

CHP ON TURKEY AND NATO

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NATO, with its array of hard, soft, and smart power assets possesses a huge potential for peace, security, and stability. This potential assumes additional significance in the context of widening national upheavals across many countries in the world, often entailing ethnic, sectarian, and tribal conflicts. And this, against a backdrop of extremism, terrorism, proliferation issues, organized crime, environmental challenges, and pandemics. At the same time, the demand for democracy, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, and social justice continues to rise across the globe. The Arab Spring is the latest case in point. In such a setting, NATO is poised to play a multitude of useful roles for stability and prosperity in much of the world beyond its primary function of protecting the security of its members. Turkey is surrounded by conflict-ridden regions and is thus exposed to a wide range of risks and threats. This is why NATO is important for Turkey; and, with its unique properties enabling it to act as an interface between the East and the West, Turkey is crucial for NATO.

Turkey and NATO

NATO is undergoing deep changes in the face of new and growing challenges. NATO today is present in a much wider geography, acting as if it were an organization with global responsibilities. Beyond its military missions, its political functions have proliferated. However, NATO has yet to make up its mind about its place and role in the new world. NATO's new strategic concept adopted in Lisbon in November 2010 has set a new vision regarding its objectives and priorities in an increasingly turbulent and fast evolving security environment. But how the new concept will be translated into concrete applications in the face of growing challenges remains to be seen.

Turkey's experience with NATO has had its disappointing episodes. In 1962, the Cuban crisis ended with the removal of all missiles from Turkey. The critical point was that this happened without Turkey's prior knowledge or consent. In 1964, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson sent a letter to the Turkish Prime Minister, warning him that NATO would not come to its defense if the Soviet Union attacked Turkey in the event of a Turkish intervention in Cyprus. The U.S. applied an arms embargo to its ally Turkey after its 1974 intervention in Cyprus. In 1991 and 1993, NATO was late and some European allies were reluctant in meeting Turkish demands to defend itself against a possible rocket attack from Iraq.

Then, there is the issue of terrorism. For many years, Turkey waged an uphill fight to put terrorism on NATO's agenda. Even today, not all NATO allies take an unequivocal stand against the terrorist organization PKK that has been a threat to Turkey's security for the past three decades. A further source of discomfort has to do with the Turkish perception that in the post-Cold War and especially in

the post-Soviet setting, Turkey's utility in the eyes of its European allies may have diminished. Turkey's extensive ties with Russia and their converging views on the Black Sea create additional strains on Turkey's relations with some of its allies.

Although Turkey contributes to NATO as much as, if not more than, other members, the perception and treatment of NATO Allies towards Turkey does not reflect this. The term 'loyal country' is used only for Turkey as if it has to keep proving its credentials at every turn. Given the post-9/11 schism between the Christian and Muslim worlds, there is an innate tendency to view Turkey with its predominantly Muslim population as the "other" in the community. Some of the NATO-related stances taken by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have probably accentuated this feeling.

On the other hand, Turkish public opinion towards NATO is skewed as well. Many Turks think that Turkey and NATO are antagonistic political actors. The perception is that "NATO demands and Turkey complies or refuses." The consensus mechanism in taking decisions at NATO is not well understood by Turkish public. For many Turks, the deaf ear to Turkey's demands regarding terrorism contrasted sharply with the prompt activation of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty in the wake of 9/11 attacks, and as such amounted to a double standard. The abolishment of the Western European Union where Turkey had an equal say in decision-making was also a blow to Turkish confidence about its place in Europe. Coupled with the frustration over the EU, the Turks are increasingly thinking that NATO membership is more of a burden and liability than an asset.

Turkey is a key NATO ally and its importance in collective defense is today multi-faceted and more complex than in the Cold War era. Based on its geographic, cultural, and historical spread, Turkey draws a high profile in the greater Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans, all areas ridden with intractable conflicts. It is still the only member with a predominantly Muslim population and the ability to connect NATO to Muslim geographies. Its role in energy security and in the fight against terrorism is an indispensable input for the Euro-Atlantic community.

Turkey, NATO, and the EU

Turkey's place in the NATO-EU equation is also problematic. The perception in the West is that Turkey hinders an effective partnership between NATO and the EU because of the Cyprus question. (Undoubtedly, there are other factors unrelated to Turkey that have the same presumed effect.) The truth better stated is that the EU sacrifices a more collaborative relationship with NATO in favor of a choice to impose on Turkey certain Cyprus-related demands. At another level, Cyprus serves as a fig leaf for those who do not wish to see Turkey in the EU. Turkey, even

as a non-member, has demonstrated the desire and the capacity to work with the EU on defense and security issues, contributing to certain EU operations even more than some EU members. Turkey's fuller participation in European security and defense affairs can only bolster the power and influence of the EU as an international actor. However, because of the unhealthy Turkey fixation of some EU members, the EU as a whole ends up weakening the existing framework of the much needed strategic collaboration with NATO.

Euro-Atlantic solidarity is the linchpin of global stability and security. Growing Turkish doubts about NATO/EU and the latter's vacillation towards Turkey undermine that solidarity. NATO must meet Turkey's legitimate concerns, particularly in its fight against terrorism and expand Turkey's political space in NATO. It should also urge the EU to remove the Cyprus barrier to NATO-EU collaboration.

