, as well as how they play into wider regional dynamics and energy geopolitics. Tzimitras and Gürel, Director and Senior Research Consultant respectively at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Cyprus Center, assert that domestically, negotiations started off positively largely due to the good rapport between Anastasiades and Akıncı, and that for the first time the economic aspects of a solution are being included in the discussions. Regionally, the authors explain how the Cyprus issue has attracted intense international interest, with both the EU and UN involved in fostering an agreement. Lastly, Tzimitras and Gürel posit that energy can be a game changer in the negotiation process. They believe the discovery of natural gas in the region can either exacerbate tensions, or “hold the key to cooperation.”

As regional actors look for ways to project power and influence, harnessing cyber technology will be increasingly important. Lior Tabansky, a researcher at the Blavatnik Interdisciplinary Cyber Research Center (ICRC) at Tel Aviv University (TAU), claims that the new frontier of international conflict will be cyberspace. Regional actors such as Russia and Israel have strengthened their cyber power capabilities for strategic purposes. Tabaksy points to two examples – the 2015 Ukrainian regional electricity outages that were widely attributed to Russian state-backed hackers and the discovery of Stuxnet malware in 2010 that was believed to be a joint American-Israeli operation, which had clear political rather than criminal motivations. As “cybered” conflict becomes an arena of conflict in the modern era, Tabansky argues that Turkey’s cyber security deficiencies will prove detrimental to its goal of remaining a pivotal regional player.

Dr. Serhat Güvenç, a professor of International Relations at Kadir Has University and Dr. Sitki Egeli, a visiting scholar at Izmir University of Economics, elaborate on changing naval balances in the Eastern Mediterranean and implications thereof for Turkey’s regional role. The authors argue that the naval power hierarchy of the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be analyzed in isolation of the Black Sea and the Aegean, and that all three regions influence each other. Tracing Turkey’s naval standing since the the days of the Cold War to the present, the authors claim that

Turkey's standing has declined in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in particular where it has ceded to Russian naval dominance.

Focusing on Turkey's regional role in the Post-Soviet space, David Erkomaishvili, lecturer at Metropolitan University Prague and Executive Editor at *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, explains that Turkey and Russia have a long history of turbulent relations, which have vacillated between conflict and uneasy friendship. In the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's growing activism in the region was economically motivated, claims Erkomaishvili. However, since the rise of the AKP, bilateral relations have been characterized by increasing differences in foreign policy objectives despite deepening economic interdependence. Erkomaishvili argues that while Turkey and Russia are not interested in maintaining strained relations, their strategic interests in the post-Soviet arena will continue to put them at loggerheads.

Howard Chase, the Director of Governmental Affairs for Dow Chemical Company in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and India, draws attention to the fact that both the EU and Turkey are underperforming in the chemicals sector. He notes that Europe has only been able to secure two percent of the growth in its own backyard. However, in key areas such as energy policy, regulation, trade, and innovation, there are opportunities for industries in both the EU and Turkey to thrive. Chase also highlights the attractiveness of the circular economy – the commitment to the most efficient use and reuse of raw materials through their life cycle – for different stakeholders, as well as its positive implications for innovation and growth.

Since the release of our Spring 2016 issue, we have featured three blog posts in our effort to provide TPQ readers with analyses on current affairs as they develop. Aykan Erdemir and Merve Tahiroğlu discuss Turkey's deteriorating security situation in their co-authored piece, "Can Terror-Stricken Turkey be the EU's Security Bulwark." In his piece, "An East European-Turkish Pact against Russian Neo Imperialism," Andreas Umland explains the benefits of establishing an "Intermarium" bloc among the states between NATO's founding countries and Russia. Lastly, Georgios Stavri and Ljiljana Jakovlevic analyze the pre-election climate in Cyprus in their piece, "The 22 May 2016 Elections in Cyprus: The Most Disparate Political Picture in Years!" We continue to welcome rolling submissions to TPQ's blog.

This year's Spring issue is the ninth issue we have published with the support of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division. We are proud of our long-standing partnership, which has enabled us to provide our audiences with multidisciplinary approaches to security, analyses on NATO's evolving role in the region, and Turkey's place within the Alliance.

With this issue, we are also pleased to announce that we have established a partnership with the Halifax International Security Forum. The Halifax Forum is recognized as the leading gathering of democratic leaders committed to global security and prosperity. This partnership will enable us to continue to expand the parameters of debate and provide our readers with informed analyses on topical global security issues.

This June, our editorial advisor Erkut Emcioğlu, took part in a PRIO Expert Meeting Group in Athens on “Oil and Gas in the Eastern Mediterranean,” which was co-organized by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Jordan and Iraq. During the meeting, the prospects for regional cooperation on energy-related matters were evaluated against the backdrop of unresolved political conflicts and the current state of affairs in the wider region. Among other topics discussed were the game-changing implications of the new Zohr discovery for the Eastern Mediterranean energy scene, Iran’s return to international energy markets, Russia’s growing strategic depth in the region, and whether energy can be used as a tool to reduce regional tensions.

In other institutional news, after an in-depth process, Melis Woodham has joined our team as the new Managing Editor. She comes to us after having worked as a Senior Media Relations and Content Development Specialist at Türk Telekom. Prior to that, Melis worked at Al Jazeera English in Doha, Qatar (2008—2011) and Al Jazeera Türk in Istanbul (2011—2015) as a producer, where she acquired experience in TV and online journalism. We believe that Melis’ skills will be a significant asset to the journal as we continue to grow and hone our institutional identity.

We are honored to welcome a new advisory board member, Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience. Professor İhsanoğlu is a Turkish academic, former diplomat and member of the Turkish Parliament and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the ninth Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (2004-2013). He was the founding Director General of the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) in Istanbul for 25 years, and the founding head of the Department of History of Science at Istanbul University. İhsanoğlu was also a presidential candidate in the 2014 general election.

We are also happy to announce that we have a new editorial advisor, Behlül Özkan, who is an Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations at Marmara University. Behlül is the author of *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: the Making of a National Homeland in Turkey* (Yale University Press, 2012).

We are delighted to welcome Behlül to our growing circle of editorial volunteers, and look forward to working with him.

We would like to extend a special thanks to the premium sponsor of this issue: Finansbank. We also welcome back our long-time online sponsor, Garanti Bank. We appreciate the support of our other corporate sponsors: Akbank, Borusan Oto/BMW, BP Turkey, Esen Yacht, Ford, Gordon S. Blair Law Offices, Halifax International Security Forum, Monaco Tourism Authority, Odea Bank, STFA, Subaru, TEB, and Turcas Petrol.

This summer, TPQ will be moving our offices to a new address, and we would like to express our gratitude to Kadir Has University for generously providing us with a home base over the past six years. We greatly value our long-standing partnership, and the opportunity it has provided us to collaborate closely with the University's professors, staff, and students.

A special acknowledgment goes to our media partner *Hürriyet Daily News* for the outreach they continue to provide.

As always, we thank the authors of this issue for sharing their expertise and insights, and welcome feedback from our readers.

Süreya Martha Köprülü