The Republican People's Party (CHP) and NATO

CHP is committed to Turkey's NATO membership and supports a sustained relationship with the Organization. Turkey is a security conscious country and is

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surrounded by regions where there are ongoing conflicts and disputes that affect it directly. The Middle East, the Caucasus, Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans are unsettled regions. CHP, therefore, gives top priority to Turkey's national security and consequently recognizes that NATO's primary function should continue to be the defense of the security of its members. NATO, however, has a critical added value for Turkey as a vantage point for the authentication of its secular democracy.

At the same time, CHP is of the view that diplomatic procedures and negotiations should always be preferred over the use of military force in the attainment of the goals of the Alliance. We have observed in Afghanistan and Libya that resorting to the use of force is costly in terms of human lives and resources and does not bring immediate success. Secondly, while acknowledging that NATO must maintain a strong defense posture, CHP supports the proposition that nuclear disarmament is a goal that must be pursued vigorously. Turkey has abided by all the international covenants on nuclear arms and other weapons of destruction. CHP would, therefore, encourage nuclear and general disarmament.

CHP's party program and election manifestos further make clear that Turkey holds NATO responsible both as an Alliance and its individual member states to fight terrorism by supporting the efforts of those Allies that are confronted with the problem. The Turkish experience in bringing its NATO allies to take a unified stand against terrorism continues to be disappointing. NATO itself could take actions with the member states to elevate the level and quality of their cooperation in combating terrorism. The spirit should be the spirit of NATO Allies when, after the 9/11 attacks, they without hesitation agreed to activate Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.

CHP's policy and outlook regarding NATO could be perhaps further understood in the context of two recent developments. The first is Libya. When the Government bill asking for authorization for NATO engagement came to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, CHP voted in favor. As the CHP, our decision was based on the fact that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) had given the green light to such an involvement and on our desire to help the Libyan people in their quest for freedom and democratic governance. Thus, CHP is happy to see that the Libyan people now have a chance to begin their long journey toward democratic governance. CHP wants to see progress toward democracy founded on contemporary values, and will help the Libyan people attain their just aspirations.

Our "yes" vote on Libya was, however, based on the understanding that Turkey's involvement would be restricted to joining the naval blockade to ensure the flow of humanitarian assistance to the Libyan people and to prevent the shipment of arms and ammunition to the Libyan regime.

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Since the onset of operations, certain aspects of NATO's intervention in Libya have worried us. Some of NATO's actions in Libya might not have been necessarily authorized by the terms of the UNSC Resolutions, such as the killing of Colonel Qaddafi and members of his family or the clandestine provision of arms by member states to one of the conflicting parties. There were also civilian casualties. Furthermore, the failure to extend search and rescue operations for Libyan refugees during the crisis is regrettable. CHP believes that NATO must be strict in observing the terms of mandate defined by the UNSC, and, in turn, NATO's own terms of reference for such interventions should also be clear and precise. CHP criticized the Turkish Government in this regard and holds it responsible for failing to take action in NATO to ensure its compliance with the UNSC's original mandate in Libya.

The other development is the NATO missile defense system. CHP believes that Turkey should have its own national capabilities for defense against missile attacks and take steps to that end. Until such time, however, we feel, Turkey signing on to a NATO missile defense shield (MDS) has been the right decision. The recent debate in Turkey between the governing AKP and the main opposition CHP is, therefore, not about whether the missile defense system is or is not good for Turkey. The controversy is about AKP-led Government's failure to share with the Turkish public the facts surrounding the radar station to be based in Malatya.

CHP is of the view that the agreement on the radar station is a bilateral arrangement between Turkey and the U.S. and that, until its integration into the NATO system, it is an American radar on Turkish soil. Indeed, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Ankara, not on behalf of NATO but by the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey. American officials have made clear that the intelligence obtained through this installation will be shared with Allies and partners, i.e., Israel. The U.S. has every right to protect any of its friends. The issue therefore is not Israel. The issue is the AKP Government's deception. AKP is bashing Israel for domestic political gains and as a jumping platform for its pretensions to regional leadership on the one hand and conceals the truth about the declared intention of the U.S. Government to use the radar in question to help Israel. All that the AKP need to do is to share this truth with the public.

Looking into the future, CHP will urge NATO to be more responsive to the needs of non-member states and support the different Alliance programs to enhance relations with them. NATO should expand its training and educational programs for non-member countries on the basis of their demands and requests. This will require bolder programs and projects using the soft and smart power assets of the Alliance and its members.

Conclusion

NATO is and will continue to be the center piece of the security of its members. NATO and Turkish authorities should take mutually linked steps to increase the waning Turkish public support for NATO. CHP wants to see NATO as an alliance that provides equal benefits to its members. CHP also believes that all future interventions by NATO must be firmly based on international law and should rest on an explicit mandate from the UN Security Council. CHP's supportive views on NATO are in coherence with its outlook on Turkey as a member of the Euro-Atlantic family. NATO must remain strong and vibrant for the sake of international peace, security, and stability.